

MEETING SUMMARY
Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
Date: 09 April 2024
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Time: 3:00pm – 5:00 pm (New York Time)

Member Organizations in attendance: COMMONWEALTH Secretariat, DOALOS, FAO, GEF, GLIPSA, IAEA, ILO, IMF, IOM, ITC, OCHA, PIFS, UNRCO (Barbados), UNRCO (Jamaica) UNECLAC, UNESCAP, UNRCO (Samoa), UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDCO, UNDESA (Co-organizer), UNDP, UNDRR, UNECLAC, UNECLAC (POS), UNEP, UNESCO, UNOHRLLS (Organizer), UNOPS, UNPFA, UNWTO, WFP, WHO, WIPO.

Chair: Ms. Tishka Francis, Head of SIDS Sub-programme, OHRLLS

Summary:

The IACG meeting focused its discussion on the preparations for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS to be held in Antigua and Barbuda on **27 – 30 May 2024**. The meeting included an update on SIDS4 related communications and the next steps on the work on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI). The meeting heard an extensive update, including the leadership and background on the SIDS4, underscored progress made on the substantive preparations of the conference, highlighted sessions and events planned at SIDS4 and logistic related information, including related challenges. The meeting also heard of the strides that have been made on the MVI process, including the PGA appointment of the two co-facilitators to carry this work forward. An intergovernmental process will culminate with the finalization and submission of a report of the Co-facilitators to the PGA (early July), including a draft resolution.

1. Opening remarks by IACG Co-chair(s)

UN-OHRLLS

Delivering her opening remarks, **Ms Tishka Francis**, Head of the SIDS subprogramme:

- Underscored the importance of the Fourth International Conference for SIDS, a pivotal moment from the SAMOA Pathway to a new pact.
- Appealed to members to rally behind the SIDS conference, and the new SIDS agenda by (i) ensuring high-level participation from member organizations, (ii) gearing to meaningfully integrate the SIDS Program of Action (PoA) into their work and (iii) backing some of the major initiatives and key deliverables of the SIDS Conference e.g., the SIDS Centre of Excellence.

- Highlighted the ongoing intergovernmental process, including some of the SIDS key priorities.

She also informed:

- OHRLLS is finalizing a SIDS NFP Engagement Strategy which will support the network in the localization of the new Programme of Action. The SIDS NFP Engagement Strategy will be [launched](#) at the SIDS4.
- [The SIDS-GBN Forum](#) will convene immediately prior to the SIDS4 Conference on **25-26 May** in Antigua and Barbuda, to bring the voice of the private sector into SIDS4.
- Together with the Host (Antigua and Barbuda), OHRLLS will convene [A SIDS business roundtable](#) on **28 May**. The SIDS4 Private Sector Roundtable will gather leaders from the private sector, SIDS and development partners for a focused discussion on partnerships for resilient island economies, and the means to ensure an active private sector engagement in the implementation of the next programme of action for SIDS.

UNDESA

Mr. Sai Navoti, Chief, SIDS unit, UNDESA, providing brief opening remarks:

- Welcomed the diverse participation of members (different regions and time zones), including from Resident Coordinator Offices.
- Noted the IACG is the last one under the SAMOA Pathway and expressed appreciation to all to all members of the IACG group for their support, particularly in preparations for its mid-term review and now the Fourth International Conference on SIDS.
- Expressed appreciation of support from colleagues in the regional organizations, the Regional Commissions, and headquarters for their assistance in the intergovernmental process and preparation for SIDS4.
- Extended an invitation and welcomed the opportunity for colleagues attending the Conference in Antigua and Barbuda to be able to meet, in person.

2. Update on the Preparations for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS

2.1 Preparations for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS

Mr. Sai Navoti provided an extensive update on the preparations of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS. His update, which he acknowledged may be a repeat to some, included the following:

- The Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) is going ahead as agreed by the UNGA. **Hon Gaston Browne**, MP and Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda is the President of the 4th SIDS Conference. **USG Mr Li Junhua**, UN

Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the Secretary-General of the 4th SIDS Conference and **USG Ms Rabab Fatima**, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is the Special Advisor of the 4th SIDS Conference.

