Global Ireland
Ireland’s Second Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States
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Our Action Plan for Partnership with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) comprises 57 commitments across four interlinking pillars – Building Our Partnership, Climate and Oceans, Capacity and Advocacy.

These commitments respond directly to the priorities raised by our SIDS partners as we were preparing this document.

Building our Partnership
Ireland will work to further broaden and deepen our relationship with SIDS in the African, Asian, Caribbean and Pacific regions, putting in place structures and mechanisms to ensure Ireland is seen as a long-term, reliable partner, and that an understanding of SIDS’ needs and priorities is mainstreamed across our foreign, development and other relevant policies.

Climate and Oceans
Ireland will work to ensure that the climate challenges faced by Pacific, Caribbean, Asian and African SIDS and their ocean-related priorities are systematically reflected in our policy and funding decisions, and that our climate action and advocacy respond to SIDS’ needs. We will increase our annual climate finance funding to at least €225m per year and ensure it targets countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, prioritising SIDS and Least Developed Countries.

Capacity
Ireland will undertake a series of initiatives to help our SIDS partners address their capacity needs at country level and to facilitate their participation in international policy discussions relevant to their needs and priorities. We will also continue to support international agencies working on SIDS-related issues or on SIDS’ behalf.

Advocacy
We want Ireland to be an advocate for SIDS, using our influence within the UN, EU, OECD and elsewhere, including in coordination with likeminded countries, to ensure SIDS’ needs and priorities are better understood.
Introduction

Ireland has worked with and championed the cause of Small Island Developing States for many years – in particular through the United Nations system. In 2019, we decided to formalise our commitment to this important group of countries with our first Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States (SIDS). That document set out how we would deepen our relationship with SIDS, with 36 commitments in areas of greatest interest to our partners. These were developed through direct consultation with island states, listening to their concerns and reflecting on how Ireland could best lend a hand.

Following consultation with our partners, and in recognition of the specific challenges facing their countries, Ireland established a scholarship scheme to bring high-potential candidates to Ireland for post-graduate study. Approximately 60 awards have been made to date, with more than half won by women, in line with our longstanding focus on gender equality.

We put in place a Trust Fund at the Asian Development Bank to support Asia-Pacific Island States in adapting to climate change, while in the Caribbean we supported the sustainable development of the blue economy. We also contributed to a regional partnership with African SIDS to strengthen governance in the fisheries industries. And we continued to be a constructive and reliable advocate for island states within the multilateral system. These and the other commitments under that strategy, as well as our role in international discussions on climate, and our first SIDS-specific humanitarian response during the COVID-19 pandemic, have helped to strengthen Ireland's relationship with Small Island Developing States around the world.

This second strategy sets out how we will build on the advances of the last four years. It reflects the findings of the independent review of the 2019 strategy, completed in 2022. It is the product of a wide-ranging process of consultation, including with SIDS' representatives accredited to Ireland, and those based elsewhere, including in Brussels, London, Washington DC and at the United Nations in New York.

Since the 2019 strategy, the challenges facing SIDS have grown – whether due to the accelerating nature of the climate crisis, global instability, or the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, Ireland’s ability to work with SIDS has been enhanced due to additional capacity developed during the implementation of the 2019 SIDS strategy, the adoption of regional strategies relevant to SIDS and the strengthening of our diplomatic network under the Government’s Global Ireland initiative, including the reassignment and/or activation of diplomatic accreditations to SIDS.

Our strategic approach

In a context of increased global focus on SIDS arising from the climate crisis and geo-political trends, Ireland will strive to build our relationship with SIDS through a partnership based on equity and political and development choices aimed at supporting their long-term, sustainable socio-economic development.

Our approach is grounded in the strategic choices articulated within our overarching foreign policy document The Global Island, in particular its focus areas Our Values and Our Influence. It reflects our commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in our policy for international development A Better World, with its commitment to strengthen our support for SIDS and address climate change, and the principle of leaving no one behind which also frames our Climate Finance Roadmap. It is consistent with the priorities in our regional strategies for Africa and the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

Who are Small Island Developing States?

Small Island Developing States comprise 39 States and 18 Associate Members of UN regional commissions. They are spread across the globe in the Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the South China Sea. They have an aggregate population of approximately 65 million and vary widely in terms of their environmental, geographic and cultural characteristics, meaning that they require a differentiated approach in terms of engagement. There are, however, a number of characteristics that they often share, in particular vulnerability to climate change - identified by SIDS’ leaders as the single greatest challenge faced by their countries. For many, it is a stark reality that much of their territory will be submerged should sea levels continue to rise at the present rate, and some are already managing the forced displacement and relocation of communities.

