



UN  
DP

SNAPSHOT

# SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)



# THE STATE OF CLIMATE AMBITION

DECEMBER 2022

---

**Authors:** Kalyan Keo and Yoona Jo, UNDP

**Reviewers and contributors:** Lisa Baumgartner, Rebecca Carman, Ankit Khanal, Annlyn Mc Phie, UNDP

**Designer:** JT Quirk

### UN Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including the UN Development Programme, or UN Member States.

### About UNDP's Climate Promise

UNDP's Climate Promise is the largest global offer on NDC support, covering over 120 countries and territories, representing 80 percent of all developing countries globally – including 40 least developed countries, 28 small island developing states, and 14 high emitters – to enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions under the global Paris Agreement. Delivered in collaboration with a wide variety of partners, it is the world's largest offer of support for the enhancement of climate pledges. Learn more at [climatepromise.undp.org](https://climatepromise.undp.org) and follow at [@UNDPClimate](https://twitter.com/UNDPClimate).

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at [undp.org](https://undp.org) or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP).

Copyright © UNDP 2022. All rights reserved. One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

Cover photo: © Jin Ni | UNDP Maldives

---

CLIMATE  
PROMISE



Government of Iceland  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs



+ UNDP's  
Core Donors



© Green Climate Fund

## INTRODUCTION

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a group of low-lying island nations that are home to approximately 65 million people and extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – despite being responsible for less than 1 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions<sup>1</sup>. The 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [report on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability](#) confirmed that SIDS are increasingly affected by tropical cyclones, storm surges, droughts, changing precipitation patterns, coral bleaching and invasive species. From 1970 to 2020, SIDS lost USD\$ 153 billion due to weather-, climate- and water-related hazards – a significant amount given that the average GDP for SIDS is USD 13.7 billion ([WMO, 2020](#)). For those SIDS whose land lies only five meters or less above sea level, projected sea-level rise represents a direct threat to their existence.

Internationally, SIDS are identified as comprising 38 UN Member States and 20 non-UN Members/ Associate Members of United Nations' regional commissions and are typically grouped into three

regions: the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Seas (AIMS). Of these, 40 countries are Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and are the focus of this snapshot<sup>2</sup>.

These island nations are diverse in many ways: level of economic development, governance systems, territorial area, geographical features, and language. For instance, 11 SIDS are considered high-income, more than half are classified as middle-income, yet eight nations are Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Despite differences, SIDS face unique environmental, economic, and social challenges. Common characteristics that contribute to these challenges include: small populations, a narrow resource base, economies heavily dependent on the natural environment, remoteness from international markets, reliance on fossil fuel imports, and limited economies of scale. Such factors affect the adaptive capacity and resilience of SIDS and make them particularly vulnerable to biodiversity loss and climate change.

In response, SIDS created the [Alliance of Small Island States \(AOSIS\)](#) in 1990 which has played a strong leadership role in international climate negotiations. The group [campaigned](#) to ensure 1.5°C was part of the global temperature goal of the Paris Agreement in 2015. More recently in August 2022, the government of Antigua and Barbuda, as the current Chair of AOSIS, convened the “[Wadadli Action Platform](#)” and called on the international community to take urgent and concrete action to fulfill commitments to strengthen resilience in SIDS. Together with LDCs, SIDS have been steadfast in advocating that loss and damages be addressed in climate negotiations, which contributed to the topic’s prominence at COP27 and the agreement made in Egypt to establish a new [loss and damage fund](#).

SIDS have also brokered other strategic partnerships and alliances, such as the [High Ambition Coalition \(HAC\)](#) formed by the Republic of the Marshall Islands in 2015 that is a political-level coalition of progressive countries on climate change who played a pivotal role in brokering the Paris Agreement. Walking the talk, the [Marshall Islands](#) was also the [first country](#) in the world to submit an enhanced NDC in November 2018. Some SIDS are also members of the [Adaptation Action Coalition](#), which aims to accelerate global action on adaptation to achieve a climate resilient world by 2030.

