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7 Key Points from Employers for the Implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)

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Across Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the private sector continues to be the key creator of jobs.

Employers' and business organisations from SIDS countries, together with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) call on Heads of State from SIDS, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN OHRLLS), the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) to incorporate the private sector's perspective into the SIDS Agenda for the next decade and beyond.

The private sector in SIDS is a diverse mix of local businesses, multinationals, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), driving inclusive economic growth, development, and decent job creation. MSMEs are vital, contributing up to 40 per cent of GDP, 50 per cent of employment, and as much as 97 per cent of private enterprises. Creating decent jobs, a key component of any thriving economy, requires conducive domestic and international conditions for sustainable private sector growth.

Here are the seven main priorities for implementing the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) over the next ten years:

1. **Build Competitive and Resilient Domestic Private Sectors** through investments in MSME development, including access to finance and promoting incentives for entrepreneurship.
 - Simplify procedures for startups and small businesses.
 - Reduce regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles for business, including coherence of rules, standards, and taxation policies.
 - Encourage local sourcing focused on productivity and innovation and fair competition.
 - Ensure stable macroeconomic environments for effective planning and development.
2. **Skills and Labour Migration**
 - Reduce unemployment and underemployment by addressing the mismatch between education and enterprise needs.
 - Encourage investments in technical and vocational education training (TVET), teacher training, and improved education curricula in STEM subjects and soft skills.

- Encourage collaboration between academia and the private sector to align education and training with evolving labour markets.
- Provide incentives for on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and work-based learning.
- Develop efficient migration systems that meet labour market needs and ensure fair recruitment.

3. **Climate Change and Business Resilience**

- Given the vulnerability of SIDS to climate change impacts, sustainable business practices and resilience are key.
- Promote social dialogue for new business models and develop efficient and scalable solutions for sectors negatively impacted by the transition to sustainable development.
- Prioritise sustainable practices in tourism to support long-term industry viability.
- Ensure SIDS representation in regional and international climate policy planning.

4. **Economic Diversification**

- Due to high dependence on external markets and susceptibility to economic shocks, identify additional job-rich sectors SIDS, strengthen the productive capacities of businesses, and reduce reliance on single sources of income.
- Food processing, sustainable transportation, textile manufacturing, construction, renewable energy, ICTs, or artificial intelligence technologies are possible job-rich sectors in addition to sustainable tourism.
- Adapt investment rules to countries' socioeconomic reality and incorporate a value chain approach when addressing business policy.
- Support MSMEs and local suppliers to create resilient business ecosystems.
- Implement regional plans to foster economic opportunities.

5. **Transition from Informality**

- Implement programmes to promote transitions from informal to formal economies as per ILO Recommendation 204, especially in the tourism, hospitality, construction, and fisheries industries.
- Encourage legal registration and tax compliance, especially for SMEs in the informal sector.

6. **Enhance Trade and Financial Architectures**

- International financial architecture must account for the unique development predicament of SIDS and ease access to development finance and climate finance.
- Enhance trade agreements amongst SIDS and invest in integrated, sustainable, and cost-effective maritime and air transportation to boost internal trade.
- Create conducive environments for domestic resource mobilisation.
- Develop policies to improve digital infrastructure, bridging the digital divide.

7. **Coherent Policies and Regional Integration**

- Ensure coherence of international and regional policies, conventions, and mechanisms to avoid confusion and overcome siloed reporting. Some key international principles are the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work or the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



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- Address geopolitical challenges affecting SIDS.
- Update terms of references to mandate minimum SIDS representation in UN groups.
- Utilise existing regional and international mechanisms to monitor ABAS implementation, such as the joint engagement of the SIDS divisions in UN economic and social commissions.

The private sector is essential for building resilient economies and sustainable employment in SIDS. Employers and business organisations are crucial partners in aligning policies, regulations, and practices with the realities of the private sector. Collaborative efforts with all stakeholders will be vital for implementing ABAS and achieving the goals of Agenda 2030.

The International Organisation of Employers on behalf of employers in SIDS.

About IOE

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) is the largest network of the private sector in the world, with more than 150 business and employer organisation members across the world. IOE advocates for sustainable economic development and is committed to enhancing the role of business in global policymaking.

See more at: [International Organisation of Employers: A powerful and balanced voice for business \(www.ioe-emp.org\)](http://www.ioe-emp.org)