Other socio-economic challenges are exacerbated by climate change including: limited economic influence due to small population size, food insecurity, healthcare provision, low economic diversification, high reliance on remittances and capacity challenges. Many SIDS are geographically remote, meaning they face high import and export costs for goods, and irregular international traffic flow.

SIDS are particularly at risk from external shocks – as demonstrated by the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a collective fall in GDP of an estimated 9.9 percent in SIDS, as compared to 3.3 percent in other developing countries.

This was accounted for by the fact that 57 percent of SIDS depend on commodity exports – often a single commodity - compared to 13 percent of developed countries. In Cabo Verde, Kiribati, Maldives, Micronesia and Tuvalu, seafood alone accounts for 70 percent of goods exports. In the Caribbean, more than 75 percent of St. Lucia’s exports are petroleum and bituminous products.

SIDS were also disproportionately affected by the collapse in tourism as a consequence of pandemic travel restrictions. Collectively, SIDS rely on tourism for almost 30 percent of their GDP, rising to or above 50 percent in countries like the Maldives, Seychelles and Antigua and Barbuda. The overnight halt to incoming tourist traffic resulted in GDP declines in these countries of up to 16 percent.

Longstanding and varying debt challenges and the impact of external shocks as well as climate change, particularly the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, has placed an increasing debt burden on SIDS which is compounded by the challenges they encounter in accessing finance.

Ireland is conscious of the importance of these issues to our SIDS partners and is committed to engaging positively with the global debate around how to improve the responsiveness of the global financial architecture.

Despite the challenges, SIDS’ leaders have demonstrated their cohesion and an ability to drive global discussions on these issues, while the resilience of their communities has led to the development of innovative approaches to economic diversification, sustainable development of the blue economy and managing the impact of climate change. Indeed, with financial and technical assistance, many SIDS also present positive opportunities in terms of clean energy transition, given the potential to sustainably develop their renewable energy resources.
SIDS are important foreign policy actors, both at regional and global level. Like Ireland, they are active in fora such as the United Nations and elsewhere, including through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). They are particularly engaged with the UN’s 2014–2024 SAMOA Pathway (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action), the work led by the UN on the development of a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and, the preparation of the 4th International Conference on SIDS in 2024, where the Programme of Action for SIDS for 2024–2034 will be adopted.

Elsewhere, SIDS are active at the World Bank, through the Small States Forum and their Constituency Offices, such as that shared by Ireland, 11 Caribbean countries and Canada. SIDS are particularly active in UN negotiations and international discussions on climate change and sustainable ocean development. They are also active in pursuing the development of more nuanced instruments for access to finance from the World Bank and other international financial institutions that take adequate account of their particular characteristics.

At a regional level, SIDS frequently work together through organisations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), as well as other sub-regional networks. While structures of this type are yet to emerge in other regions, initiatives such as the African Union–SIDS Platform show promise.¹

¹ At the World Bank, Ireland and Canada share a constituency with Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.


Ireland and Small Island Developing States

Ireland is an island nation and much of our history, culture and outlook has been shaped by that fact. We share many of the characteristics of small islands around the world, including a history of emigration, the place of the ocean in our national experience and the fact of being relatively peripheral geographically.

When we decided to prioritise SIDS within our foreign and development policy it was partially in recognition of what we have in common, but also the fruit of many years of working closely with SIDS at the United Nations and elsewhere on issues of common concern, including on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, an area which remains a particular priority for our partners in the Pacific. More recently, our cooperation in the UN Security Council context and our work on the climate crisis, including loss and damage, has brought us even closer.

Building on this history, our vision is of an ambitious partnership focused on addressing the unique challenges facing SIDS and advancing Ireland and SIDS’ shared priorities. In line with the advice and suggestions received from SIDS’ representatives during the consultation phase, this second strategy will be built on four interlinking pillars:

(i) Building our Partnership
(ii) Climate and Oceans
(iii) Capacity
(iv) Advocacy

Within each of these pillars, we will set out the steps Ireland will take to advance SIDS’ priorities and our relationship.
Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States to 2026

Our Commitments

Pillar One: Building our Partnership

Ireland’s cooperation with SIDS at international level is a cornerstone of our partnership. We enjoy a strong track record of mutual support and cooperation to advance shared values at the UN and other fora, on issues relating to peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation, human rights, development, as well as a growing partnership on climate-related issues. Years of close cooperation with SIDS has been invaluable in helping us to increase our knowledge of their priorities and in developing shared solutions to shared problems. This provides an excellent foundation to build our cooperation further.

