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Ministerial declaration of the small island developing States to the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

We, the Ministers of the small island developing States (SIDS),

Having met on the occasion of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XVI) held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 20 to 23 October 2025 at the Palais des Nations,

Recalling the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), which resulted from the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States in May 2024; and recognizing the continued importance of these frameworks in addressing the unique vulnerabilities and development needs of SIDS,

Recalling that member States, through ABAS, stressed their commitment “to support SIDS on their pathway to achieving sustainable development and resilient prosperity, where the progress of today does not compromise the possibilities of tomorrow, through targeted, results-focused interventions and investments”,¹

Considering the Ministerial Statement for Enhancing Transport and Logistics in SIDS, which resulted from the inaugural UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum held in Barbados from 21 to 24 May 2024; and reaffirming the strategic directions and priorities highlighted therein,

Recalling the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States on the Special Circumstances of Small Island Developing States adopted on 25 September 2025; and reaffirming the recognition that the special circumstances of SIDS constitutes a principle of international law, and must be operationalized,

Reaffirming the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS to exogenous shocks owing to their size, geographical remoteness, the small scale of their economies, high dependence on international trade and extreme exposure to natural disasters and the effects of climate change,

¹ Para. 16 of ABAS.



Further reaffirming that SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base and exposure to global environmental challenges,

Recognizing that despite the resilience and leadership of SIDS in advancing sustainable development, they remain disproportionately impacted by global economic and other external shocks, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, high debt burdens and limited access to financing,

Acknowledging the UNCTAD strategy for SIDS, which provides a road map for addressing systemic vulnerabilities, fostering sustainable productive capacities, supporting structural transformation and sustainable development and enhancing economic resilience, as well as enhancing connectivity, reducing transport costs and promoting sustainable and resilient transport,

Noting the continued adverse impacts of climate change on trade, economic growth, sustainable development, debt sustainability, infrastructure and livelihoods in SIDS; and stressing the need for strengthened international cooperation, increased and accessible climate financing and effective implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies,

Reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism, a transparent, inclusive and fair rules-based multilateral trading system and enhanced regional, triangular and South–South cooperation,

Reaffirming our commitment to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the Pact for the Future and its annexes, the Sevilla Commitment, which was adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development; and stressing the importance of aligning international trade, debt and investment frameworks with their outcomes,

1. *Call on* UNCTAD to strengthen support towards developing and expanding the productive capacities of SIDS and identifying climate-resilient development pathways, including through investment in digital transformation, technology transfer, renewable energy, green industrial policies, sustainable ocean economies, sustainable and resilient transport and logistics, including maritime shipping and ports, and resilient tourism, and in undertaking national productive capacities gap assessments and implementing holistic productive capacities development programmes, pursuant to ABAS.

2. *Call on* UNCTAD to establish regional centres of excellence within national institutions in SIDS to enhance productive capacities through knowledge exchange, triangular and South–South cooperation, capacity-building, including in sustainable ocean economies and blue biotrade, and policy implementation for economic diversification and structural transformation.

3. *Welcome* the establishment of a dedicated trust fund at UNCTAD to support sustainable development in SIDS and encourage development and trade partners to provide adequate and predictable financial contributions to ensure its effectiveness, long-term impact and alignment with the UNCTAD strategy for SIDS.

4. *Encourage* UNCTAD to continue supporting SIDS in achieving sustainable development with external and public debt sustainability through the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) Programme, the preparation of country studies and climate finance strategies, including through the UNCTAD sustainable development finance assessment framework and other SIDS-specific research, analysis and technical assistance related to debt and development finance issues, including the SIDS debt sustainability support service.

5. *Encourage* UNCTAD to continue supporting SIDS in data collection, storage, analysis and use, particularly in the areas of trade, productive capacities and vulnerability assessments, to ensure more effective planning, monitoring and reporting on sustainable development.

