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Small Islands Developing States:
The need for International Climate Change Action

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on Small Islands Developing States, SIDS, and their need for international climate change action. The aim is to explore what arguments have been used to advocate for international action to support SIDS in their climate change challenges between 2007-2017. The Alliance of Small Islands States, AOSIS, have represented SIDS issues in international events since 1990. As SIDS are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events, they have been considered a special case for sustainable development by the United Nations. The data was collected from UN archives and included AOSIS documents provided to the UN at various events during the ten-year period. This qualitative research uses argumentation analysis and an independently developed theoretical framework inspired by the premises of Theories of Climate Justice. The findings reveal a moral foundation for all the AOSIS arguments, taking shape through ethical perspectives on climate change, operational suggestions for climate change action and reminders to fulfil diplomatic agreements on climate change. Three main themes emerged from the data: urging the international community to take responsibility for the damage they have caused SIDS through anthropogenic climate change; the need for collective climate change action to solve shared global concerns; and the SIDS need for the international community to follow through with international commitments made. In conclusion, SIDS remain in a state of existential crisis because of the unwillingness of the international community to follow through with commitments made. Still dependent on support and resources puts them in a powerless state to strive for their sustainable development, which effectively limits their chances of future survival.

Key words: SIDS, AOSIS, Human Rights, SDGs, Climate Change, international community, Climate Justice

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List of Abbreviations

AOSIS - Alliance of Small Islands Developing States

BPoA - Barbados Program of Action

CSD - Commission of Sustainable Development

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

MSI - Mauritius Strategy of Implementation

OWG - Open Work Group

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS - Small Islands Developing States

TCJ -Theories of Climate Justice

UN - United Nations

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UN-OHRLLS – United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

1. Introduction

There is a general agreement amongst scholars that the climate change challenges we face today are predominately anthropogenic. The greenhouse gas emissions, GHG, is one of the main contributors to climate change, which results in global warming that effectively melts the polar ice and generates sea-level rise (IPCC, 2007a: 2, 6). This effect endangers the economy, social life and environment globally (Richardson, 2009: 4), representing all three dimensions of sustainable development (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2015: 6).

Article 3 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights claims everyone's "right to life, liberty and security of person" (UN General Assembly, 1948). Human rights are non-sustainable in the face of climate change (Caney, 2008: 537). As the world is facing the effects of climate change, the most vulnerable states, such as Small Islands Developing States or SIDS, must be considered, recognized and supported in order to survive the implications of unpredictable weather conditions. In 2007, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC stated that Greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 70% percent due to human activity between 1970 and 2004, causing global warming of the earth by the rise of global temperature (IPCC, 2007a: 5). Ten years later, in 2017, the United Nations Development Program, UNDP, claimed that "no other group of nations is more vulnerable to its devastating effects than the Small Island Developing States" referring to climate change. The impacts that these countries have faced so far, while contributing to less than 1 % of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, have been harmful to the livelihoods of SIDS populations, their economies and food security. The United Nations Development Program addressed SIDS vulnerability in 2017 by demonstrative numbers. Almost 30% of SIDS populations live in areas where the sea-level and land have increased in proximity. SIDS also have uninhabitable land. These circumstances present that sea-level rise and the increase in frequency and intensity of hurricanes, cyclones and other weather events threatening the sustainable development of SIDS as sea-level rise, storm surges and coastal destruction are continued climate change events that weaken the longevity of SIDS (UNDP, 2017). The Alliance of Small Island States, AOSIS, voiced their concerns of SIDS at the UN and during international climate change negotiations (AOSIS, 2021). One of their greatest achievements has been to push to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5 C degrees at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was later included in the Paris Agreement (Ourbak & Magnan, 2018).

1.2. Problem formulation

The future of Small Islands Developing States, SIDS, and their living conditions are under existential threat due to climate change, risking their populations' fundamental human rights of life, freedom and personal security, which all other human rights depend upon. As SIDS are most vulnerable to climate change, their survival is, to a large degree, dependent on how successful AOSIS are in international climate negotiations to bring about change for SIDS sustainable development. How successful AOSIS are in pushing for the interests of SIDS to advocate for international action, will impact the level of international support SIDS get in facing their climate change challenges.

1.3 Aim & Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore what arguments AOSIS used between 2007-2017 to advocate international action for SIDS in facing their climate change challenges. Furthermore, the aim is to get an understanding of the fundamental needs of SIDS and the international communities' response to meet them.

1. What arguments does AOSIS use to advocate for international action to support SIDS in facing climate change?

1.4 Background

The Alliance of Small Island States, AOSIS, was created in Geneva, at the Second World Climate Conference, 1990. It is an intergovernmental organization with a coalition of 44 SIDS and 5 observer states with low-lying coasts (UN-OHRLLS, 2021). The platform is used to lift the marginalized voices of its members and advocate for SIDS interests. AOSIS plays a role in negotiating global commitments like reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The alliance reaches their goals through their partnerships, successful ones have been established with the European Commission and the United Nations Development Program. The purpose of these partnerships is to impact negotiations involving climate change. Through this platform, the collective voice of SIDS has been raised and heard in international climate talks. AOSIS core focus areas are Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Ocean Conservation (AOSIS, 2021). To ensure sustainable development, is to maintain the SIDS, as they have been recognized as a special case of sustainable development (UN, 2021a) in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, when pointing out SIDS "unique and particular vulnerabilities" (UN General Assembly, 2010: 1). AOSIS have created the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action, SAMOA pathway as a platform to address specific challenges concerning SIDS and is acknowledged as an essential part of the sustainability goals

of agenda 2030 (Un General Assembly, 2014: 3). Through AOSIS, SIDS have been actively and consistently involved in international negotiations such as the Kyoto protocol and the Climate Change Convention, ensuring that their position is accurately represented. AOSIS made contributions to the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, in the Barbados Conference on the development of the UN Program of Action, BPoA, in 1994 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Together, AOSIS members represent 28% of all developing states (Slade, 2007: 217). Their negotiation standpoint and official submission is centered around preventative action as an essential principle alongside the principle of the ‘polluter pays’, duty to cooperate, state responsibility and the common but differentiated responsibility principle (ibid: 217; Ronneberg, 2016: 764, 766).

The specific vulnerabilities of SIDS result in circumstances that impede SIDS in maintaining their own survival and makes them highly dependent on outside support and a global response to their existential needs (Von Tigerstrom, 2005: 403, 412). AOSIS leaders and representatives have expressed their concerns to the UN regarding the industrialized states’ inability to take responsibility for their significant contribution of global emissions to the environment. Their lack of action to ensure the sustainable survival and maintenance of SIDS is irresponsible in the eyes of these small islands that are so vulnerable to climate change (Corneloup & Mol, 2014: 292-293). For SIDS, there is a clear connection between the negative impacts of global warming which threatens the survival of their cultures and people, and their chances of sustainable living conditions. The frustration of SIDS lies in the international negotiations lack of appropriate direction and speed that is required to assist with the SIDS related climate change issues on sustainable development (Ashe, Van Lierop & Cherian, 1999: 218). The interdependence between human rights and environmental law is evident in the impacts of environmental degradation on the present and future enjoyment of human rights (Slade, 2007:217).

1.5 Demarcations

This thesis focuses exclusively on exploring the content of the arguments found in the AOSIS statements between the years 2007-2017. The empirical data will be retrieved from these statements. The purpose is to explore trends and patterns in the data that can answer the research question through the perspective of AOSIS to gain knowledge and insight on their position in the international community. Therefore, the findings of this thesis will not be generalized as the

common interest and concerns of AOSIS are limited to their specific geography, socio-economic and environmental circumstances and resource capacity to face their climate change challenges. Limiting the research to AOSIS arguments exclusively keeps a SIDS-focus throughout the thesis which is needed due to their urgent climate change issues and vulnerability. To include other actors could potentially risk a divided and reduced focus on SIDS where several parties would need to be introduced and put in context equally. The possibility for a comprehensive representation needed for all parties included would be narrowed down, due to the thesis's word limitations.

This thesis will answer the research question through the findings and analysis from the collected data in the AOSIS statements as it explores the perspective of AOSIS exclusively. This is motivated by the fact that SIDS are the group most vulnerable to climate change and shedding light on their unique perspective in these matters is a valuable subject of research. The research design, theoretical framework and analytical method are chosen specifically to understand the content of the arguments and for the relevance of the aim and research questions. The literature and sources used in this thesis will contribute with knowledge and understanding of the context of climate change challenges and human rights challenges that SIDS face and the work of AOSIS in the international arena. It will also resonate with the fundamental human rights of the populations of SIDS in accordance with article 3 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "the right to life, liberty and security of person".

1.6 Thesis argument & relevance in the Human Rights field

The standpoint of AOSIS is important for the prospect of sustainable development, as their previous contributions to international accords can affirm. The support that is needed for SIDS to face their climate change challenges will be explored, presented, analyzed and reflected upon in regard to how it can contribute to future research. Choosing this area of research is motivated by the patterns of interconnectedness in human rights, climate change and sustainable development, in the context of SIDS. As climate change poses an existential threat for SIDS and their population's right to life, security and freedom is being compromised. Being acknowledged as a special case for sustainable development emphasizes and distinguishes SIDS as a priority for the international community to consider. In addition, the anthropogenic climate change as a phenomenon is an interesting and complex issue, relevant for the human rights field as people exercising the right to freedom in a developed country, taking uncontrolled

consumerism for example, has too often been at the expense of maintaining the security rights of people in developing countries, leading us to a conflict of interest between the three pillars of sustainable development: economic freedom vs. social and environmental sustenance. This aspect further contributes to the need for more interdisciplinary research of Human Rights and Climate Change, reflecting the strive for sustainability as the biggest challenge of our time, to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13: climate change action, for Agenda 2030. This thesis argues that the future survival of SIDS, their populations and the human rights of their populations can only be ensured through 1. the international community following through with commitments made on SIDS sustainable development and 2. the continued development of action-based approaches proportional to the disastrous effects of climate change on SIDS are implemented with speed and urgency. This thesis also argues that in failing to do so, the international community is committing human rights violations, as the life, freedom and security of SIDS populations are at stake considering their climate change challenges.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The chapter on previous research will present the topics related to the problem and provide context for the chosen area of research. The theory chapter will demonstrate the chosen theoretical framework and motivate its relevance for this thesis. Thereafter, the research design will be discussed and argued for, alongside the methodological tools explained in the methodology chapter. The findings and analysis chapter will present and analyse the AOSIS arguments found in the data. The results from the findings and analysis will answer the research question of this thesis. Furthermore, the conclusive discussion will discuss and reflect on the findings of this thesis and their implications for future research.

2. Previous Research

This chapter will present previous research on Human Rights, Climate Change and SIDS. The topics will be discussed in relation to each other and critically reflected upon.

2.1 Human Rights

Human rights are first and foremost moral, then political and lastly legal (Bell, 2013: 159-162). In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, 1948, article 2 states that “no distinction shall be made based on the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty” and Article 15.1 claims every person’s “right to a nationality” (UN General Assembly, 1948: Articles 2 and 15). The sovereignty of Small Island

States and their people are not only limited, but under existential threat as well as their nationality as islanders. These island states are dependent on the legislative nature of the International Law regime who have been unable to meet the challenges of statelessness presented by climate change for these vulnerable states. Although various sustainable development events have recognized the need to address SIDS' climate change challenges (Pineda, 2018: 3-16), this unmet need of SIDS creates a distinction between citizens of vulnerable island states and citizens of other countries who are not as affected by climate change. It becomes inevitable that the right to a nationality is dependent on the stability of state territory, which is at risk of vanishing for small island states due to sea-level rise.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, article 22, 25 and 28 all mention social security as a human right in need of consideration. While article 22 looks at national resources and international co-operation to ensure everyone's "economic, social and cultural rights", article 25.1 goes into greater detail, mentioning accessibility to health care necessary social services to secure circumstances where lack of livelihood is beyond one's control. Finally, article 28 requires a social and international order that can realize the content of the declaration for everyone's enjoyment of rights and freedoms (UN General Assembly, 1948: Articles 22, 25 and 28). Elson argues that although the human rights system does assist with resources to socially struggling countries, the obligation for governments to assist these struggling societies is rarely fulfilled (Elson, 2019: 8).

2.1.1. Human rights and climate change

In the field of moral and political philosophy as well as social and environmental science, there is a growing interest for a human rights approach on climate change. Several UN organs as well as moral political philosophers and legal scholars have taken interest in potential relation between climate change and human rights (Bell, 2013: 159-162).

There are three main arguments presented, one of them suggesting enabling a human right to an adequate environment. In contrast, another argument states that emitting GHG is in fact a human right, presenting two versions; the first one claiming the right to per capita emissions and the second version states the right to emit GHG for reasons of livelihood. The third and most popular one focuses on the general agreement that anthropogenic climate change has devastating effects on human life and human rights, especially states who are the most vulnerable to climate change (Bell, 2013: 1; Caney, 2009:69). It is the anthropogenic climate

change that arguably violates the human right to life where the right to health is also put at risk (Caney, 2009 :79). The fourth Assessment of the International Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, states that anthropogenic climate change causes an increased tendency of diseases, floods and droughts, storms and fires, which inevitably affects the standard of human livelihood, health, movement and limits one's cultural identity and property (IPCC, 2007b: 31).

Vulnerable populations will lack the resources to adapt and become dependent on how well they can make their voices heard when advocating for international action (Caney, 2009:1). Small nations and other parties vulnerable to climate change have together provided the UN with a document pinpointing how climate change is in fact a human rights issue (Slade, 2007: 216). While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR, Article 1.2 states that "in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence" (ICCPR, 1966), the effects of anthropogenic climate change pose a direct threat to this sentence, as it threatens the right to life, the right to health and the right to subsistence. The source of these circumstances is widely acknowledged by the scientific community as anthropogenic, meaning other people's actions are causing the decrease of right accessibility for vulnerable populations (Caney, 2009: 9, 75, 81, 82). The function of a human rights approach is to view climate change through the perspective of people suffering from its effects. Making climate change a human rights issue has the benefit of presenting the issue as not only unsustainable but unacceptable. When shedding light on the fact that some people benefit at the expense of other people suffering, that is a harder reality to escape (Bell, 2013: 159-161).

2.2 Climate Change

According to the Mary Robinson Foundation definition, climate change:

"...links human rights and development to achieve a human-centered approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly. Climate justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world's resources." (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2020).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change holds human activity responsible for the GHG increase of 70% between 1970 to 2004, with annual emissions of carbon dioxide growing by 80%. The connection between global warming since the 1950s and anthropogenic GHG

emission is widely accepted above the notion that the reason would be exclusively due to natural changeability (IPCC, 2007a: 2-7).

Article 4.13 in the Paris Agreement promotes parties to take responsibility by limiting and reducing their GHG emissions. Additionally, mandatory promotion of transparent and consistent measures for the environment are to be expected (UNFCCC, 2015: 5).

Being the most imperative document for climate change, the Fifth IPCC Assessment Report estimates a sea-level rise between 25-82 centimeters by 2100 depending on whether a strict process of emission reduction will be followed- through. This poses an existential threat to Small Island States who will be significantly impacted by the sea-level rise as their state territory will be reduced following extreme weather events that severely damage the infrastructure and economic sources like agriculture, fisheries and tourism. Ocean acidification is another effect of human induced climate change, which inevitably damages marine life (Pineda, 2018: 3-16).

2.2.1 Climate refugees vs. Climate justice & responsibility

In 2007, international security got new concerns on how climate change may cause ‘climate refugees’ as it could potentially trigger large-scale refugee movements from poor societies to Europe and the United states. Hartmann argues that the ‘climate refugee’ narrative presents obstacles in international cooperation to be continued in a peaceful way with the needed development initiatives that are equitable and efficient for climate change action (Hartmann, 2010: 233-234).

Although proposals for a treaty to be developed to internationally protect ‘climate refugees’, there has been clear resistance to the concept of climate refugees. McAdam argues that there are difficulties in distinguishing which refugee is displaced due to climate change and which refugee is displaced for other reasons, which create issues in terms of correct legal application to each refugee’s situation. Additionally, a treaty for ‘climate refugees’ would enable people displaced through climate change to become prioritized over displaced people due to other circumstances, like poverty. Furthermore, issues regarding the definition of ‘climate change’ could occur as a clear definition is needed for a legal framework but could potentially exclude some people in need of protection (McAdam, 2012: 187-188).

The Geneva conventions definition of a refugee does not encompass the circumstances of a ‘climate refugee’. It refers only to an individual with reasons to fear persecution in their own

country if they would return, due to attributes like religion, race, nationality, a particular social group membership or a political opinion. Having climate change causing the loss of national protection creates a haze in determining when a national government has a responsibility to their citizens and when the international community has a responsibility towards people without protection. This poses a threat of future statelessness, specifically for Small Island States without proper adaptation or mitigation strategies. International law has not addressed these circumstances of states disappearing under water as there is no framework considering citizens of countries that are uninhabitable (Hsiao, 2017: 270 - 271).

