

The Cowrie



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Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Unit
Division for Sustainable Development Goals
UN DESA
(March 2025)



Welcome Remarks

UNDESA-SIDS Inaugural Ambassadorial Retreat

Under-Secretary-General, Mr Li. Junhua
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
(Permanent Mission of Singapore - 7 March 2025)

Excellencies,

I'm pleased to welcome you to the inaugural DESA-SIDS Ambassadorial Retreat. I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to be with us today. My gratitude extends to Ambassador Gafoor and the Government of Singapore for graciously hosting us. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Seid of Palau on her appointment as Chair of AOSIS. DESA looks forward to working closely with you and your team over the next two years. I would also like to acknowledge Ambassador Luteru for his able stewardship of AOSIS during a politically significant and critical time for SIDS.

Excellencies,

The *Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)*, adopted last year, outlines a clear vision for the future of SIDS. Since then, the General Assembly has endorsed the *Multidimensional Vulnerability Index*, marking the culmination of nearly three decades of sustained advocacy by SIDS.

Through the *Pact for the Future*, the international community has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting SIDS in achieving the 2030 Agenda and advancing ABAS goals — including measures to address the debt crisis and reform the international financial architecture.

However, the global landscape presents growing challenges that undermine SIDS' interests. Most notably, development finance has contracted. Shifting geopolitical dynamics further underscore the importance of robust partnerships to support ABAS implementation. DESA and SIDS share a long-standing and trusted partnership. Together, we can address the unique sustainable development challenges SIDS face.

As we embark on this collective journey to implement ABAS, I have convened this Retreat for three key reasons:

First, to introduce the full breadth of my Department. Many of you have engaged with DESA through the SIDS Unit, but today, I am joined by colleagues from all nine Divisions of UN DESA. The agenda includes dedicated time for introductions and networking.

Second, to share DESA's efforts in supporting ABAS across our three core pillars of work — intergovernmental support, policy and analysis, and capacity-building — and to highlight opportunities to advance ABAS priorities this year.

Third, to facilitate dialogue with SIDS Ambassadors. ABAS implementation must be informed and guided by SIDS. We welcome your feedback on DESA's priorities and how we can better tailor our support to meet your needs. We also value your insights on strengthening the connection between country-level and Headquarters discussions.

I am confident that DESA's strategic approach to ABAS implementation in 2025 and beyond will be enriched by today's exchanges and your invaluable perspectives.

Let me conclude by thanking you, once again, for your steadfast commitment to advancing the priorities of SIDS.

Thank you.





SIDS Ambassadorial Retreat

On Friday **7 March 2025**, Under Secretary-General (USG) Mr. Li Junhua convened the inaugural UNDESA-SIDS Ambassadorial Retreat.

The retreat was attended by 26 Permanent Representatives, or their designates, and provided an opportunity to explore how UNDESA's global offer on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be strategically leveraged to advance implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). UNDESA also used the opportunity to provide an update on efforts to advance key mandates for the UN system, including the monitoring and evaluation framework (M&E) for the ABAS, as well as efforts to embed SIDS' priorities in major UN conferences led by UNDESA in 2025, including the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3); Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4); and Second World Social Summit (WSSD2). UNDESA Directors, or their designates, participated in a networking session, enabling SIDS Ambassadors to meet with UNDESA leaders and to better understand the breadth of UNDESA's work and identify potential opportunities for collaboration.

SIDS Ambassadors noted the international environment had shifted significantly since the Fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4) in ways that were inimical to SIDS interests. In particular, recent cuts to ODA budgets posed risks to ABAS implementation. In this context, SIDS Ambassadors welcomed the retreat and called for UNDESA's support to safeguard

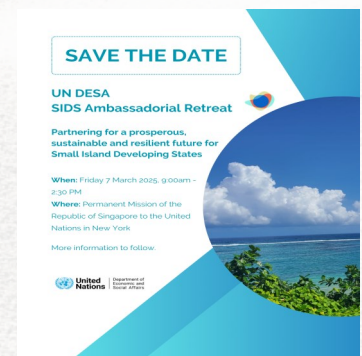
the ABAS by embedding its priorities across the UN's sustainable development agenda. SIDS Ambassadors recommended a series of short-and-long term actions, which UNDESA will take forward in close consultation with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

In the short-term, UNDESA was requested to develop a departmental-wide **Strategy of Support for SIDS**, articulating the contribution of each Division to the implementation of the ABAS over the next ten-years. The Strategy should seek to build on the Department's existing impactful initiatives for SIDS, including the SIDS Coalition for Nature. Complementing this and noting UNDESA's leadership role driving ABAS implementation across the UN system, UNDESA was requested to **provide regular updates to Ambassadors on ABAS implementation**, as well as identifying opportunities for SIDS to access new funding or capacity-building. This could be achieved through participation in monthly AOSIS Ambassadorial Meetings, regular engagements with AOSIS' ABAS Coordination Committee and through reinvigorating a SIDS newsletter. In a shifting global environment developing new partnerships will be crucial. UNDESA was also requested to support SIDS to **use the SIDS Partnership Framework to identify and expand new partnerships**, including with international financial institutions and the private sector.

Over the long-term, Ambassadors requested UNDESA continue to leverage its policy and analytical expertise to assist SIDS to mobilize the means of implementation

required to implement ABAS. This includes **supporting the operationalization of the Center of Excellence** as well as assisting SIDS to access **innovative financing mechanisms to support disaster response and build resilience** and continued support towards the **formalization of the MVI**. There was strong interest among Ambassadors in building capacity in **digitalization and artificial intelligence** to help accelerate the digital transformation in SIDS and provide innovative solutions to key challenges facing SIDS. UNDESA was also requested to convene briefings as well as exploring an **event dedicated to digital technologies** for ABAS implementation, following the model of the SDG Digital Day.

Overall, the retreat was highly successful in building networks between UNDESA staff and SIDS Ambassadors and defining shared priorities for the year ahead. UNDESA has committed to convening the SIDS retreat annually and will use future editions of the Cowrie to provide updates on our efforts to take forward these recommendations and requests for support.





Developing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for ABAS—A Collaborative Approach

The **COWRIE** is pleased to share this update on the work of the **Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF)**, convened by the UN Secretary-General to develop the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS).

The development of this framework is a pivotal step in supporting the sustainable development ambitions of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Led by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), the initiative is being carried out under the authority of the UN Secretary-General.

Why This Framework Matters

This marks the first time the UN system has been mandated to design a comprehensive M&E framework specifically for SIDS. The framework will:

1. **Track progress** toward the achievement of ABAS goals.
2. **Enable evidence-based policy**, supporting decision-making with reliable data.
3. **Enhance accountability** among SIDS and their development partners.
4. **Mobilize resources** by serving as a tool to attract funding and investments.

To ensure practicality and minimize reporting burdens, the framework will align with existing global mechanisms.

Progress So Far

In August 2024, the IATF was formed, comprising 33 UN entities and 46 experts. Since then, the development process has been highly collaborative.

The initial phase involved mapping ABAS commitments against global frameworks such as the SDGs and the Sendai Framework. This exercise identified areas of alignment as well as important gaps — particularly around climate action, finance, and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI).

As a result, an initial set of **63 outcome-based and adaptable targets** was proposed. These are currently under review by AOSIS.

Indicator Selection Process

The process for identifying indicators follows four key steps:

1. **Initial drafting** by the Secretariat, using existing frameworks to ensure alignment and minimize duplication.
2. **Review and revision** by IATF members, who may propose additional indicators.
3. **Technical validation** by custodian agencies to assess feasibility and methodology.
4. **Finalization** based on feedback from custodian agencies and experts.

This process ensures that indicators are robust, actionable, and aligned with both global standards and SIDS-specific needs.

Consultations and Next Steps

Ongoing engagement with AOSIS and other stakeholders remains central. Their feedback is critical to ensuring the framework is both ambitious and grounded in the realities faced by SIDS. In the coming weeks, the Secretariat will continue refining the targets and begin matching them with appropriate indicators. The next phase will focus on **validation**, including pilot testing in selected countries to assess the framework's usability and effectiveness.

A series of **regional consultations and workshops** is also planned to ensure broad participation and feedback from all SIDS regions.

Timeline and Way Forward

The goal is to finalize the M&E Framework by **June 2025**, in line with ABAS timelines.

We encourage all stakeholders to remain actively engaged in this important process. Your input is vital to building a framework that is practical, effective, and truly supportive of SIDS' sustainable development.

The **COWRIE** will continue to provide updates as this work progresses and thank you for your continued support.





The Cowrie's take on the Draft Outcome Declaration

As the countdown to the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) accelerates, the global community is turning its focus to the picturesque coastal city of Nice, France. Governments, environmental organizations, scientists, and advocates are gearing up for what promises to be a pivotal moment in the effort to save our oceans. However, for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the conversation should extend beyond the glamour of the event, beyond 9 to 13 June 2025. It is time for SIDS to take a closer look at how they can maximize their engagement with the conference's outcomes and ensure that their unique challenges are addressed.