- The 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) will be held on **27-30 May 2024** in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, under the overall theme “**Charting the course toward resilient prosperity**”.
- The Conference Venue is American University of Antigua (Medical School Campus). More information on the Conference can be obtained on the SIDS4 website: <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/sids2024>.
- The Conference will result in an [inter-governmentally agreed, focused, forward-looking, and action-oriented political outcome document](#) that sets out a new Programme of Action for SIDS, with concrete, measurable targets to support SIDS to achieve their sustainable development objectives over the next ten years.
- The UN General Assembly ([A/RES/77/245](#)) established the Prep Comm to make the organizational, procedural and substantive preparations for the Conference. The Prep Comm was also tasked to hold a one-day organizational meeting in January 2024 to elect the members of the Bureau.
- The [Bureau of the Preparatory Committee](#) was chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Maldives and New Zealand to the UN. The other members included Barbados, Cabo Verde, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Italy, Latvia (Rapporteur), Romania and Seychelles. Antigua and Barbuda (as host of the Conference) and Samoa (as Chair of AOSIS) served as ex officio members.
- As part of their deliverables, the Prep Comm delivered/adopted the following:(i) SIDS4 Annotated Provisional Agenda, (ii) SIDS4 Additional Modality and format, (iii) SIDS4 Provisional Rules of Procedure, (iv) SIDS4 Further Modalities; (v) The Accreditation of NGOs & Others and (vi) The SIDS4 Outcome Document (ABAS).
- The Preparatory Committee convened two sessions at the UN headquarters, in New York, to negotiate the outcome document on **22-26 Jan 2024** (First session) and **1-5 Apr 2024** (Second session).
- The negotiations, as anticipated, were prolonged and in some moments very difficult.
- The outcome document, to be called Antigua & Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), has a 5-part structure: (i) *Section 1*: The SIDS story (where do SIDS find themselves today?), (ii) *Section 2*: What do SIDS want? (an overview of key SIDS priorities under the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development), (iii) *Section 3*: How do SIDS get there (identifying the specific actions that would help SIDS achieve resilient prosperity within the next ten years), (iv) *Section 4*: Role of the UN system in supporting SIDS and (iv) *Section 5*: Monitoring and evaluation (systematic monitoring and evaluation of the SIDS agenda for the next ten years).

- A total of 10 priority areas are identified: (i) Building Economic Resilience, (ii) Scale-up Climate Action and Support, (iii) Scale up Biodiversity Action, (iv) Conserve and Sustainably Use of Ocean and its Resources, (v) Mainstreaming Disaster Risks, (vi) Safe and Healthy Societies, (vii) Data collection, Analysis and Use; (viii) Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitalization, (ix) Productive Populations, and (x) Partnerships.
- Most of the IACG members have mandates they can use to support SIDS under these 10 specific priority areas.

Mr. Navoti also **underscored** these following:

To meet their ambitions:

- a. SIDS are also calling for **increased access to concessional finance**, which includes: (i) expanding multilateral lending, (ii) enhancing the voice and representation of SIDS in international financial institutions and (iii) incorporating vulnerability into the allocation of concessional finance, accompanied by support to sustainably manage their debt levels through inter alia the **establishment of a Debt Sustainability Support Service**.
- b. SIDS efforts will be futile without urgent action to implement the Paris Agreement and scale-up climate finance, in line with existing obligations and commitments.
- c. The Center of Excellence for SIDS, which will be launched at SIDS4, has the potential to **help strengthen data collection, storage and analysis, mobilize investment in SIDS and promote technology innovation and transfer**, as part of a broader ecosystem of existing initiatives.
- d. The **Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)** is a tool which can complement GNI per capita, providing a more comprehensive assessment of a country's vulnerabilities and its need for concessional finance, to help the international community to make smarter, more targeted development policy and financing decisions.

Format of the SIDS4 Conference:

- The SIDS Conference will have (i) Opening and closing sessions, (ii) Eight (8) Plenary sessions and (iii) Five (5) interactive dialogues.
- Members who wish to speak at plenary need to **inscribe speakers** by consulting the [UN journal](#) (inscription for Speaker at Plenary opened 8 April 2024). Member States, as practice, will have the first opportunity to speak. There is 5-minute limit for speakers.
- The five (5) interactive dialogues are: (i) Revitalizing SIDS Economies for accelerated and sustainable growth, (ii) Enhancing Critical Forms of Financing and Aid Effectiveness through collaborative Partnerships: A Conversation, (iii) Making Climate Finance work for SIDS: Building on the Outcomes of UNFCCC COP 28, (iv) Levering Data and Digital Technologies and Building effective Institutions for a Resilient Future in SIDS and (v)

Investing in human capital: addressing health crisis in SIDS and building the potential of youth in SIDS.

Other Events (Special events, Side events and Exhibits)

- The [Special events](#) to be held are: (i) SIDS Children and Youth Action Summit (**24-26 May**), (ii) Gender Equality Forum (**25-26 May**), (iii) [Global Business Network Forum \(25-26 May\)](#), (iv) [Private Sector Roundtable \(28 May\)](#) and (v) [Civil Society Forum \(29 May\)](#).
- A total of **232** Side events have been approved (*191 – Inside Conference Venue, 12 – Outside Conference Venue and 29 - Virtual Event*). Open to Member States, IGOs, UN Entities and accredited stakeholders, the call for side-events ran from 26 January to 8 March 2024, and sought proposals that were aligned with the SIDS4 Theme “Charting the course toward resilient prosperity” and/or addressing any of the five themes of the [Interactive Dialogues](#).