In a written document provided to the UN, states vulnerable to climate change argue that industrialized countries bear the responsibility of reducing their fossil fuels since they are the largest contributors to anthropogenic climate change, creating social and environmental injustice (Slade, 2007: 216). It is perceived as a violation of human rights when the countries producing the largest amount of fossil fuels refuse to take responsibility. By doing so, they pave the way for future victims of climate change to not only include small islanders and natives of remote societies but mainlanders of larger states as well, who are not currently as affected by the human induced climate change (ibid: 216). The focus of international climate change negotiations, as is argued, should shift to consider the ones who suffer the consequences of climate change and to include prevention strategies. Climate Justice is a successful tool as it has empowered the Inuit and the Maldives, who are victims of climate change, to make their voices heard. Subsequently, climate change has come to be considered a human rights issue in need of a human rights approach (Bell, 2013: 159-162). Azar suggests taking responsibility for GHG emissions by incorporating emission fees as a form of tax. These taxes would then increase for the purpose of fulfilling the goal of reducing GHG emissions (Azar, 2009: 88).

2.3 SIDS

Small Island Developing States are the most vulnerable to the repercussions of climate change all while contributing the least. Having difficulties to adapt to extreme weather events poses an existential threat over SIDS, detrimental to their long-term survival (Slade, 2007:215). There are currently 52 territories defined as SIDS and 38 of these are UN members. The IPCC has paid SIDS extra attention recently due to their increased challenges of climate change (Baiamonte & Redaelli, 2017: 6). These states are located across three geographical regions: the Caribbean-Pacific-Atlantic region, the Indian Ocean region and the Mediterranean-South China Sea region. SIDS face difficulties in the social, economic and environmental realm. The

United Nations acknowledged SIDS as a “special case for sustainable development” in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UN-OHRLLS, 2017: 5). Included in the social realm is the cultural heritage and community of SIDS, which is also put at risk due to human induced climate change. Therefore, climate justice becomes relevant to consider as the cultural loss of SIDS is primarily unjust rather than exclusively unfortunate (Zellentin, 2015: 497).

The collective criteria for most SIDS are many although each Island has their own unique circumstances. Wong highlights 8 features that the majority of SIDS share regarding sea level rise and climate change; limited physical territories, weak institutional capacity, poor climate change adaption capacity, high population density in proportion to land resources, high exposure to extreme weather events, limited water supplies, fragile ecosystems and threatened biodiversity (Wong, 2011: 2). Due to their geographical location, SIDS are positioned as frontlines of extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods. As small islands state, SIDS are poorly equipped to combat the crisis of climate change all the while most vulnerable, being surrounded by the ocean. Consequently, the life support systems, territory and economic activity of SIDS are limited. According to recurring SIDS statements, these circumstances arise from issues of equity and survival (Slade, 2007: 215). Although SIDS face these difficulties, Betzold views islanders as particularly resilient, having had generational experience of adapting to the environmental and social alternations of climate change. Despite their awareness and perception, the lack of resources are obstacles between SIDS current state and their sustainable development. To overcome these obstacles, the resources and knowhow must be provided locally (Betzold, 2015: 481, 487).

2.3.1 The International community & SIDS

Alongside advocating to limit the temperature rise of 1.5 C above pre industrial levels in international climate change negotiations (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012: 592), the adoption of Agenda 21 in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 effectively increased SIDS’ position internationally. At the Barbados Program of Action, 1994, SIDS were in the public eye as the implementation of Agenda 21 was taking place. The plan was later reviewed in Mauritius, 2005, at the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation. SIDS had changed their international position within two decades, from being viewed as tropical tourist islands to international actors that challenge the concept of sustainability, bringing international attention to the implication of climate change. AOSIS have emerged as a united body for the SIDS in climate change negotiations in order to elevate SIDS influence. Leading with the concept that ‘no island should be left behind’, AOSIS pressed

for political action and demanded a general adaptation act to include insurance in Poznan, 2008 (Wong, 2011: 2). However, efforts to address “leaving no one behind”, which represents the agenda 2030 promises for the achievement of the SDG’s (UN, 2021d) have been deemed as misguided. The World Bank for example, has been criticized for operating from an institutional level instead of a local level, using terms as “shared prosperity” to promote SGD 10 when the need is to reduce the income gap and increase economic equality (Saiz & Donald, 2017:1029, 1030). Both Wong, Saiz and Donald mention the SIDS initiative on not leaving any Islands behind. While Wong focus on AOSIS pressing to implement the idea, Saiz and Donald address the problematic ways in which this principle has been implemented. The question arises of the overall satisfaction of AOSIS on matters of implementation measures taken to meet their needs by international actors, as such research is lacking.

Scholars have also conducted research on AOSIS by interviewing its members on issues emerging from climate change negotiation processes. The main objective was to explore if the cohesiveness of the alliance has changed or remained the same over the years due to fragmentations occurring in negotiations. Results show how AOSIS maintains a strong union in international climate change negotiations despite fragmentation within the alliance (Betzold, Castro & Weiler, 2012: 592, 607). Although the research does mention the many contributions of AOSIS to climate change negotiations, it does not cover the cases AOSIS have made over the years to promote international action and how well these have been answered.

SIDS need international assistance to develop adequate adaptation projects. Previous SIDS designs of adaptation projects have often failed due to lack of proper technology, accurate data, weak institutions and budgets, funded by regional and international bodies (Kostakos, Zhang & Veening, 2014: 5). One issue emerged as a conflict of interest due to the rules of intellectual property rights that benefit the developed countries but effectively stagnate the technology transfer to SIDS, which they urgently need as means of survival due to their disastrous climate change challenges (UNDP, 2010: 24). Measures taken by the international community do not have lasting effects and are not adequate measures to meet the needs of SIDS. It is argued that the international community should do more in terms of financial support and to provide reliable and innovative solutions for SIDS (Baiamonte & Redaelli, 2017: 6, 16). Brandstedt & Brüle explain one aspect of the international communities inadequate and short-term solutions as the radical position that powerful states sometimes take, displaying unwillingness to answer to ” any moral considerations and base their decisions about what climate actions to commit to (if any) solely on what is in their short-term national self-interest” (Brandstedt & Brüle, 2019:788).

2.4 Research gap

Previous research has covered some ground on SIDS and AOSIS regarding their contributions to climate change negotiations and exploring the strength of their coalition within the alliance. Many articles also cover the discussion of the need for a legal ‘climate refugee’ framework from various angles. However, there has been little research on what position AOSIS, the representative organ of SIDS, take in these matters, how they voice their concerns, seek international support and what their concerns include. This thesis focuses on arguments used in AOSIS statements and explores the issues that the alliance presents to the UN. The objective of this thesis is to explore what arguments the alliance uses to advocate for international action to support SIDS in facing climate change.

3. Theory

This chapter will present the chosen theoretical framework based on previous research. The principles of the theoretical framework will be presented, and their usefulness as theoretical tools explained.

3.1 Reflections on previous research in search for theory

A large part of previous research discusses climate justice and responsibility and ties together human rights and climate change, which focus the attention to the most vulnerable, SIDS. As most climate change disasters affecting SIDS’s territory and people are caused by human-activity, the question of responsibility is tightly connected to accountability, to pave the way for climate justice action (Graham, Barnett, Fincher, Montreux & Hurlimann, 2015). Further, it is argued that the injustice gap between states’ environmental, social and economic terms needs to be understood through their historical roots (Storr, 2016: 528). However, the lack of a definition for climate justice creates stagnation in the process (Meikle, Wilson & Jafry, 2016: 1).

The previous research highlights a couple of elements to consider in the search for relevant theory: the need for climate justice for vulnerable states, industrialized states with largest GHG emissions being responsible for climate change and therefore responsible to provide climate justice, the intrinsic relationship of human rights and climate change, for history of injustice to be considered and the stagnation process caused by lack of a common ‘climate justice’ definition. As the concept of ‘climate justice’ lacks a definition, choosing any climate justice theory would lack proper motivation. Therefore, using Baxi’s seven premises on Theories of

Climate Justice is an appropriate alternative to developing a theoretical framework from, as it includes the features that many Theories of Climate justice have in common. They address responsibility by taking action, developing approaches for sustainable development for vulnerable states such as SIDS, intergenerational justice and constantly developing theory based on new climate negotiations as important features of Climate justice.