The draft declaration from UNOC 3 addresses critical issues that directly impact SIDS, particularly in the face of climate change, marine pollution, and sustainable ocean economies.

1. Climate Change & Sea Level Rise: A Call for Urgency

The draft acknowledges the disproportionate impact of sea level rise on SIDS, whose coastal areas and maritime zones are especially vulnerable. (Paragraph 7) With rising seas threatening the very existence of many island nations, SIDS must continue to advocate for stronger adaptation financing, climate-resilient infrastructure, and robust International cooperation to address the impending threat.

2. Sustainable Ocean Economies: Unlocking Growth for SIDS

The declaration highlights the potential for SIDS to develop sustainable ocean-based economies, fostering industries like fisheries, tourism, and renewable ocean energy. (Paragraph 15) SIDS should continue to push for innovative financial mechanisms such as Blue Bonds, concessional financing, and other tailored instruments to support sustainable ocean planning and implementation, enabling them to unlock the full potential of their ocean economies.

3. Marine Biodiversity Conservation: Protecting Critical Ecosystems

The draft commits to conserving 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030, with a focus on creating and managing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). (Paragraph 17) For SIDS, the establishment and effective management of MPAs are crucial in safeguarding their fragile ecosystems. SIDS must ensure access to financial and technical support for these initiatives and emphasize ecosystem-based approaches to protect vital marine biodiversity.

4. Tackling Marine Pollution: Immediate Action is Needed

Plastic pollution remains a key concern for SIDS, whose economies heavily rely on pristine coastal and marine environments. The draft highlights the need for accelerated action to reduce marine pollution and the establishment of effective waste management systems. (Paragraph 11) SIDS should continue to advocate for

stronger international commitments to tackle plastic pollution and secure resources for waste management and pollution control strategies.

5. Financial Mobilization: Overcoming Financial Barriers

SIDS face significant financial constraints in implementing ocean-related initiatives. The draft calls for the mobilization of resources through innovative financial instruments like Blue Bonds, blended finance, and concessional loans, as well as direct support for small-scale fishers and local communities. (Paragraph 25) SIDS should push for access to specialized financing mechanisms tailored to their unique challenges, ensuring that investments align with their sustainable ocean economies.

6. Strengthening Scientific Research & Knowledge Sharing

The declaration emphasizes the importance of scientific research, including Indigenous knowledge, to inform policies and actions. For SIDS, improving scientific understanding and access to reliable ocean data is essential for sustainable ocean governance. (Paragraph 24) SIDS should further advocate for international research collaborations and capacity-building initiatives that enhance local scientific infrastructure and improve ocean management.

7. Indigenous Knowledge and Early Warning

The draft highlights the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision-making and knowledge sharing. For SIDS, many of which have significant Indigenous populations or traditional oceanic knowledge, this is a crucial point. (Paragraph 24) The Declaration also emphasizes the need to enhance resilience and provide access to early warning systems. (Paragraph 13).

8. Voluntary Commitments for Ocean Action

SIDS are encouraged to take part in voluntary commitments to implement SDG 14, with the Declaration stressing the need for monitoring these commitments. Voluntary commitments are a key mechanism for SIDS to drive action on ocean sustainability. (Paragraph 26) SIDS should ensure that any voluntary commitments made by them or international partners are aligned with their needs and priorities, and push for transparent and effective mechanisms to track and report on progress.

Conclusion:

The 3rd UN Ocean Conference presents a critical opportunity for SIDS to secure the financial, technical, and political support necessary to safeguard their oceans and develop sustainable ocean economies. By aligning global commitments with their specific needs, SIDS can ensure that ocean action leads to real, tangible outcomes for their communities and the planet.





From St Johns to Seville: SIDS & FfD4

Key Expectations and Opportunities for SIDS

On 9 and 10 December 2024, the UNDESA(SIDS) Unit, in collaboration with the Financing for Sustainable Development Office (FSDO), hosted a **SIDS Capacity Building Workshop** aimed at enhancing the ability of SIDS experts to effectively participate in the intergovernmental negotiations for the Outcome Document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4). The workshop concluded with participants highlighting key priorities for SIDS in the FfD4.

The **Cowrie** now provides a brief review of how these priorities are addressed/reflected in the latest draft of the FfD4 Outcome Document.

- (1) **Stronger voice and representation in International Financial Institutions (IFIs)**, to ensure SIDS priorities are prioritized in global policy decisions. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Section II, Para 46(d)* is sufficient).
- (2) **Reforming the International Financial Architecture (IFA)**, to create an Inclusive financial system better serving vulnerable nations, with a focus on SIDS, allowing for equitable access to financing. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Section II, Paragraphs 6, 20, 23(a), 34(e) and 45* are sufficient).
- (3) **Center of Excellence for Data, Innovation and Technology** to enable SIDS to leverage advanced tools, including Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation, to accelerate development and bridge gaps in sectors like international investment. (SIDS Negotiators to ascertain whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Section III, 56(c)* is sufficient).
- (4) **Debt Sustainability Support**—building on existing debt management efforts, FfD4 should enhance debt sustainability frameworks for SIDS, integrating climate and disaster risk insurance solutions to better cope with development and climate financing pressures. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Section II, Paragraphs 6, 20, 23(a), 34(e) and 45* are sufficient).
- (5) **Separation of Climate, Biodiversity, and Development Finance**—dedicated streams of finance for climate action, separate from development and biodiversity funding, will help SIDS better address their disproportionate environmental challenges. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether the sentiments contained in Paragraph 34 and 34 (b), (c), (d) and (h) are sufficient. They should also check whether the operationalization of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund in Para 34(f) is also sufficient).



- (6) **Direct reference to the ABAS**— (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraph 56(c)* is sufficient).
- (7) **Minimum allocations** for SIDS on all financing (percentage, early access) - **not clearly reflected**
- (8) **Redefining Vulnerability**—the unique vulnerability profiles of SIDS clearly defined, to ensure that tailored support measures are introduced. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraph 31(q)* is sufficient).
- (9) **Trade and Special Treatment**, SIDS to benefit from special and differential treatment in global trade agreements, with preferential trade terms and support for sectors like e-commerce, to foster economic diversification and resilience. (SIDS Negotiators to check whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraph 36(e)* is sufficient).
- (10) **Broadening references to MVI** beyond just graduation (SIDS Negotiators to check whether the sentiments reflected in *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraph 38(a)* is sufficient).
- (11) **Capacity-building** (links to Center of Excellence (CoE) – economic diversification, technical support. (on CoE– see: 3 above, on Capacity Building, SIDS Negotiators to ascertain whether the sentiments reflected in the following paragraphs of *Draft FfD4 Outcome Document*, are sufficient; Para 22(k)-(m), 23(e), 27(c), 29(d) & (e), 31(p), 32(b), 33(a), 34(h), 36(b), 39(a), 41(b), 42(a), 42(b)(v), 50 (b), 52(e),(f) & (i), 56(c) and 58(a)).
- (12) **Support for Cultural, Sport, Tourism and Economic Sectors**- SIDS' unique cultural assets, including tourism and fisheries, need more significant investment. FfD4 should recognize these sectors as key drivers of sustainable growth. **Not reflected**
- (13) **Ocean-Based Economy**, including targeted investments in sustainable marine industries, including fisheries, marine tourism, and renewable ocean energy. **Not reflected—the closest is a reference to ocean and mountain economies in Paragraph 34(h)**
- (14) **Resilience-Building**- investing in resilient infrastructure and disaster risk reduction systems is essential to safeguard SIDS communities from the impacts of natural disasters and climate change. (SIDS Negotiators to ascertain whether: *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraphs: , 34(h), 32(b) & (d), 34(b) & (h) and 44(a)* are sufficient).
- (15) **Supporting Post-COVID Recovery** focusing on strengthening healthcare, social protection, and economic resilience. **Not reflected very well—BUT SIDS negotiators may wish to see whether Paragraphs, 8, 22(j), and 47(f) are relevant and sufficient.**
- (16) **Promoting SMEs and MSMEs** to foster entrepreneurship and job creation. (SIDS Negotiators to ascertain whether: the sentiments reflected in *Draft FfD4 Outcome—Paragraphs: 16, 27(g), 37(d), 49(a) and 57(e)* are sufficient and or relevant).
- (17) **Health and Social Sectors**— investments in children's health, education, and social protection are critical to ensuring the future prosperity of SIDS communities. **Not reflected**

*FfD4 SIDS Capacity Building Workshop Participants
Amb. Ms Tania Romualdo (PR-Cabo Verde) 2nd front
right, making an intervention*





The Road to DOHA–WSSD2

A Cowrie Commentary on the WSSD2 Food for Thought Paper.

