

High-Level Meeting on mobilization of resources for Small Island Developing States
8:30am – 10:30am, 28 May 2024
Interactive Dialogue Room
American University of Antigua

The United Nations Secretary-General will convene a high-level meeting with international financial institutions, development banks and major donors with a view to ensuring the full mobilization of resources for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/245 and 78/232. The meeting will take place on 28 May 2024 in the margins of the fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4) to be held at the American University of Antigua, Antigua and Barbuda.

Background

Financing for SIDS remains below the levels needed to achieve their sustainable development objectives. SIDS have small and narrow resource bases, which limits their domestic resource mobilization, generation of private finance and ability to attract foreign direct investment. Many SIDS continue to rely on official development assistance (ODA), while some middle-income and high-income SIDS, with limited or no access to external concessional financing, have accumulated unsustainable levels of external debt.

Despite this, ODA to SIDS remains comparatively low, with SIDS as a group receiving only a small proportion of total ODA. Over the last 20 years, total net ODA by all DAC donors ranged between around USD2.5 and USD5 billion, with significant year-to-year volatility. There was also a marked decline in 2022, the most recent year for which data is available, when ODA fell to USD3.3 billion, compared to USD4.2 billion in 2021. Several SIDS that have graduated to middle income status have also lost access to concessional finance from Multilateral Development Banks, due to their eligibility requirements.

The recent confluence of global crises and shocks have further exacerbated the situation. Over 40 per cent of SIDS are now on the edge of or are already grappling with unsustainable levels of debt. SIDS external indebtedness is considerably higher than in other developing countries. Between 2000 and 2019, the external debt of SIDS rose by 24 percentage points (of GDP). And while overall public debt-to-GDP ratios among SIDS are down from pandemic highs of around 71 per cent in 2021, they remain at around 60 per cent on average, significantly above pre-pandemic levels.

SIDS have consistently called on the international community to acknowledge their challenges, particularly their vulnerabilities to external shocks, in the allocation of resources, as well as tailored debt support and relief and increased financing to build resilience, including to address the rapidly accelerating impacts of climate change. SIDS have also been at the forefront of advocacy to consider multidimensional vulnerability in the criteria for allocation of concessional financing and debt relief, including through the operationalization and implementation of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index and the establishment of a SIDS Debt Sustainability Support Service. If SIDS are to realize their potential, achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implement The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), which will be adopted at SIDS4, mobilizing new resources to finance their sustainable development will be critical.

In February 2023, the Secretary-General proposed the SDG Stimulus Plan which is a three-point proposal that seeks to increase liquidity, accelerate debt restructuring efforts and expand concessional and long-term financing to developing countries. The SDG Stimulus Plan draws together existing interconnected proposals under discussion in the UN, G20 and governing bodies of the international financing institutions, and under the Bridgetown Initiative. It has the potential to be transformative for SIDS, by unlocking financing required for investments in sustainable development, including climate action. The Secretary-General has also proposed a series of reforms to the International Financial Architecture, which are well aligned with SIDS' priorities, including to lower the cost of borrowing and create a lasting solution on debt, and scale up development and climate financing. As part of his proposal to move beyond GDP, he has advocated for the systematic consideration of vulnerability in all its dimensions in allocation criteria. These issues will be considered as part of the upcoming Summit of the Future and Fourth International Conference on Financing Development.

Objectives

The meeting, which will include representatives from donor partners, the United Nations system, international financial institutions, development banks, private sector financiers and multilateral development partners, will aim to identify decisive actions to facilitate the mobilization of resources for SIDS to support implementation of the ABAS, with a focus on devising solutions for SIDS in relation to debt vulnerability in the immediate term and debt sustainability in the long term. Due regard will also be given to multidimensional vulnerability, including the potential use of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index as criteria to access concessional finance.

Format

Convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, the meeting will be held in-person in the Interactive Dialogue Room at the American University of Antigua, and it will be structured to enable open and frank dialogue between Heads of State/Government of SIDS, heads of international financial institutions, development banks and multilateral development partners, especially SIDS' development partners.

The opening segment will feature statements by the Secretary-General, Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda as host of SIDS4, Chair of AOSIS and Chair of the G20 to set the scene for the discussion. The opening segment will be followed by an interactive fireside chat between 2 Heads of State/Government from SIDS and select representatives from donor partners, international financial institutions, development banks and multilateral development partners. The fireside chat will focus on how participating partners and institutions are responding to SIDS' calls to mobilize resources, including by increasing access to finance and debt sustainability, in response to external shocks, and how all stakeholders can assist in the full implementation of the ABAS. A limited number of delegations will be invited to deliver interventions during the meeting.

The high-level meeting will conclude with the launch of a Call to Action, issued jointly by the Secretary-General and Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda.

Format

Opening Segment (20 minutes)	Setting the scene <ul style="list-style-type: none">· H.E António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations· H.E. Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and Host of SIDS4· H.E. Fiamē Mata‘afa, Prime Minister of Samoa and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States· H.E. Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships, European Commission
Fireside Chat (90 minutes)	Moderated discussion between <ul style="list-style-type: none">· H.E. Hilda Heine, President of the Marshall Islands· H.E. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados· The Rt Hon Lord Benyon, Minister of State (Climate, Environment and Energy), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland· Mr. Ed Mountfield, Vice President Operations Policy and Country Services, World Bank Group· Ms. Pilar Garrido, Director for Development Cooperation, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development· Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General (Moderator) <p>Followed by interventions from the floor following a pre-arranged speakers' list.</p>
Closing Segment (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· H.E. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations· H.E. Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and Host of SIDS4

Participation

The high-level meeting is open to **invited** Member States, observers of the General Assembly, the United Nations system, and representatives of relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.