

SIDS Civil Society Engagement Forum

12-13 May 2025, UNHQ, New York

Introduction

On 12–13 May 2025, the *Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Civil Society Engagement Forum* will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Organized by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in collaboration with the Governments of the Maldives and Latvia – the co-chairs of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS -, and with generous support from Ireland, the Forum aims to ensure that diverse stakeholder perspectives and needs are fully reflected in the recommendations for strengthening the SIDS Partnership Framework, an outcome from the Fourth International Conference on SIDS.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 as part of the SAMOA Pathway, the **SIDS Partnership Framework**¹ was created to monitor progress on existing partnerships and stimulate the launch of new, genuine, and durable partnerships in support of sustainable development in SIDS.

The **Fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4)**², held from 27 to 30 May 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda, concluded with the adoption of *The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS)*. Paragraph 37 of ABAS requests the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and through the Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships, to present recommendations for strengthening the SIDS Partnership Framework and the SIDS Global Business Network and its Forum.

The **SIDS Civil Society Action Plan and Roadmap (2024–2034)**³ - developed by civil society representatives from the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (AIS), Caribbean, and Pacific regions - outlines a strategic framework for enhancing civil society's role in implementing the SIDS agenda. It calls for tailored capacity-building, adequate financing, and meaningful inclusion, recognizing the vital contributions civil society makes to sustainable development.

A renewed and strengthened SIDS Partnership Framework can be instrumental in advancing these efforts - fostering partnerships built on trust, transparency, accountability, and collaboration across all sectors of society.

Inputs

- **Civil Society Consultations and Study (May 2025):** With funding support from Republic of Korea/UNOSD, UN DESA is developing a study assessing the opportunities, challenges, and capacities of stakeholders in the Caribbean, Pacific, and AIS regions to support implementation of the ABAS. *To be launched at the Forum.*
- **Preliminary Strategies for Enhancing the SIDS Partnership Framework (April 2024):** With funding support from the Government of Portugal, UN DESA developed a set of

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/small-island-developing-states/sids-partnership-framework>

² <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/sids2024>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/SIDS%20Civil%20Society%20Action%20Plan%20and%20Roadmap%2029%20May%202024.pdf>

preliminary strategies for enhancing the SIDS Partnership Framework over the coming decade. [Study by UN DESA on the SIDS Partnership Framework](#)

Structure and Format

The SIDS Civil Society Engagement Forum is a two-day meeting designed to facilitate structured dialogue and engagement between civil society and Member States:

- **Day 1 – Civil Society Positions:** Participants will refine key priorities, identify capacity needs, and develop actionable recommendations to enhance civil society engagement in the SIDS Partnership Framework and support ABAS implementation.
- **Day 2 – Dialogue with Member States:** Civil society representatives will present their recommendations, showcase successful partnerships, and engage in a focused dialogue with Member States to strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration in SIDS.

Outcomes

- **Enhanced Civil Society Engagement:** Greater integration of civil society perspectives, deeper South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange, broader representation, and stronger influence in shaping implementation aligned with the ABAS.
- **Strengthened Collaboration between Civil Society and Member States:** Improved mutual understanding and cooperation to advance shared priorities for sustainable development in SIDS.

Venue

The Forum will take place at UN Headquarters in New York.

- The first day, 12 May, will be held in **Conference Room A** as a workshop for civil society representatives in SIDS (**by invitation only**).
- The second day, 13 May, will be held in the **ECOSOC Chamber** and will be open to all Member States and relevant stakeholders, and will be broadcast on UN WebTV at <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1yzy4z1hr>

Website

<https://sdgs.un.org/2025SIDSCSOForum>

Programme

12 May 2025, Conference Room A, UNHQ

10.00 AM – 10.15 AM **Opening remarks**

- H.E. Dr. Ali Naseer Mohamed, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations, co-chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS

- H.E. Ms. Sanita Pavļuta-Deslandes, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations, co-chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS

Outline of Forum

- Mr. Sai Navoti, Chief, SIDS Unit, UN DESA

10.15 AM – 10.40 AM

Setting the Stage: Strengthening the SIDS Partnership Framework

- *Presentation on SIDS Partnership Framework Consultations (Mr. Ola Goransson, UN DESA)*
- *Presentation of SIDS Global Business Network and Forum (Mr. Damien Sass, UN OHRLLS)*
- *Study Findings on Stakeholder Engagement for ABAS (Ms. Karuna Rana, Consultant, UN DESA) (virtual)*

Followed by Q&A

10.40 AM – 11.00 AM

Coffee break & networking

11.00 AM – 12.30 PM

Interactive Breakout Groups – Strengthening Civil Society Engagement in the SIDS Partnership Framework

Facilitated discussions **in two rounds** to identify key recommendations across the following themes:

1. Connecting local to global action
2. Improving access to funding
3. Strengthening CSO–government partnerships
4. Strengthening CSO–private sector partnerships
5. Addressing CSO capacity development needs

Each group should aim to develop at least one actionable proposal—e.g., a funding mechanism, training initiative, or new engagement model, including how the SIDS Partnership Framework’s activities can support effectively.

See below for guiding questions

12.30 PM – 01.00 PM

Plenary: Reporting Back and Discussion

(Highlights from each breakout group)

Facilitated by Mr. Sai Navoti, UN DESA

01.00 PM – 02.30 PM

Lunch break

02.30 PM – 03.30 PM

Interactive Breakout Groups - Regional perspectives on SIDS Civil Society Action Plan and Roadmap Implementation

- *Introduction of session and the **SIDS Civil Society Action Plan and Roadmap** – Ms. Emeline Siale Ilolahia and Ms. Karuna Rana (virtual)*

Groups reflect on SIDS region-specific approaches to advancing the SIDS Civil Society Action Plan and Roadmap.

See below for guidance.

Group facilitators:

- Ms. Emeline Siale Ilolahia (**Pacific**)
- Mr. Shabbir Esmael (**AIS**)
- Ms. Anna Cadiz-Hadeed (**Caribbean**)

03.30 PM - 03.45 PM Coffee Break & Networking

03.45 PM – 05.00 PM Refining CSO Recommendations

- *Reporting back by three regional groups*
- *Facilitated discussion to finalize CSO recommendations*

Moderated by Mr. Sai Navoti, UN DESA

13 May 2025, ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ

10.00 AM – 10.20 AM Opening remarks

- H.E. Ms. Sanita Pavljuta-Deslandes, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the UN
- H.E. Ms. Shiruzimath Sameer, Deputy Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN
- Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Ms. Rabab Fatima, Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

10.20 AM – 10.40 AM ABAS in Action: Stakeholder Engagement and Innovative Partnerships for SIDS

- Presentation by Ms. Karuna Rana, consultant for UN DESA (virtual)

10.40 AM – 11.10 AM The Role of Civil Society in Driving ABAS

Presentation of recommendations from civil society in SIDS based on consultations. The recommendations will set the stage for the interactive dialogue with Member States.

A draft summary of the CSO recommendations will be posted on the Forum website in the evening of 12 May 2025.

11.10 AM – 12.50 PM Interactive Dialogue: Civil Society and Member States – Partnering to Deliver ABAS

Member States respond to the civil society recommendations and engage in a discussion on opportunities, challenges, and next steps to build a meaningful and effective SIDS Partnership Framework.

Any delegation wishing to make an intervention may request the floor during the dialogue. Interventions should aim to be succinct and limited to 4 mins.

Moderated by the co-chairs

Guiding questions:

- What actions can be taken to strengthen civil society engagement and foster more effective multi-stakeholder partnerships at the national and regional levels in SIDS?
- How can we build a more inclusive SIDS Partnership Framework that better supports civil society contributions to the implementation of ABAS at the national, regional, and global levels?