Since the launch of our first Strategy for Partnership with SIDS in 2019, Ireland has built a more structured relationship with our partners. We have worked together to achieve positive progress on the local response to the climate crisis at successive meetings of the UNFCCC. During our term as an elected member of the United Nations Security Council we worked with many SIDS on issues such as climate and security and the protection of civilians during armed conflict. We have supported SIDS’ global leadership on climate action and sustainable ocean development, and worked with them and with the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN OHRLLS) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

We have worked hard to deepen and reenergise our bilateral relationships, including by re-assigning our diplomatic accreditations to many SIDS to Irish embassies that are closer geographically, as well as establishing diplomatic relations with others for the first time. This process has been facilitated by the expansion of our network of diplomatic missions, as well as our becoming observers at a number of intergovernmental bodies which enjoy SIDS membership – such as the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), as well as the accreditation of our Ambassador to Brazil to CARICOM. We have also established a regular cycle of meetings with the Brussels-based representatives of CARIFORUM countries to discuss EU issues.

What do we want to achieve?

Our aim over the course of this strategy is to further broaden and deepen our relationship with SIDS, putting in place structures and mechanisms to ensure that Ireland is seen as a long-term, reliable partner to SIDS and that an understanding of SIDS’ needs and priorities is mainstreamed across our foreign, development and other relevant policies.

What will we do to make this happen?

» Open a new Office for the Caribbean in Miami, with a specific mandate to deepen our relationships with this important region. The practical lessons from this process will inform decisions on the steps we will take to enhance our relationship with African, Asian and Pacific SIDS.

» Use our accreditation to CARICOM to intensify our relationship with that body, as a complement to the work of our Office for the Caribbean.

» Seek to deepen our dialogue with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), as the primary regional body in the Pacific region, as well as with its Member States. Our aim is to identify opportunities for closer cooperation, consistent with the PIF’s 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and to support regional multilateralism.

» Seek to develop trade and economic links with SIDS, including through Ireland’s business and economic development in island communities.

» Use our status as an Observer at the CPLP and OIF to deepen our relationship with Lusophone and Francophone SIDS.

» Provide additional financial resources to our diplomatic missions accredited to SIDS to support local civil society organisations working to advance inclusive socio-economic development in island communities.

» Continue to support Irish NGOs partnering with civil society organisations in SIDS to address climate and nutrition challenges.

» Institute a regular cycle of meetings with SIDS’ diplomatic missions accredited to Ireland from other capitals, to ensure their views are taken into account in our policy reflection.

» Develop closer engagement and cooperation with SIDS on global, foreign and security policy issues, in particular in multilateral bodies such as the UN as well as through the EU’s political dialogues.

» Continue to develop our partnerships with SIDS to address and advance gender equality and other equality issues.

» Ensure that future strategies developed by Irish diplomatic missions accredited to SIDS, and which implement an international development programme, include a chapter on those relationships.

» Establish diplomatic relations with SIDS and complete the assignment of secondary accreditations to SIDS to our bilateral diplomatic missions.

» Seek to increase the frequency of high-level visits between Ireland and our SIDS partners, and to ensure Irish representation at relevant multilateral conferences.

» Support OHRLLS and UNDESA in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and contributing to the preparation of the next SIDS Programme of Action for 2024-2034.

» Explore the culture and traditions we share with our SIDS partners, beginning with a study on historical links between Ireland and the Caribbean in 2023.

» Work to nurture and bolster existing relationships within the Bretton Woods institutions to inform our engagement with SIDS, and advocacy on SIDS’ priorities.

> Partnerships with Caribbean SIDS

Ireland’s deep historic ties with the Caribbean have helped to build personal links and cultural bridges that connect our nations, embodied in the friendship of our Nobel laureates, Seamus Heaney from Ireland and Derek Walcott from Saint Lucia, as well as in the large numbers of Caribbean islanders who claim Irish heritage today.

