



**AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting on the
Mid-Term Review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in the Atlantic,
Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea Region
Balaclava, Mauritius
21 - 25 May 2018**

AIMS Regional Report

Preamble

1. Building on the BPOA and the MSI, in September 2014, the General Assembly adopted the SAMOA Pathway, as an international framework, reaffirming SIDS as a special case for sustainable development and underscoring priority areas for action by the international community to support SIDS to realise their sustainable development aspirations. The MTR provides an important opportunity to ensure that the special case for SIDS, in recognition of their unique challenges and vulnerabilities (first recognized in the Rio Declaration of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development), is consistently addressed across the various global sustainable development frameworks. These include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

2. In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution A/RES/71/225, decided to convene a one-day high-level review, at United Nations Headquarters in September 2019, to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. The regional preparatory meetings for the Mid-term Review (MTR) of the SAMOA Pathway are held pursuant to paragraphs 27 and 28 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/217¹ and the SAMOA Pathway itself (paras 122-124). Paragraph 28 called for “regional preparatory meetings of Small Island developing States in their respective regions, as well as an interregional meeting for all small island developing States, in order to undertake a review of progress in the implementation of the Samoa Pathway at the national and regional levels.”

3. This Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) Report assesses the progress of the AIMS Region in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and was compiled by UNDP and UN-OHRLLS. This report is based on country presentations made at the AIMS Regional review meeting and national reports received from Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and

¹ Para 27. Reaffirms its decision to convene a one-day high-level review, at United Nations Headquarters in September 2019, to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, which will result in a concise, action-oriented and intergovernmentally agreed political declaration, and decides to consider further the modalities of the review before the end of its seventy-second session;

Para 28. Decides to convene, in 2018, regional preparatory meetings of small island developing States in their respective regions, as well as an interregional meeting for all small island developing States, in order to undertake a review of progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway at the national and regional levels, and also decides that, for this purpose, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, within their respective mandates and existing resources, should organize, facilitate and provide necessary support to the review process at the national, regional and international levels;

Singapore, as well as other “existing reports and relevant processes.” For the purpose of this report, the phrase “AIMS region” refers to the following AIMS SIDS (8) countries: Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Singapore.

I. Introduction

4. Most SIDS compare relatively well to other developing countries in terms of gross domestic product, as three fifths of SIDS qualify as upper middle-income countries. However, economic growth in most SIDS is slow-moving. SIDS are also highly vulnerable to shocks in the global economy and to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, owing to narrow production bases and undiversified economies, as well as strong reliance on the global economy for financial services, tourism, remittances and concessional finance.

5. Given the small size of SIDS economies, a single natural disaster can translate into losses of up to 200% of GDP (World Bank, 2005), wiping out entire economic sectors and eroding the development gains accumulated over decades. Globally, SIDS make up two thirds of the countries that suffer the highest relative losses – between 1 per cent and 9 per cent of their GDP each year – from natural disasters (OECD-World Bank, 2016).

Table 1: AIMS at a Glance

	POPULATION 2016	GDP/capita in 2016 ²	Real GDP Growth Rate 2015	Real GDP Growth Rate 2016	Human Development Index, 2015
Cabo Verde	0.540m	3,038	1.01%	3.82%	.648
Comoros	0.796m	1,445	-0.20%	2.20%	.498
Guinea Bissau	1.816m	618	5.11%	5.09%	.424
Maldives	0.428m	9,875	2.25%	6.16%	.701
Mauritius	1.262m	9,679	3.47%	3.75%	.781
São Tomé and Príncipe	.2m	1,715	3.83%	0.12%	.574
Seychelles	0.094m	15,217	4.97%	1.47%	.782
Singapore	5.622m	52,814	1.93%	2.00%	.925
Total	10.758m	90,907	2.79%	2/16%	

