

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

**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).*

In 2024, UNCTAD contributed to resilient prosperity in SIDS through strategies, programmes and activities supporting several areas of the UN Implementation Matrix for ABAS. UNCTAD contributed to building economic resilience; scaling up climate action, biodiversity action and sustainable use of the ocean; mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR); strengthening data collection, analysis and use; promoting science, technology, innovation and digitalization, all while fostering innovative partnerships with national and international stakeholders. Interventions were delivered through a demand-driven and adaptive approach, ensuring alignment with national priorities, the ABAS Plan of Action, the UNCTAD Strategy to Support SIDS and the 2030 Agenda.

Concerning economic resilience, in 2025 UNCTAD started the implementation of its new project “Stronger and Greener Productive Capacities for Just Transitions in Caribbean Small Island Developing States” that will support Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago in strengthening and greening productive capacities, aiming at boosting just transitions that align with the unique needs of SIDS and advance economic transformation. Furthermore, UNCTAD continues its work on addressing structural economic vulnerabilities through fostering inclusive and sustainable investment environments and enterprise development. Selected examples of activities undertaken in 2024 include a special SIDS-centred issue of the Global Investment Trends Monitor, training of civil servants in Cuba on the use of UNCTAD business facilitation tools and methodologies, and entrepreneurship development workshops in the Dominican Republic and Guyana.

In the areas related to climate change, biodiversity and sustainable use of the ocean, UNCTAD continued its assistance to SIDS on the international maritime legal framework and activities on the intersection of maritime transport, climate change and resilience-building, such as DRR for critical transport infrastructure. Under UNDA project entitled “Harnessing trade policy and transport and logistics to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains in the Caribbean and the Arab region” (2024-2027), UNCTAD, in collaboration with ECLAC and ESCWA, supported Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in strengthening trade, transport, and logistics policies to build sustainable and resilient food supply chains.

In the area of data collection, analysis and use, UNCTAD is implementing several technical cooperation projects. For instance, as part of the UNDA 16 project “Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM”, UNCTAD, in partnership with ECLAC and OECS, supports seven countries in East Caribbean. Activities realised in 2024 included a scoping survey among beneficiaries, a kick-off workshop hosted by Barbados, an e-learning course on trade in services, testing of the trade in services information system (TiSSTAT), and launch of national pilots.

The Pacific Digital Economy Programme, implemented by UNCTAD jointly with UNCDF and UNDP, contributed to the area of promoting science, technology, innovation and digitalization. Under the Programme, Pacific SIDS benefited from two capacity-building courses – on digital identity for trade and development, and the legal aspects of e-commerce, respectively, and a workshop on effective legal frameworks for building the digital economy. Examples of analytical work include the 2024 edition of the Pacific Digital Economy Report with the focus on “Promoting Digital Entrepreneurship and Trade”, and a policy review titled “Gap analysis of Cyberlaws in Pacific Small Island Developing States”. Furthermore, under the project on “Technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa to accelerate progress on Science, Technology and Innovation”, UNCTAD helps Seychelles to address food security and renewable energy needs by adopting photovoltaics in agriculture.

In 2024, 28 projects of UNCTAD focused exclusively on SIDS. According to preliminary figures, the 2024 expenditures under these projects amounted to \$9.43 million, representing 16.7 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditures of UNCTAD.

## **PART B - COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE UN SYSTEM WIDE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES TO SIDS**

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

UNCTAD provides development programmes addressing the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of SIDS based on its mandates, including the Bridgetown Covenant, the outcome document of the latest quadrennial conference, which was held in 2021 in Bridgetown, Barbados and Geneva, Switzerland. The Bridgetown Covenant directs UNCTAD to “(d) Continue its work in assisting small island developing States to address persistent trade, investment and development challenges that they encounter, including through the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway”, and “(v, iii) Support small island developing States, most notably in addressing their specific vulnerabilities, build resilience and promote structural economic transformation and productive capacities”.

To foster the implementation of its mandate related to SIDS, UNCTAD formulated a comprehensive strategy entitled “UNCTAD Strategy to Support Small Island Developing States”. The Strategy is designed to effectively address the multiple and systemic vulnerabilities of SIDS by sustainably harnessing their comparative advantages and unlocking key binding constraints to their development. The strategy received strong support from the delegates during its presentation to the Trade and Development Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2024. Delegations commended the alignment of the SIDS Strategy with key international frameworks, including the ABAS, the SAMOA Pathway, and the Bridgetown Covenant.

UNCTAD’s Strategy for SIDS will promote complementarity between the work of UNCTAD and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system, such as UN DESA and UN-OHRLLS, by ensuring a clear understanding of the contribution that UNCTAD can make, stemming from its mandate, expertise and comparative advantage. The Bridgetown Covenant affirmed UNCTAD’s role as the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, and mandated UNCTAD to continue its work under the three key pillars of economic research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus building and technical cooperation.

To promote harmonised and efficient support delivery to SIDS, UNCTAD actively engaged in interagency coordination mechanisms. A key lesson from 2024 was the value of embedding technical expertise within broader UN development frameworks, particularly through UN Country Teams (UNCT) and regional economic communities. For example, in Cabo Verde, UNCTAD contributed investment-related inputs to national development assessments and collaborated with the UNCT to align its support with country programming documents. This contributed to greater coherence, minimised duplication, and ensured investment promotion strategies were rooted in national development priorities. In Guyana, Empretec’s Programme relaunch exemplified successful coordination with

national and local stakeholders and UN development actors. At the regional level, UNCTAD supported the harmonised investment policy to WAEMU, CEMAC, and ECO. These partnerships pooled technical resources across agencies and supported coordinated training and reform advisory delivery, demonstrating the benefits of multilateral coherence in addressing SIDS' investment climate needs.

Joint programming under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks has proven beneficial in improving coherence, especially through multi-country approaches in the Caribbean and Pacific. Best practices include strong Resident Coordinator leadership, regional thematic collaboration, and alignment with national priorities to increase ownership and impact. Furthermore, integrating different stakeholders, such as regional institutions, into planning processes, aligning with regional strategies, and co-developing shared monitoring tools allow to boost programme efficiency, avoid duplication, and better respond to SIDS' complex development challenges. A more strategic and unified UN approach will be key to supporting resilient, inclusive development across SIDS.

Among notable challenges encountered during the design, coordination and delivery of development programmes in SIDS are their geographic dispersion and small administrative capacity, digital infrastructure limitations and resource constraints. During the implementation of activities in 2024, some SIDS lacked the bandwidth or systems to fully engage in hybrid or digital technical assistance formats, leading to partial exclusion from regional or global dialogue opportunities. Resource constraints remain the major challenge. During the deliberations of a plenary session of the Trade and Development Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, many delegates from developing countries, including SIDS, called for donors and development partners to contribute to the SIDS Trust Fund, identifying it as a crucial mechanism for supporting the effective implementation of the UNCTAD Strategy to Support Small Island Developing States.