



**Statement by Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States
at the Virtual meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Operational Activities Segment**

19 May 2020
United Nations, New York

Madam President, Secretary-General/Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies,
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. AOSIS commends you, President Mona Juul of Norway and Vice President Juan Sandoval of Mexico, for convening this very important meeting through the use of available technology. This is a painful time globally, and we wish to express our deepest condolences to all governments and their peoples on the loss of lives and livelihoods due to COVID-19.
3. Madam President, in the past year AOSIS has regularly engaged with the UN Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and their team on the question of the Multi-country Office Review, the Regional Review and the Resident Coordinator System. Member countries are now pleased to have the result of those reviews captured in the SG's report on the QCPR.
4. It is no understatement to say that countries are going through contortions in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time agonizing over how to keep economies on life support and preserve sustainable development gains. As a result, the UN development system (UNds) faces the biggest stress test in its history.

5. Now more than ever, SIDS need the UNds. Prime Minister Mia Mottley of the small island developing state of Barbados wrote to our UN Secretary General on 17th April and pointed out that *our extra vulnerability to this crisis is compounded by lack of fiscal space for vital expenditures in public health, or to absorb the massive loss of tax revenues, or to support the newly unemployed, or even to be better prepared for the impending hurricane season in the Caribbean.* As if on cue, Cyclone Harold barreled through the Pacific, laying waste to land and critical infrastructure, and taking lives, just as the people of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Tonga were gearing up to face COVID-19.
6. The sudden cessation of economic activities coupled with the uncertainty of when and how we recover may very well force our small islands and low-lying coastal states into a depression, the scale of which would be unprecedented for SIDS. In many ways, the sudden onset of COVID-19 is a harbinger of the very types of events that scientists project will become the new norm of our ever-warming world, even if globally we collectively maintain climate change at or below 1.5°C. It is vital therefore that we make every effort to ensure that the UNds is well positioned to support developing countries and that we keep our focus on rescuing 2020 as the start of a “decade of action”.
7. Madam President, the recommendations of the Secretary-General for MCOs and for the Regional Level mechanisms, are steps in the right direction for a better coordinated and more effective UN system. It is appropriate now that the Secretary-General compiles a work plan with clear and definitive milestones that can serve as a basis for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of these recommendations. While we are hopeful that we will see improvements in delivery on the ground, we are presently navigating uncharted waters and we must be ready to course correct if necessary.
8. We appreciate and welcome the recommendations to open the MCO in the North Pacific, and the ones providing additional coordination officers to the MCO countries. However, It is important for me to highlight that the recommendations as contained in the report under consideration today, omit details that were instrumental in AOSIS, the wider Group of 77 and China and our strategic partners arriving at this point of agreement and compromise.

9. In particular, the document of 27th March 2020, prepared by the Secretariat and presented to the membership of the UN seemed to have the support of everyone as a way to move the process forward. In this regard, AOSIS wishes to see this document incorporated into the resolution that approves these recommendations.
10. Secondly, AOSIS seeks clarification on whether the SIDS specific recommendations referenced in the SG's report apply equally to all SIDS irrespective of whether or not they fall within an MCO.
11. Madam President, we are almost there. AOSIS looks forward to continuing the work with other Member States on the remaining mandates and especially the recommendations for the Regional Level mechanisms.
12. We reiterate the importance of national ownership and leadership as well as transparency and accountability to Member States as important compass points for the UNds.
13. In closing, Madam President, these are trying times, but we must continue in our efforts to make a better planet for future generations. We must use this opportunity to unite and to forge forward together, with the determination to make sure this decade of action will be one of ambition and that come 2030, no one is left behind.

Thank you.