Small Island Developing State (SIDS), are acutely aware of the challenges that persist in achieving their social development aspirations. The internationally agreed path towards achieving SIDS social sector priorities is well reflected in **Part III, Paragraph 32, Sections A (e) (i) & (ii), F and I** of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda of SIDS (ABAS).

The upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2), scheduled to be held in Doha, Qatar from 4 to 6 November 2025, presents an essential opportunity for SIDS to further address these challenges in a global forum that should unite all nations in pursuit of a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.

While the proposed structure of the political declaration in Section 1 of the WSSD2 **Food for Thought Paper** provides a skeleton of an ambitious roadmap, that is intended to create the necessary political momentum and reach people around the globe, for SIDS, the path to progress in social development must not only focus on poverty eradication, decent work, and social integration, but also on enhancing resilience against environmental shocks and building long-term sustainable solutions, including financing.

The topics covered in the **Call to Action to "close the gaps"** in the Copenhagen commitments are particularly relevant to SIDS. Over the years, SIDS have witnessed firsthand how global crises, ranging from the global pandemic, geological and meteorological disasters to economic recessions and geopolitical tensions, have exposed the fragility of previous social development gains.

SIDS populations disproportionately bear the brunt of these crises. As we approach DOHA, SIDS need a **Political Declaration** that not only addresses their need for more than reactive measures but also provides resilience building strategies to protect the most vulnerable during crises.

For most SIDS, social protection is a critical area for growth. The Food for Thought Paper's focus on **upscaling social protection systems** aligns with SIDS priorities (See: ABAS, Para 25(a)(ii) & (vi)). However, there is a pressing need for social protection systems to be inclusive, adequately funded and designed with the unique circumstances of vulnerable countries in mind.

Similarly, fostering the transition from informal to formal employment and ensuring **access to decent work** is a priority. Yet, this must be coupled with targeted investments in sectors where SIDS have the potential for growth, such as sustainable tourism, blue economies, and renewable energy.

The discussion around financing for social development is of paramount importance. SIDS have long faced challenges in accessing predictable and sustainable resources for development. The call to **enhance international cooperation** and reform the **global financial architecture** to support developing countries is critical, but it must go further. SIDS need **enhanced access to climate**

finance, debt relief, and technology transfers, which are vital for our long-term sustainability.

The upcoming WSSD2 presents an opportunity for global solidarity, but it must go beyond rhetoric. SIDS negotiators must ensure that the political declaration is not just a statement of intent but a **blueprint for action** that addresses their unique challenges and aspirations, reaffirming their right to a fair and just development path.

The **Food for Thought Paper** provides a starting point, but it is the responsibility of all member states, including SIDS, to ensure the final declaration reflects the urgency of their collective needs. For SIDS, WSSD2 should not be just a summit of promises, but a defining moment that drives meaningful change through concrete actions that address their vulnerabilities and build the resilience needed for future generations.

Chief's Corner



Welcome back everyone to **THE COWRIE**—*SIDS Magazine*! After more than three years of silence, responding to the request made by the SIDS Ambassadors, we are back, reinvigorated and are excited to reconnect and to share with you the updates on progress SIDS are making in building resilience and advancing their sustainable development.

UNDESA's mandate on SIDS, as originally enunciated in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and observed throughout the past four decades, include *inter alia* to act as liaison and focal point for governments, organs and agencies of the UN systems and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, on matters related to the follow up of the SIDS sustainable development Agenda.

In the above connection, now that the **COWRIE** is back foraging, members of the IACG on SIDS, all SIDS Stakeholders, including Permanent Missions in New York, are welcome to contribute **articles, opinion pieces or simple thoughts** to be published. We hope to journey with you on this resilient path! **Next Edition– Let's talk Debt!**

In this 1st 2025 Edition, the **COWRIE** is providing updates on the development of the ABAS M&E Framework, the MVI and the SIDS Partnerships Framework. We are also providing commentaries on the preparations for UNOC3, FfD4 and WSSD2, Again– warm welcome—Everyone! ENJOY!

RSSNavoti (Sai)
Chief, SIDS Unit

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The MVI—A Tool for Development!



Ambassador Alfonso
Walton Webson
(Antigua and Barbuda)



The **COWRIE** is pleased to reproduce here (abbreviated) the sentiments expressed by the Co-Chair of the MVI

Inter-Governmental Negotiation, H.E. Mr. Walton Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations.