3.2 Baxi's Theories of Climate Justice

Several theoretical perspectives offer relevant insights to the subject of this thesis. However, a theory of Climate Justice reflects the voices of SIDS and enables a distribution of responsibility to actors with the power and resources to protect the earth's life systems. A theoretical framework that encompasses both human rights and environmental rights through climate change action is arguably most relevant, based on findings in previous research. Baxi's presentation of Theories of Climate Justice, TCJ, had seven premises suitable to theorize what arguments AOSIS uses to advocate international action to support SIDS climate change challenges. The goal of policies of climate justice is to eliminate GHG emissions. The concept of intergenerational justice was also highlighted as generally agreed upon in the field of climate justice, where scholars argue that "persistence of greenhouse gases is a past, present and future wrong that must now be somehow addressed" (Baxi, 2016: 19-26).

The theoretical framework of this thesis draws on the seven premises of TCJ identified by Baxi and distills the four premises that I deem most relevant for this thesis. To distinguish the theoretical framework from the premises that Baxi mentions, the following section presents Baxi's seven premises of TCJ.

The first premise stresses that the life systems of planet earth are threatened and needs saving from complete extinction. Second, saving the earth systems is every nations and peoples responsibility and concern, regarding the cause and effects of these issues. Third, our moral responsibilities, legal duties and collective and individual human rights need to be reaffirmed, to encompass respect for our common but differentiated responsibilities and concerns. Fourth, TCJ needs to move away from a human-centered perspective to further consider the environment. Fifth, TCJ are required to acknowledge common and rare climate issues of different societies and develop new approaches with special attentiveness to the adversities of Small Island Developing States, one of them being aid issues. This premise argues that utilitarian approaches have not been successful in encouraging the climate change action needed. Therefore, the approaches needed require new ways of developing concern for human

and species well-being and survival. Sixth, the impact of social movements, contributing new approaches adopted by TCJ have been fruitful. The last premise refers to how TCJ relates to and analyzes the changes in climate negotiations and regards emerging mediator and national policy needs, stressing the necessity to connect theory to practice (Baxi, 2016: 20-21).

3.3 Theoretical framework

This thesis uses the first and second TCJ premise of Baxi, that the earth’s life systems need saving from complete extinction and that all human beings are equally responsible to do so with the means they acquire. These premises together provide an overarching basis for the other premises and are suitable to set the foundation for the theoretical framework. The third, fifth and seventh premise will, through independent interpretation, create the three principles of Climate Justice that sums up the theoretical framework of this thesis. These principles all have a moral basis, with principle two and three urging for the need of operational measures to be taken. The function of the principles is to explore the elements of Climate Justice in the AOSIS arguments. This, in order to analyze the standpoint of AOSIS on certain climate change issues as well as reflect upon the aim of their arguments, in light of their audience, which is the UN, including the international community. The following section presents the three premises of Baxi, developed into three Climate Justice principles included in the theoretical framework.

Premises	Interpretation	Principles
Third: Our moral responsibilities, legal duties and collective and individual human rights needs to be reaffirmed, to encompass respect for our common but differentiated responsibilities and concerns	Our moral and legal duty is protecting human and environmental rights by implementing international commitments – reducing GHG emissions and achieving SDGs. We need to distinguish responsibilities of developed and developing states, based on climate change contributions, their resources and expertise.	One: The actors contributing most to GHG emissions, which negatively impact the past, present and future enjoyment of human rights, are the ones responsible and expected to contribute with solutions for Climate Change.
Fifth: TCJ needs to acknowledge common and rare climate issues of different	Acknowledging different society’s climate change issues distinguishes which societies	Two: New approaches are to be developed to protect human rights and environmental rights

societies and develop new approaches with special attentiveness to the adversities of Small Island Developing States, one of them being aid issues.	are most vulnerable and needs to be prioritized, like SIDS. Special approaches and aid should therefore be developed and provided to SIDS to better face climate change issues.	of the planet. Particularly, new approaches for SIDS are to be prioritized, promoting action-based support to provide SIDS with aid.
Seventh: TCJ relates to and analyze the changes in climate negotiations and regards emerging mediator and national policy needs, stressing the necessity to connect theory to practice.	TCJ is constantly updated in relation to new climate negotiations, mediator and national policy needs. To analyze climate negotiation changes, the theories need to be applied to relevant events.	Three: Climate Justice is action oriented to and is about mobilizing change through new climate negotiations and international agreements for concerning actors to follow and implement.

The motivation for the choice of using Climate Justice derives from the unfair burdens of SIDS, calling for a theory that represents their voices.

4. Methodology

This chapter presents the methods and materials of this thesis, going through the research process, collection of data and coding, source critique, analytical method, ethical considerations, validity and reliability as well as methodological discussion.

This thesis uses a qualitative research method. The choice for a qualitative method over quantitative method is motivated through the character of the aim and research question. A qualitative method is suitable for an explorative thesis which enables deeper understanding of SIDS-specific experiences where quantitative data would face difficulties doing so (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2007). According to McCracken, qualitative research must consider the researcher as an influential instrument in the research, affecting the data collection process, coding and analysis in significant ways (McCracken, 1998:18-22).

4.1 Research design, data collection and coding

The research design of this uses an inductive approach (Bryman, 2016: 19). It is explorative in expanding the scope that previous research has covered. Motivating the chosen approach, is by comparison with the linear structure of a deductive research design and how it would limit the

space to explore and increase the risk of uninformed assumptions. An inductive approach allows the researcher to change the focus of the research based on new and more relevant theoretical and empirical findings. This thesis tested the usefulness of the theoretical framework by application on sections of the findings before making a choice of theory (Bryman, 2016: 25). Using an inductive approach also allows the analysis to be based on the experiences of the research subjects. The process of finding themes and concepts in the data worth analyzing usually includes detailed and thorough back and forth reading. An inductive approach produces findings directly through analysis rather than from hypothesis (Azungah, 2018: 391). This thesis adopts this approach.

The collected data includes arguments from around 50+ AOSIS documents called “statements” between 2007-2017 found in an UN archive. The data collected comprises the lines of argument found in these documents. The most recurring themes and concepts in the arguments were divided into six categories. The process of coding had three phases: open color-coding method to separate one code from another, followed up by focused coding method that evaluates which codes can merge under one category, and lastly identify the categories with titles that best reflect the code contents (Bryman, 2016: 574).

4.2 Source critique

Different members of AOSIS have written statements to the Secretary General about their common concerns, to shed light on their issues as SIDS and to advocate for international action to support their case over the years. The United Nations is the recipient of these statements. Used as primary sources, the data collected from these AOSIS statements serve the same purpose as data collected from interviews (Leth & Thurén, 2000: 23), although without the pre-colored views of an interviewer, decreasing biased data collection and again, increasing authenticity. The time period of the ten-year span between 2007-2017 gives space to identify which arguments are most characteristic to AOSIS and their cause as well as trends and patterns in their arguments (ibid: 23). The statements have clear standpoints and can be compared to other statements within the ten-year period to identify patterns of argumentation that may differ from previous years, decreasing the risk of tendency. The credibility of the data is considered high as all the statements were found in an UN archive (ibid: 26-31).

These statements are written by political figures in respective SIDS like prime ministers and other actors, writing on behalf of their countries to voice their concerns to the UN Secretary

General. These statements and the context in which they are written are the best sources at hand to draw valid conclusions (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020: 35).

4.3 Analytical Method

Since the aim, research questions and collected data of this thesis focus on the arguments of AOSIS, the chosen analytical method is descriptive argumentation analysis. This method is used to reconstruct the arguments found in the AOSIS documents by drawing out and putting together segments of text that belong to the same line of reasoning, demonstrating an argumentation that would otherwise be scattered in different places in the text (Bergström & Boréus, 2019: 93-94). There are central concepts of argumentation analysis that explain the parts that make up an argumentation. This paper will be using the following concepts as needed to bring out the essence of the arguments, to understand the standpoint of AOSIS on various issues that ties to climate change.

- ❖ *Argumentation* is a constellation of reasons made up of arguments, statements and premises, presented to advocate for a standpoint.
- ❖ *Statements* are the pillars of argumentation. It is something one claims with the purpose to convince other people that it holds truth.
- ❖ *Thesis* is the central statement of why the argumentation is initially taking place. It explains what the argument or twist is about.
- ❖ *Premises* are steps that lead to a logical conclusion. Something that is accepted as common knowledge, whether it is a statement or a fact. The function of premises is to work as links between statements or arguments (Bergström & Boréus, 2019: 100-103).