Logistics (Accommodation and Transport)

Members can book for accommodation by consulting the [Host Country website](#) at <https://sids4.gov.ag/> . The Host has confirmed transportation will be provided from hotels including to those who may be in Airbnb’s through some designated central pick-up point to and from the Conference.

2.2 SIDS4 Communications

Ms. May Yaacoub, Chief of the Advocacy unit (OHRLLS) provided an update on the status of SIDS4 related communications:

- UN-OHRLLS, together with DESA and the host country are actively advertising SIDS4 on all our social media platforms. Support from members to amplify on their respective channels is sought.
- Members can freely use the [Trello board with assets and messaging](#) to promote the conference on their respective platforms: <https://trello.com/b/CUPe3lBO/2024-sids-conference-27-30-may-2024-antigua-and-barbuda>
- Status of communications and advocacy efforts for the conference are reviewed weekly, with local counterparts, including ensuring aligning messaging and branding strategies and exchanged information about media engagements during the event.
- There is also close collaboration with Department of Global Communications (DGC) and the PCO on branding, signage and finalizing the setup of rooms for UN TV, press conferences, and media stakeouts - all progressing well.

- After consultations with the host country, there will not be any dedicated space for exhibitions due to space constraints at the venue. There will, however, be a cultural village in the Red Zone organized by the host country, in conjunction with UNESCO – with a view for cultural representation from all SIDS regions.

Ms. Yaacoub further informed of the [Voice the Future SIDS Journalism Campaign](#):

- It aims to enhance SIDS-based reporting and attract journalists from SIDS member countries to cover the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in May 2024.
- Led by UN-OHRLLS and UN-DESA, the campaign seeks to address the lack of media representation specific to SIDS issues.
- Objectives include selecting journalists passionate about SIDS development, promoting in-depth coverage of the conference, and building a network of SIDS-focused journalists.
- Short-term outcomes include quality reporting during the conference, while long-term goals involve establishing a dedicated stream of SIDS-centric news and fostering a network of engaged journalists.
- Members are encouraged to spread the word. The deadline for journalist applications is tomorrow, 10 April 2024.

Discussions

- **UNOPS:** congratulated OHRLLS and UN-DESA on the conclusion of informal consultations for the SIDS4 outcome document. UNOPS sought clarity regarding the structure of interactive dialogues in Antigua and Barbuda, and the inscribing requirements for speakers. **IAEA** also raised a similar question.
- **DESA,** in response, noted the interactive dialogues will likely be held over two hours. SIDS participants must be at the head of government or state level. The IDs will feature a fire-side chat format, intended to promote authentic conversation between participants – not to be scripted. Everyone must inscribe to participate in the Interactive Dialogues. Priority will be given to member states, beginning with the Head/Prime Minister, followed by the Ministers. The UN System, other stakeholders and potentially experts will also be given the opportunity to speak. Time limits to speak will be strictly enforced.
- **UNEP:** sought clarification regarding a central contact in Antigua and Barbuda to arrange events outside the Conference venue.

- **DESA** responded Ms. Shelia Rosso (*contacts information can be offered bilaterally*) is the lead focal point. DESA also noted there were challenges related to the side events, including over subscription and additional space is being sought. If members have not received a response yet on their applications, it is probably they are on the waiting list. The offer of a side event includes basic facilities including for presentations. Additional services including interpretation, the cost will be borne by the organizer(s). All organizers had to be properly accredited to the conference for a side event to be considered – some were rejected for this reason.

- **UNFPA**: flagged there are logistical questions from the field, and a focal person could be useful from UNDESA or OHRLLS staff in Antigua and Barbuda. UNFPA also sought a brief update on the open paragraphs ‘sticking’ points from the draft outcome document negotiations.

- **DESA**, in response, outlined the more challenging obstacles for consensus, highlighting disappointment in the resolution negotiations of the last evening. DESA underscored some of the sticking issues are in fact of priority to SIDS. These included on Indigenous issues and local community and rights, climate change, climate financing which were difficult, and issues related to Security and Climate change. DESA noted at the end of the negotiations everyone was exhausted and hopes for the silence procedure not to be broken, even though other countries have indicated they might break their silence on their redlines.

- The Chair (**OHRLLS**) echoed the challenges surrounding the negotiations, and noted co-chairs will – hopefully – provide language acceptable to all delegates.

- **DESA** also noted the challenges related to accommodation and indicated that these are exacerbated by an upcoming cricket tournament. Following the collapse of the cruise ship plans for accommodation, the host is putting together information on available accommodation, including Airbnbs. Members and delegates are encouraged to book accommodation as soon as possible. The Airbnbs, unlike the hotels, will be within the DSA range.