The analysis below provides insights on climate ambition in SIDS that builds upon, and updates the information, from UNDP’s NDC Global Outlook Report 2021: [The State of Global Ambition](#), published in October 2021.





## Antigua and Barbuda

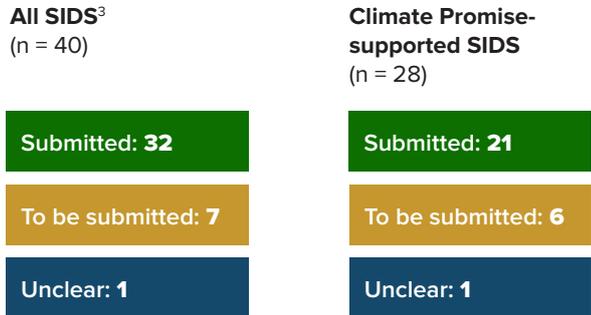
### TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

Like many other Caribbean nations, Antigua and Barbuda's power system is dependent on imported fossil fuels, with renewable energy accounting for only 3.5 percent of power generation (IRENA, 2021). To respond to this reality, the updated NDC has set a goal to reach net zero by 2040. This includes a mitigation target to generate 86 percent of renewable energy from local resources for the electricity sector by 2030 and that by 2030, 100 percent of new vehicle sales will be electric vehicles. Mitigation targets also extend to the Waste and Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sectors. Importantly, the country is committed to ensuring a just transition of the workforce through the creation of decent work and quality green jobs as well as skills and capacity building in relevant industries.

With support from UNDP's Climate Promise (and the NDC Partnership's Climate Action Enhancement Package and other key implementing partners such as Climate Analytics), Antigua and Barbuda undertook a preliminary study that analyzed the employment implications of transitioning to a low-carbon economy, based on the country's proposed NDC targets in the electricity and transport sectors. In support of a just transition, Antigua and Barbuda's NDC lays out specific actions to support a just transition of the workforce across the whole economy. Actions include: training the workforce in mitigation technologies; support for MSMEs to enter renewable energy value chains; development of a gender-responsive approach to just transition in the energy and construction sectors; development of new training and entrepreneurial programmes; and operationalization of the Sustainable Island Resources Framework Fund (SIRF) to act as a funding mechanism focused on vulnerable communities.