4.4 Reliability, validity and ethical considerations

Reliability explains the compatibility of the analytical method and the collected data. Validity compares the findings with the collected data to measure accuracy. Validity is also used to prove qualitative research methods' level of quality (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004: 8-10). The collected data is made up of arguments made by AOSIS. Choosing argumentation analysis provides the concepts relevant for analyzing arguments that makes up the empirical data. Argumentation analysis also goes well hand in hand with the inductive research design as the findings would emerge directly from the analysis without needing a hypothesis (Azungah, 2018: 391).

The quality of the analysis depends on how effective the research method and analytical method is for the collected data and overall paper. Usually, the qualitative research method consists of

the researchers collecting data from conducted interviews, which often includes common factors that can decrease the quality of the research, like misunderstandings leading to inaccurate interpretation of data. Positionality is another problematic factor in interviews. It explains the standpoint from which one's experience is based on criteria like history, language, culture, gender and sexuality. There benefits of a researcher who does not share the same narrative as its research subject, is bias mitigation in the findings (McCracken, 1998: 18, 22). However, coming from a different standpoint also means lack of contextual understanding of the research subject, which can cause misrepresentation in the data and analysis. This research uses written AOSIS statements as empirical data, eliminating the factors of positionality, misunderstandings and misinterpretations as they only notably interfere and influence the data within the realms of interviews. This leaves little room for biased data collection since the empirical data consists of AOSIS statements rather than produced through conducted interviews, securing the quality and validity to this thesis.

However, the positionality of the researcher remains. The researcher and the research subjects have different worldviews. Being a citizen of Sweden, prejudice and pre-understanding is mixed up on knowledge of SIDS and their living conditions socially, culturally, economically and environmentally. The recent experience of exchange studies at the University of West Indies in Jamaica, a SIDS and AOSIS member, did however bring new insights on how climate change affects islanders' living conditions. This thesis considers that exchange studies cannot compensate for the lack of common context between researcher and research subject. However, having experienced a SIDS society and education forms on climate change for university students is beneficial in navigating relevant aim and research questions. Nonetheless, the lack of pre-understanding and deeper contextual knowledge of the research subject are factors that affect the quality of the thesis.

4.5 Methodological discussion

Using the analytical method and theoretical framework for the first time affects the quality of analysis as the writer was getting familiar with the tools while using them, causing the quality of analysis to grow gradually throughout the chapter rather than being at one level consistently, throughout the findings and analysis. This is to be expected in qualitative research as the researcher is an influential instrument in the research (McCracken, 1988: 18-22). The usefulness of argumentation analysis was measured by how effectively it reconstructed an argumentation that could draw out the standpoint of AOSIS arguments.

The search for an already developed and suitable theoretical framework of Climate Justice for this thesis was not successful. However, Baxi's seven premises of Theories of Climate Justice, were resourceful in unexpected ways, as it covered the main characteristics of TCJ relevant for this thesis, which allowed the researcher to develop a theoretical framework. Despite the lack of guidelines on how to properly develop a theory, the theoretical framework served an adequate functional purpose applied to the empirical data. In addition, the researcher did test out the theoretical framework on a set of different arguments to estimate its usefulness before writing the findings and analysis section.

The difficulty of inductive coding and organizing such a large amount of data was the time-consuming method of reading back and forth to find trends, patterns and recurrent phrases, statements and premises (Bryman, 2016: 574). Defining the common but different traits of each category and deciding stronger versus weaker relation of each code to each other needed careful weighing and logical reasoning, redefining codes several times (ibid: 574). The motivation to use the inductive coding method was in following the overall inductive research design of this thesis. In hindsight, using a more systematic coding method like thematic coding might have created a more reliable coding process as it consists of more guidelines (Gibbs, 2018: 4-8).

5. Findings and analysis

The findings are categorized under three themes: 1. Climate debt - If you caused it, you fix it, 2. Global agendas – help protect our rights in face of a shared problem and 3. Standing commitments – deliver on what you promised. The quotes retrieved from the data are made up of reconstructed arguments, put together into paragraphs to demonstrate the standpoints of AOSIS on each issue presented. The quotes are retrieved from over forty AOSIS documents called “statements”. The findings, presented as quotes, reflect the general tendencies in the data and are standing examples of the line of reasoning in the AOSIS statements between 2007-2017, including recurring arguments, concepts and sentences.

The principles of Climate Justice will be applied accordingly to the three themes in the findings. Principle one relates to the first theme, principle two to the second theme and principle three to the third theme.

5.1 Climate debt – if you caused it, then you fix it.

This section analyzes arguments that relate to the international community's responsibility to fix the climate change issues that they have caused for SIDS, implying climate injustice.

At the 15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting, 28th of February 2007, AOSIS points out the disproportionality of SIDS' contribution to climate change and SIDS' vulnerability to the effects of climate change:

“The adverse effects of climate change, and associated phenomena including sea-level rise and the increase in frequency and intensity of hurricanes, cyclones and other weather events threaten the sustainable development, livelihoods and existence of SIDS, despite our negligible contribution to the problem.” (AOSIS, 2007a: 1).

The thesis of the arguments seems to revolve around climate injustice as the argumentation reveals that SIDS have done little to nothing to contribute to their vulnerable circumstance, implying that other actors are responsible for climate change causing an existential threat for SIDS. As discussed in my theoretical framework, principle one supports the argumentation and stresses that the actors with the largest GHG emissions that helped cause climate change are the ones responsible to solve the problem.

On May 5th, 2008 at the 16th session of the CSD, AOSIS addressed the lack of representation and equal opportunity for SIDS in the international market:

“Our economic prospects have deteriorated with the loss of traditional markets and with competitive pressures of globalization [...] International Financial Institutions must now go further in recognizing the twin economic and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS [...] We note also that international obligations mandated to address the new security concerns have created particular difficulties for SIDS; and some trade rules and other protectionist measures against SIDS are undermining the economic competitiveness of many SIDS, financial services being one such area.” (AOSIS, 2008a: 3-4).

The protectionist measures against SIDS serve as premises for the deteriorated economies of SIDS, revealing the international community's power over SIDS economies. The argumentation reveals a possible solution by turning the arguments around: how including SIDS in the international market would increase their economy, which also increases their capacity to handle their environmental vulnerabilities due to the interconnectedness of SIDS economic-environmental vulnerabilities. The international community's continued exclusion of SIDS from the global market would further expose them to climate disaster, which prosperous global players are, in large part, responsible for causing. The vulnerable position of SIDS emerged from anthropogenic climate change, the result of international actors' GHG emissions, making them responsible and accountable, to help SIDS build stronger economic

and environmental stability, as principle one of Climate Justice implies. However, the lack of such inclusion suggests a non-effort and intentional disregard from the international community to improve the circumstances of SIDS, moving towards climate injustice. It is assumed that the “trade rules and protectionist’s measures against SIDS” are enforced by the same state actors that are responsible for most GHG emissions.

On May 12th, 2008, the AOSIS Statement Opening of SIDS Day CSD-16 expressed their concern on the harmful consumer culture.

“unsustainable patterns of production and consumption have given rise to this problem of Climate Change. A consumer culture has evolved with scant regard for the environment. This culture must be replaced by a culture of citizenship – where citizens have both rights and responsibilities [...] We urge the entire UN community to exercise this spirit of citizenship by taking greater responsibility for the impact of Climate Change on the vulnerable economies.” (AOSIS, 2008c: 2).

The statement on unsustainable consumer culture highlights the adverse effects of climate change. The notion of the UN community taking greater responsibility reflects principle one of Climate Justice. The argumentation implies that unsustainable patterns of production and consumption have caused climate change, which enables a discussion of climate debt within the international community. Principle one states that actors with largest volumes of GHG emissions have caused climate change and are therefore responsible to fix the problem, in accordance with the “polluter pays” principle used as an essential element of AOSIS arguments (Slade, 2007:217). Conclusively, the GHG emissions are, in large part, connected to the unsustainable patterns of consumption leading to a consumer culture that is harmful for the environment and for the SIDS populations. Principle one further argues that the biggest GHG emitters of the international community are held accountable to create a culture of citizenship, taking into consideration vulnerable economies like SIDS. Today, SDG 12, *Responsible Consumption & Production*, serves as a response to the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption that SIDS addressed in 2008 (UN, 2021b). Whether the international community has taken their responsibility and fulfilled SDG 12 by 2030 remains a future result.

