

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).

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As part of its commitment to the Agenda, UNOPS has proactively established a SIDS Resilience and Sustainability "Mission Hub". This hub is an internal platform that aims to enhance internal coordination to deliver coherent and consistent practical solutions tailored to the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS. By addressing knowledge gaps, anticipating future needs, and fostering innovation, this hub serves as a central point for developing and disseminating resilience-focused expertise and approaches across UNOPS.

Another illustration of UNOPS' proactive approach to SIDS, is the development of in depth partnerships at regional level. For instance, UNOPS is finalising Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with CARICOM and the OECS. It has also established procedural framework agreements with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF). By harmonizing procedures, these agreements aim to streamline access to development finance, a critical enabler for SIDS to implement large-scale resilience projects.

At the national level, UNOPS is discussing, as well as, implementing targeted interventions across several SIDS, each designed to build specific aspects of resilience:

- In Barbados, the current discussion with the Ministry of Transport and Works (MTW) is a technical assistance which aims at measuring and enhancing the government's capacity to manage and implement infrastructure projects. This includes building long-term internal expertise in specialized infrastructure project management, which is crucial for developing resilient infrastructure that can withstand environmental hazards. Furthermore, the current engagement with the Ministry of Health and Wellness aims to address specific resilience needs in critical sectors like healthcare infrastructure, procurement of essential medical equipment. Strengthening the infrastructure and IT capabilities of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital directly contributes to a more resilient health sector capable of responding to crises.
- In St. Maarten, the focus on improving detention facilities through technical assistance in project management, procurement, and infrastructure design and construction is a proactive

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

measure to enhance the resilience of the justice sector. Engagement with various ministries and the National Recovery and Planning Bureau indicates a coordinated approach to building resilience in areas like rule of law and essential water and waste infrastructure.

- In St. Lucia, UNOPS is negotiating an engagement with the Water and Sanitation Authority to build capacity in executing their transformative 20-year Water and Waste Management Master Plan aimed at ensuring long-term water security and sustainable waste management, both critical for environmental and public health resilience.

The expected outcomes of these interventions underscore UNOPS' commitment to building resilience in SIDS. These include strengthening evidence-based climate planning, supporting the growth of sustainable blue and green economies, enhancing health infrastructure, improving national adaptation planning, accelerating the development of resilient infrastructure, and increasing support for accessing and managing climate finance. These outcomes are all geared towards enhancing the long-term resilience of SIDS to various shocks and stresses. The stepwise approach adopted by UNOPS, starting with smaller projects to build knowledge and operational capacity before scaling up, indicates a strategic and resource-conscious approach to fostering sustainable resilience in SIDS.

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)

Section not applicable to the UN System.

PART B - COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE 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?

UN agencies encounter several significant challenges in delivering a 'whole-of-system response' to address the needs, risks, and vulnerabilities, and to provide development programs that tackle the underlying drivers of needs in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These challenges, from UNOPS' perspective, can be described as follows:

- **Capacity Constraints:** SIDS frequently experience a shortage of human, institutional, and technological capacity. This translates to limited staff across various sectors, hindering the implementation of global frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. There's also a low capacity for conducting essential research and a scarcity of domestically trained experts, which further exacerbates the problem.
- **Financing Access and Management:** The global financing system often fails to account for the unique challenges faced by small countries with limited public service staff. UN agencies struggle with the high costs of managing concessional financing and the administrative burden of numerous small, short-term projects, which drain already limited institutional resources. Furthermore, strict eligibility requirements, co-financing demands, and lengthy project approval processes act as substantial barriers to securing necessary funds.
- **Data and Information Systems:** SIDS face persistent difficulties in generating and analyzing data. This includes limited or unreliable climate change information, coupled with inadequate technology or institutional capacity to collect, interpret, or analyze existing data. The absence of a centralized system or database for climate change-related data and challenges in generating sub-national statistics further complicate efforts to understand and address specific needs.
- **Coordination and Coherence:** Processing and coordinating international aid and post-disaster efforts prove difficult due to limited staff and the complexities of managing information from various agencies. There can be tension between funding regional partnerships versus directly financing national institutions, which can undermine national capacity building. Integrating disaster risk reduction across all sectors remains a significant hurdle, and the burden of reporting on multiple international frameworks places an onerous strain on limited staff.