# NDC SUBMISSION STATUS

**FIGURE 1**  
NDC submission status of SIDS



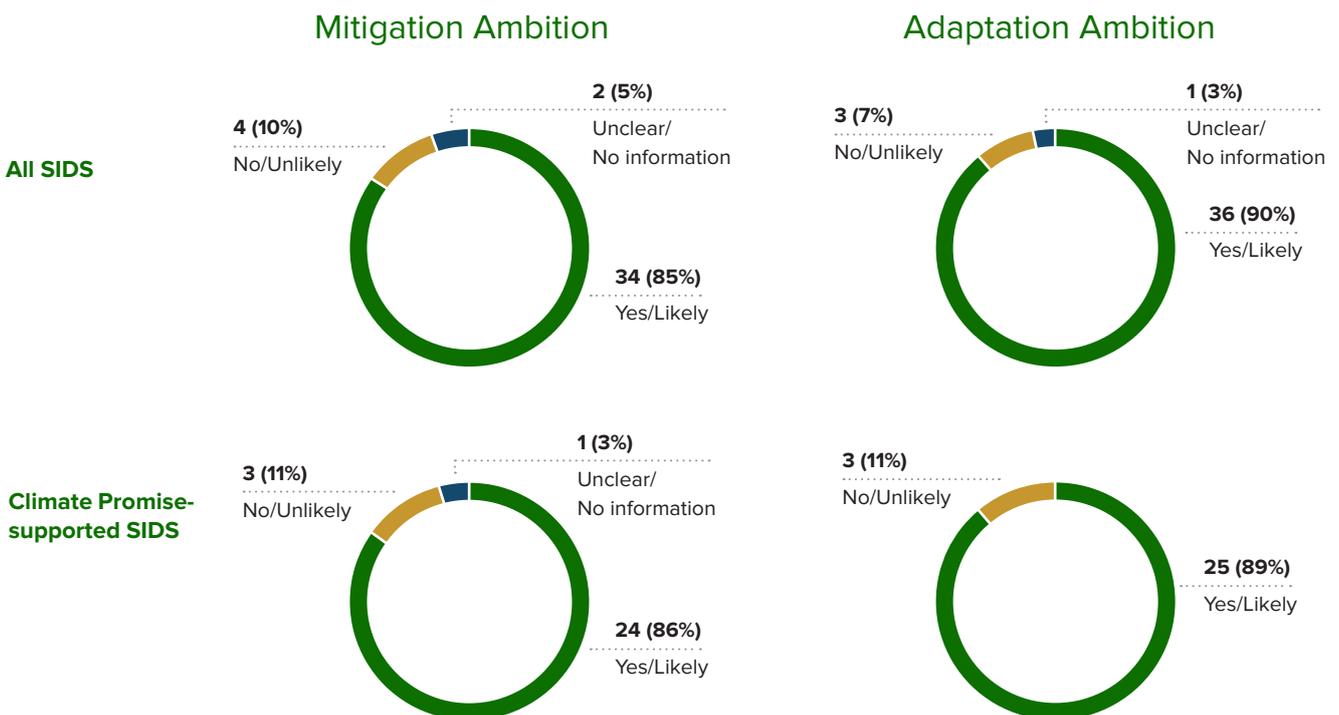
Of the 40 SIDS, 28 (70 percent) received support through UNDP’s Climate Promise to prepare enhanced NDCs. Of these, 21 (75 percent) have submitted enhanced NDCs as of 9 December 2022 (Figure 1). Six countries still plan to submit updated NDCs in the near future, while one country’s submission (Palau) remains unclear.

# THE STATE OF AMBITION IN SIDS

As of 19 December 2022, 86 percent of Climate Promise-supported SIDS have raised, or intend to raise, mitigation ambition, while 89 percent are enhancing the adaptation component of their NDCs (Figure 2). This level of ambition is similar with the

overall intentions of the entire SIDS group (85 percent for mitigation and 90 percent for adaptation). The high adaptation ambition is reflective of the vulnerability of SIDS to more frequent and intense climate change impacts.

**FIGURE 2**  
NDC mitigation and adaptation enhancement intentions in SIDS





© UNDP Seychelles

As seen in Figure 3, the most common means to raise mitigation in the 21 enhanced NDCs submitted by Climate Promise-supported SIDS was by increasing GHG reduction targets (90 percent) and by adding new mitigation sectors or increasing scope within sectors featured in initial NDCs (90 percent). Only 57 percent of enhanced NDCs increased the scope of unconditional mitigation targets and 52 percent covered all GHGs or added new gases for mitigation, implying these could be entry points for further enhancement of ambition in future NDCs.

In terms of adaptation, 95 percent of Climate Promise-supported SIDS strengthened alignment of the NDC with National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and other adaptation planning processes or instruments, while 90 percent included clearer adaptation objectives in line with the Paris Agreement. In addition, 81 percent increased the scope or sectors for adaptation, compared to the previous generation of NDCs. The strengthening of adaption pathways reflects the increasing adaptation ambition seen from SIDS. One noticeable area for further enhancement is inclusion of quantitative or qualitative adaptation targets and provisions for a monitoring and evaluation system, reflected in only 33 percent of enhanced NDCs.