On the same day, at the AOSIS Statement Opening of SIDS Day CSD-16, the alliance addressed their dislike of the two important events overlapping:

“We have registered our disappointment on the overlap between SIDS day and Water and Sanitation [...] The General Assembly gave a mandate for the devotion of one day of the CSD for the SIDS... The SIDS symbolizes the frontline of the fight against Climate Change [...] we have, for 20 years, been drawing the attention of the global community to the challenges of Climate Change. So, to bury SIDS day, is to bury the evangelists of Climate Change. And to bury the Climate Change issue is to commit the SIDS to a burial by sea.” (AOSIS, 2008c: 4-5).

The thesis of the argumentation is clear; SIDS need a whole day to cover and advocate for their issues, as promised, to address the urgent measures needed to combat their climate change challenges. It also implies that without this opportunity, their voices will not have a platform to be heard or given fair representation. Considering previous argumentation on how an unsustainable consumer culture has given rise to climate change, the need for international support on such matters is imperative to address on SIDS day. As climate change threatens SIDS’ future survival, failing to provide SIDS with a whole day of addressing their existential issues, caused by actors in the international community, implies indifference regarding SIDS survival and further increases the climate debt of the international community. Principle one of Climate Justice argues that SIDS issues are the international community’s issues, and they are expected to right their wrongs, which in this case would be to provide SIDS with enough time on SIDS day to voice their concerns, for the international community to attend, listen and implement the changes needed to secure SIDS future survival considering their climate change issues.

In sum, the protectionist measures leading to SIDS exclusion of the global market, weaken their economic and environmental resilience and increase their vulnerability to climate change, revealing SIDS interdependent relationship between the economic-environmental vulnerability and climate change vulnerability. The display of power imbalance becomes clear, as the international community has the means to decide to include or exclude SIDS, which effectively determines their sustenance in the long run. In addition, SIDS are dependent on the international community to transform the unsustainable consumer culture to a sustainable culture of citizenship, all in order to reduce the GHG emissions that enable sea-level rise and other climatic changes which pose a threat to the future survival of SIDS. Adding up the intrinsic vulnerabilities of SIDS with their dependency on the international community to reduce the cause of anthropogenic climate change – GHG emissions – the limitations of SIDS day portrays an indifference of the international community regarding SIDS future survival. Considering the

miniscule contributions of SIDS to climate change in comparison to the GHG emissions of the international community only goes to show that taking responsibility for the devastation caused is not a quality that the international community aspires towards.

5.2 Global agendas – help protect our rights in face of a shared problem.

This theme differs from the previous as the data consist of more statements than arguments. These statements provided to the UN, in the shape of policy options that SIDS need implemented by the international community, will be presented through a timeline from 2007-2017.

On February 28th, 2007, at the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the CSD-15 New York, AOSIS listed policy options for the international community to:

“Support SIDS in the development and implementation of national climate change action plans through the provision of new and additional resources, technical assistance and capacity building; Assist SIDS to incorporate climate change adaptation concerns in national sustainable development plans; Provide technical and financial resources to assist SIDS to strengthen national and regional national climate change coordination mechanisms such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center (CCCCC), and the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable; Provide technical support in areas of disaster preparedness, risk management and disaster mitigation; Develop new financial arrangements including a SIDS climate change funding facility to provide insurance to SIDS to recoup losses due to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise; Improve access to, and transfer of, environmentally sound technology related to climate change” (AOSIS, 2007a:1-2).

The policy options listed demonstrate a strong need for various kinds of aid, like principle two of Climate Justice argues. The policy options of AOSIS emphasize the feature of the second principle on new approaches needed. The approaches that would promote protection of human rights could be implemented through financial and technical assistance and support for disasters and adaptation, capacity building and accessibility to financial funds. The only suggestion that explicitly considers environmental rights is the one on accessibility to “environmentally sound technology”. With principle two of Climate Justice applied, the policy options show how the SIDS are prioritizing human rights over environmental rights, which reflects the urgent need of aid to maintain human life, freedom and security (UN General Assembly, 1948). It is also a reminder of how the basic human rights of SIDS are under existential threat due to

anthropogenic climate change. This has been stated in previous research, although adding the human rights element addresses the void of responsibility that needs to be taken through action-based support for the societies whose human rights are most needed but least claimable – SIDS.

At the Agriculture Plenary session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 17th Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development on February 27th, 2009, expectations regarding international policy responses to climate change were declared in an AOSIS statement, urging the international community to:

“Support climate vulnerability analysis for all food production sectors in SIDS; Support the efforts of SIDS to diversify agricultural production system to adapt to climate change; Ensure new, additional and predictable resources are provided to SIDS to address the impact of climate change: Support the establishment of research and monitoring institutions, and support for MSI implementation, and programs for boosting, renewable energy production and reducing vulnerability to disasters [...] Support the integration of climate change adaptation strategies with land, watershed, and coastal zone management; Engage in re-forestation, sustainable land use, zoning and other sustainable measures to improve resilience to climate change;” (AOSIS, 2009b: 1-2).

The policy options presented, much like previous policy options of 2007, revolve around aid for SIDS in various ways, like principle two of Climate Justice implies. Focusing on developing food production and adaptation of diverse agricultural production in light of climate change demonstrates the need for a sustainable approach to ensure food security and agricultural stability. The difference between these policy options and the ones presented earlier (AOSIS,2007a:1) is a more even distribution of policy option between human rights and environmental rights: food and agricultural production serving human rights and providing renewable energy, integrating adaptation strategies with the management of land, coastal and watershed zones and engaging in reforestation to ensure environmental rights.

During the Opening Session of the 2nd Inter-Sessional Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, New York, 15 December 2011, AOSIS stated that:

“The UNCSD RIO+20 should identify a framework of action of implementation of commitments and should move the sustainable development agenda forward taking into account the renewed political commitment and assessment of gaps in the implementation.” (AOSIS, 2011).

The call for a framework of implementation reflects the new approaches needed for SIDS, to provide the aid needed, pointed out in principle two of Climate Justice. The policy options of earlier years (AOSIS, 2007a:1; AOSIS, 2009b: 1-2), suggest various kinds of aid that SIDS need for a more sustainable development. Combining previous years' policy options with an action-based framework of implementation reflects a situation where the policy options suggested have yet to be implemented.

At the 5th Session of the OWG-SDG on Macroeconomic Policy November 26, 2013, AOSIS argued that:

“International support for financing (concessionary loans or grants) need to be accessible, predictable, and efficient in order to have resounding positive impact on SIDS fragile economies, and create meaningful employment, generate income, and build resilience against external shocks [...] SIDS could benefit significantly from capital flow from abroad, which can be official development assistance from development partners, long-term international loans, as from the World Bank, foreign private investment, medium and short-term loans from commercial banks, or medium- and short-term loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).” (AOSIS, 2013).

The argumentation points out how accessibility, predictability and efficiency of financial support from the international community is a precondition or SIDS to secure and grow their economies and create meaningful employment. Listing the various financial sources above demonstrates SIDS awareness of the many actors and institutions that have the means to provide financial aid for SIDS, as principle two of Climate Justice argues.

At the Talking Points Session on Means of Implementation on the post-2015 development agenda Targets 21 April 2015, AOSIS addressed the many development challenges of SIDS:

“We recognize that our persistent development challenges require an enhanced global partnership for development, adequate provision and mobilization of financing from all sources, domestic and international, public and private, the facilitation of trade, technology transfer, capacity building, and an enabling institutional and policy environment at all levels, as well as strengthened partnerships at the national, regional and international level [...] And while we recognize that financing from all sources is important, the most critical source of financing remains international public financing.” (AOSIS, 2015a: 1).

Here, AOSIS stresses the importance of international public financing and strengthened global partnerships for development. This argument implies a lack of financial aid as well as weak existing partnerships. Principle two applied argues that new possible approaches for the human and environmental rights and aid needs of SIDS could be developed through strengthened partnerships.

At the Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development 15 February 2017, AOSIS stressed that:

“The Call for Action must [...] serve as a testament to the political will of the global community to achieving SDG 14. This means that we must focus on the concrete and actionable activities that could be undertaken [...] SIDS are at the forefront of facing marine pollution and ocean acidification, and we see the Call for Action as a critical opportunity to demonstrate our strong collective political commitment to addressing these issues [...] It should also emphasize the need for capacity building and transfer of technology to small islands, and also highlight the necessity to mobilize sufficient means of implementation when it comes to achieving the targets for SDG 14 [...] Additionally, it should include a call for sustainable and predictable support for efforts that aim at enhancing the resilience of the oceans, especially in areas of particular importance for biodiversity, ecosystem services and areas that are sensitive to ocean acidification, such as coral reefs. (AOSIS, 2017: 1-2).