- Institutional and Political Factors: National development plans in SIDS can often lack supporting sector-specific policies, fail to adequately account for existing inequalities, or may even be inconsistent with broader sectoral strategies, impeding a cohesive 'whole-of-system' approach.
 - Partnership Management: UN agencies and their partners in SIDS face constraints in effectively managing partnerships. These include a lack of awareness of all available partnerships, limited staff and resources to manage numerous relationships, and short project durations. The brevity of projects often prevents the achievement of sustainable results, long-term knowledge transfer, or lasting capacity building.
- 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?

UNOPS hosted coalitions and joint partnerships have played a pivotal role in advancing the key development priorities of SIDS by fostering collaborative, resilient, and sustainable solutions, including in climate resilience, sustainable ocean management, health management, food security and sustainable food systems. The partnerships, including CVF-V20 Joint Multi-Donor Fund, NDC Partnership, SUN, have enabled the mobilization of technical expertise and financial resources, strengthening healthcare systems, improving renewable energy access, and enhancing disaster preparedness. By aligning with the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, UNOPS has helped ensure that projects are locally relevant, scalable, and anchored in national development plans, thus reinforcing long-term resilience and inclusive growth across island nations.

- 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?

If we take our experience in the Caribbean region, one could say that the UN Resident Coordinator system remains highly fragmented. The Barbados RCO oversees the Eastern Caribbean, the Trinidad and Tobago RCO covers T&T and Dutch-speaking islands, the Jamaica RCO manages the Northern Caribbean, while Guyana and Belize each have standalone RCOs. Fragmented UN positioning in the overall Caribbean space blurs conversations at scale and requires ability to articulate disconnected agendas. To address this, UNOPS prioritizes these entities as critical interlocutors for government engagement, resource mobilization, and alignment with regional UN priorities. UNOPS collaborates closely with the RCOs to expedite processes. Engagement with UNDRR aims to strengthen synergies in disaster resilience and risk reduction. Also potential synergies in service delivery within the Rule of Law sector are being explored with UNODC, for a joint programme implementation. Also a strengthened partnership between UNOPS and UNOSSC is crucial due to UNOSSC's role in facilitating South-South cooperation and knowledge sharing, enabling UNOPS to leverage best practices from other developing nations; the existing collaborative history in the Caribbean in sectors

like Health and Energy, and ongoing project discussions, provide a solid basis for future cooperation.

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

Targeted Capacity Building: Prioritize capacity building initiatives that directly address the needs and challenges of SIDS, particularly in project management, technical design, and Environmental and Social Management Plans preparation.

Meeting Donor Requirements: UN should invest in local capacities to ensure they meet the requirements of the UN system and key donors. This will enable financing and streamline project implementation ensuring the successful delivery of projects.

Resource UN Presence: Ensure UN country and multi-country offices operating in SIDS are well-resourced with staff possessing appropriate skills, experience, and country context knowledge.

Tailor Approaches: Recognize that SIDS are not uniform and capacity development approaches need to be tailored to the singularities of coherent smaller ecosystems. A one-size-fits-all approach is not effective.

Address Institutional and Systemic Challenges: Give greater recognition to institutional and systemic challenges pertaining to the public sector and national statistical systems. Support SIDS in strengthening strategic foresight capabilities for policy-making in contexts of uncertainty.

Streamline Reporting and Data Systems: Streamline reporting on multiple international frameworks to reduce the burden on limited staff. Support SIDS in designing reporting practices that inform national policy-making, rather than solely fulfilling international requirements. Promote effective data platforms that allow for inter-sectoral use and easy data input. Leverage regional partners for data generation and capacity building, and ensure this data is applied to inform policy.

Promote Long-Term Support and Programmatic Approaches: Encourage programmatic, long-term approaches with sustained accompaniment over numerous short-term projects, which drain human resources and foster a project-based approach.