Since 2019 we have worked to build a framework of new partnerships centred on sustainable development in the Caribbean and focussed on protecting the marine environment, developing the blue economy and supporting disaster responses. We are working with Irish and international NGOs to support communities whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by climate change and to build their capacity in responding to the climate crisis.

In 2021 we were pleased to serve alongside St. Vincent and the Grenadines as elected members of the UN Security Council. 2021 also marked the beginning of deeper engagement with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) with the accreditation of Ireland’s first Ambassador to CARICOM and increased political and diplomatic contacts in Washington, New York and Brussels.

Irish representation at relevant multilateral conferences.

Support OHRLLS and UNDESA in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and contributing to the preparation of the next SIDS Programme of Action for 2024-2034.

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GOAL staff preparing emergency response kits in Haiti, 2022 © GOAL

Tonga Red Cross Society staff and volunteers delivering essential supplies to local communities impacted by the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai eruption and tsunami in 2022.

© IFRC

Antigua and Barbuda. © Ashlee Stoeck

What will we do to make this happen?

GOAL staff preparing emergency response kits in Haiti, 2022 © GOAL

Tonga Red Cross Society staff and volunteers delivering essential supplies to local communities impacted by the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai eruption and tsunami in 2022.

© IFRC

Antigua and Barbuda. © Ashlee Stoeck

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Tonga Red Cross Society staff and volunteers delivering essential supplies to local communities impacted by the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai eruption and tsunami in 2022.

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Antigua and Barbuda. © Ashlee Stoeck
Pillar Two: Climate and Oceans

Ireland recognises the unique challenges facing SIDS arising from their vulnerability to climate change. We have worked with SIDS to address climate challenges, to improve global climate action, including gender responsive climate action, and to strengthen ocean governance. In recent years, Ireland has intensified our international climate diplomacy, prioritising: adaptation and Loss and Damage; oceans and biodiversity; and climate and security.

At COP 26 in 2021, the Government of Ireland pledged to increase our annual climate finance spending to at least €225m per year by 2025. We are committed to ensuring it targets countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, prioritising SIDS and LDCs.

Ireland recognises that extreme and slow onset weather events often surpass countries’ adaptation measures, leading to severe devastation, losses of livelihoods, incomes, homes and life. To this end, Ireland’s International Climate Finance Roadmap has identified Loss and Damage as a priority in the scale up of our funding to 2025 and beyond. This will complement our ongoing diplomacy and advocacy for international progress on Loss and Damage, particularly in the UNFCCC and in close collaboration with SIDS.

As an island nation, Ireland is conscious of our responsibilities as caretaker of the oceans and the environmental, economic and societal benefits we derive from healthy oceans and sustainable development of the blue economy. While the ocean has played a hugely significant role in mitigating climate change, its natural adaptive capacity is now moving beyond its limits. The socioeconomic consequences of this trend are far greater for SIDS than for continental nations.

SIDS’ combined ocean area is 20.7 times that of the land territory and their exclusive economic zones encompass 30 percent of the world’s oceans and seas. As Large Ocean States they are to the fore in responding to ocean-related challenges and well-placed to pursue opportunities for sustainable ocean development. However, the OECD has reported that from 2018 to 2020 only 4% of ODA to SIDS contributed to more sustainable ocean economies.

What do we want to achieve?

We want to ensure that the climate challenges faced by SIDS and their ocean-related priorities are systematically reflected in our policy and funding decisions and that our climate action and advocacy respond to SIDS’ needs.

Seek to scale up partnerships to achieve a clean, healthy and biologically diverse ocean, and seek to support SIDS in tackling marine litter.

- Foster ocean innovation and support the development of research networks, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing in ocean management between Ireland and SIDS through the Our Shared Ocean programme, managed by Ireland’s Marine Institute.
- Support the establishment and effective management of Marine Protected Areas in SIDS, in line with commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework to protect 30% of our seas by 2030.
- Work to enhance the accessibility of funding for SIDS to Multilateral Climate Funds via ongoing work within governance bodies of the Funds; our membership of the Transitional Committee on Loss and Damage finance; as well as through advocacy fora such as the Champions Group on Adaptation Finance.
- Support accelerator partnerships, green business and clean tech start-up in Pacific SIDS, including initiatives to support female entrepreneurs.
- Engage with SIDS partners, including through supporting and participating in the work of the International Law Commission in working towards broadly agreed, appropriate and effective solutions to international law issues related to sea-level rise, including with respect to maritime zones.
- Support SIDS-led initiatives focussed on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, such as the SIDS Coalition for Nature.
- Collaborate with SIDS on the protection of cultural and natural heritage as part of Ireland’s commitment to promoting the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

Increase our annual climate finance funding to at least €225m per year by 2025 and ensure that it targets countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, prioritising SIDS and LDCs.