Sources: UNCTADSTAT

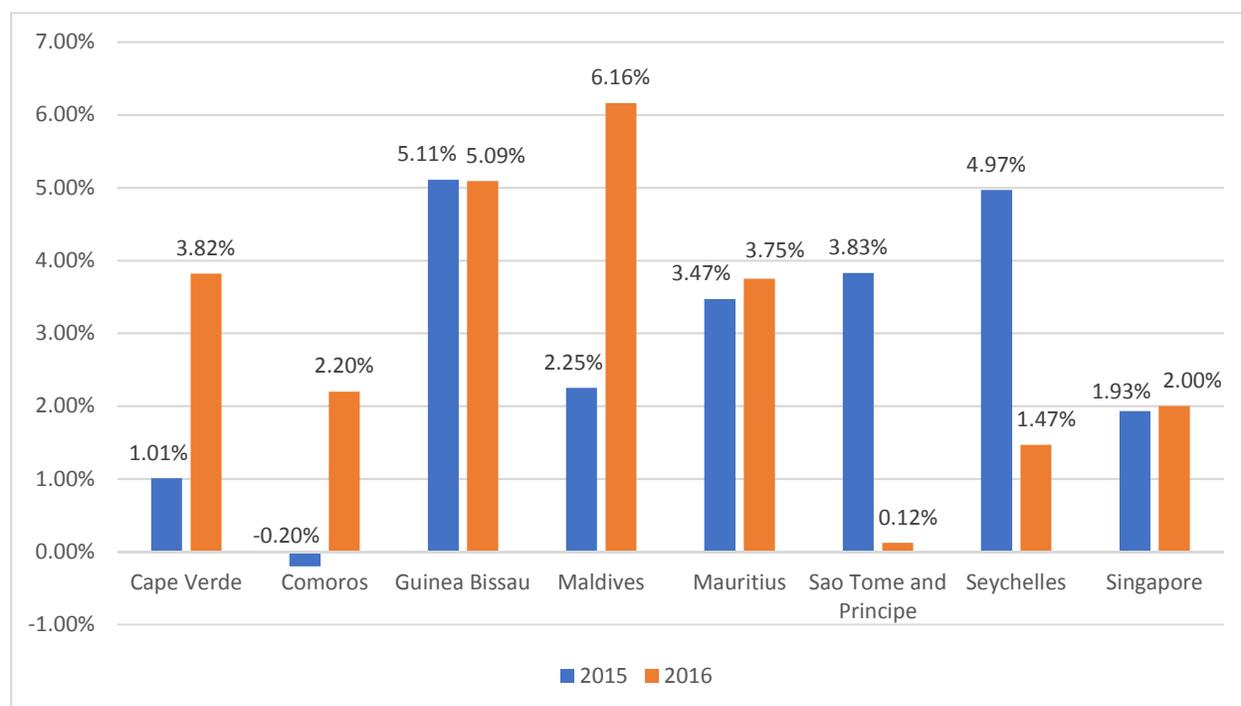
6. The wide variety of human and economic development patterns in AIMS impede the ability to make a single statement on financing for the group as a whole. Island nations such as Mauritius, Seychelles and Singapore have high levels of human development, while others, such as Comoros, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe, have low levels of human development. However, many share similar challenges with regards to financing for the Agenda 2030, which include capacity challenges to mobilize domestic resources, high costs for the provision of public services, vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks, and they are vulnerable to amongst the highest costs for climate adaptation in the world.

7. Compared to other developing countries, GDP growth rates have been rather tepid in most SIDS in the AIMS region. This development mirrors two distinct stories. The first story is that of countries that are confronted with challenges associated with “middle-income trap”. These challenges exacerbate those that are inherent to being small island developing states and contribute to depressing GDP growth. The second story is that of countries that are both least developed countries and small island developing states, therefore facing structural handicaps to growth and development. Narrow production and export bases, low

² Millions of US\$ unless otherwise specified.

productivity, vulnerability in terms of trade variations and environmental shocks, infrastructure gap, high trade costs and limited competitiveness in global markets, among others, have conspired to reduce the pace at which these LDC SIDS have grown.

