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**Briefing to Member States and Other Stakeholders on
Possible Development of a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index for SIDS
Wednesday, 17 February 2021 (11:00 am – 12:30 pm)**

Excellencies,
Under-Secretary-General Fekita ‘Utoikamanu,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire world, it has brought serious economic hardship and damage to SIDS. They are now disproportionately bearing the brunt of the global decline in international travel, global commodity prices and the overall disruptions in worldwide trade and supply chains.

On the frontline of multiple world crises -- climate, nature, health and economy -- SIDS’s acute structural challenges and vulnerabilities are more than ever exposed and intensifying over time. Indeed, these multiple vulnerabilities interact and drive one another at an alarming rate.

Complex causes for vulnerability will persist, but they are not being properly characterized. Above all, these vulnerabilities cannot be captured through the GDP per capita lens. Thus, for many SIDS, the development of a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) is a pressing, but unfinished business.

For three decades, SIDS have argued that the GDP per capita index does not adequately capture their special vulnerabilities and have called for the establishment of an MVI. This is critical, in particular, for those SIDS that are being disqualified from concessional resources, owing to their relatively high level of GDP per capita.

The General Assembly, in its most recent resolution on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations, at its 76th session, on the possible development, use, coordination and finalization of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index (MVI) for SIDS.

The development of a composite MVI will be crucial to advancing global understanding of vulnerability, refining global policy and improving resource allocation to address vulnerability. A composite MVI can be a tool for smarter and targeted eligibility for financing for sustainable

development in SIDS. It is in our collective interest that we bring a closure to this long-standing request.

But the reasons for an MVI for the SIDS do not stop with financing access. Rather, such an index can help to identify other areas of vulnerability where the SIDS could benefit from better articulated and targeted support in non-financial form—technical assistance at affordable cost; market access on suitable terms and conditions; suitably priced access to insurance instruments that can help absorb some of the shock of climate-related disasters. Such an index could also help to understand better the impact of the inequalities of income distribution that deepen individual vulnerabilities well beyond what the per capita GDP might indicate.

Excellencies,

UNDESA, as Secretariat of all the sustainable development agendas for SIDS, including the SAMOA Pathway, is fully aware of the history, technicalities and sensitivities surrounding the development of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index for SIDS. We have been on this road for quite some time.

We are also aware of all the good work that has been done towards the development of an MVI for SIDS by partners, both within and outside the UN system.

In this regard, I wish to especially acknowledge the most recent initiative led by the Network of UN Resident Coordinators in SIDS, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator in Samoa.

The recent work by UNDP is also duly recognized.

Similar efforts have also been made by several UN system agencies, multilateral development banks and financial institutions, as well as the Commonwealth Secretariat.

In response to the request by the General Assembly, UNDESA, in collaboration with UNOHRLLS, have agreed on a strategy and a work programme to gather information from all relevant stakeholders, in order to formulate appropriate recommendations, to be presented to you at the 76th session of the General Assembly. You will hear more on this in today's briefing.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me point out that this work, as critical as it is for the SIDS, is also very relevant for the broader group of middle-income countries. Our progress with an MVI for the SIDS will pave the way for similar progress for that much broader group of countries and the hundreds of millions of poor people who live in them.

Excellencies,

In concluding, I wish to reiterate our strong commitment to strengthening our long-standing cooperation and support to SIDS, to make progress in addressing their vulnerabilities and supporting their collective sustainable development efforts, which goes a long way in ensuring that we leave no one behind.

Thank you.