The statement in the first sentence displays the need for, and lack of, proof of the political will necessary to achieve SDG14. It also relays that political will is the missing component, the premise of which the resilience of the oceans can be achieved. Applying principle two of Climate Justice, the new approaches needed are urged to focus on protecting environmental rights, which in this case corresponds to the Call for Action which includes capacity building and technology transfer to SIDS alongside other means of implementation necessary to achieve SDG14. Consistent with principle two of Climate Justice, all statements besides 2011 address the need for aid, specifically related to capacity building, financial support, technical resources and transfers to deal with climate change challenges. The challenges from 2007 address “disaster preparedness, risk management and disaster mitigation”. In 2009, AOSIS presented a similar statement, “reducing vulnerability to disasters”. In 2013, financial support was requested to “build resilience against external shocks”. These three statements essentially focus

on the same issue that recur in different phrasings over the years – SIDS vulnerability to climate disaster and building resilience to face climate change challenges. In 2011, AOSIS addressed how a framework for implementation of commitments should be developed to drive the sustainable development agenda (AOSIS, 2011b). As stated before, there is a strong connection between climate change and sustainable development as the implications of climate change threatens sustainable development, affecting SIDS the most (UNDP, 2017). The subject of implementation resurfaced in 2017 as a “Call for Action” regarding SDG 14.

The patterns of this theme are presented as AOSIS urging the international community to take climate change action for SIDS. Various ways to do so is by providing financial support, technical resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and implementation of commitments. Every statement up until 2017 addresses challenges taking place above sea-level, essentially focusing on new approaches needed to protect human rights and address climate change challenges that create issues for humans. It is only until 2017 that the state of the oceans and concerns regarding climate change challenges affecting life systems below sea-level, are highlighted as an issue that calls for action. Through the lens of principle two of Climate Justice, there is a trend shift of the new approaches that AOSIS require during the 10-year period, starting from SIDS specific policy options that aim to protect human life and rights of SIDS populations, to gradually moving towards environmental rights that affects human life and rights globally, regardless of geographical location.

5.3 Standing commitments – deliver on what you promised.

This theme presents statements that have been argued for previously and urges the international community to follow through with international commitments made.

At the 16th session of the United Nations CSD, May 6th, 2008, AOSIS statements revealed a deep concern and distrust that the international community will in fact fulfil their internationally agreements:

“Despite the many efforts at the national level however, SIDS are concerned that the promises by the international community which emanated from the Mauritius Strategy are yet unfulfilled. 2010 marks the five-year review of the MSI. Are we to continue annually at the CSD to make this point? [...] Many SIDS require technical assistance in building institutions and drafting legislation to provide for development in marginalized areas. There is also need for the Global Environment Facility, bilateral donors and regional development banks to get actively involved in financing integrated rural

development programs. Let 2010 mark a year of reporting successes within the international community in not only standing by their promises but also having committed the necessary investment in SIDS to advance their sustainable development agendas.” (AOSIS, 2008b:3).

SIDS’ continued annual reminder at the CSD for the international community to fulfil their promises serves as a premise that reveals lack of expected implementation between 2005-2008. Principle three of Climate Justice supports SIDS’ argumentation by calling for international action in accordance with climate negotiations, which in this case would be the promises made during the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation in 2005. The rhetorical question of annually repeating that promises are yet unfulfilled, reflects the unmet expectations of SIDS based on previous agreements. Presenting this to an audience that is already aware of their insufficient actions towards implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, reveals an imbalance of power between SIDS and the international community, as it seems to be the third year that SIDS are repeating that international promises are yet unfulfilled, going against principle three of Climate justice. The technical and financial assistance needed reiterates arguments covered under the previous theme (AOSIS, 2007a:1-2). Here, the same aid is explicitly needed to further the agenda of sustainable development, which again demonstrates that SIDS’ sustainable development is dependent on the aid from the international community.

On February 23rd, 2009, during the SIDS Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the CSD-17, AOSIS highlighted that:

“While SIDS have largely made progress in formulating and implementing strategies and policies to advance sustainable development, we are faced with myriad challenges and constraints to implementation. It is becoming increasingly clear that our national and regional efforts must be complemented by the international community’s response to close a gaping implementation gap” [...] We urge the international community to implement all commitments related to SIDS, particularly as it relates to capacity building, technology transfer and the provision of financial resource. Further delays risks endangering our very existence.” (AOSIS, 2009a: 2).

In light of previous argumentation (AOSIS, 2008b:3), to address a gaping implementation gap, despite SIDS national efforts to bridge it, alongside progress in formulating and implementing strategies, implies a passivity from the international community to do their part. Although, there is no mention of any specific climate negotiation like principle three of Climate Justice

suggests, previous argumentation addressed the international community's unkept promises regarding the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (AOSIS, 2008b: 3). Principle three of Climate Justice applied argues that action needs to be taken in accordance with climate negotiations. Since a declaration is not legally binding like a convention, the closest option to an international agreement is the international commitments made, as mentioned. The thesis is clearly about the implementation gap of sustainable development commitments that the international community are responsible for but have yet to take sufficient action to achieve. The argumentation is supported by previous research on the international aid SIDS need, which includes proper technology, accurate data and a strong budget (Kostakos, Zhang & Veening, 2014: 5). Further explanation addresses how international efforts usually do not have long lasting effects in providing financial support, innovative solutions and fulfilling SIDS needs (Baiamonte & Redaelli, 2017: 6, 16). The inadequate efforts of the international community are described as an "unwillingness to answer to" the moral considerations of climate change if it does not serve certain actors' self-interest (Brandstedt & Brüle, 2019: 788).

On March 7th, 2011, at the Opening Session of the Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development New York, AOSIS continued referring to earlier commitments:

"in so many instances we have been disheartened by the apparent abandonment of international promises made by the Barbados Program of Action, BPoA. How do you know if a car runs out of gas if you lack a gauge? Without baselines and benchmarks – without these very basic tools – how do we measure our progress and failures? [...] The international community must stop endless applying old coats of paint to an increasingly aging development vehicle. The buyer is no longer fooled, no matter how skillful the salesman (AOSIS, 2011a: 2).

As an international agreement, abandoning the Barbados Programme of Action, BPoA, is breaching principle three of Climate Justice. The metaphors in the argumentation demonstrate SIDS frustration of how the process of implementation has been poorly managed. There is an implication of indifference from the international community through the lack of baselines and benchmarks to implement the Program of Action for SIDS' sustainable development. The last arguments indicate an unwillingness from the international community to take appropriate measures for SIDS. Applying "old coats of paint" implies something beyond minimum effort, it suggests that the international community holds the power and privilege to not follow through with international promises, which again displays the power imbalance between SIDS and the

international community. Looking back at previous arguments displaying this kind of power imbalance, it is always in relation to uneven distribution of resources.

To conclude, the power imbalance identified in the first theme recurs here, demonstrated in SIDS annually reminding the international community to fulfil their promises as an example. Furthermore, the gaping implementation gap that SIDS pointed out reflects a passive stance from the international community to fulfil their commitments. The issue of implementation most often includes capacity building, financial aid and technical support and other concerns that prevail regardless of the many reminder's SIDS make. It indicates an unwillingness to follow through with commitments, which inevitably give rise to the question of why the international community commits to something they are unwilling to finish.

5.4 Summary of Findings & Analysis

The finding and analysis demonstrate the intrinsic relationship of resources and power, displayed in various ways, as the power imbalance between SIDS and the international community. Another interconnected relationship discovered is the one of SIDS economic and environmental vulnerabilities and how they serve as measurement for SIDS climate change vulnerabilities. Following this path, considering the significant power that the international community has over SIDS combined with the unwillingness to support SIDS in facing their climate change challenges, the future prospect of SIDS survival is exponentially decreasing, leading to a scenario filled with human rights violations caused by the international community.

On the other hand, the chances of SIDS surviving are measured likewise, through the international efforts to efficiently reduce GHG emissions, fully implement all commitments made and provide SIDS with all the necessary aid they require and have asked for all these years. For this alternative future prospect to take place, there needs to be consequences for the international community to fail following through with commitments.

One consequence emerging is the state of the oceans, a situation affecting all members of the international community, calling for a more urgent response to achieve the SGDs, specifically SGD14. The question arises of whether the international community will make the necessary changes in their approach towards saving the planet in time to save those most vulnerable - SIDS.

The findings show a trend shift throughout the ten-year period. Starting with the focus on the international community's responsibility to solve the issues they have caused, reflected in the

first theme. Following is the second theme, where striving for collective approaches to be developed for the global issues that serve the entire planet. Finally, the third theme is reminding the international community of the collective issues that still need to be remedied.

