

## **STATEMENT BY DR. KALIM SHAH ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITIES CONSORTIUM OF SMALL ISLAND STATES**

**2020 Annual Global Multi-Stakeholder SIDS Partnerships Dialogue. Friday 10 July, 2020.**

Good day everyone. I am Kalim Shah, Professor and Director of the Island Policy Lab, Joseph Biden School of Public Policy at the University of Delaware. Today I represent the newly revitalized Universities Consortium of Small Island States. I am also a proud national of Trinidad & Tobago.

Universities and higher education institutions generate and disseminate knowledge that informs how we advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The revitalized Consortium works to enhance SIDS higher education and research capacity; and to accelerate growth of the knowledge and skills needed to implement the SAMOA Pathway.

COVID19 now casts a shadow on our future. Island Universities are now re-focusing strategies to contend with its repercussions, alongside and intertwined with the growing complexities of climate change and globalization. But in spite of this, Universities are well positioned to leverage island creativity, innovation and technology to rebuild clean, green, blue and equitable island economies. To do this, we offer the following five ways forward:

1. Re-commit to the recommendations of the SAMOA Pathway that call for strengthening involvement of academia in island development. Part of this is improving access for inclusion of universities, academics, students and researchers to inform decision-making processes at all levels of governance.
2. Increase funding and grants to support higher education institutions for research excellence and student success; work with universities to implement training and conduct studies that support economic development; and include universities in national grant proposals to facilities like the Green Climate Fund.
3. Promote authentic, equal public, private and international partnerships and university to university relationships, specifically designed to build island universities' capacity, human and intellectual capital. In so doing we reduce our small island states' dependence on advanced nations.
4. Deliver higher education programs that create the next generation of island professionals and thought leaders; and avoid 'brain-drain' by creating sustainable career pathways for young graduates, in their island homes, in entrepreneurship and the science and technology, digital economy fields of the future.
5. Support the coordinating role of the new Universities Consortium, as a Platform to leverage the combined know-how of island universities; and to connect the global diaspora of island experts including that reside in institutions in advanced nations. We must engage them all to speed up and scale up island recovery.

Lastly, we live in a time when data and scientific logic and the value of higher education to society is questioned. The strongest response we can give, lies in how effectively we work together to generate value-added, evidence-based solutions to this pandemic, economic recovery, social change, and island sustainability. Thank you.

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