

QUESTIONNAIRE

Follow-up to and implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS)

Please note that strict word limits have been established for each question. The Secretariat is unable to consider any information beyond these established word limits. You are requested to report only on new or updated information. Information conveyed in previous surveys or Secretary-Generals' reports will not be considered.

PART A - FOSTERING RESILIENT PROSPERITY IN SIDS

1. Enhanced UN System Support for achieving Resilient Prosperity in SIDS (FOR the UN system)

Using the UN implementation Matrix¹ (attached) to guide feedback, briefly elaborate on any resilience building interventions or strategies (proactive or preventative) that were/are being implemented during the reporting period at national or regional levels aimed specifically at improving resilience in SIDS. Please include indications of resource allocations, if available (600 words).

During the reporting period, ESCAP implemented diverse resilience-building interventions at national, subregional and regional levels. Asia-Pacific SIDS have particularly voiced their priorities for building resilience and highlighted the critical need to mainstream the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) across climate financing. They emphasized that debt relief and concessional financing, leveraging the MVI, are vital for economic stability and future investment.

Environmental and Economic Resilience:

A focus has been on strengthening environmental economic resilience through capacity building for ecosystem evaluation in the Pacific and innovative climate financing in Asia and the Pacific. In the **Maldives**, ESCAP initiated support for blue carbon investment, tapping into climate financing via blue carbon credits. This included stakeholder consultations, aiming for a pilot project and capacity building to mobilize financing. This technical support extends to the Maldives on developing innovative climate financing tools and mechanisms, strengthening policy, institutional, and legal frameworks, and a blue carbon financing strategy.

Furthermore, capacity building funded under RPTC is ongoing in 2025, including **Fiji**, to develop climate-smart macroeconomic policies and promote green finance. This leverages South-South cooperation for knowledge exchange on integrating climate change into macroeconomic policymaking. ESCAP also supported capacity development via knowledge products, such as a draft roadmap for closing the gender gap in financial inclusion in Fiji and value propositions for FDI in sustainable tourism in **Kiribati**. In 2025, further interventions with Kiribati's Investment Promotion Department are planned for co-creating investment opportunity catalogues and incentives.

For **Solomon Islands**, a small island least developed country (LDC) that is graduating from LDC status in 2027, ESCAP led the Inter-Agency Task Force on LDC Graduation and provided technical assistance to develop a smooth transition strategy. This aims to mitigate potential impacts of graduation and to ensure a smooth transition, with the draft endorsed by Cabinet in April 2025.

Infrastructure Resilience:

To enhance infrastructure resilience, ESCAP supported the **Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)** and **Kiribati** under the 14th tranche of the Development Account in developing national SDG 7 Roadmaps. These roadmaps offer insights into energy resources, technology, economics, and policy to

¹ accountability framework developed to promote and monitor progress with implementation of ABAS

achieve SDG 7 and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In FSM, findings contributed to updating the National Energy Policy, while in Kiribati, analysis led to further work on Minimum Energy Performance Standards.

Under the 16th tranche of the Development Account, ESCAP began work in **Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Kiribati** and **Timor-Leste** to strengthen national capacity for developing policies for efficient, resilient, low-carbon, and accessible port cities.

Social Resilience:

Efforts to foster social resilience include RPTC-funded capacity building on realizing inclusive and equitable societies. In 2024, **Fiji** benefited, fostering socio-economic resilience through strengthened social protection systems and inclusive policymaking for older persons, advancing gender equality and Leaving No One Behind. The project aids Fiji in identifying strategies to enhance inclusive social protection design and delivery, with climate action linkages. Additional regional activities on the care economy benefited several Pacific SIDS, with LNOB-related voluntary national review Briefs for **Papua New Guinea**. This capacity-building for Fiji continues into 2025, focusing on a social protection action plan based on the ESCAP Social Protection online Tool (SPOT), assessing current situations and intersectionality with climate change.

Cross-cutting Support and Policy Coherence:

ESCAP works with **FSM, Kiribati** and **Marshall Islands** to monitor, review, update, and implement trade, investment, and industrial policies, strengthening their capacity for cross-sectoral coordination to improve their business environment and foster a thriving private sector. This includes strengthened capacity to climate change-related displacement, migration and planned relocation. ESCAP also led the development of “Indicator Guidelines for Policy Monitoring in the Pacific” to support Pacific SIDS in sustainable development reporting and progress reporting against ABAS via the forthcoming M&E framework. ESCAP and the UN development system collaborate with Pacific agencies to optimize synergies and policy coherence for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, aligning with ABAS.

2. Enhanced and Tailored Development Cooperation for SIDS (For Development Partners, IFIs and SIDS Governments)

Successful ABAS implementation will require improved, tailored development cooperation approaches and financial resources, calibrated to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS. It will also require that relevant national/regional plans programme and policies are implemented. Briefly elaborate on:

- i) any planned or ongoing strategies/approaches to improve and deliver on more tailored development support to SIDS. What are the expected results from these interventions in the targeted countries Please include indications of resource allocations if available (600 words)
- ii) any planned or ongoing national programmes to develop more resilient SIDS economies. What are the expected results from these interventions. Please include indications of resource allocations if available (600 words)

PART B - COHERENT AND EFFETIVE UN SYSTEM WIDE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES TO SIDS

Paragraph 36 of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) requests the UN Secretary-General:

“..... within his annual report to the General Assembly for the 80th Session on the implementation of the ABAS, to present proposals to ensure a coordinated, coherent and effective UN system wide capacity development approach to SIDS and to enhance the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ABAS, including a potential single SIDS dedicated entity at the UN Secretariat.”