6. Conclusions

This section answers the research question of the thesis, reflects and discusses the findings and analysis as well as suggests considerations for future research.

6.1 Conclusions of AOSIS arguments on supportive international action

The three themes represent the most recurring arguments of AOSIS used to advocate for international action to support SIDS climate change challenges, answering the research question. The first theme covers the morality of climate debt and was characterized by its accusive patterns on holding the international community responsible for the unsustainable circumstance's SIDS face, reflecting the first Climate Justice principle of the theoretical framework. The second theme had a different moral view, focusing on taking action for shared global concerns by presenting policy options for SIDS, like principle two of Climate Justice argues. The most recurring ones were the need for financial support, capacity building, technology transfer and implementation. The third theme was a combination of both previous themes in terms of the moral features; pointing out insufficient measures, lack of action and the urgent need for action by referring explicitly to earlier commitments made but not implemented. This theme reflected the third principle of Climate Justice on following through with international agreements and climate negotiations.

The recurring pattern in the arguments boils down to the unfair treatment of SIDS by the international community, which could be traced to the power imbalance and the uneven distribution of resources between SIDS and the international community. One conclusion made is that, in the context of the international community supporting SIDS, action taken is not synonymous to a goal reached or progress made, as the insufficient action of the international community has been pointed out. The achievement of a goal is only established after a commitment or promise has been fully implemented, which have not been the case for SIDS. One example is the arguments on the lack of, and need for, technology transfer, which reflected the unwillingness of the international community to fulfil their commitments. This further demonstrates the position of power they hold over SIDS. The non-action displayed through the repetitive arguments of SIDS in urging the international community to proceed with implementation reflects a collision of SIDS long-term goals and the short-term self-interest of

actors in the international community (Brandstedt & Brüle, 2019:788). This explains the debate on the rules of intellectual property rights that benefit the developed countries but effectively stagnates the technology transfer to SIDS, an urgent need to survive climate change challenges (UNDP, 2010: 24).

6.2 Reflective discussion on findings & analysis

The objective of this thesis was to explore what arguments the alliance uses to advocate for international action to support SIDS in facing climate change. Reflecting on the previous research on climate refugees and the findings, interestingly, the AOSIS arguments did not cover the need for a legal ‘climate refugee’ framework nor did they promote the concept. Rather, the findings focused on the international community to follow through with commitments made, indicating that their circumstance could be solved with the resources mentioned but not provided. Focusing explicitly on the future vision and maintenance of SIDS brings up the question of why the most vulnerable states to climate change are not pursuing their need for future protection through a legal “climate refugee” framework.

Is it like Hartmann suggests, that the debate on ‘climate refugees’ emerged through the perceived threat and security problem through a European and US perspective (Hartmann, 2010: 233-234) rather than from SIDS citizens? It does seem unlikely for SIDS to support or even initiate a legal framework for ‘climate refugees’ when the narrative presents obstacles for international cooperation to continue to develop peacefully, with equity and efficiency towards climate change action (ibid: 233-234). Regardless of the need for a legal framework for ‘climate refugees’, the AOSIS statements between 2007-2017 do not use ‘climate refugee’ rhetoric. Rather, they exclusively focus on SIDS’ needs for sustainable and sufficient resources for their populations to remain in their states and for their future to be secured. Focusing on other alternatives is to ignore the most important one for SIDS, which also explain their clarity and repetitiveness in addressing following through with international commitments made.

Considering the contributions of AOSIS in climate negotiations and their unique perspective as frontlines of climate change, refraining from indulging in the debate on ‘climate refugees’ could indicate that for SIDS, a solution is still possible to ensure future human life on islands to be sustainable.

The findings reveal that in order to secure SIDS future survival, the interconnectedness of climate change and sustainable development must serve as a reminder of the need for proportional, sufficient and relevant action, based on commitments made (AOSIS, 2015a: 1-2).

A common pattern of the AOSIS arguments that were used to advocate for international action stressed how important sustainable development is for SIDS as it is their only prospect for survival. The necessity of SIDS sustainable development provides context to their arguments on whether the international community understand the true meaning behind SIDS being a special case for sustainable development (AOSIS, 2015a), given the lack of adequate effort to support SIDS in their climate change challenges.

Another interesting observation is how urging the international community to develop a national plan of action on climate change that would speed up the implementation process (AOSIS, 2007a:1-2) directly addresses SDG 13 on taking urgent climate change action, developed nine years later (UN, 2021c). This brings up the question of how influential AOSIS have been in developing the SDG for Agenda 2030. What AOSIS specifically argue for, concerning the international climate change action, is the implementation of support and resources, technical assistance and capacity building during the 10-year time period.

Following the timeline of the AOSIS documents, the second theme reveals a change of trend that begins to emerge. From supporting SIDS specific sustainable development by suggesting international provision of financial aid, technology transfer and capacity building (AOSIS, 2007a), towards a striving to sustain life under water, as SDG 14 implies (AOSIS, 2015a). This global sustainable development concern is not exclusive to SIDS future but to the survival of planet earth.

However, it is unclear if AOSIS contributions have granted them the voice to sit at the table with equal opportunity to impact the future negotiations and agreements to come. Echoing the Theories of Climate Justice, it is the international community's responsibility to make sure AOSIS are included as their unique experience of climate change is invaluable to anticipate risks, develop resilient adaptation and mitigation strategies and navigate the vital future steps of sustainable development.

It is troubling that the international community displays such passivity in relation to the urgency that is climate change and SIDS increasing vulnerabilities to it. Especially since there is an interdependent relationship between SIDS as and the international community; without each other, the SDGs for agenda 2030 will not be achieved. To approach the issue correctly would be to prioritize sustainable development of SIDS to the level of fulfilment, which is the opposite of what has happened during 2007-2017. The implementation gaps result in a setback for all, creating a bigger distance between where we are as an international community and where we

have committed to be by 2030. This also means that our best shot of reaching our common goal is by using the development of SIDS as a measuring stick.

From a human rights lens and a climate justice lens, each right bearer has responsibilities. Being labelled as a “special case for sustainable development” seems beneficial at first but potentially categorizes SIDS as victims, which can also decrease their power to influence. As the international unwillingness to contribute to protecting human and environmental rights, this situation risks leading us to irreversible damage of earth’s life systems.

In conclusion, the standing problem of failing to follow through with international commitments made seems to derive from developed countries’ self-interest rather than moral duties, as Brandstedt and Brule have argued before (Brandstedt & Brüle, 2019:788). Using the perspective of the fifth premise of Baxi’s TCJ, it urges new approaches to be developed for human and other species survival as old utilitarian approaches have not been sufficient to spark international climate change action. Supporting SIDS from a perspective of self-interest would be beneficial as they have the most expertise to contribute for sustainable development to be achieved. The problem now withstanding is the AOSIS agency, including the aspect of power imbalance, and whether the international community’s powerful member states value sustainable development enough and in time, to save the future of human rights and the future of the planet. Choosing to do so, or not, would, according to the premises and principles of Climate Justice, be reflected in how the future survival of SIDS is prioritized.

6.3 Considerations for future research

Future research could involve exploring more of the international community’s reasons for not following through with their commitments. If intellectual property rights rules present a conflict of interest between developed and developing countries about technology transfer, what other kinds of conflict of interest lies between strong partnerships for SIDS sustainable development? Which actors in the international community have the legal responsibility to follow through for SIDS and how do they relate to their commitments? Is there a solution that creates a win-win scenario for all parties committed to striving for SIDS sustainable development? If so, what does that look like in theory and practice? If not, what sacrifices are the international community willing to make in order to fulfil the most SDGs most relevant to SIDS by 2030?

Previous SIDS statements claim issues of survival and equity are the root cause of their limited resources and weak life support systems (Slade, 2007:215). Future research should seek out the obstacles to SIDS equity, exploring reasons why AOSIS are still struggling to be included with

equal opportunity to participate and impact climate negotiations. One alternative is to look at SIDS representation in media coverage under climate negotiations, if they are publicly given credit for their contributions and if their agency has increased in proportion to their contributions. Another alternative would be conducting research on the process of SIDS participation, as an observational field study measuring SIDS equity during international negotiations. Using the criteria of; time dedicated to SIDS during international events; rights and responsibilities of SIDS during international events; equal opportunity for AOSIS to partake in decision-making, contribute and be fully considered in international events concerning climate change and sustainable development. In combination with, or separate from the suggestion of observational field study, is the alternative to conduct research that measures the progress of the international community's implementation of the most relevant SDG to implement for SIDS, which is SDG 12, 13 and 14, though a five-year review between 2016-2021 of Agenda 2030.

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