Strengthen Procurement and Project Management Implementation Capacity: Prioritize capacity building in areas like project management, procurement, and financial management, where SIDS often have weak institutional setups. Support the streamlining of government work processes and provide training for officials to implement their own projects effectively.

Integrate DRR and Climate Action: Increase the political salience of DRR and clearly message its centrality to sustainable development to promote intersectoral and whole-of-society support. Integrate DRR indicators within climate adaptation financing to ensure value of investment and support coherent, risk-informed adaptation.

- 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

Some strategies may include:

Leverage Existing Regional Bodies: SIDS benefit from partnerships, particularly at the regional level. Regional statistical centers like the Regional Statistics Programme at the CARICOM Secretariat provide significant technical support and contribute to coordinating the regional statistical system. Entities like CDEMA have regional strategies for disaster risk management that are recognized by CARICOM. The CLME+ SAP has facilitated partnerships involving SIDS and inter-governmental organizations.

Map and Understand Regional Support: Conduct a mapping exercise of partnerships at the regional level to identify the scope of services, data, technology, and financing support available to SIDS. This can help pinpoint duplicative activities and leverage support effectively.

Collaborate on Specific Initiatives: Partnering with regional bodies on concrete initiatives is demonstrated through examples like the Santiago Network on Loss & Damage Fund, where UNOPS and UNDRR is hosting the Secretariat and working closely with the most level influential Caribbean partners.

Strengthen Dialogue and Joint Vision: Maintain continuous dialogue with other development partners, including regional stakeholders and considering developing a joint and common vision to serve the Caribbean Community.

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)

Section not applicable to the UN System.

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)

At a time when the UN is focused on becoming more efficient, integrated, and impact-driven—particularly under the UN80 agenda and broader reform efforts—the proposal to create a dedicated UN-SIDS entity deserves careful consideration. While there is no single entity in the UN system solely responsible for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and coordination across agencies remains fragmented, the question is whether a new structure is the most effective solution.

SIDS face unique, multifaceted challenges that require sustained, coherent international support. A dedicated mechanism could, in theory, strengthen system-wide alignment, provide a clearer entry point for partners, and elevate the visibility of SIDS issues. It might also help streamline joint programming and facilitate more strategic donor coordination.

However, the creation of a new UN body must be weighed against current realities. The UN is operating in a constrained fiscal environment, and member states continue to emphasize the need for consolidation rather than expansion. Establishing a new entity carries risks of duplication, additional bureaucracy, and a dilution of already limited resources.

The current reform agenda already aims to improve coordination, integration, and responsiveness through mechanisms such as the Resident Coordinator system, the regional architecture review, and the UN2.0 vision. Rather than creating a new institution, it may be more practical—and aligned with ongoing reforms—to strengthen and clarify the mandates of existing bodies with a SIDS focus, such as UN-OHRLS, DESA, or relevant regional UN offices.

Embedding a SIDS coordination function within an existing structure could enhance coherence without significant new overhead. It would also allow for quicker implementation and better integration with existing programming tools, avoiding the delays and political complexities often associated with creating new entities.

Moreover, given the diversity among SIDS regions, support mechanisms must remain flexible and context-specific. Strengthening regional coordination—particularly through the UN's Multi-Country Offices and Resident Coordinators—may offer a more grounded, responsive approach. Enhancing inter-agency collaboration at the regional level, supported by dedicated focal points within operational entities like UNOPS, could yield concrete improvements without structural expansion.

In summary, while the aim of improving UN system-wide support for SIDS is valid and necessary, the means must be carefully chosen. A new institution may not be the most feasible or effective option in the current context. Focus should instead be placed on maximizing the potential of existing structures, improving coordination, and ensuring a tailored response to SIDS' specific needs. Any move toward institutional change should be based on demonstrated added value, alignment with UN reform principles, and a clear strategy for resource efficiency and delivery impact.

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?)

Section not applicable to the UN System.

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)

Section not applicable to the UN System.