**FIGURE 3**

**Selected mitigation and adaptation pathways of enhanced NDCs submitted by Climate Promise-supported SIDS**

**Mitigation Pathways**

- 19 (90%) Add new mitigation sectors or increase scope within existing sectors
- 19 (90%) Increase GHG emission reduction targets
- 12 (57%) Increase scope of unconditional mitigation targets
- 11 (52%) Cover all GHGs or include new GHGs including SLCPs

**Adaptation Pathways**

- 20 (95%) Align with NAP or other adaptation planning processes or instruments
- 19 (90%) Include clear adaptation objectives in line with the Paris Agreement including in a form of Adaptation Communications
- 17 (81%) Increase adaptation sectoral coverage or scope within existing sectors
- 7 (33%) Include quantitative or qualitative targets and provisions for a monitoring and evaluation system

### STRENGTHENING ADAPTATION PLANNING AND ACTION

Under its revised NDC, Cabo Verde increased the scope and ambition of its mitigation goals to help the country achieve a net-zero economy by 2050. It has committed to reducing GHG emissions by 18 percent by 2030 as compared to the Business-as-Usual scenario. This includes increasing the renewable energy share of the electricity supply from 18.4 percent to 30 percent by 2025 and up to 50 percent by 2030. The enhanced NDC expanded the scope of adaptation sectors to eleven from the original five that were covered in Cabo Verde's first NDC. Adaptation sectors now include: health, water, coastal zone, environment, social development, agriculture, disaster risk management, energy, LULUCF, and cross-cutting issues. Critically, the enhanced NDC also strengthened its focus on climate justice, gender equality, transparency, and good governance.

Building off the NDC and its adaptation priorities, Cabo Verde also submitted its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to the UNFCCC in 2022. The NAP is based on the NDC and the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and provides a medium-term plan to increase adaptive capacity and transformative change. The NAP builds off the identified adaptation sectors and actions in the NDC and is aligned to the National Development Plan 2030. With leadership from the National Planning Authority, it is expected that the NAP will facilitate sectors and municipalities to be able to automatically integrate adaptation into their planning, operations and budget.



## Vanuatu

### HARNESSING CIRCULAR ECONOMY OPPORTUNITIES

Vanuatu submitted an updated NDC in 2020 and then submitted a further revised and enhanced first NDC in August 2022 that increased ambition by adding more activity-based mitigation targets and sectoral and policy targets in key sectors. Vanuatu plans to replace fossil fuels with 100 percent renewable energy in the electricity generation sector by 2030. To drastically increase electricity coverage, Vanuatu set a target in its NDC to roll out an energy access programme that will provide energy access to 80 percent of the rural population. This equates to approximately 90,000 people or about 30 percent of the nation's population. To green the islands' tourism sector, the NDC sets a target for 65 percent of rural tourism bungalows, or guesthouses, to use renewable energy by 2030.

Important for island nations who may have a limited resource base and who may rely on imports, Vanuatu is also exploring how to strengthen resource efficiency by identifying circular economy opportunities. With support from UNDP, the government carried out a metabolic analysis that looks at ways to reduce the waste flow of imported materials while also examining how to improve the resource efficiency of all material use, including domestically sourced materials. Taking advantage of circular economy opportunities will support Vanuatu on its path to decarbonization.

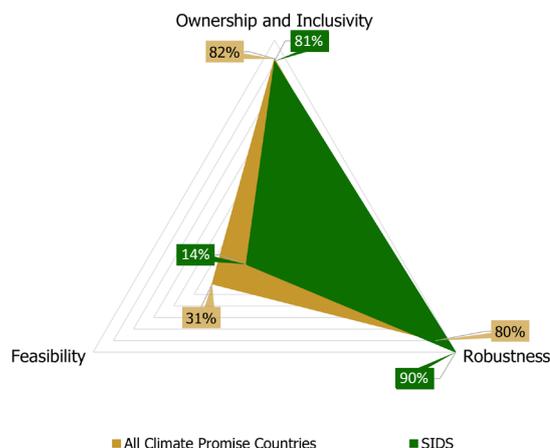
The quality of an NDC is arguably as important as its ambition. Higher-quality NDCs are more likely to lead to successful implementation and signal the government’s intention to be accountable for turning pledges into actions.