Figure 1: AIMS SIDS GDP Growth (Annual per cent) from 2015 to 2016



8. The AIMS SIDS with the greatest range of GDP Growth from 2015 to 2016 was the Maldives, which expanded from 2.25 per cent to 6.16 per cent, and the AIMS SIDS with the lowest growth was Singapore, which developed from 1.93 per cent to 2 per cent.

9. Four years into the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, the challenge before most AIMS region’s SIDS continues to be one of entering a path of higher, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

I.A. Summary of country presentations on progress implementing the SAMOA Pathway

10. During the AIMS Regional Meeting for the MTR of the SAMOA Pathway, each of the SIDS presented on the progress of their country in implementing the SAMOA Pathway, including best practices, lessons learnt, constraints and challenges as well as identified emerging challenges facing Small Island Developing States. The Member States that made country presentations were: Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Singapore and Mauritius. Summaries of these presentations are provided in the Annex.

11. Common issues arose in several of the national presentations. Several delegates highlighted challenges of weak coordination and communication among stakeholders in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and that institutional coordination needs to be improved to implement the SDGs. Delegates highlighted that for implementation of the SDGs, there is strong participation

and engagement of social sectors but weak participation of governance related agencies and economic sector agencies. There is a need to improve familiarity of SDGs and SAMOA Pathway among government staff, which is a challenge due to staff turnover rates in government offices and ministries. The importance to actively strengthen the foundations of AIMS SIDS economies was also highlighted, particularly in areas of agriculture, fisheries, tourism and other ocean resources.

12. Other and more specific priorities for implementing the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS SIDS included the need for improved statistical information and policy mapping, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, environmental governance, inclusive education, inclusive growth, efficient transport systems, water and sewage, climate adaptation and renewed involvement of the private sector, as well as more South-South and SIDS-SIDS cooperation and exchange of best practices.

I.B. Common Challenges for SIDS

13. The special case of SIDS is internationally recognised and has received international attention. The challenges that SIDS face in pursuit of sustainable development can be severe and complex. They face common economic, social, environmental challenges stemming from their small populations and small landmasses, their spatial dispersion and remoteness from major markets, and their high exposure to external shocks, including severe climate-related events and natural disasters.

Economic vulnerability

- Small domestic markets and a limited natural resource-based result in undiversified economies. This limits their ability to achieve economies of scale, and reduces the opportunity for private sector development, which in turn, may have an impact on economic growth and employment.
- SIDS have open economies and thus are highly susceptible to shocks from global trade, financial volatility and economic downturns.
- Infrastructure costs – particularly for sustainable energy, communications and transportation – are high for small island states.

Social vulnerability

- The population of many SIDS is growing at a rapid pace, which can pose challenges to development, such as providing basic services and job opportunities.
- The extensive spatial dispersion of some island groupings affects the ability of government to deliver public services and increases their relative costs.

Environmental vulnerability

- SIDS are characterized by fragile natural environments such as falling fish stocks, threatened biodiversity, limited water availability and land management challenges.
- SIDS are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, extreme weather events, sea level rise, and habitat degradation.
- Many SIDS lack the capacity and resilience to deal with the rising incidence of natural disasters, storm surges, droughts and landslides, among others.

14. Within the AIMS region, SIDS have faced – and continue to face - many challenges that hinder their economic, social, and environmental development, as well as implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

15. In Mauritius, challenges that emerged for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, included cross-cutting issues and lack of awareness. For example, monitoring quality was identified as a greater challenge than collecting quantitative data. No comprehensive data was available from the private sector and existing information was restricted to the public sector. There is also poor enforcement in terms of legislation and a lack of impact assessment framework and feedback mechanism. Coordination was identified as an area which needs to be improved within line Ministries, as well as between different institutions.³