At the global level, the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) oversees UN efforts for sustainable development in 162 countries and territories, guiding, supporting, tracking and overseeing the coordination of development operations. The UNSDG derives its mandate from the Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which serves as an important instrument for the monitoring and the assessment of UN development operations. The integrated nature of ABAS calls for a UN Development System that works in a coordinated and coherent manner while preserving each entity's mandate and role and leveraging each entity's expertise.

1. Coherent and effective UN system support to SIDS (For UN System Responses, 750 words)

- i. What challenges are encountered by UN agencies, to deliver a 'whole-of-system response' in addressing the needs, risks and vulnerabilities and to provide development programmes that address the underlying drivers of needs in SIDS?

Challenges faced include high-level UN coordination not adequately reflecting ground realities, exacerbated by inter-agency competition due to funding scarcity. Additionally, government changes affect continuity and national capacity, requiring RC-led UNCT re-engagement.

- ii. What percentage of your entity's programming expenditures on development activities in SIDS in 2024 were allocated to joint programmes? What percentage will be allocated in 2025?

In 2024, ESCAP estimates around 4 per cent of its programming expenditures (in-kind RB staff time) on development activities in SIDS were allocated to joint programmes (e.g., Fiji under a Joint SDG Fund project Accelerating Multi-level Action for SDG Localization with UN-HABITAT). For 2025, the amount allocated is the same as in 2024, with percentage estimates calculable only at year-end.

- iii. What are the lessons learned, challenges and best practices of the UNSCDF (including multi-country frameworks) and their respective Country Implementation Plans (CIPs) in promoting joint programming?

Lessons learned/best practices: UNSCDF is useful for strategic government engagement, especially during transitions; RCOs' guidance helps UN agency missions.

Challenges: High-level coordination does not always reflect ground realities; limited government human resources require agile, targeted support. There's a need for more focus on practical implementation to deliver results.

- iv. What improvements would you recommend to enhance the UN's system-wide approach to capacity development in SIDS?

Recommendations include the ability to contextualize and assess capacity needs to adjust approaches, accordingly, ensuring the UN system responds to changing country priorities. "Early Warning for All" is useful for system cohesion but needs consistent funding. SDG Fund joint programmes are effective for multi-year capacity building.

- v. How can the UN better partner with regional development stakeholders e.g. CARICOM Secretariat, SPC, PIF, SPREP etc to improve programme delivery, improve coherence and avoid duplication

The UN could actively inform itself of past and ongoing support and engage relevant partners. It must recognize the lead role of existing subregional/regional intergovernmental organizations, particularly in the Pacific, and position itself as a technical support provider.

For Governments

- vi. How would you assess the current level of coordination among UN agencies in supporting capacity development for SIDS at the national, regional and global levels? What challenges do you believe hinder effective coordination among UN entities in providing support to SIDS? What mechanisms would you suggest to improve the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of UN support for SIDS? (600 words)

2. Interagency Mechanisms for improved coherence

Under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) provides broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for the UN system in the areas under the responsibility of Executive Heads. Focus is placed on inter-agency priorities and initiatives while ensuring that the independent mandates of organizations are maintained. One particular focus of the CEB is system-wide coordination and policy coherence in the programme areas. The CEB has to date created three inter-agency mechanisms to increase coherence across the United Nations system in addressing urgent development challenges. These are UN-Water, UN-Oceans and UN-Energy.

- vii. As there is no single entity in the United Nations system that has sole responsibility for SIDS, do you see value creating a UN-SIDS to serve as the primary agent for promoting system-wide collaboration on SIDS issues, and to promote coherence in the UN system's multi-disciplinary response to SIDS? (500 words)

viii.

Creating a new UN-SIDS entity at the global level holds limited value as a coordinating structure but could be useful as an implementing agency for SIDS activities. However, its creation is currently unrealistic due to the fiscal situation and ongoing UN80 reforms. For country-level work, coordination is best done under the Resident Coordinator (RC) or at the subregional level to better contextualize and assess the ground reality of SIDS, while SIDS-specific funding windows (such as the SDG Fund) can be facilitated globally or regionally.

Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs Plus (ECESA Plus)

Coordination of UN System actions for the implementation of politically agreed documents e.g. ABAS takes place through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social (ECESA Plus). Its over fifty members have developed a matrix for the follow up to ABAS, focusing on mandates specifically directed at the United Nations system as well as on areas where the UN system is already engaged through its programmatic work. The UN Implementation Matrix, which is being continuously updated, serves as an accountability framework and as a working tool to promote and monitor progress. ECESA Plus meets regularly to *inter alia* SIDS related matters and is convened by the Under Secretary General of DESA.

- viii How can ECESA Plus be used to more effectively harness UN agency contributions and to amplify systemic synergies?)

3. HLPF

- ix. How should the HLPF SIDS session be structured to effectively monitor progress to scale up implementation of the SDGs while at the same time driving implementation of ABAS? What role should the monitoring and evaluation framework of ABAS play in this? (250 words)