Under the Climate Promise, UNDP developed a Quality Assurance Checklist that allows governments and/or other practitioners to systematically review opportunities to improve NDC quality against three dimensions: *i) Robustness, ii) Feasibility, and iii) Ownership and Inclusivity*. Using this checklist, UNDP undertook an in-depth analysis of second-generation NDCs submitted by Climate Promise-supported countries, scoring NDCs based on a percentage of criteria that were met.<sup>4</sup>

As illustrated in Figure 4, ‘robustness’ was the strongest dimension of enhanced NDCs submitted by Climate Promise-supported SIDS (90 percent), scoring higher than the global average of 80 percent. Regarding ownership and inclusivity, Climate Promise-supported SIDS scored similarly to the global average at 81 percent versus 82 percent. However, when looking at NDC feasibility, SIDS come in at only 14 percent, about half of the already low global average of 31 percent. This implies that SIDS still lack the necessary enabling environment to attract sufficient levels of finance to ensure the effective implementation of their commitments.

**FIGURE 4**

**Assessment of submitted Climate Promise-supported NDCs against three dimensions of quality: SIDS vs global average**

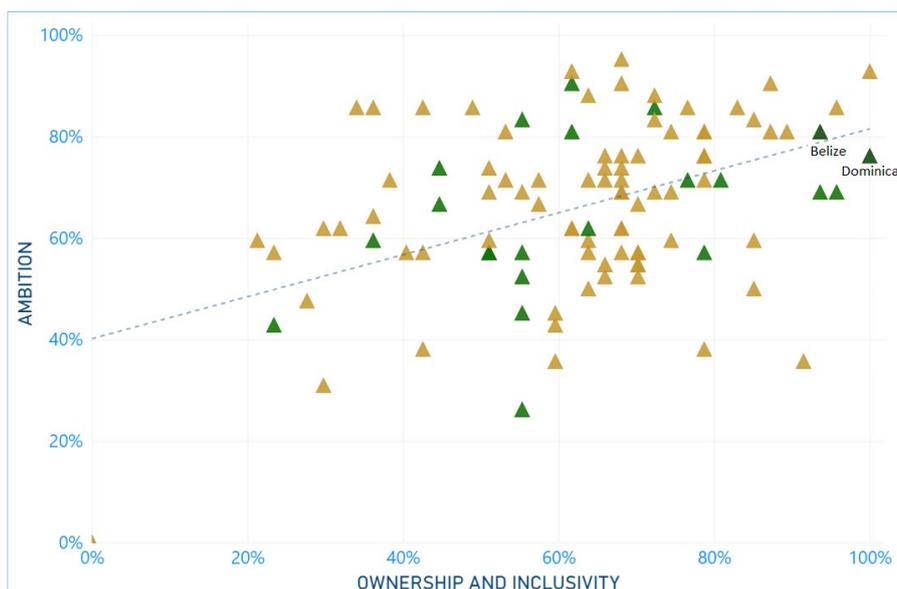


Source: UNDP analysis

In line with global findings, UNDP analysis showed a positive correlation between submitted NDCs that used more inclusive revision processes and those with higher rates of ambition (Figure 5). However, there remains a variance that may be due to differing national circumstances and contexts, but also to other factors that impact ambition (e.g., political will). In Figure 5, Belize’s NDC demonstrates the positive correlation between high ambition (81 percent) and strong ownership and inclusivity (94 percent), while Dominica scores 100 percent for ownership and inclusivity and also shows high ambition (76 percent).

**FIGURE 5**

**Mapping NDC ambition to inclusive approaches: SIDS vs global average**



Source: UNDP analysis. Note: Green triangles represent the NDCs of 21 Climate Promise-supported SIDS for which an NDC Quality Assurance Review was undertaken.