16. Guinea Bissau highlighted a variety of challenges. Political instability has been impeding the mobilization of the legislative body to ratify SIDS DOCK, the Paris Agreement and DOHA Amendment, as well as to develop policy documents in the support of implementation of SAMOA Pathway in some critical sectors such as water and sanitation, transport and communications. In addition, there is poor national capacity to produce accurate statistical data, particularly concerning environmental data. Guinea Bissau has been faced with communications constraints and/or absence of safe sea transportation means to the Bijagos Archipelago which have negatively impacted attempts to develop comprehensive projects that capture SIDS financing opportunities. Further, there is an absence of baseline indicators for the different SAMOA Pathway focal areas.⁴

17. Comoros emphasized the main challenge in the implementation of SAMOA Pathway is the development of the different islands that is becoming increasingly associated with the adaptation / mitigation of climate change. It will be important, inter alia, to: (i) make enforcement of the regulation on the restoration of degraded areas, (ii) promote intensive agriculture and an energy policy that promotes the use of renewable energies (gas, photovoltaic), (iii) increase the involvement of women and communities in environmental decision-making given their growing role in the development of the domestic economy; and (iv) build resilience of populations to disasters and climate change. To achieve this, the country will have to successfully integrate these climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into the various sectoral policies, strengthen the capacities of the actors and mobilize sufficient financial resources. The challenges of climate change and the evolution of international climate negotiations suggest a better organization at the national level and the strengthening of political commitment to address the main challenges of the country.

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS TO DATE AND THE REMAINING GAPS

II.A. A Few Success Stories:

18. The AIMS region has made important progress toward the implementation of some of the priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway, both at national and regional levels. A few examples of success stories are listed below to reflect some of these achievements.

Cabo Verde

19. The implementation of the Delivering Results Together (DRT) initiative, fostered the international role of Cabo Verde in promoting the SIDS agenda within the SDG implementation, leading the formal establishment of the African SIDS group+Madagascar, with a clear SDG implementation focus, positioning

³ Mauritius submission.

⁴ Guinea Bissau submission.

in regional African Union and global UN fora, to support the implementing of the Agenda 2030, the SDGs, the AU Agenda 2063 and Samoa Pathway.

Comoros

20. The Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) approved the Comoros' Country Strategy Paper 2016-2020, designed to enable the country to achieve diversified job-creating economic growth and to increase resilience to external shocks. The Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCA2D) aims to strengthen the social, economic and environmental situation in Comoros over the 2015-2019 period. It details specific measures to be taken by the government to achieve such development, notably regarding land degradation, vulnerability to climate change related disasters, the promotion of a green economy, and raising public awareness to climate change.

Guinea Bissau

21. In the energy sector, the project "Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Renewable Energy Technologies Investments in the Guinea Bissau Electricity Sector," provides integrated interventions in the areas of technology demonstration, policy support and human resources training. It is financed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Industry of Guinea-Bissau, the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), the NGO TESE (Association for Development by Technology, Engineering, Health and Education), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK). The project aims to create a favorable environment for investment in renewable energy in Guinea Bissau has been implemented.⁵

22. In the Water and Sanitation sector, a scheme is being updated with the drafting of a national water and sanitation policy, revisions to the water code and its harmonization with sub-regional policies, water code enforcement regulations, sanitation and legal regulatory framework for water management and drafting of the National Water Fund.

23. Together with the Government of Guinea Bissau, UNDP and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), signed a EUR 16.4 million grant in 2016 to prevent and treat malaria for the country's most vulnerable populations, specifically pregnant women, children under five and health workers.

Maldives

24. Maldives launched a new integrated water supply system on the island of Thoddoo, Mahibadhoo and Gadhdhoo, in 2016. The system aims to harness rainwater and water desalination to meet the domestic water demands of the island, thus, helping to protect the fragile freshwater lens by reducing the over-extraction of groundwater. To further address increasing climate induced water shortages across the country, the Government of Maldives has also begun implementation on a project funded by the Green Climate Fund that would enable uninterrupted freshwater supply to 105,000 people (30% of the population). In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Energy launched a new "FENFAHI" national awareness campaign to sensitize the public on better water management and sanitation practices. The initiative was unveiled at the occasion of World Water Day 2017.

Mauritius

⁵ Submission from Guinea Bissau.