- Build on the success of Ireland’s Trust Fund for SIDS at the Asian Development Bank with a new phase of support to help partners in the Pacific and Indian Ocean adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Actively explore opportunities to engage with and support African SIDS, including through the African Development Bank.
- Support SIDS in their domestic efforts to respond and adapt to climate change, including through support to global programmes for: the development and implementation of national adaptation plans; the strengthening of marine and ocean governance; and the development or strengthening of early warning systems.
- Support the role of women in climate decision-making processes and provide support to women’s and grassroots organisations to assist them in accessing climate funds.
- Foster collaborative processes and provide support to women’s and grassroots organisations to assist them in accessing climate funds.

What will we do to make this happen?

Ireland’s Marine Institute.

Local marine conservation is part of a programme being implemented by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Melanesia through Ireland’s partner, Blue Action Fund.

© Björn Svensson

Partnerships with African SIDS

Our goal of building our partnership with African SIDS is a natural extension of Ireland’s longstanding and positive relationship with the continent, as articulated in Global Ireland: Ireland’s Strategy for Africa to 2025. Education has always been a significant part of Ireland’s links with Africa. We have built on this through our postgraduate scholarship programme for SIDS and support of over €1m, since 2019, for early education programmes and training in Guinea-Bissau.

Since 2019 we have also established new frameworks to deepen our relationships with African SIDS, becoming a member of the African Development Bank and an Observer State to the CPLP and OIF.

As an island nation we know that a healthy marine environment is critical to the well-being of our citizens and coastal communities, and recognise its importance in terms of income generation and food security for SIDS. Our partnership with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FTI) is focussed on supporting increased levels of transparency and multi-stakeholder collaboration in the marine fisheries sectors of five African SIDS - Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Ireland recognises the unique challenges facing SIDS arising from their vulnerability to climate change. We have worked with SIDS to address climate challenges, to improve global climate action, including gender responsive climate action, and to strengthen ocean governance. In recent years, Ireland has intensified our international climate diplomacy, prioritising: adaptation and Loss and Damage; oceans and biodiversity; and climate and security.
Pillar three: Capacity

Capacity is a fundamental issue for Small Island Developing States given their low population base and relatively small Governmental systems. Throughout our consultation process for this strategy, partners stressed the need for assistance in building their capacity in a wide range of areas essential to their development and to their ability to engage with the international system. As well as building human capital, this extends to the ability of SIDS representatives, including youth representatives, to attend international events and conferences of direct relevance to SIDS’ needs and priorities. Within the international system, agencies working on SIDS issues are also relatively lightly resourced.

Since 2019, we have provided financial and other support to ensure that SIDS’ leaders are facilitated in representing their states at global discussions, including climate and ocean-related meetings and negotiations, as well as to ensure the voice of future leaders from these islands is heard. We have developed education and professional training initiatives and exchanges which have provided opportunities for shared learning and to forge new connections and friendships amongst leaders from all of our islands. During this next phase, we aim to combine a long term, strategic approach to capacity enhancement with a series of shorter term measures to support our partners operating in a global context.

What do we want to achieve?

We want to help SIDS partners address their capacity needs at country level and to facilitate their participation in international policy discussions relevant to their needs and priorities. We also want to continue to support international agencies working on SIDS-related issues or on SIDS’ behalf.

What will we do to make this happen?

» Develop a capacity-building partnership in the Pacific region with New Zealand, aimed at supporting climate-resilient development in our SIDS partners.

» Provide financial support for initiatives to build national data and statistical governance and production capacity in and between SIDS, given the critical role of quality data for the implementation of the SDGs, vulnerability assessment and access to finance.

» Work with two SIDS seeking to develop policies or strategies in relation to their diaspora over the duration of this strategy. As part of this relationship, we will offer advice and guidance based on our own experience in this area, in line with our ambition to promote Ireland as a hub of expertise in diaspora engagement.

» Extend and deepen our system of scholarships, the Ireland Fellows Programme, which brings nationals of SIDS to Ireland for post-graduate study, maintaining our commitment to gender equality, diversity and equal opportunity.