Reflections by UN:

- Mr. Simon Springett, UN Resident Coordinator in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean (*virtual*)
- Ms. Lisa Simrique Singh, UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles (*pre-recorded*)
- Mr. Dirk Wagener, UN Resident Coordinator to Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (*pre-recorded*)

12.50 PM – 01.00 PM

Closing remarks and next steps

- H.E. Ms. Sanita Pavļuta-Deslandes, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the UN
 - H.E. Ms. Shiruzimath Sameer, Deputy Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN
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Guiding Questions for Day 1 Interactive Breakout Groups

Regional breakout groups

Guiding questions:

- **Thematic Priorities:** Which one or two ABAS-aligned thematic areas is civil society in your region best placed to lead on—considering your region’s needs, strengths, and networks?
- **Scalable Best Practices:** What existing civil society-led initiative, campaign, or alliance in your region could be scaled or adapted to support implementation of the Civil Society Action Plan and Roadmap?
- **Alignment with Regional Mechanisms and Member States Recommendations:** What regional mechanism (e.g., learning hub, accountability platform, or partnership with a regional body) could strengthen implementation, collaboration, and accountability for civil society? How might this align with Member States’ recommendations under the SIDS Partnership Framework—for example, through civil society participation in national/regional nodes or a civil society showcase in the SIDS Incubator and Investment Platform?
- **Targeted Support Needs:** What targeted support, capacity-building or resource, is most urgently needed to enable your region’s civil society to deliver on the Roadmap?
- **Immediate Regional Action:** What is one actionable, region-specific recommendation or initiative your group can propose today to advance the implementation of the Roadmap—and how can the SIDS Partnership Framework help support it?

Breakout Group 1: Connecting Local to Global Action

While civil society organizations in SIDS are often deeply rooted in local communities, their voices remain underrepresented in global dialogues and actions. Additionally, meaningful engagement and collaboration between civil society actors across the three SIDS regions is still limited, often only occurring through formal UN processes. This disconnect hinders the potential for shared learning, South-South cooperation, and a stronger, unified civil society voice on the global stage.

This group will explore how to elevate local knowledge and solutions onto the global stage, strengthen civil society’s influence in international climate, ocean, and development agendas, and foster stronger South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange among island regions.

Each group will select a facilitator, as well as a note-taker and presenter to report back to the plenary.

Expected Output:

1. What is one concrete action or initiative (tool, alliance, platform, campaign, etc.) can we co-design today to strengthen local-to-global linkages?
2. How could the SIDS Partnership Framework effectively support the implementation or coordination of this action?

Guiding questions:

1. **Visibility and influence:**

- How can we ensure that grassroots voices from all SIDS regions meaningfully influence regional and global decision-making?
 - What platforms, tools, or mechanisms are missing—or underused—that could help amplify local actions and overcome barriers like language, tech, or access?
2. **Cross-regional collaboration:**
- How can we increase engagement and collaboration between CSOs across the Caribbean, Pacific, and AIS regions outside of UN-led processes?
 - What kind of platforms or alliances could support continuous South-South learning and joint advocacy?

Breakout Group 2: Improving access to funding

Despite being at the forefront of climate and ocean action, CSOs across SIDS face persistent challenges accessing sustainable and appropriate funding. Barriers include complex application processes, short-term funding cycles, lack of visibility to donors, and limited eligibility for larger grants, and lack of tailored financing mechanisms. These constraints hinder long-term impact, innovation, and the ability of CSOs to scale community-driven solutions.

This group will explore how to design inclusive, appropriate and sustainable financing mechanisms tailored to the realities of SIDS CSOs and identify actionable proposals that the SIDS Partnership Framework could support to unlock new funding pathways.

Each group will select a facilitator, as well as a note-taker and presenter to report back to the plenary.

Expected Output:

1. What is one concrete funding initiative or mechanism we can co-design today to improve funding access for SIDS CSOs?
2. How can the SIDS Partnership Framework support its implementation, scale-up, or coordination?

Guiding questions:

1. **Barriers and readiness:**
 - What are the main funding barriers faced by CSOs in SIDS, and what changes are needed to make existing funding mechanisms more inclusive and accessible?
 - What support is needed to strengthen CSOs' ability to apply for, manage, and report on funding effectively?
2. **Donor engagement and funding models:**
 - How can we increase visibility of SIDS CSOs to funders and ensure their work aligns with donor priorities without compromising community needs?
 - What new or underutilized funding models could better support civil society in SIDS, including models that enable CSOs to generate their own sustainable funding?