6. *Welcome* UNCTAD work on sustainable finance; and encourage continued support in strengthening policy and institutional frameworks to channel such finance into

climate adaptation, renewable energy, sustainable ocean economies and resilient tourism, consistent with the SAMOA Pathway, ABAS, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

7. *Call upon* UNCTAD and related institutions to support member States, international organizations and treaty bodies and related institutional and financial mechanisms, where appropriate, to explicitly reference and implement the special circumstances of SIDS in the design, interpretation and implementation of all multilateral agreements, frameworks and support facilities, including those under negotiation or review.

8. *Further encourage* UNCTAD, through the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting, to strengthen capacity in sustainability and climate-related reporting, including on greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, to enable SIDS to mobilize climate and development finance more effectively.

9. *Stress* the need for a holistic approach to vulnerability assessments, incorporating multidimensional indices that include trade vulnerability, climate vulnerability and debt vulnerability assessments to ensure that SIDS have equitable access to grants and concessional financing and other international support measures to recover from and build resilience to external shocks, including in respect of ports and other critical transport infrastructure.

10. *Call upon* international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and development partners to adopt innovative financial mechanisms and instruments, including nature or climate debt swaps, climate-contingent debt instruments, climate-resilient debt clauses and carbon markets and concessional financing mechanisms tailored to SIDS unique circumstances.

11. *Call for* strengthened support to address the unique investment challenges faced by SIDS, including high exposure to climate change, dependence on narrow export bases, high import bills and structural constraints. Existing trade preference schemes do not adequately reflect these vulnerabilities as most SIDS are middle-income countries and ineligible.

12. *Encourage* the use of demand-side risk mitigation instruments, such as structured market access arrangements and regional investment platforms, to improve project viability and attract private capital. These efforts should be complemented by the development of essential infrastructure to facilitate access to overseas markets, with the active engagement of multilateral development banks in financing, de-risking and capacity-building initiatives.

13. *Call on* development and trade partners of SIDS to generously contribute to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, established at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with a view to responding to the loss and damage suffered by developing countries, in particular SIDS, as a result of the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events on their socioeconomic progress and environmental protection.

14. *Encourage* the full operationalization of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, ensuring that SIDS have priority access for addressing the impacts of extreme weather and slow-onset events.

15. *Underscore* the urgency of climate adaptation and mitigation, resilience-building, circular economy practices and sustainable infrastructure development; and call for increased technical and financial support to SIDS to strengthen climate resilience, disaster preparedness and early warning systems, recognizing the unique role grants play in adapting to climate change, considering it is rarely a return-generating activity.

16. *Call on* UNCTAD to strengthen technical assistance and research on sustainable export value chains, including biodiversity-based ones, and their contribution to SIDS efforts to promote low-carbon economic diversification and climate resilience, as well as to increase the value added to exports.

17. *Call on UNCTAD to scale research and technical assistance in designing and implementing nationally determined contribution measures related to trade and investment policies that foster just transitions to resilient, low-carbon economies.*

18. *Call on UNCTAD to conduct research on how to improve the design of the increasingly fragmented, uncoordinated and non-transparent environmental and climate measures, standards and regulations to maximize their environmental and climate impacts while minimizing negative spillover effects on SIDS.*

19. *Call on UNCTAD to continue its work on transparency and analysis of tariff and non-tariff measures and voluntary sustainability standards that hinder market access and SIDS integration into the global economy.*

20. *Encourage UNCTAD to intensify its work in supporting SIDS in trade facilitation reforms, sustainable and climate-resilient transport systems, investment promotion, technology transfer, capacity-building for microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainable and resilient supply and export chains and integration into regional and global value chains while promoting low pollution, low-carbon economic diversification and climate resilience.*

21. *Call on UNCTAD to continue support to capacity-building and peer-learning, to enable SIDS to develop and fully benefit from competitive and fair markets where consumers are better protected, enhancing their economic and social progress.*

