

STATEMENT

**HONOURABLE DR. RALPH GONSALVES
PRIME MINISTER OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)
CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP26), GLASGOW, SCOTLAND**

**SIDS DOCK SIDE EVENT: *CALL TO ACTION!*
GLOBAL OCEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE (GOEA): OCEAN ENERGY FOR
RESILIENT ECONOMIES**

**11 NOVEMBER 2021
WOOD HOUSE, GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
&
CONDUCTED REMOTELY BY MEANS OF CONFERENCE**

“THE ‘BLUE GUARDIANS’ PASSING THE BATON - OCEAN ENERGY IS THE WINNER FOR SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS) IN THE RACE TO RESILIENCE”

Mr. Chairman,

My fellow Heads of State and Government, Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

GLOBAL OCEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE (GOEA)

It is a distinct honour for me, on behalf of the Government and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, to be invited to join my fellow “Blue Guardians,” the Prime Ministers from the Kingdom of Tonga, Belize, and Sao Tome and Principe and the President of the Republic of Seychelles, to add and amplify St. Vincent and the Grenadines’ voice to the *Call To Action!* for ocean energy for resilient economies and the establishment of the Global Ocean Energy Alliance (GOEA).

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) govern over and serve as the “Blue Guardians” of our Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), vast ocean territories extending up to two hundred (200) nautical miles from our coastlines. These ocean areas are vital ‘blue carbon’ sinks that also help mitigate global climate change. The UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) provides the legal framework for SIDS to exercise their

full sovereign rights over the natural resources, coastal and marine ecosystems throughout their EEZs, and extended continental shelves. Together, SIDS have rights to govern ocean areas more than fifteen (15) times the size of the European Union (EU) land mass and represents our largest natural resource endowment, and to disavow this huge source of renewable energy, would be to our major detriment.

BLUE GUARDIANS

In September 2015, during my opening remarks as Acting Chair, at the ceremony establishing the SIDS DOCK and the Treaty coming into force, held on the margins of the seventieth (70th) session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), at UN Headquarters, in New York, I announced the Blue Guardians Programme as the first major programme for SIDS DOCK.

The Blue Guardians Programme is seen as critical for climate adaptation and resilience for SIDS, and with each successive Assembly, the Blue Guardians Baton has been passed, and I am pleased to recognize my fellow leaders, who keep passing the baton, in this Race to Resilience:

1. Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, elected President of the first session of the Assembly, in December 2015.

2. Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, elected President of the second session of the Assembly, in September 2016.
3. Honourable Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, elected President of the third session of the Assembly, in September 2017.
4. Dr. the Right Honourable Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, elected President of the fourth session of the Assembly in 2017. Prime Minister Mitchell, along with the Bureau, served an unprecedented two terms, due firstly, to the unexpected passing of the President-elect of the fifth session the Honourable Akilisi Pohiva, former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, in September 2019, and, secondly, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, in September 2020.

In September 2021, with the election of my brother, the Rev. Dr. Pohiva Tu‘I‘Onetoa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, as President of the sixth session of the Assembly of SIDS DOCK, the Blue Guardians Baton has been passed, and today, we ask you to answer Prime Minister Tu‘I‘Onetoa’s *Call To Action!* for the Global Ocean Energy Alliance, on behalf of all the people across the world where the oceans and seas matter, to over four billion people.

It is important to the people across the SIDS, to know that those whom they have entrusted to lead them, are working together, cooperating and supporting each other in this war that is upon us, called climate change and sea level rise. SIDS share many similarities that includes prioritising developing Ocean Energy and establishing the Global Ocean Energy Alliance, as a major resilient-building mechanism. I wish to thank our Chair of the SIDS DOCK Executive Council, His Excellency Ambassador Ronnie Jumeau from Seychelles, for being the ever-watchful steward, our SIDS Climate Change and Oceans Ambassador, guiding the baton changes over these years, keeping it steady for a smooth handover among the Blue Guardians. We could never ask for a more dedicated servant of the Oceans.

