



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
27-30 MAY, 2024
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

UNESCO SIDS Operational Strategy: building resilience in SIDS (ID90)

**Tuesday 28 May 2024
16:00-17:30**

Room 10

**Organized by: UNESCO with contributions by Government
of Seychelles, Indian Ocean Commission,**

Background on the event (one paragraph)

The [UNESCO Operational Strategy for SIDS \(2023-2029\)](#)² was adopted in the 42nd session of the General Conference in 2023 and guides the organization's actions in support of SIDS' resilience. It is operationalized through six SIDS Accelerator (ACEs) Programmes, conceived to fast-track progress towards achieving the 2030 SDGs in SIDS and to address their specific priorities. A dedicated Partnership and Resource Mobilization Plan was developed to support the implementation of the ACEs building on the development of "SIDS Partner platforms". The Plan outlines three principles, such as joint ownership and co-creation with SIDS countries and key partners and on efforts to date. The ACEs consist of several initiatives and this session will look at three examples.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

- The first showcased initiative, the **IslandWatch Programme** informed about how citizens and institutional engagement will be mobilized in gathering data to monitor coastal, marine and terrestrial environments based on the successes and lessons learnt of the Sandwatch programme across SIDS in three regions. IslandWatch will be first piloted in nine SIDS in the 3 regions (AIS: Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Seychelles; Caribbean: Grenada, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago; and Pacific (Cook Islands, Fiji, and Kiribati). IslandWatch was officially launched during this side event with in this context, a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) MoU was signed by UNESCO's Deputy Director General, Mr Xi Qi with Mr Vêlayoudom Marimoutou, Secretary General, Indian Ocean Commission to enhance collaborative efforts for the rollout of the pilot in the AIS region. Through this collaboration, UNESCO aims to leverage education for sustainable development, scientific research, data generation and innovation to address the environmental challenges faced by SIDS. Ms Jeannette Larue, Director General, Public Education and Community Outreach Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change & Environment, Seychelles spoke about the benefits of the Sandwatch programme in building a new generation of leaders that are committed to environmental sustainability.

- The second initiative referred to **VISUS (Visual Inspection for defining Safety Upgrading Strategies)**, a programme that aims at reducing vulnerability of building infrastructure (schools) to natural hazards in Haiti, funded by the Adaptation Fund. The VISUS methodology allows to identify key actions for upgrading the safety of existing schools in a multi-hazard perspective, build construction codes capacities, while reducing the time and costs of the safety assessment. In Haiti, VISUS has adopted a triage approach for quantifying and prioritizing the safety upgrading needs of a large number of schools. During the event, **Mr Mikko Ollikainen**, Head of the Adaptation Fund presented opportunities for funding available to SIDS through the Adaptation Fund
- The third initiative refers to efforts to **strengthen higher education research and training capacities in Marine Sciences and biodiversity** in Lusophone SIDS through the Mindelo Centre of Excellence. This programme focuses on strengthening Ocean science and biodiversity capabilities by transforming Ocean Science Centre Mindelo (OSCM) in Cabo Verde into a regional Centre of Excellence, functioning as a hub for advancing research and training endeavors in Ocean Science and Biodiversity for Portuguese Speaking SIDS. It addresses challenges resulting from climate change and environmental degradation in SIDS in the AIS region, including Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe. Timor-Leste, located in the Pacific region, and participating in this initiative due to the shared language. Stephanie Rambler Sustainable Development Officer, UNDESA, highlighted UNDESA's comment to collaborating with UNESCO on the implementation of this initiative.

Key recommendations for action (5-6 bullet points)

1. Enhance the global visibility of UNESCO's Operational Strategy for SIDS and its six Accelerator Programmes among SIDS, interested partners, and donors for collaboration.
2. Launch additional initiatives to address SIDS's needs and priorities and ensure the sustainability of these initiatives through ongoing mobilization efforts.
3. Roll out of IslandWatch pilots in the 3 regions through a multi-stakeholders partnership approach and build on lessons learnt for scaling up to other SIDS.
4. Support the implementation of the programme for marine sciences and biodiversity capacity building in the Mindelo Oceans Center for research and training in Portuguese speaking countries.
5. Build on lessons learnt of the VISUS programme and expand the adoption of the concept in SIDS highly vulnerable to build infrastructure damage by natural hazards.
6. Enhance cooperation between UNESCO and the Indian Ocean Commission in implementation of the IslandWatch Programme in the AIS region based on the signed MOU.