22. *Call on UNCTAD to enhance SIDS access to digital infrastructure and connectivity to bridge the digital and geographical divides, strengthen readiness to benefit from electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital trade by assisting in undertaking e-readiness assessments and the development and implementation of e-commerce strategies, fostering supportive legal and regulatory frameworks and enhancing capacities to gather data on e-commerce and digital trade.*

23. *Continue support for developing national systems of innovation to enhance the contribution of science, technology and innovation (STI) to national development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and capacity-building for policymakers in developing and implementing effective STI policies and policy instruments.*

24. *Continue support for high-level United Nations deliberations on STI, including serving as the secretariat for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and collaborating with United Nations agencies active in the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (paragraph 70 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).*

25. *Reiterate the importance of food security and sustainable agriculture, urging international partners to support SIDS in scaling up climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries, reducing food import dependency and enhancing food production, nutrition security and supply chains, including sustainable and resilient transport and logistics systems to support food security and regional value chains.*

26. *Call on UNCTAD to deepen its role in supporting the ocean economy as a key pillar for sustainable development in SIDS and call for strengthened efforts to achieve progress on implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, target 7.*

27. *Acknowledge the outcomes of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, held in Nice, France, in June 2025, including the adoption of the Nice Ocean Action Plan and the political declaration, and commit to aligning national and regional ocean-related policies with its priorities, particularly in accelerating action to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, supporting the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, and advancing ocean-based climate solutions.*

28. *Encourage UNCTAD to advance work on blue economy financing, including the valuation of blue carbon ecosystems, development of blue bonds and promotion of sustainable marine renewable energy and ocean-based carbon markets.*

29. *Support the development and implementation of effective legal frameworks to reduce ship-source pollution, as well as combat illegal, unreported and unregulated*

fishing, promote sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and coastal tourism and foster sustainable ocean-based industries.

30. *Welcome* the entry into force of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies as a contribution to sustainable ocean economy; call on UNCTAD to support SIDS with the implementation of this Agreement; and urge enhanced multilateral efforts to complete negotiations on disciplining subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing with appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries and the least developed countries to meet Sustainable Development Goal 14, target 6.

31. *Reject* the unilateral and coercive blacklisting of countries as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions and emphasize the need for fair and transparent international tax cooperation that considers the specificities of SIDS.

32. *Recognize* the important role of UNCTAD, according to its mandate, in promoting the elimination of unilateral coercive economic measures which are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and that are a significant impediment to the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the affected States, impair their trade and financial relations and negatively impact the well-being of the populations.

33. *Call on* the international community to address the adverse impacts of high transportation and logistics costs faced by SIDS by investing in sustainable and resilient maritime and air transport infrastructure, improving regional connectivity and expanding trade facilitation measures, including for reverse logistics.

34. *Call for* coordinated efforts by the international community to reduce the transaction costs that hamper the flow of remittances to SIDS as a source of development financing, including by developing legal and institutional frameworks to protect migrant workers, in view of the vital role of remittances in SIDS socioeconomic development.

35. *Support* gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth and inclusive economic participation, recognizing that social inclusion is vital for the long-term resilience and prosperity of SIDS; and encourage UNCTAD to support SIDS in advancing inclusive trade by promoting gender-responsive trade policies and strengthening women's capacity to participate fully in regional and international trade.

36. *Call on* UNCTAD to continue its leading role in advocating for the unique challenges of SIDS within the multilateral system, including greater vulnerability to the debt-climate cycle, and to support SIDS in the implementation of ABAS and other relevant frameworks for resilient prosperity.

37. *Call upon* UNCTAD and the broader United Nations system to provide continued and strengthened support to SIDS in overcoming their structural vulnerabilities and achieving sustainable, climate-resilient and inclusive economic growth through just transitions.

We, the Ministers of SIDS, remain committed to working in partnership with the international community to advance our sustainable development priorities and ensure a resilient and prosperous future for all SIDS.