## Papua New Guinea

### **SAFEGUARDING FORESTS AS EMISSION SINKS**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a high forest cover country, with almost 80 percent of its land area taken up by forest, and with 60 percent of this land considered primary forest. This makes PNG steward to one of the world's great forest ecosystems, one that is home to incredible biodiversity and that has immense carbon sequestration possibilities. Committing to protecting this resource and utilizing it to reduce emissions, PNG's second NDC sets a target to reduce annual emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by 10,000 Gg CO<sub>2</sub> eq by 2030 as compared to 2015 levels. This translates into a 25 percent reduction in both the area of annual deforestation and annual degradation against 2015 levels (equating to a reduction in annual deforestation of 8,300ha or annual degradation of 43,300ha) as well as an increase in the area of forest planted. These targets mean that PNG's Land use, Land- Use change, and Forestry (LULUCF) sector will be converted from a net GHG source to a net GHG sink – a valuable goal not just to reduce PNG's emissions but also to safeguard one of the world's most intact tropical forest ecosystems.

### **PRIORITIZING “BLUE” NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS**

Seychelles is committed to achieving a more resilient, decarbonized net-zero emissions economy by 2050. To help achieve this goal, Seychelles, with support from UNDP, has strengthened the adaptation component of its enhanced NDC and focused on the blue economy. In doing so, Seychelles is recognizing the centrality of marine and coastal ecosystems to sustainable development, resilience, and human well-being, especially as the country has high economic dependence on tourism and fisheries.

The enhanced NDC seeks to safeguard these assets by prioritizing “blue” nature-based solutions. The government commits to protecting 50 percent of its seagrass and mangrove ecosystems by 2025 and 100 percent by 2030, and will establish a monitoring program for these ecosystems by 2025 in order to include these GHG sinks in the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. The country has also committed to implementing its Marine Spatial Plan and to sustainably managing the protected marine areas that make up 30 percent of its Exclusive Economic Zone. These actions support the country’s ‘Ridge to Reef’ approach to adaptation, that recognizes the interconnections between terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems and adaptation strategies to protect, manage and restore them.