This piece was first published in the **DESA VOICE**, Volume 28, No. 3, March 2024

What is the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)?

The MVI is a revolutionary new tool that provides a comprehensive way to assess a country's structural vulnerability and its capacity to withstand external shocks. Unlike traditional economic indicators such as Gross National Income per capita (GNI pc), the MVI looks beyond mere income and delves into factors that influence a country's long-term resilience to global challenges, such as natural disasters, climate change, conflicts, and health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MVI is built on two core levels:

1. Universal Quantitative Assessment: This provides a standardized approach to measure vulnerability across all developing countries, giving each a score based on a variety of factors, such as exposure to environmental hazards and economic instability.

2. Vulnerability and Resilience Country Profiles (VRCPs): These in-depth profiles are tailor-made for each country, highlighting their unique vulnerabilities and resilience factors. These profiles guide policymakers in securing the right support and building long-term resilience.

Why Is the MVI Important for Developing Countries, Especially SIDS?

For many developing countries, access to development finance is often tied to a country's GNI per capita. However, this system falls short in capturing the complex

vulnerabilities faced by countries in special situations like SIDS. Current financial support mechanisms tend to focus on post-crisis relief rather than preemptive resilience building a gap that the MVI seeks to fill.

Unlike the GNI, which simply measures average income at a given time, the MVI paints a much richer picture of a country's vulnerabilities. It accounts for more than just income fluctuations; it takes into consideration factors like climate vulnerability, geographical remoteness, and infrastructure weaknesses all of which are particularly significant for SIDS. This nuanced approach helps ensure that countries' vulnerabilities are adequately acknowledged in international finance discussions.

In a world where external shocks are becoming more frequent and intense, it's crucial to move beyond simple economic indicators. The MVI provides a holistic view of vulnerability, capturing dimensions that GNI and GDP miss. For instance, while GNI per capita may show a country's average income, it doesn't capture the fluctuations and risks that could undermine that income. The MVI does.

The MVI in Action: Beyond Income and GDP

The **MVI isn't here to replace GNI or GDP but to complement them.** While traditional economic indicators focus solely on income and production, the MVI considers factors that make a country's economy volatile such as exposure to climate risks, limited infrastructure, and small population size. By doing so, it provides a more accurate measure of a country's vulnerability, allowing governments and international organizations to develop better-targeted support strategies.

For example, if a country's GNI shows steady growth, but the MVI reveals high vulnerability due to geographic isolation or

susceptibility to extreme weather events, the country can advocate for specialized international support that accounts for these challenges.

Vulnerability Isn't Just About Poverty

One crucial takeaway from the MVI is that **vulnerability doesn't necessarily mean poverty.** Even wealthy countries can be vulnerable due to external shocks or structural weaknesses. The MVI distinguishes vulnerability from poverty by including a broad range of factors beyond income, such as environmental risk and social resilience. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of a country's development needs and ensures that international support is tailored to the specific risks faced by each country.

A Call for International Cooperation

In conclusion, the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) is a gamechanger for countries like SIDS that face unique challenges but often get overlooked in global discussions. It provides a stronger, more nuanced case for why these nations need increased international support. The MVI will help ensure that vulnerable nations receive the right kind of financial aid and resources not just in times of crisis, but as part of a broader, long-term strategy for building resilience and achieving sustainable development.

As we embark on the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), it's clear that the MVI could play a pivotal role in reshaping how the world views vulnerability and resilience. **By embracing this tool, we take a significant step toward a more equitable, sustainable future for the most vulnerable countries**

For the full interview: See **DESA Voice**, Volume 28, No. 3, March 2024
<https://desapublications.un.org/un-desa-voice/expert-voices/march-2024/why-multidimensional-vulnerability-index-mvi-matters>



A New Era: Reimagining the SIDS Partnership Framework

In Paragraph 37 of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), world leaders call on the United Nations Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to present recommendations for strengthening the SIDS Partnership Framework. Over the past decade, this Framework has been instrumental in raising the global profile of SIDS, advancing knowledge sharing, and catalyzing impactful partnerships through platforms and initiatives like the Global Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues, the SIDS Partnership Awards, and the UN Steering Committee. Yet the urgency of today's challenges—climate change, economic shocks, and digital divides—demands a more ambitious and inclusive approach.

