



Inter-Agency Task Force on the  
Development of a Monitoring and  
Evaluation Framework for the Antigua and  
Barbuda Agenda for Small Island  
Developing States

(IATF-ABAS)

**Discussion Paper 1**

*“Selection of Targets”*

# Inter-Agency Task Force on the Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (IATF-ABAS)

## Discussion Paper 1 - “*Selection of Targets*”

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### 1. Introduction

This is the first of three discussion papers that will guide the work of the Inter-agency task force on the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (IATF-ABAS).

This discussion paper ***sets out a process and proposes a set of guiding principles for the selection of targets***. For the purposes of this exercise, a target is defined as:

*“a broad statement that captures the main essence of an outcome or an action and that provides sufficient flexibility for the selection and development of indicators.”*

This paper is guided *inter alia* by the recommendations of the technical workshop co-hosted by DESA and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in Apia on 11-13 March 2024 (**Attachment A**).

### 2. Monitoring and evaluation framework for the ABAS

The ABAS was adopted at the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, which took place from 27 to 31 May 2024. It sets out the sustainable development priorities of SIDS for the next decade and the support required from the international community to achieve them.

The ABAS will be the first programme of action for SIDS with a dedicated monitoring and evaluation framework. The framework will:

- track and assess progress toward the fulfillment of the ABAS;
- enable the identification of issues requiring increased focus to accelerate progress;
- support evidence-based policy and decision-making;
- build accountability among SIDS and their development partners for the effective implementation of the ABAS; and
- act as a tool to mobilize new resources.

As per the mandate in paragraph 38 of the ABAS, the monitoring and evaluation framework will comprise of a set of targets and indicators. Taken together, the targets and indicators will provide good quality, verifiable evidence on the progress toward achieving ABAS commitments by 2034. The targets will translate the high-level policy commitments in the ABAS into concrete outcomes that are measurable, from which an indicator framework can be developed. A process and guiding principles for the selection of indicators will be further elaborated in discussion paper two.

An assessment of progress against the targets and indicators will be presented via an annual report of the Secretary-General and discussed during the SIDS Segment of the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, commencing in 2026 (ABAS Para. 40). Also commencing in 2026, the Regional Commissions will conduct comprehensive biennial reviews of progress in SIDS in their respective regions (ABAS Para. 41). These biennial reviews will inform the annual report of the Secretary-General. The institutional arrangements and governance structure for the monitoring and evaluation framework will be further elaborated in discussion paper three.

### **3. Process to develop Targets**

#### *a. Progress to date*

As set out in the first meeting of the IATF-ABAS, the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework will be a stepwise process.

Guided by the mandate, a comprehensive mapping of existing international and relevant regional agreements was undertaken. The preliminary mapping was shared as part of the background documentation for the first IATF-ABAS meeting on 12 September 2024. An updated version is available via the IATF-ABAS sharepoint site.

The mapping informed the development of a list of draft targets (**Attachment B – Excel Document**) as a basis for consultation with the IATF-ABAS. The ABAS comprises 133 actions under 30 key action areas. To ensure the monitoring and evaluation framework is not overly burdensome for SIDS, it is understood that the framework will focus on a core set of SIDS-specific targets and indicators, which seek to capture the spirit of the agreement.

Following consultation with AOSIS, it was determined the monitoring and evaluation framework would focus on tracking commitments contained in **Section III: How Do SIDS Get there?** (the means of implementation component of the document). This section of the ABAS consists of 59 actions, under 10 key action areas and 14 sub-clusters.

In total, 81 draft targets have been proposed. As per the mandate, 65 (80.2 per cent) are consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Where there was no alignment between SDG targets and ABAS commitments, alternate targets have been proposed drawing on existing international agreements where possible and informed by the preliminary consultation with the IATF-ABAS.