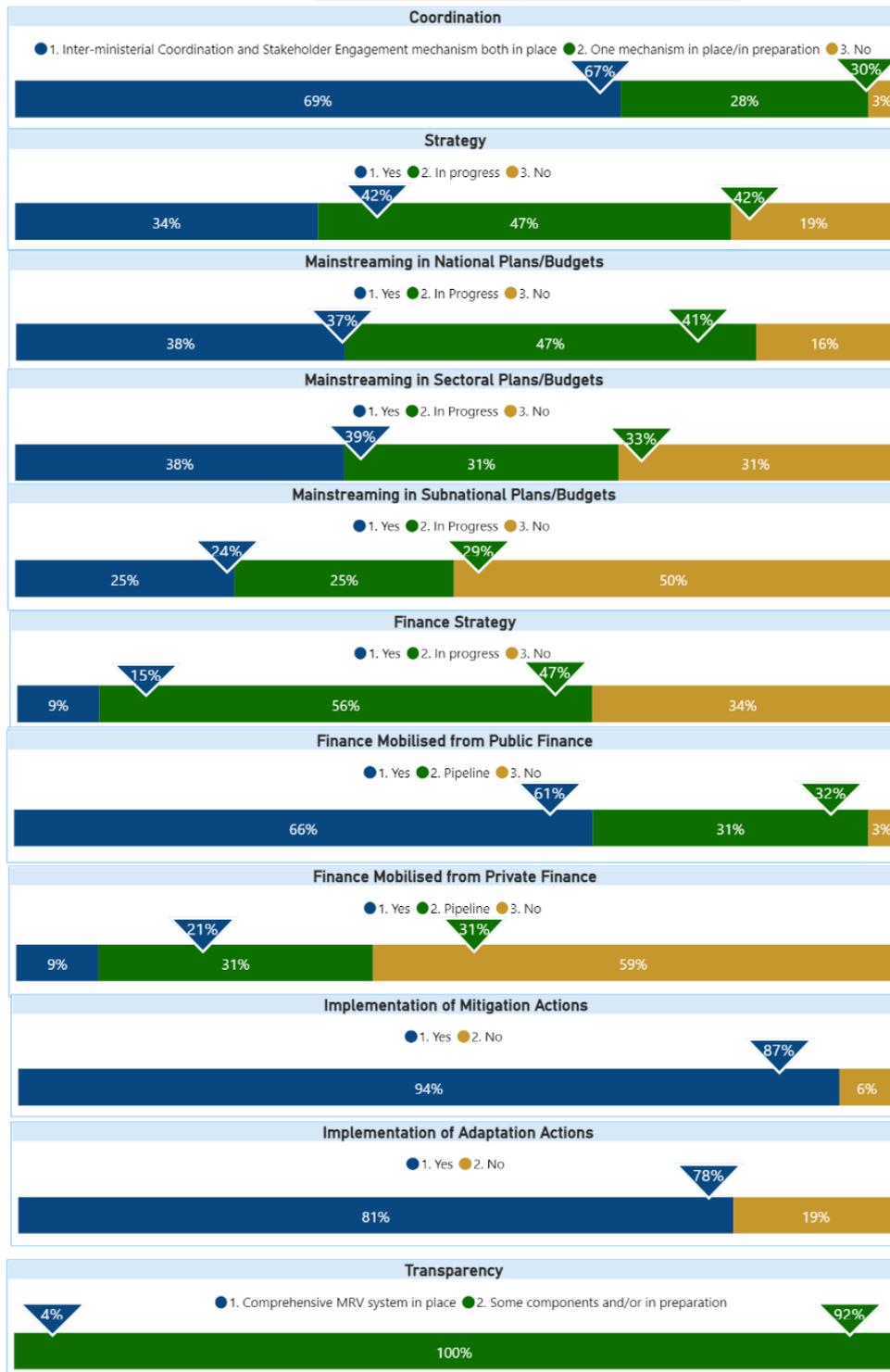
# NDC IMPLEMENTATION READINESS

In 2019, UNDP defined and began monitoring seven “building blocks” for effective NDC implementation that are based on UNDP’s experience and lessons

learned from supporting countries throughout the NDC cycle. Figure 6 compares SIDS’ progress against the global average (triangles)<sup>5</sup>.

**FIGURE 6**

**Progress on key NDC systems and architecture in 2021: LDCs vs global average**



Source: UNDP analysis.

In most cases, the progress in SIDS on putting in place the foundational “building blocks” of NDC implementation is generally on par with the global aggregated results reported by 122 countries.

- Regarding if **key coordination mechanisms** are in place, globally, nearly all countries (97 percent) have put in place at least one coordination mechanism or are in the process of establishing one. For SIDS, 69 percent reported to have in place both inter-ministerial coordination and stakeholder engagement mechanisms (versus 67 percent globally), while 28 percent have one mechanism in place or in preparation.
- In terms of mainstreaming the NDC, SIDS are generally on par with the global average for **mainstreaming** into national, subnational, and sectoral plans and budgets. SIDS have made the most progress at the national level (84 percent), followed by sectoral mainstreaming (69 percent). Only half have conducted subnational mainstreaming efforts.
- On **finance**, SIDS reported high rates of mobilizing public finance (97 percent compared to 93 percent globally) but lag in accessing private finance (40 percent compared to 52 percent globally that have accessed private finance or have it in the pipeline). The fact that three-fifths of SIDS have not tapped private finance implies there is potential to leverage greater support for climate action, but also highlights the challenges of scale that is a barrier to private investment for most SIDS. Preparation of **financial strategies** (completed, or in progress, in two-thirds of SIDS) will be beneficial for understanding the investment opportunities of highest potential.
- In terms of **implementation of actions**, SIDS are ahead of global averages for both mitigation actions (94 percent versus 87 percent globally) and adaptation actions (81 percent versus 78 percent globally).
- On **transparency**, 100 percent of SIDS indicated that they are in the process of putting in place measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems, although none have a fully operational, comprehensive MRV system at this time.