A renewed vision is required to strengthen the SIDS Partnership Framework, a vision centered on aligning with ABAS and delivering real results for SIDS. This means embedding gender equality, climate resilience, and data-driven strategies across all efforts, while embracing innovation and the blue-green economy. Creation of new tools, such as, a SIDS Partnership Incubator, investment platforms, regional hubs, and a civil society working group could strengthen and foster collaboration, unlock funding, and better connect local voices with global opportunities. Inclusivity is key: youth, women, indigenous communities, and local businesses must be not just beneficiaries, but active partners in shaping sustainable futures.

To bring this new vision to life, the UN's role must evolve. A stronger, better coordinated and resourced Secretariat, improved monitoring systems, and closer collaboration with UN Resident Coordinator Offices and financial institutions will be essential. Clearer divisions of responsibility—particularly between UN DESA and OHRLS—are needed to streamline support and amplify impact. With enhanced visibility, digital outreach, grassroots engagement, and alignment with national development strategies, the Framework can transform from a promising initiative into a dynamic engine for resilience, innovation, and prosperity across the world's small island states.

**SIDS Civil Society
Engagement Forum**

**12-13 May 2025,
UNHQ, New York**

*Thanks to the kind
support of the Irish
Mission*



The Cowrie Salute

The **COWRIE** takes this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to Ms. **Rosemary O'Hehir** and Ms. **Saeko Kajima** for their dedicated service to SIDS, through their tenure at the SIDS Unit of UNDESA, which concludes in **June 2025**.

Rosie joined the SIDS Unit as a Sustainable Development Consultant, in 2023, an additional resource so graciously supported by the Government of Australia as part of its contribution to strengthening of the SIDS Unit of DESA and for the preparations for SIDS4

Rosie's support and contributions came at a most critical juncture. With her diplomatic and extensive inter-governmental experience and with a pleasant temperament, she gave her utmost, professionally and efficiently, which earned the admiration and thanks of all who worked with her, from USG Mr. Li Junhua, the UNDESA Directors and all of us, her colleagues.

Ms. Sae Kajima, our temporary Sustainable Development Officer, re-joined the SIDS Unit in 2022 to assist preparations for SIDS4. She has since been very instrumental in providing substantive support to the intergovernmental processes, including the preparatory process for SIDS4 and support to the 2nd Committee.

Sae presently leads the Unit's support efforts to the Co-chairs (Latvia & Maldives) of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS. She spearheads activities and organizes the UN SIDS Partnerships Awards.

Sae has substantive expertise in capacity-building for the SDGs including in the climate change and renewable energy sectors. She is a strong advocate for social inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities.

Thank you **BOTH** for your dedicated service. You'll both be missed at the north end of the 26th Floor, UN Secretariat Building.

The **Cowrie** salutes and thank you both!



Ms. Rosemary O'Hehir



Ms. Saeko Kajima



SIDS Center of Excellence an Update



The **Center of Excellence for SIDS** was one of the key deliverables of the SIDS4 Conference. Over the past year, Antigua and Barbuda, under the leadership of Ambassador Webson, has made significant progress operationalizing the Center and its four pillars, in consultation with AOSIS, and with the strong support of the PVBLC Foundation, DESA and OHRLLS. Recruitment is underway for a consultant to lead the development of governance and operational policies to help get the Center up and running (in St. Johns).

A Strategic Advisory Group, co-chaired by H.E. Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda and H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu of the Maldives, was formed to guide the design of the **Debt Sustainability Support Service for SIDS**. The design phase concluded on 12 September 2024, and the operational phase has since begun to establish the necessary structures and processes for the DSSS's effective implementation. Regional Consultations are planned for the second half of 2025 to develop governance frameworks tailored to the unique needs of each SIDS region, as well as progressing hosting arrangements for the DSSS and its regional hubs ensuring local ownership. Political momentum and support for the DSSS has been building through the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document for FfD4 and its potential value has been recognized in the draft outcome document as a mechanism to help enable sound debt management. A High-Level Roundtable on the DSSS will be convened on 25 April 2025 in the margins of the World Bank Springs meetings to refine its operational roadmap, solidify new partnerships and accelerate its expansion to cover other developing countries, including LDCs and LLDCs.

A roadmap has been developed for the **Global Data Hub** to bring together technology and data capabilities. The PVBLC Foundation is working on scaling up the prototype data hub, which was developed for SIDS4, to cover different countries and issues and will be sharing this with SIDS soon. Plans are underway to launch the inaugural **Island Investment Forum** at this year's World Investment Forum. There will be more to share in our next edition.

