Global Renewables Alliance

GREENING THE ISLANDS foundation

**Global Renewables Alliance**
**and**
**Greening the Islands Foundation**

# ENERGY TRANSITION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISLANDS

Worsening climate change poses existential threats to small islands worldwide. For these vulnerable communities, accelerating the energy transition stands as a vital priority in the next decisive decade. In line with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, the major outcome of the SIDS4 Conference in 2024, concerted efforts from different stakeholders at the national, regional, and global levels are needed to accelerate the deployment of renewables and other enablers of a just energy transition on islands.

Such a transition is not only bound to the energy sector, but broadly, it is paramount for economy-wide decarbonisation and revitalisation through job creation, reduction of energy costs, empowerment of local value chains, and circularity. Small islands are uniquely placed to showcase the technical and economic viability of 100% renewable energy systems and ensure their sustainability, originating replicable and scalable models that can lead global change.

Small islands, especially those non-interconnected, should develop ambitious energy strategies aiming at diversifying their energy mix exploiting all renewable sources available, at all sizes, and coupling them with the most viable energy storage solutions according to the system's needs. Islands should commit to fast-maturing solutions such as offshore renewables and green hydrogen, and embrace the full potential of circularity and nexus, designing highly integrated systems.

However, there are regulatory aspects that act as barriers, compensating island utilities for the additional costs that they bear for provisioning fossil fuels, and in fact do not allow renewables to play on a level playing field. Indeed, direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuels should be phased-out and available funds reallocated to clean technologies.

Small islands have a particular need for a streamlined and effective permitting process, as they often have protected areas, little available land, and limited public finances. Complex authorisation processes entail higher costs and risks of losing financing opportunities. More standard and transparent processes are necessary – alongside auctions, power purchase agreements, guarantee mechanisms, and public-private partnerships – to attract private investments by reducing the perceived risk associated with island projects, which truly offer a high potential. In this sense, the role of development banks and public-private cooperation at the international level is significant.

Hence the following recommendations, tailored to the small islands' context, emphasise the role of effective permitting and community engagement, among other actions, to advance the deployment of renewable energy and related projects, thereby leading to sustainable development, energy security, and resilience of economies and societies.

We encourage governments to put these recommendations into action; the international and local private sector, civil society, and international institutions, stand ready to cooperate with them.

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Chair, Greening the Islands Foundation

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# A 9-POINT PLAN

## FOR FAST AND FAIR PERMITTING ON ISLANDS

### 1 INNOVATE TO SHORTEN PERMITTING TIMEFRAMES

- Establishing clear timelines and maximum lead times
- Adopting a "rule of positive silence" for smaller-scale projects
- Establishing single-permits or "One-stop-shop" mechanisms

### 2 STREAMLINE PERMITTING PROCESSES IN A TRANSPARENT AND PREDICTABLE MANNER

- Clarifying and streamlining the regulatory and legal frameworks for renewables energy storage, green hydrogen, and related projects
- Standardising protocols for similar projects
- Digitising permitting processes

### 3 ENGAGE COMMUNITIES FROM THE OUTSET

- Adopting a clear policy & communication approach
- Engaging local communities as early as in planning phase, including running attitude surveys and preliminary public audits
- Setting up institutionalised and permanent coordination mechanisms to involve diverse local non-governmental stakeholders in planning and consultation

### 4 DEPLOY CAREFULLY DESIGNED AND REGULATED BENEFIT-SHARING MECHANISMS

- Embedding social and economic value in tenders, auctions and PPAs, including cross-sectoral synergies and involvement of local communities
- Assigning priority status to nexus-smart projects (e.g., RES desalination, agrivoltaics) and projects linked to energy system's resilience
- Implementing local incentives, community benefit sharing, co-design, and shared ownership schemes
- Implementing regulation for energy communities and collective self-consumption
- Providing inclusive workforce skilling and re-skilling opportunities covering roles across the energy sector and other relevant sectors

### 5 PUT IN PLACE STRONG POLICIES AND SAFEGUARDS TO LIMIT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Adopting "Do No Significant Harm", biodiversity conscious, and nature positive development approaches, including recognising RES-nature synergies and health benefits
- Implementing special policies for protected areas to promote decarbonisation and energy efficiency in all sectors involved
- Integrating renewable energy and agricultural, water cycle, and environmental planning (WEFE nexus), as well as transportation and waste management
- Promoting building and landscape integration to fit projects harmoniously into the environment

# A 9-POINT PLAN

## FOR FAST AND FAIR PERMITTING ON ISLANDS

### 6 ACCELERATE GRID INFRASTRUCTURE BUILD-OUT AND INTEGRATION

- Upgrading the power network to manage greater penetration of renewable electricity, with particular attention to integrating adequate energy storage systems
- Supporting the development of smart grids and rollout of demand-response and control systems, for a highly integrated power systems
- Granting priority for grid connection and priority dispatch to renewable energy projects
- Supporting projects for wider electrification, including mini-grids and projects enabling access to reliable power for communities currently lacking it

### 7 ALLOCATE LAND APPROPRIATELY AND STRATEGICALLY

- Establishing Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) to simplify project approval processes: areas that are preselected based on factors such as high-quality renewable energy resources and suitable topography and land-use designations
- Setting up Strategic Spatial Planning and "renewable acceleration areas", including marine siting for offshore renewables, securing land access
- Mapping all usable spaces, including agricultural land, rooftops, parking slots, and offshore areas/EEZs (exclusive economic zones)
- Performing high-quality resource assessment studies for all renewable sources available, also exploiting existing digital tools

### 8 STRENGTHEN AND OPTIMISE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AT CENTRAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

- Ensuring sufficient resourcing, competence enhancement, and staffing for permitting roles
- Defining clear mandates and distinct roles in the permitting process and creating dedicated transversal units/platforms to coordinate internal and external stakeholders (e.g., climate change authority)
- Promoting opportunities for local and international multistakeholder cooperation and partnerships to facilitate knowledge sharing and alignment with overarching frameworks such as the ABAS (SIDS4)
- Performing regular monitoring, also exploiting existing mechanisms and tools
- Creating a centralised database to share key information including concerning the energy system and renewable energy projects with public and private stakeholders

### 9 AVERT TECHNOLOGICAL RISKS BY ADOPTING RIGOROUS STANDARDS

- Ensuring regulatory certainty through feasibility and pre-feasibility studies
- Adopting leading renewable energy and hydrogen standards and certifications
- Integrating renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the broad energy transition in resource and resilience strategies and disaster risk management plans as means of energy security and resilience
- Enhancing energy efficiency actions across all sectors
- Sustaining R&D and pilot projects

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ENERGY TRANSITION PLANNING
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR ISLANDS

# BACKGROUND

The above is an elaboration of the original **recommendations from the Planning for Climate Coalition**. Greening the Islands and Global Renewables Alliance have cooperated to adapt the 9-point plan for fast and fair permitting to the context of small islands. The outlined recommendations are addressed to both island states and central governments, in the case of island territories and sub-national island jurisdictions.

The Planning for Climate Coalition was launched at the COP27 UN Climate Conference in Egypt in November 2022 to raise awareness of the need for improved planning and approval processes for renewable energy projects and the green hydrogen economy.

The Coalition is a joint initiative by the members of the Global Renewables Alliance (Green Hydrogen Organisation, Global Wind Energy Council, Global Solar Council, International Geothermal Association, International Hydropower Association and Long Duration Energy Storage Council).

The Coalition is made up of leaders representing governments, the private sector and civil society. It includes leading global institutions with mandates to promote renewable energy and experts on energy law and regulation.