## Future support needs identified by SIDS under the Climate Promise:

There have been three main areas of requested technical support to enable SIDS to effectively turn NDC commitments into action. These include:

- Capacity building and technical support to implement NDC actions;
- Financial and investment planning and/or securing resources; and
- Strengthening NDC coordination and engagement.

Among Climate Promise-supported SIDS, 29 percent of countries indicated that they still need technical or capacity support to implement their planned NDC actions. In **Comoros**, this takes shape in building the capacity of sectoral ministries to implement climate policies relevant to key sectors, while **Vanuatu** has honed in on the need to build capacity for Article 6 implementation.

Not surprisingly, planning for and securing climate finance was another area of support requested by 29 percent of countries. **Grenada** wants to develop financing mechanisms and investment opportunities for a National Cooling Action Plan and renewable energy needs, while the **Dominican Republic** wants to increase the involvement of the private sector on climate action by identifying suitable entry points to tap into this financing source.

The third common area of requested support concerns strengthening NDC coordination and engagement mechanisms, with 21 percent of countries indicating they needed this assistance. **Belize** wishes to develop a Strategic Plan for the National Climate Change Office, the institution that is to guide implementation of the NDC and low emission development strategy, while **Sao Tome and Principe** needs support to establish a national climate change institutional body as, currently, a dedicated unit or directorate does not exist.

A woman wearing a blue cap and a grey t-shirt is kneeling in a field of green plants, possibly a vegetable garden or farm. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is filled with lush green foliage under a clear sky.

## Dominica

### **BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

Dominica has put resilience at the center of its updated NDC declaring that it will be the world's first "Climate-Resilient Nation". The country knows all too well the cost of climate change after Hurricane Maria inflicted damage in 2017 amounting to 226 percent of Dominica's GDP. To ensure resilience was a priority in its NDC, it was included alongside mitigation and adaptation as one of the three pillars that make up the country's integrated climate response.

Dominica's climate resilience vision is a developmental paradigm that seeks to "climate proof" (i.e., to be resilient against the destructive impacts of extreme weather events) the key pillars of national policy, which are: economic diversification, sustainable and inclusive growth, employment creation and revenue generation, social development, social protection and poverty reduction, environmental management and cultural preservation. In the NDC, resilient actions are focused on rebuilding stronger through a decentralized approach across four levels: household, community, district and national. Eight priority actions have been identified that include reducing energy costs, increasing community off-grid/mini-grid/ micro-grid renewable energy electrical supply systems, establishing early warning systems, facilitating capacity building and by establishing the Global Centre for Agricultural Resilience. To lead and coordinate strategic resilience initiatives across sectors, Dominica has established the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica (CREAD), which will lead the country towards its goal of becoming the world's first climate-resilient nation.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Based on 2019 [Climate Watch \(CAIT\) data](#), including Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry sector.
- 2 The 40 SIDS that are signatories to the Paris Agreement include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Mauritius, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Singapore, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- 3 The use of 'All SIDS' here refers to the 40 SIDS that are signatories to the Paris Agreement.
- 4 Global results were first published in UNDP's [2021 NDC Outlook Report: The State of Climate Ambition](#) with data from 67 countries. This information has been updated to include data from 105 submitted NDCs (as of 19 December 2022) from Climate Promise-supported countries. The SIDS specific data reflects information from the 21 SIDS that are supported under the Climate Promise that have submitted NDCs. For more detailed information on the methodology used for the NDC Quality review, please refer to the 2021 report.
- 5 A UNDP survey on NDC implementation readiness obtained 133 developing country responses in 2019 and 122 developing country responses in 2021. The 2021 data included responses from 32 SIDS.



## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

1 UN Plaza  
New York, NY 10017, USA

[climatepromise.undp.org](https://climatepromise.undp.org)  
[@UNDPClimate](https://twitter.com/UNDPClimate)

[undp.org](https://undp.org)  
[@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP)