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Opening Remarks

by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

at the

SECRETARIAT BRIEFING

Development of a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index

(MVI)

for small island developing States (SIDS)

17 February 2021

11:00 – 12:30 (Eastern Time)

Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to our general briefing on the development of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for small island developing States (SIDS).

I thank our colleagues in UNDESA for partnering with us on this exciting undertaking.

As you are aware, this work has been mandated by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/215, para 8(a), which calls on the UN Secretary-General:

“To provide recommendations as part of his report on the present resolution to the General Assembly at its 76th session on the potential development and coordination of work within the UN system on a multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States, including on its potential finalization and use;”

This is a mandate that has taken on even more critical meaning where we all everywhere in the world are in the midst of responding to and only begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has been brutal in and on the SIDS.

SIDS always faced rather complex developmental and environmental challenges but we now have an added host of challenges.

We barely have a decade left to turn the 2030 Agenda goals into tangible results for people.

SIDS were already struggling prior to the pandemic and now the struggle is much greater. I cannot emphasize enough how urgent it is now to mobilize the necessary resources to implement the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 induced crisis is indeed unprecedented.

That SIDS are highly vulnerable to endogenous and exogenous shocks has long been recognized by the global community.

Indeed, we have reaffirmed over and over again, and most recently in the political declaration of the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway held in 2019, that SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development. Their vulnerabilities are specific, unique and definitely not small !

Yet, SIDS remain constrained in meeting their goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development.

The attempt to develop a vulnerability index for SIDS is not new.

Way back at the First International Conference on SIDS in 1994, where the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted, we have been discussing, across the UN system and beyond, the use of indices developed specifically for SIDS. Already then, this was agreed on as a first step in addressing the issue of vulnerability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the mandate before us now, we have the opportunity to really move ahead with these efforts by building on the great body of work that has been generated both within and outside the UN system.

Today, DESA and OHRLLS will set out the roadmap to fulfil the mandate given to us by the General Assembly last year.

This will not be an easy undertaking.

Previous experience tells us that the task at hand is a complex one, both technically and politically.

This is why our roadmap includes a series of briefings and consultations both technical and political in nature.

The intent is to be as inclusive and as thorough as possible. Every effort must be made to include all relevant stakeholders and give them the opportunity to shape the process so we get coherent and concrete results,. We want the best possible outcomes for SIDS.

We must do everything to get the broadest possible support for the SG's recommendations, in the lead up to intergovernmental discussions at the 76th session of the UNGA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with the principle to “leave no one behind”, we believe that the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index for SIDS is critical to ensure evidence-based, targeted and effective support to these countries in the era of COVID-19 and beyond.

I look forward to our discussions today, and to facilitating the delivery of this important tool to the global community in the near future.

Thank you.