Breakout Group 3: Strengthening CSO-government partnerships

Strong and sustained collaboration between civil society and government is critical to inclusive and effective policy-making and sustainable development. While many CSOs contribute valuable local

knowledge and services, they are often engaged late in the process or only in a consultative role. True partnership requires institutionalized mechanisms, mutual trust, and co-creation.

This group will explore how to deepen collaboration between CSOs and governments at local, national, regional and global levels. It will also propose concrete actions to institutionalize partnerships through the SIDS Partnership Framework, as well as the implementation of ABAS.

Each group will select a facilitator, as well as a note-taker and presenter to report back to the plenary.

Expected Output:

1. What is one concrete proposal (e.g. joint taskforce, national CSO coordination mechanism, policy dialogue platform) we can co-design today to enable a truly meaningful, long-term partnership between CSOs and governments in a SIDS context?
2. How can the SIDS Partnership Framework help support or scale it?

Guiding questions:

1. **Trust and co-creation:**
 - What barriers currently prevent trustful collaboration between CSOs and governments—and how can we overcome them?
 - How can governments and CSOs move from consultation to co-creation?
2. **Enabling policies and structures:**
 - What types of policies, frameworks, or institutional mechanisms could ensure civil society is engaged early and consistently in policy and planning processes at local, national, regional and global levels?
 - What accountability tools or feedback mechanisms could support this?

Breakout Group 4: Strengthening CSO–private sector partnerships

The private sector holds significant potential to support and scale the work of civil society—through funding, technology, and innovation. Yet, partnerships between CSOs and businesses in SIDS remain limited, often due to competing interests, lack of trust, or unclear value propositions. When done right, such partnerships can unlock co-benefits, drive local economic development, and amplify community impact.

This group will explore how to build meaningful, ethical, and strategic partnerships between civil society and the private sector, especially in ocean and island-based sectors.

Each group will select a facilitator, as well as a note-taker and presenter to report back to the plenary.

Expected Output:

1. What is one concrete initiative (e.g., joint innovation fund, responsible business pledge, partnership toolkit) we can co-design today to strengthen CSO–private sector engagement in SIDS?
2. How can the SIDS Partnership Framework, as well as the Global SIDS Business Network Forum help facilitate or support it?

Guiding questions:

1. **Shared value and trust:**
 - How can we build trust and align goals between CSOs and private sector actors while ensuring equity and community benefit?
 - What principles or safeguards are needed to ensure CSO–private sector partnerships are ethical, transparent, and community-first?
2. **Models and incentives:**
 - Are there examples of successful partnership models or incentives that could be adapted in the SIDS context?
 - What role can the private sector play in supporting civil society-led solutions in SIDS—and what’s in it for them?

Breakout Group 5: Addressing CSO capacity development needs

Many civil society organizations in SIDS operate with limited resources and small teams—making it difficult to sustain momentum, access funding, and scale impact. One-off engagements and support are often not enough. What’s needed is long-term, context-specific capacity development that supports leadership, technical skills, and organizational resilience.

This group will identify priority capacity needs and explore practical, scalable approaches to strengthen the capacity of CSOs across SIDS, including how the SIDS Partnership Framework can serve as a platform for ongoing support, learning and knowledge exchange.

Each group will select a facilitator, as well as a note-taker and presenter to report back to the plenary.

Expected Output:

1. What is one concrete initiative (e.g., regional training hub, mentorship program, shared resource platform) we can co-design today to strengthen CSO capacity in SIDS?
2. How can the SIDS Partnership Framework help coordinate or support this?

Guiding questions:

1. **Priority gaps:**
 - What are the most urgent capacity development needs of CSOs in your region to strengthen both advocacy and project delivery?
 - How do these needs compare to those of CSOs in the Global North—and what types of support are needed to close this gap?
2. **Sustainable support models:**
 - How can we move from one-off trainings and engagement models to sustained, long-term capacity-building support?
 - What role can South-South exchange, mentorship, or regional CSO networks play in building lasting capacity?