<b>Procedure to select/develop targets</b>	
<b>ABAS action is:</b>	<b>Target</b>
In line with SDG target (full/partial overlap) and indicator	Use SDG target
In line with SDG target (full/partial overlap) but corresponding SDG indicator does not capture ABAS action main issue	Use SDG target
Compatible with indicator from other global statistical indicator frameworks but target is not available	Identify target from existing global agreements or develop a new target, consistent with the definition of targets (contained in the introduction)
For the remaining cases where there is no alignment with SDG targets or with commitments in existing global agreements, or where indicators are not compatible with the SDGs or other global statistical indicator frameworks: Build new target	Develop new target consistent with the definition of targets (contained in the introduction)

While ABAS actions are aligned with the SDGs, the ABAS provides a more nuanced focused on SIDS-specific issues and challenges. Therefore, the draft targets will require tailoring, whilst maintaining complementarity with existing agreements and commitments. In instances where ABAS actions capture multidimensional issues, targets may be selected/developed for each of the main issues addressed in that action. A process to narrow down the list of targets will need to be undertaken, prioritizing targets that will support the development of a SIDS-specific framework while ensuring the list of targets appropriately capture the breath of issues in the ABAS across its key action areas.

Guidance from the IATF-ABAS will be critical to ensure the final set of targets strikes an appropriate balance between being SIDS-specific while not imposing additional burden on SIDS or Custodian Agencies who are responsible for collecting and analyzing data and reporting to the global database.

*b. Guidance from the IATF on the selection and development of targets*

Feedback is requested from the IATF-ABAS to further improve the list of targets. IATF-ABAS members have been divided into thematic sub-groups (**Attachment C**), in line with their technical expertise. IATF-ABAS members within each sub-group are requested to provide guidance to advance the development of targets that are SIDS-specific under the relevant ABAS key action areas and in response to the guiding questions (section 5). Given the IATF members' direct engagement with individual SIDS, their guidance will be critical in ensuring the identified targets align with SIDS' unique and diverse contexts, while remaining achievable.

To guide the formulation of an appropriate set of targets, a set of guiding principles have been outlined below (section 4) which should be taken into consideration in the process of assessing the proposed targets and providing feedback, including the proposal of alternate targets.

In reviewing the proposed targets, it should be noted that these will need to allow sufficient flexibility for the selection of appropriate and feasible indicators from existing global statistical indicator frameworks (for example the SDG indicator framework) as the process progresses and the framework evolves. It is requested that the IATF-ABAS review the targets bearing this in mind and with the understanding that the framework will continue to undergo iterative refinement, as appropriate.

**4. Guiding principles for the selection/development of targets**

To inform the selection of targets, taking into account the mandate and the recommendations of the technical workshop, the Secretariat proposes the following guiding principles:

- (i) **Targets should be SIDS-specific:** Whilst ensuring complementarity with targets and commitments in existing international agreements.
- (ii) **Targets should be clear and quantifiable, as appropriate:** With flexibility to allow value setting for indicators at the national level, consistent with national contexts.
- (iii) **Targets should be achievable:** The target should give due consideration to the specific challenges faced by SIDS and be achievable for a majority (60 per cent) of SIDS by 2034.
- (iv) **Targets should be measurable:** Targets should be able to be feasibly measured through an indicator, which utilizes data SIDS are already collecting (for example,

through SDG reporting). Progress toward the target can be tracked overtime, at defined intervals and in a timely manner (noting reporting against the framework will commence in 2026).

- (v) **Targets must be clearly defined, including their purpose, scope and responsibilities:** Using terminology commonly accepted and understood within the UN and SIDS context.
- (vi) **Targets should define target coverage and disaggregation:** Targets should explicitly identify the population, institution, area or industry covered and should explicitly identify the appropriate levels of disaggregation, in alignment with the relevant ABAS commitment.
- (vii) **Targets should avoid multidimensionality:** Targets should not combine two or more different priority issues. Where ABAS commitments combine issues, each action should be translated into one target. A process to narrow down the number of targets to a workable framework will be undertaken, in consultation with AOSIS.
- (viii) **Targets should support resource mobilization in SIDS:** By effectively engaging international institutions, international financial architecture and other development partners, as appropriate.

## 5. Guiding questions

Questions to be taken into consideration in the process of assessing the proposed targets and providing feedback, including the proposal of alternate targets:

- Do you agree with the proposed list of targets for the key action area? Which are the most appropriate? Explain why and if none are appropriate, propose a replacement.
- Do the targets in the thematic cluster appropriately capture the essence of the ABAS commitments?
- Are there important issues from the thematic cluster which are not covered by the proposed list of targets? (For example, commitments which may be contained in other sections of the document).
- Do the targets appropriately balance covering the breadth of ABAS commitments, whilst remaining manageable for SIDS, considering the challenges SIDS face in collecting, analyzing and reporting data?
- Are there specific areas where national-level targets or priorities should be reflected more explicitly?

- Do the targets provide an appropriate basis for a monitoring and evaluation framework that is SIDS-specific and does not simply replicate existing frameworks?
- Given the time span of the monitoring and evaluation framework, are the proposed targets flexible enough to address emerging challenges, such as pandemics or shifts in global economic trends?

## **6. Next steps and timeline**

IATF-ABAS sub-group leads are requested to coordinate and provide consolidated feedback on the proposed targets in their thematic cluster, in response to the guiding questions as set out in **(Attachment D)**, by **Friday 31 January 2025 using the feedback template (Attachment D)**.

The Secretariat will use this feedback to inform a revised list of targets for consultation and endorsement by AOSIS.

Discussion Paper Two setting out the process and principles for the selection of indicators will be circulated in early February.

## Technical Workshop in support of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4): Recommendations

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE NEW MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The new framework should be:

- developed in **close consultation with AOSIS to ensure maximum buy-in from all SIDS**;
- clear on its **purpose, scope, responsibilities and resources for implementation**;
- **relevant** to SIDS' national contexts and priorities to promote **national ownership** and allow SIDS to tell their own story ("bottom-up" approach);
- **flexible and adaptable** to account for national and regional contexts;
- based on a compilation of indicators which are **simple and measurable** giving priority to data that SIDS are already collecting with clear rationale for indicator selection;
- **pragmatic** by leveraging reporting from existing global and regional agreements where possible, whilst ensuring targets and indicators are focused on measuring SIDS-specific priorities;
- **based on quality data** that can be standardized for comparison;
- **voluntary, efficient** and not create new reporting structures that are overly burdensome for SIDS;
- able to **drive accountability** and collaboration across government (breaking down silos);
- **open to continuous improvement** to reflect new data and innovations;
- **able to provide the data for an evidence-based** mid-term review;
- able to **effectively mobilize resources for SIDS'** priorities by highlighting the most pressing challenges to donor partners, the UN system, international financial architecture and other partners; and
- **inclusive, transparent and collaborative** to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement.

### Format of the new framework

- The new framework should comprise a core set of SIDS-specific targets and indicators as a baseline, to facilitate comparability between regions.
- Targets should be broad and there should be sufficient flexibility in setting indicators, so that they are relevant to the context of each country, including the utilization of existing proxy indicators.
- An indicative national reporting template should be developed by the Secretariat, as a guide for measuring progress at the global level., with flexibility for countries to adopt their own reporting formats.
- National reporting on the core set, through the indicative template, should be supplemented with voluntary national reporting, reflecting national proxy targets or indicators.
- All SIDS should be encouraged to report by 2028, to enable a comprehensive, data-driven mid-term review in 2029.



- Additional regional indicators could be attached to the global indicators, to provide regional specificity and leverage regional processes (such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent).
- Development of the monitoring and evaluation framework should be guided by the eleven-step harmonization process (below).
- The framework should articulate the contribution of regional organizations to monitoring.
- The development of a complementary template to measure the commitments of partners should also be considered to track the support provided by the international community to assist SIDS to implement the new programme of action.

## **Eleven-step harmonization process**

### **1. Assess existing frameworks**

Begin by *mapping out all existing monitoring frameworks* related to global agendas. Identify which frameworks are currently in use at the national, regional, and subnational levels. Understand the specific goals, indicators, and data collection methods associated with each framework.

### **2. Identify overlaps and gaps**

Compare the different frameworks to identify *commonalities* and *overlapping indicators*. These areas of convergence can serve as a starting point for harmonization. Also, identify any *gaps* where certain aspects of development or specific indicators are not adequately covered by existing frameworks.

### **3. Engage stakeholders**

Involve relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, and international partners. Conduct consultations, workshops, and dialogues to gather input on harmonization priorities and challenges.

### **4. Develop a harmonization strategy**

Create a *national strategy for harmonization* that outlines the overarching principles, objectives, and timelines.

