

## ECOSOC Partnership Forum 2024

### A SIDS side event

## “Resilient prosperity: Strategic Partnerships to Advancing Science, Technology, and Innovation in Small Island Developing States”

January 30, 2024, 1:15 – 2:30 PM

Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

### Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold its 2024 Partnership Forum on 30 January 2024 at the UN Headquarters in New York under the overall theme of “*Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions*”. The Partnership Forum will place special emphasis on the SDGs under review at the 2024 session of the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF): SDG 1 (no poverty); SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace and justice) and SDG 17 (partnership for the Goals).

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Small Island Developing States Unit of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will organize a side event that focuses on scaling up strategic partnerships to advance Science, Technology, and Innovation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) towards a resilient future.

### Background

Stimulating Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) sectors within SIDS is crucial to drive a transformative shift in their technological development and is critical in achieving their overall sustainable development objectives. The technological advancements are vital for equipping SIDS with the necessary tools to address the challenges posed by climate change in sectors like tourism and agriculture-fishery. Despite international efforts in recent years to mobilize financial resources and facilitate sustainable technology transfers in SIDS, there has been an overall decline in such initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, led to a reduction in foreign direct investment inflow to SIDS, attributed to the downturn in the tourism industry and postponed technology advancement projects. Additionally, official development assistance has decreased as some developed nations redirected funds to address pandemic and refugee-related challenges.<sup>1</sup> Given that official development assistance contributes significantly to the resilience of vulnerable populations, such as SIDS, it is critical to prevent funds from being redirected from STI investments to shock recovery. Boosting strategic partnerships and leveraging North-South and South-South and triangular partnerships, including SIDS to SIDS, are essential to ensure the STI investment and access to technical and technology transfers.

The fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4) will be held in May 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda under the theme “Charting a Course to Resilient Prosperity.” In the outcome document of their inter-regional preparatory meeting for SIDS4 (the “Praia Declaration”), SIDS recognized that science, technology and innovation are essential enablers and drivers for sustainable development. SIDS have called on the international community and the

---

<sup>1</sup> UNDESA, 2022, Financial Flows to Promote Technology Transfer and Gender Inclusiveness for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), available from [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/5th%20UN%20Policy%20Brief%20on%20STI%20roadmaps%20-%20SIDS%20finance\\_0.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/5th%20UN%20Policy%20Brief%20on%20STI%20roadmaps%20-%20SIDS%20finance_0.pdf)

United Nations system to (i) assist them in developing national roadmaps for STI and to support the building of their national capacities for developing and utilizing the state-of-the-art technologies; and (ii) support them in leveraging emerging science and technology, including artificial intelligence, for their national sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> Ensuring universal and meaningful connectivity is critical in this regard. In addition, promoting home-grown innovation and fostering entrepreneurship will help to provide sustainable livelihoods, especially for young people.

The Praia Declaration also recognized that the responsible use of artificial intelligence and other technological developments presents opportunities to fill critical data gaps and that artificial intelligence models must be trained on adequate amounts of SIDS-specific data to produce credible and reliable statistics. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly advance sustainable development in SIDS by enhancing efficiency, fostering innovation, and addressing specific challenges across various sectors. For example, it can reduce international trade costs by improving logistical efficiency and facilitating customs processes. It can also monitor and analyze climate information to inform decision-making in combating against climate change, as well as forecast extreme natural events for early warnings and assess post-disaster situations.<sup>3</sup> However, it is critical to also understand the risks associated with AI. There is a pressing need to develop robust policies and regulations to ensure the responsible and ethical deployment of AI technologies, safeguarding against potential negative impacts on privacy, security, and societal well-being.

**Objective:**

The side event aims to explore and promote effective partnerships in science, technology, and innovation to facilitate resilient prosperity and to achieve sustainable development in SIDS.

**Expected outcome:**

The discussion will showcase good examples of innovative partnerships that facilitate STI in SIDS, identify challenges and provide recommendations on creating enabling environment in SIDS to advance STI in SIDS-specific context. The output of the discussions will inform the STI Forum, SIDS4 and the High-Level Political Forum in Sustainable Development in 2024.

**Format, date and time:**

**Date & Time:** 30 January 2024, 1:15 – 2:30 PM

**Format:** Hybrid format (In-person with few speakers participating virtually)

**Room:** Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

The event will feature panel discussions, case study presentations, and interactive discussions to facilitate knowledge sharing among participants. Government officials, representatives from international organizations, and other stakeholders could contribute to the discussions.

---

<sup>2</sup> Paragraphs 93, 87

<sup>3</sup> Estier, M., Cleeland, B., and Stauffer, M. (2023). Safe and beneficial artificial intelligence for Small-Island Developing States. Geneva, Switzerland: Simon Institute for Longterm Governance.

**Provisional programme:**

1:15pm	<p><b>Opening segment</b></p> <p>Chair: H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations</p> <p>Remarks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, co-Chair the 9th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum)</li><li>• Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General, UNDESA</li><li>• Ms. Ursula Wynhoven, ITU Representative to the UN and Head of UN Affairs Division, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</li></ul>
1:25pm	<p><b>Presentations on partnerships for SIDS, facilitated by Ms. Ursula Wynhoven, ITU</b></p> <p>Presentations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations</li><li>• H.E. Mr. Fergal Mythen, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations</li><li>• Mr. Anurag Mathur, Global Head, Strategic Partnerships Financial Services, Google Cloud, Google</li><li>• Mr. Rodney Taylor, Secretary-General, Caribbean Telecommunications Union</li><li>• Mr. Sam Saili, Chief Executive Officer, SkyEye Pacific Limited</li></ul>
1:50pm	<p><b>Interactive discussions, facilitated by Ms. Ursula Wynhoven, ITU</b></p> <p><b>Guiding questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>How can we scale up innovative partnerships that facilitate STI in SIDS?</i></li><li>- <i>How can we create the enabling environment in SIDS to advance SIDS-specific partnerships on STI?</i></li></ul>
2:28pm	<p><b>Closing by the Chair</b></p>