» Make courses in the broadest-possible range of disciplines available to Ireland Fellows from SIDS. From 2023 these will include areas our partners have signalled as priorities for them, such as strategy, management and innovation.

» Develop a new network of SIDS alumni as part of our Ireland Fellows global alumni initiative, working with our diplomatic missions to enhance our relationship with former Fellows.

» Examine options for engagement with the newly created African Union-SIDS Platform as a potential tool to enhance coordination and strengthen the representation of African SIDS at regional and global level.

» Help to build SIDS’ capacity to engage in the multilateral trading system and related negotiations through continued support for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) French Irish Mission Internship Programme, in which officials from SIDS participate.

» Provide additional support to UNDESA to bolster staffing within their SIDS team.

» Support the participation of SIDS’ representatives, including government and civil society representatives, women and youth leaders, in events and processes, including global climate and ocean-related negotiations.

» Contribute to, and participate in, training programmes for climate youth delegates from SIDSs and LDCs.

» Provide financial and policy support to preparations for the 4th International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024.

» Develop our virtual policy dialogue with SIDS to facilitate expert discussions on evolving areas of common interest.

» Work with SIDS who wish to engage in peer learning initiatives to strengthen the capacity of public institutions, including through our Domestic Resource Mobilisation initiative.

» Continue to support the placement of Irish UN Volunteers in the Caribbean and Pacific Islands, and extend these placements to African SIDS, with particular focus on roles relating to gender and climate action.

Seagrass monitoring – Melanesia, Blue Action Fund & WCS © Björn Svensson
Ireland Fellows Programme for SIDS

The Ireland Fellows Programme for SIDS was established in 2020. The aims of the Programme are: to nurture future leaders; to develop in-country capacity to achieve national SDG goals; and to build positive relationships with Ireland.

Since 2020, fellowships have been awarded to over 60 early-career professionals from 26 SIDS for full-time Masters degree programmes in Ireland.

Irish UN Youth Volunteers in SIDS

Since 2020 Ireland has funded the placement of Irish UN Volunteers in SIDS where they work, mostly as part of the UN’s gender and climate teams.

Insights from May 2021 on UN Volunteer Gender and Youth Associate Officer Tess Mitchell’s contribution to COVID response in Guinea-Bissau:

“As a Gender and Youth Associate Officer, Tess has visited and coordinated with different partners to identify strategies and synergies to address issues faced by women, but also children. She supports collecting data to analyse the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the health sector and WHO’s contribution.”

“As a young person starting a career, taking part in the significant work of WHO in mitigating the impact of the pandemic is a rewarding experience. I hope to make a substantial contribution in improving women and youth wellbeing through my assignment and develop my technical skills.”

Tess Mitchell

From the Dominican Republic to Dublin - Ricardo’s reflections on his SIDS Fellowship

Ricardo was employed by the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic as an Advisor on Environment Policy and Law of the Sea before receiving his Ireland Fellows Programme award (2021-2022) to study in University College Dublin.

“For the past 7.5 years I have been employed by the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic as an Advisor on Environment Policy and Law of the Sea. I advise on law of the sea and environmental law, research, write legal analysis and draft judicial decisions on environmental cases admitted under the authority of the Constitutional Court.”

“I chose to study Environmental Policy at University College Dublin because I believe that without environmental policy, the world may continue to be unaware of how to take better action in protecting our planet. As an international student studying environmental policy, I am learning about public policies and plans that will help to protect the environment and create sustainability.”

“The fellowship will also help me to bring innovative approaches and ideas to respond to the environmental issues we work with at the Constitutional Court.”

Photo: © Ricardo Paredes

Maldivian youth discuss local climate change response for their respective communities as part of the Catalyzing Youth-Led Climate Action in the Atoll Nations project.

© Asian Development Bank
Pillar four: Advocacy

While Small Island Developing States are increasingly successful in ensuring their voices are heard at global level, they often express concern about the extent to which their views are considered in decision-making by multilateral bodies and other actors. An area of particular priority is ensuring that their unique vulnerabilities are taken into account in decisions around access to ODA, or to finance intended for the poorest countries. SIDS contend that their vulnerability to external shocks, the effects of climate change, additional costs associated with developing and maintaining infrastructure, and their relatively high debt burden place them in a special category and have argued for a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) that would inform these important criteria and decisions.