While the Blue Guardians Programme is a forty (40) million dollar pilot programme that is expected to be supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Ocean Energy Alliance is what it says it is – global. We know that the development and deployment of ocean energy technologies that are SIDS-Appropriate is going to be a major challenge, requiring hundreds of millions of dollars in financing from non-state actors, who under the UN-backed “Race to Resilience” campaign will focus on helping frontline communities to build resilience and adapt to impacts of climate change, such as extreme heat, drought, flooding and sea-level rise.

HIGH AMBITIONS FOR GOEA

As governments, we have a responsibility to ensure that we do all we can to provide the right environment, or the enabling environment, for investing in the Ocean Industry. The international community, private, sector, civil society organisations, and the media, too, have significant power and influence to direct the dialogue toward action for ocean energy for resilient economies and for the recognition of Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) as the best-suited technology that can harness the energy from the vast oceans and seas, to provide small islands, coastal cities and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with a survival option.

Our ambitions for the Global Ocean Energy Alliance are high. The Blue Guardians Programme has taught us that while patience in developing our programmes with supportive and committed partners is central to implementation, financing is what gets the race started. In the case of the Blue Guardians Programme, all the private sector partners who came on as supporters, are still committed, six (6) years after its launch. I understand that a Proposal is to be submitted to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), sometime next year; this programme is being executed by the SIDS DOCK Secretariat, our SIDS DOCK Partner, Grid-Arendal from Norway, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Over the last six (6) years, as projected, things have gotten worse for SIDS, and that is why we have placed an urgency on ocean energy. Time

is running out much faster than anyone can predict and the deaths and destruction are rising, more rapidly than we can process.

In 2016, during my term as Vice-President of the third Assembly of SIDS DOCK, and Member of the Bureau, the Heads of State and Government of State Parties to the SIDS DOCK issued a mandate to the SIDS DOCK Secretariat to achieve in the shortest timeframe, the commercial-scale deployment of ocean-based energy technologies that are appropriate to the demands in SIDS, for the development of a low carbon economy with emphasis on generating sustainable gender-equity employment to replace those that will be lost due to the negative impacts of climate change.

In response, the Secretariat of SIDS DOCK accelerated its work on the establishment of partnerships to support the mandate.

ROLE OF ISLAND WOMEN OPEN NETWORK

In September 2016, following up on the mandate from the Heads of State and Government, Her Excellency Ms. Rhonda King, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the UN, in her capacity as the first Chair of the SIDS DOCK Island Women Open Network (IWON), launched the IWON Campaign to *Bring Home Dominique* – the first OTEC Plant. We believe that Global OTEC's **Floating OTEC Platform**, being developed for deployment in

partnership with the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, will *Bring Home Dominique*, in 2024.

The IWON, the energy-gender-nexus empowerment arm of the SIDS DOCK Organization, included their voice as a major advocate for Ocean Energy, recognizing the myriad livelihood opportunities available to women. On 26 October 2016, Ambassador King delivered a powerful presentation: “*Ocean Energy Development Unique to Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*,” to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) High-level Luncheon and Discussion, “Building Global Energy Interconnection and Achieving Worldwide Sustainable Development of Energy,” calling for the immediate development and deployment of Ocean Energy in SIDS. Women stand to benefit, significantly, from an Ocean Energy Industry.

CALL TO ACTION!

Our job as Leaders is not done. It is one thing to issue a mandate, but it is also equally important to be a part of the fulfilment of the mandate. That’s why we are gathered here, today, to lead in this *Call To Action!*, and to encourage you to support us in our next step, the launch of the Global Ocean Energy Alliance, at the United Nations (UN) Ocean Conference,

scheduled for 27th June to 1st July 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal, a county that has some ancestral, familial connections to me.

We can, and we will provide clean energy for our people, using ocean energy. We can, and we have attracted partners and investors, but we need more support. Ocean energy has long been the ignored renewable, despite its vastness and its multiple sources of energy options. Let us answer this *Call To Action!* Including particularly the private sector. We must answer this Call because ocean energy is a major winner, perhaps the winner, for SIDS and coastal cities, in the Race to Resilience.

Thank you!