



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK



From Scarcity to Security: Sustainable Water Management for Small Island States

Malta, Antigua and Barbuda, Fiji and UN-OHRLS

Thursday 16 July 2026 1:15pm-2:30pm | Conference Room 8

Background

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Small Island States face unique challenges related to the availability of water resources, including groundwater salinisation in low-lying coastal areas, limited natural freshwater sources such as lakes and rivers, and distribution to remote islands and communities. Additional pressures on water availability include increasing hydro-climatic risks such as droughts, sea-level rise, and the high-water usage of the tourism sector. These challenges require sustainable and innovative water management strategies designed for the realities of SIDS and Small Island States, however, the degree of integrated water resources management (SDG Target 6.5.1) for this group is 48, below the global average of 57.

As we approach the end of the 2030 Agenda, this side event organized on the margins of the 2026 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by the Permanent Mission of Malta, the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda, and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, provides an opportunity for diplomats and technical experts to share lessons and best practices towards achieving SDG 6.

Sustainable Water Management Strategies

The side event will discuss the technical, financial, regulatory, and social considerations of sustainable water management, also known as integrated water resources management. Technical solutions, including rainwater harvesting, wastewater recycling, desalination, and leakage detection and control, can increase the availability of water but must be tailored to country contexts. Financial considerations include addressing the cost of water infrastructure and maintenance through increased national budget allocation, external funding from development partners, and access to climate adaptation finance. The discussion will also include regulatory and social considerations, including water planning across government ministries, policies to incentivize conservation, especially in high-water usage sectors such as tourism and agriculture, community education, and special access accommodations for women and girls, older persons, and persons with disabilities. The role of traditional and local knowledge will also be discussed.

ABAS and the Role of Partnerships

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) calls for support from the international community to SIDS on integrated water resources management. The session will conclude with a discussion on existing bilateral, regional, and international partnerships, and where further progress is required towards the implementation of ABAS in the context of sustainable water management.



Proposed Agenda

1:15-1:20pm	Welcome and Opening Ms. Tishka Francis, Head of Small Island Developing States Unit, UN OHRLS
1:20-1:32pm	Scene Setting - H.E. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations - Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UNEP - Mr. Karl Cilia, Chief Executive Officer, Water Services Corporation of Malta Guiding Question <i>3 minutes each</i> - What are the challenges and structural barriers faced by Small Island Developing States in sustainable water management?
1:30pm-2:00pm	Sustainable Water Management Strategies - H.E. Matthew Samuda, Minister of Water, Environment and Climate Change of Jamaica and President of the United Nations Environment Assembly - Ms. Sherilita Dore-Tyson, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Sustainable Development of Saint Kitts and Nevis - Ing. David Sacco, Chief Officer Production and Treatment, Water Services Corporation of Malta <i>Technical expert from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda</i> Guiding Questions <i>7-8 minutes each</i> - Discuss the technical, financial, regulatory, and social considerations of sustainable water management specific to your national context.
2:00pm-2:12pm	Respondents - Ms. Rhoda Rokotuibau, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations - Ms. Jocelyne Croes, Director of Foreign Relations, Government of Aruba - Mr. Ho Jian Kai, Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations Guiding Questions <i>2-3 minutes each</i> - Discuss additional national experiences in sustainable water management.



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	• What is the existing landscape for bilateral, regional, and international partnerships for SIDS in sustainable water management? • What are existing gaps for the implementation of ABAS in the context of sustainable water management?
2:12pm-2:30pm	Responses from Experts, Q&A from Floor Closing • H.E. Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations