

A High-level Roundtable on "Innovative Partnerships for addressing environmental challenges in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda"

Summary

*1:00pm – 2:30pm on Wednesday 25 May 2016
Conference room 14, UN Office Nairobi, Kenya
Organized by UN-DESA, UNEP, UN-OHRLS, and UNDP*

The roundtable was moderated by H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations and co-chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Opening

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs began by expressing his appreciation to the co-organizers, UNEP, UN-OHRLS, and UNDP, as well SIDS ministers and representatives from regional organizations for their participation. Mr. Wu stated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for special attention to SIDS, highlighting special challenges faced by them in the protection, management and sustainable use of environmental resources. The synergies must be made between the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, focusing on strengthening the resilience of SIDS. Mr. Wu stressed the importance of robust partnerships in the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, and emphasized that the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS plays a significant role in the follow-up to the existing partnerships and promoting the new ones. Mr. Wu concluded with highlighting that UN-DESA is fully committed to continue supporting SIDS in their pursuit of sustainable development.

The next speaker, **H.E. Mr. Anote Tong, Former President of the Republic of Kiribati**, highlighted that the Signing Ceremony of the Paris Agreement held in New York earlier this year symbolizes the commitment of many countries to tackle global climate change challenges. Mr. Tong stated that ability of SIDS to achieve SDGs are compromised by adverse impact of climate change. He elaborated the climate change challenges faced by SIDS, including the risks of survival of some SIDS due to sea-level rise, increased frequency of extreme weather, and loss of biodiversity. He emphasized that ratification of the Paris Agreement is meaningless unless it is effectively monitored and followed up to. Partnerships are important in this regard, in the form of "360 degree partnerships" involving all stakeholders. Mr. Tong also emphasized the importance of capacity building of government officials and their citizens to cope with such challenges. He concluded by thanking the participants - all from different backgrounds, who have shown their willingness to take actions towards sustainable development by participating in this roundtable.

Interactive Dialogue

Ambassador Sareer provided introductory remarks to the interactive dialogue, emphasizing the importance of moving from vision to implementation. The establishment of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS is one of the concrete actions taken by SIDS in partnership with the UN Secretariat. The Steering Committee, which is chaired by Maldives and Italy under the SIDS Partnership Framework, a concrete follow-up mechanism to ensure implementation of the partnerships announced at the Third International Conference on SIDS. The moderator concluded by highlighting that the current roundtable provided a unique opportunity to focus on the specific issues with regard to environmental challenges facing SIDS, and stressed that there is an urgent need to increase the resilience of SIDS to new and emerging environmental challenges.

Innovative partnerships in the area of environment: Oceans

H.E. Mr. Alvin Da Breo, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Grenada, emphasized the importance of oceans for livelihood in SIDS. Mr. Da Breo highlighted several initiatives by his government dedicated to poverty eradication, including the Zero Hunger Initiative, as well initiatives on tuna export, tourism industry, and small enterprises and employment in fisheries and arts and craft. The government also undertake various activities related to partnerships on oceans, including protecting the coral reefs by using a Ecosystems Based Approach, as well as hosting the "Blue Week 2016 and Investment Conference" - which successfully provided effective dialogue and networking opportunity amongst participants to advance Grenada's pursuit of a sustainable ocean-based economy. The Minister said that this form could be replicated in other SIDS and Grenada is ready to cooperate in this regard.

Open discussion

Most participants emphasized the importance of effective partnerships in the areas of oceans. One SIDS delegate said that effective partnerships help raising the voices of SIDS to address special environmental challenges, such as destruction of coral reef and marine and coastal areas. Effective partnerships also offer opportunities for sharing information, best practices, and lessons learnt.

Participants continued sharing their efforts to support SIDS in the area of oceans, including domestic resource mobilization, Ecosystem-Based Adaptation, protection of marine and coastal areas, and enhancing resilience of SIDS.

One participant stressed that the resolutions related to oceans and seas adopted at UNEA2

will be a concrete roadmap to achieve SDG14. Another participant highlighted the need for increasing investments in disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness in order to address climate change impacts in SIDS

Innovative Financing for SIDS

H.E. Ms. Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya, Minister, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Cuba, began to explain that, although innovative finance could play a complimentary role to international public finance flows, it is often not a stable source of finance, and should not replace the responsibility of public sources to finance sustainable development. She also highlighted that the main responsibility of developed countries should be to fulfil their official development assistance commitments toward developing countries. The Minister continued by briefing participants about a capacity building center Cuba had established, in cooperation with Norway, in 2008, focusing on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. To date, the center had conducted six training courses. The Minister also mentioned that, at the fifth Cuba-CARICOM Summit, held in December 2014, it was decided to establish a Regional Strategic Agenda to address disaster risk management in the broader Caribbean region. Furthermore, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti has established, in collaboration with UNEP, the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) for driving long-term integration of conservation actions between island states and thus contributing to the preservation of global biodiversity. The Minister also highlighted the upcoming 7th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States Heads of State and/or Government, to be hosted by Havana on 2-4 June 2016, where a program to confront climate change in the Caribbean region will be assessed, as a basis for its work plan 2016-2019.

Ms. Rebecca Loustau-Lalanne, Principal Secretary for Blue Economy, Ministry of Finance, Trade & The Blue Economy, the Republic of Seychelles, shared the country's experience in turning oceans into a force for driving sustainable development. Firstly, Seychelles maximizes the full potential of their oceanic territory Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by applying the Blue Economy concept as the foundation for economic diversification and growth. Social inclusion is an important component of the concept. Secondly, the urgency of climate change urged the country to develop a debt swap deal with the Paris Club, an innovative financing mechanisms that could enhance resilience of Seychelles. The deal, which was designed by The Nature Conservancy, enables Seychelles to redirect a portion of the debt payments to fund nature based solutions to climate change. The Government has since then developed Seychelles Climate Change and Adaptation Trust (SEYCCAT), a special trust fund for managing the process. Thirdly, Seychelles is in the process of developing a Blue Bond, in collaboration with the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, and the African Development Bank, in order to better mobilize finance for its blue economy strategy.

Open discussion

Most participants echoed the significance of the means of implementation to cope with environmental challenges faced by SIDS, and to achieve sustainable development. In particular, financing, as an enabler of the commitments made for key international agreements, must be accessible for those most in need. Many participants stressed that SIDS face challenges in accessing financing. Several participants agreed that mobilization of domestic resources, including from the private sector, is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway. In particular, Public-Private-Partnerships play a key role in this regard. Several participants provided concrete examples of innovative financing in the areas debt-for-nature swaps and enhanced micro-financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). One participant noted the need to create an enabling environment and integrated policies in order to attract investments for promoting Blue-Green economy, and in particular, low carbon technologies.

The UNEA resolution on the SAMOA Pathway, which was adopted at UNEA 2, well articulates the priorities of SIDS. One delegation noted that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway requires coherent and integrated framework at all levels. At the national level, SDGs need to be tailored into the national context. The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is to be held in Fiji in June 2017, will provide an important step in the implementation of SDG14 for all countries working towards conserving and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Closing

Ambassador Sareer expressed his sincere gratitude to all participants and said that he was inspired by the strong level of commitments to Small Island Developing States shown by all, as was clear by the many examples that were highlighted in the presentations and the discussions, in both ocean related partnerships and innovative financing. The Ambassador closed the meeting by encouraging participants to continue sharing experiences and best practices, and invited all to attend the first Global Multi-Stakeholder SIDS Partnerships Dialogue, a mandated conference on SIDS partnerships, to be held in New York, September, later this year.