Define how the harmonization process will align with global agendas such as the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and other relevant frameworks.

### **5. Standardize indicators and data collection and reporting methods**

Work towards *standardizing indicators* across different frameworks. Prioritize widely accepted and globally recognized indicators.

Establish common data collection methods, including protocols for data collection, reporting, and validation.

### **6. Integrate data systems**

Explore ways to integrate existing data systems and databases. This could involve creating a centralized platform or using interoperable systems. Ensure that data collected under different frameworks can be easily aggregated and analyzed.

**7. Promote cross-sectoral collaboration, including public private partnerships**

Encourage collaboration between different sectors (e.g., health, education, environment) to ensure a holistic approach to monitoring.

Foster partnerships that cut across traditional boundaries to address interconnected challenges.

**8. Capacity building and training**

Invest in capacity building for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Train relevant personnel on harmonized methodologies.

Promote data literacy and statistical skills among stakeholders.

**9. Produce a pilot report**

Pilot test (with support from the Regional Commissions) the usability of the framework to produce a report, prior to the encouraged timeframe for SIDS' reporting. This can assist with targeted actions and further refinement of the steps in the harmonization process, especially steps 5 through 8.

**10. Monitor progress and adapt**

Regularly assess progress in harmonization efforts. Use feedback loops to make adjustments as needed.

Monitor the impact of harmonization on policy decisions, resource allocation, and development outcomes.

**11. Share best practices**

Learn from other countries' experiences. Exchange knowledge and best practices through international forums, workshops, and peer-to-peer learning.

## **ATTACHMENT B**

**(See: Excel Document)**

### Target Review Thematic Sub-Clusters

ABAS Action Cluster	IATF-ABAS sub-group
A. Build economic resilience	UNCTAD (lead), ITC, WTO, UNDP, UNICEF, IAEA, IOM, ILO, UNIDO, UNESCO
B. Scale-up climate action and support	UNFCCC (lead), UNDP, IAEA, UNOPS, UNESCO
C. Scale up biodiversity action	UNEP (lead), UNDP, IAEA, UNESCO
D. Conserve and sustainably use the ocean and its resources	DOALAS (lead), FAO
E. Mainstream disaster risk reduction	UNDRR (lead), UN-HABITAT
F. Safe and health societies	WHO (lead), UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO, UNESCO
G. Data collection, analysis and use	UNDP (lead), ECLAC, ESCAP, ECA, IAEA, ITC, UNDRR, FAO, UNESCO
H. Science, technology, innovation and digitalization	ITU (lead), IAEA, UNOPS, IRENA, UNIDO
I. Productive populations	ILO (lead), WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, FAO, WFP, UNIDO
J. Partnerships	UNOSSC (lead), DCO

## IATF-ABAS Target Selection and Development Feedback Template

ABAS Action Cluster Sub-group: \_\_\_\_\_

IATF-ABAS Contributors (names & organizations):

### A) Target-specific feedback – do you agree with the proposed targets?

For each proposed target in the relevant thematic area that is not agreed upon, please respond to the relevant components of the following table.

Note, for targets where no feedback or comments are received, it will be assumed these are agreed upon unless otherwise specified.

ABAS Action	Proposed target	Relevant guiding principles not met	Other comments or justification for exclusion	Proposed replacement	Comments or justification

### B) Feedback on thematic area

<p><b>1.</b> Do the targets in the thematic cluster appropriately capture the essence of the ABAS commitments?</p>

<p><b>2.</b> Are there important issues from the thematic cluster which are not covered by the proposed list of targets? (For example, commitments which may be contained in other sections of the document).</p>

<b>3. Do the targets appropriately balance covering the breadth of ABAS commitments, whilst remaining manageable for SIDS, considering the challenges SIDS face in collecting, analyzing and reporting data?</b>

<b>4. Are there specific areas where national-level targets or priorities should be reflected more explicitly?</b>

<b>5. Do the targets provide an appropriate basis for a monitoring and evaluation framework that is SIDS-specific and does not simply replicate existing frameworks?</b>

<b>6. Given the time span of the monitoring and evaluation framework, are the proposed targets flexible enough to address emerging challenges, such as pandemics or shifts in global economic trends?</b>

**C) Other comments and feedback**