- **UNESCO**: Noting their work on the Interactive Dialogue (ID 3), wanted to know how the tremendous inputs to the Interactive Dialogues, the research and information produced in

preparation for SIDS4, will be incorporated into SIDS4, beyond just the website information.

- **DESA**, in response, noted there is additional time allocated to the conference closing to allow for delegates to ‘report back’ and emphasize action-oriented discussions for implementation of the side-events, interactive dialogues, and the outcome document. The interactive dialogue is also a place to make pledges or announcements.

- **DESA** also addressed a question that sought clarification on the Center for Excellence, and how delegates can support this initiative and a request to share a related MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Public Foundation. DESA indicated a Center for Excellence Concept Note was circulated, and the host has made presentations on the Centre for Excellence. **The Chair suggested a written response could be given to participants, including on the Centre of Excellence.**

- **UNFPA** asked clarification as to the G20’s request, to which **DESA** indicated the G20 request was for Brazil to speak in their capacity as President of G20 regarding climate finance, which will be addressed in the SG’s high-level event. If they need to speak on IDs, Brazil will need inscribe.

- **UNDP** provided an outline of UNDP’s contribution to the PrepCom process, including the launch of their ‘[Small Island Digital States](#)’ report. UNDP also asked if the Secretariat could provide a list of what Side-Event were not approved.

- In response, **DESA**, indicated that side-events on the waiting list will be allocated to speaking slots as they become available. DESA further provided information on the participants they are funding and encouraged colleagues to draw potential event speakers from the group of funded participants. The UN Protocol can provide information regarding the state of registration of Member States.

3. The MVI – Way Forward

Ms. Miniva Chibuye, Sustainable Development Officer at OHRLLS, providing an update on the way forward on the MVI, noted the following:

- The final report on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), and its framework based on structural vulnerability and lack of structural resilience was launched on 28 March 2024.
- The changes in the final report has ensured a (i) Less dense; easier to read report, with repetitions removed, (ii) English and grammar addressed throughout and language simplified where possible (to improve readability), (iii) Explanations added on the results, specifically the bunching in the scores (iv) Additional information on potential future development on the MVI provided and (v) Detailed literature review included in annex for each indicator.
- Resolution [A/78/232](#) (Paragraph 12 & 13) requested the ¹PGA to appoint “*two co-facilitators...*” “*to consider the recommendations presented in the final report of the High - level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States, its applicability, scope, custodianship and governance and ways to further improve it*”.
- Some issues emanating in the Intergovernmental Process includes the notion of Universality (scope), Indicators (exogeneity vs. endogeneity) including unemployment, external debt service (to economic vulnerability), income inequality (to social resilience) and gender gaps in educational attainment (to social resilience), Applicability (e.g. UN System, IFIs, evidence-based country support/ resource allocation...), and the link to other processes (e.g. beyond GDP, EVI), Governance (how Member States can participate).
- The outline of the intergovernmental process includes (i) focused discussion on elements of the mandate (by clusters) (week of 22 and 29), (ii) Release of the zero-draft resolution (Week of 6 May), (iii) Intergovernmental consultations (May and June 2024), (iv) Finalization of the Draft resolution (End of June) and (v) Finalization and submission of the Report of the Co-facilitators to the PGA (Early July).
- **Ms. Anya Thomas**, UNDESA, adding to the update informed that [documents](#) related to the MVI are available on the websites of DESA and [OHRLLS](#) for review. She also noted the intent of the General Assembly is to move the MVI towards implementation within the UN system.

¹ On 6 February, the PGA appointed His Excellency, Mr. Walton Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, and Her Excellency, Ms. Ana Paula Zacarias, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN

- She noted Resolution [A/78/232](#) (Paragraph 13) requests the Secretary-General to assess how multidimensional vulnerability is currently considered by the United Nations system, explore the potential uses and application of the multidimensional vulnerability index, and to inform the intergovernmental process. The plan is to approach specific entities to invite them to participate in a pilot testing exercise, to be able to demonstrate potential use of the MVI. This does not make it an obligation on any entity to implement it. The General Assembly is interested in the proof of concept, which could also in turn inform the intergovernmental discussions. For agencies indicating willingness to undertake the pilot exercise, they will be issued a formal letter including some terms of reference of the exercise.

Discussions

- There were no requests for interventions from the floor. The chair invited members to contact OHRLLS and DESA for more information on the MVI.

4. Any Other Business

- There were no requests for interventions from the floor under this item. The chair reiterated members should visit the [SIDS4 website](#) for more information. As usual, a record of the meeting will be shared in due course and the meeting adjourned.