The **Cowrie** will keep you posted on all the latest developments. The Center of Excellence needs a broad network of supporters for this work, so if you would like to partner, please get in touch. We continue to count on your support for this important initiative for all SIDS.

UNDESA Organized SIDS Events Post SIDS4

Paragraph 34 of the ABAS underline the need to give due consideration to issues and concerns of SIDS in all relevant UN conferences and processes. UNDESA was happy to organize these Events post SIDS4:

- 1) Int'l Workshop on *Utilizing Big Earth Data for the SDGs in Small Island Developing States*, Beijing, China, 2 – 8 September 2024
- 2) *FINS Initiative: Advancing Fiji's National Development Plan with INFF and UN DESA*, 1-3 October, 2024, Suva, Fiji
- 3) Int'l Workshop on *Caribbean Energy & Climate Conference & The 2nd GTI Summit 24*, 7-12 October 2024, Willemstad, Curacao
- 4) *SIDS Focal Points Meeting*, 14-16 October 2024, Port Villa, Vanuatu
- 5) Multistakeholder Hearing Event "*From St John to Seville*" - *FfD4 Preparation*– 2nd Prep-Com 28 October 2024, UN HQ, New York
- 6) *CBD COP16*, Cali, Colombia:
 - (i) Event—*Caribbean SIDS-SIDS Cooperation on Data Solutions for Nature*, 24 October 2024
 - (ii) Event:- *Consolidating Global Environment Facility/UNDP partnership with SIDS Coalition for Nature*, 31 October 2024
 - (iii) Closed-door Meeting | *Internal Strategic Planning* for the SIDS Coalition for Nature, 31 October 2024

- 7) *UNFCCC COP29*, Baku, Azerbaijan
 - (i) *Financing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation for Overseas Territories and Sub National Jurisdictions*, 11 October, 2024
 - (ii) *Building a Resilient Future– Strengthening Climate Finance in SIDS*, 12 Oct 2024
 - (iii) *Fostering Climate Adaptation in SIDS and Beyond*, 12 Oct 24
 - (iv) *Bridging Global and Local– Empowering Communities for Climate Action*, 14 November 2024
 - (v) *SIDS Leading the Way Towards 100% Renewable*, 14 November 2026
 - (v) *Striving for Ambition: Ocean Based Actions*, 16 November 2024
 - (vi) *How responsible Governance can catalyze Renewable Energy Financing* 20 November 2024
 - (vii) *High-level Dialogue on Climate and Finance for African SIDS*, 21 November 2024.
- 7) Capacity Building Workshop "*Strengthening capacity of SIDS Negotiators for FfD4 Negotiations*" 9-10 December 2024, UNHQ, New York.
- 8) Expert Group Meeting: *Fireside Chat 2: From ABAS to Nice Ocean Action Plan-Synergies and Priorities*, 14 January 2024, Incheon, Korea
- 9) SIDS Event: 59th Stats Commission- "*Small Island Developing States: Strengthening Data Infrastructure for a Resilient Future*", 4 March 2024, UNHQ, New York
- 10) UNDESA - *SIDS Ambassadorial Retreat*. Singapore Mission, 7 March 2025.



The Cowrie What's-Up 🍌

UP-COMING UNDESA SIDS EVENTS

April 2025

1. **21 April 2025:** Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)- Outreach Event to IFIs and MDBs, World Bank Spring Meetings, Washington DC, USA
2. **25 April 2025:** High-level Roundtable: Operationalizing Global Debt Sustainability Support Services (DSSS), World Bank Spring Meeting, Washington DC, USA.

May 2025

3. **12-13 May 2025:** SIDS Civil Society Engagement Forum— SIDS Partnerships Framework, UNHQ, New York, USA
4. **27 –28 May 2025:** 6th Conference on Strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda & SDGs, “CLIMATE AND SECURITY: Challenges and Perspectives of SIDS: Copenhagen, Denmark.
5. **30 May 2025:** Ambassadorial Meeting, UN Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships, UNHQ, New York , USA.

June 2025

6. **9-13 June 2025:** 3rd UN Ocean Conference on the Oceans (UNOC3), Nice, France—SIDS Events (TBA)
7. **30 June—3 July 2025:** 4th Int’l Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) Seville, Spain. SIDS Events (TBA)



CONTACT US

*Interested in the Cowrie? Do you wish to
contribute an Article for the next Edition?
We will be talking “DEBT”*

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Participants at the SIDS Capacity Building
Workshop for FfD4, 9-10 December 2024