As a small country ourselves, Ireland is conscious of the importance of magnifying our voice by building coalitions of states and institutions around policy issues. We have been active in areas of priority to SIDS within the European Union, OECD, UN, World Bank and other International Financial Institutions and in global processes such as the UNFCCC. This advocacy will continue to be one of the pillars of our relationship with SIDS in years to come.

What do we want to achieve?

We want Ireland to be an advocate for SIDS, using our influence within the UN, EU, OECD and elsewhere, including in coordination with likeminded countries, to ensure SIDS’ needs and priorities are better understood.

What will we do to make this happen?

» Consult SIDS when developing our policy positions on global issues of relevance to them. Our aim is to ensure the SIDS’ perspective is understood and taken into account in our multilateral policies.

» Extend our coordination mechanism with Caribbean countries on EU issues to African, Asian and Pacific SIDS, establishing a calendar of regular contacts with our Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels.

» Seek to ensure that EU initiatives and instruments, including the Global Gateway and Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) and Team Europe Initiatives, respond to the needs of SIDS.

» Support initiatives to move beyond the GNI-based model for access to finance, taking account of the outcome of the UN’s deliberations on a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI).

» Consult closely with SIDS to try to ensure that new global funding arrangements, including those relating to Loss and Damage meet their needs.

» Support the strengthening of the EU and Ireland’s trade relations with SIDS, including the accession of further Pacific islands to the EU-Pacific States Interim Economic Partnership Agreement.

» Support Pacific SIDS’ engagement on nuclear non-proliferation, and on nuclear legacy issues.

» Work with SIDS to advance our shared values and address human rights and gender issues, including through UN and EU partnerships.

» Use our leadership roles and global advocacy on sustainable development, climate, energy, health and nutrition work to ensure that SIDS’ perspectives and priorities are reflected in related outcomes.

» Continue to work with OSIS and likeminded countries, including as members of the global Group of Friends of SIDS, to improve access to and quality of development assistance, building on the Effectiveness Principles. 30

» Work with UNESCO members and civil society to raise awareness and support the protection of SIDS’ cultural heritage and as part of our engagement on non-economic Loss and Damage, building on our status as a founding member of the Group of Friends of SIDS.

Partnerships with Asia Pacific SIDS

Since the 1970s, Ireland has had strong links with Pacific Island countries including joint advocacy on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and climate action. This is borne out by our longstanding contributions to international peace and security, including the service of our UN peacekeepers.

Ireland engages bilaterally at political level, and multilaterally with the Pacific Islands Forum. Recent collaboration with Pacific islands includes co-facilitation with Fiji of the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019 and support for Palau as host of the 7th Our Ocean Conference in 2022.

We are working together to address the climate crisis. In the region, Ireland has sought to support these islands through climate partnerships, notably the Ireland Trust Fund for Building Climate Change and Disaster Resilience in SIDS at the Asian Development Bank. The €12 million fund for 2019-2024 is helping to generate climate-resilient investment and has delivered multiple outcomes, including to build coastal resilience and clean energy and water infrastructure. In 2021, a further €2.1 million was provided to support an inclusive and green post-COVID-19 recovery.
How will we ensure these commitments are implemented?

In order to ensure that we honour these commitments, we will develop a detailed plan assigning responsibility for their implementation. A new SIDS Working Group will ensure our progress and we will also commission evaluations midway through the life of this strategy and just prior to its conclusion.

Conclusion

The aim of this strategy is to set out a comprehensive range of actions that will strengthen our relationships with SIDS in the coming years. Global events since our first strategy in 2019 have shown that unforeseen challenges are a constant, and that partnerships are most meaningful and effective when they are agile and responsive.

Our overarching commitment is to be a partner that is ready to listen, learn and respond as we continue to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, reinforce the multilateral system and strengthen ties with our island partners.
Our island heritage

Sceilg Mhichíl is an early medieval monastic settlement located on the Great Skellig island off the southwest coast of Ireland, where monks lived until the thirteenth century in beehive-shaped stone huts or ‘cells’ that remain to this day. This UNESCO World Heritage Property and the smaller Skellig Beag - home to the second-largest gannet colony in the world - are also internationally recognised as Key Biodiversity Areas.

Sceilg Mhichíl is the only site in Europe to have been selected for the Preserving Legacies: A Future for our Past global initiative, which focuses on safeguarding sites of cultural significance from the impacts of climate change. This group of ten World Heritage Properties also includes Nan Madol in Micronesia and Levuka in Fiji.

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