25. One in a series of successful partnerships that has proved to be an important complement of the SAMOA Pathway is the Switch Africa Green programme, implemented by the Ministry of Environment. This is a partnership between 7 pilot African countries, including Mauritius and the European Union, to achieve sustainable development through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production practices. It mainly focuses on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and seeks to provide them with the necessary skills and enabling environment to transition to greener and more sustainable production patterns. In September 2015, the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) was approved and submitted by Mauritius. It is now considered the first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Mauritius. The Mauritius INDC proposes a quantified economy-wide target, to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30% by the year 2030, relative to the business as usual scenario, subject to support from the international communities.

São Tomé and Príncipe

26. The Minister of Finance of São Tomé and Príncipe introduced the USD 29 million Power Sector Recovery Project, in parallel with the financing of USD 13 million from the European Investment Bank (EIB) on 23 February 2017. Through partnerships for the implementation of sustainable energy between 2014 and 2017, the country was able to address areas including energy access, deforestation and land usage, as well as the creation of a guarantee fund and support for legislation for the production of renewable energies by private investors through energy purchase, production and distribution protocols on a national level. Moreover, partnerships allowed for the increase in capacity of renewable energy and the improvement in the reliability of the electricity supply through: increase of 2.2 MW of the capacity of generating hydroelectric energy; and reduction of energy losses on the intervention area up to 33 per cent.

Seychelles

27. The Government of Seychelles endorsed the first National Water Policy and National Integrated Resources Management Plan in 2017. In addition, a new Water Bill was drafted as well as a monitoring framework to track the anticipated impacts put in place.

Singapore

28. Demonstrating their commitment to play a part in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, in February 2017 Singapore renewed their special three-year technical cooperation package (SCP), through which they offered training for over 1,000 participants from SIDS in courses of interest, including disaster management, healthcare and pandemic preparedness, waste management, and urban planning. Singapore has indicated their commitment to continue to support fellow SIDS in their development journey.

II.B. Key Sector/Thematic and Cross-Sectoral Challenges

29. This section focuses on SAMOA Pathway implementation in the AIMS region, as part of global reporting requirements. It provides an assessment of progress, gaps and opportunities related to the thematic and cross-sectoral challenges listed in the SAMOA Pathway. The focus is primarily on implementation for the 8 AIMS SIDS and at the regional level.

Sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all

30. SIDS are a very heterogenous group but experience several similar economic vulnerabilities and disadvantages including, high import and export dependence, limited resource base and dependence on a limited number of goods and services for exports, small internal markets, limited regional and global

connectivity, and lack of economies of scale. Despite these vulnerabilities, AIMS countries, for the most part, have exhibited strong economic growth. Unemployment, including skills-work mismatches and lack of job opportunities are major concerns for SIDS. Significant emigration of high-skilled individuals, or so-called ‘brain drain’, continues to rise. In particular, the youth employment crisis in most countries, including SIDS, has resulted in increased vulnerability of young people. Of the nearly 200 million unemployed people today, about 37 per cent – more than 70 million – are between the ages of 15 and 24.⁶ Across most labour market indicators, wide disparities exist between young women and men, underpinning and giving rise to wider gaps during the transition to adulthood.

31. In São Tomé and Príncipe, since the beginning of the millennium, the economy has been growing on average at about 5 per cent. In 2015 and 2016, the GDP variation rate was 4 per cent, which, given the growth effect of the population, resulted in a growth rate of the GDP per capita of 1.7 per cent. The economy is very dependent on the services sector, where tourism is the primary expanding sector, together with public administration, social and private companies, which in 2015, corresponded to 72.5 per cent of the GVA. São Tomé and Príncipe is not only vulnerable to massive FDI flows and fluctuations associated with the oil forecasts, but also to the price changes of the global raw materials, mainly cocoa and oil.

32. In Mauritius, gross domestic product growth in 2015 was slightly higher than in recent years, at 3.4 per cent (compared to 3.2 per cent in 2014). An important factor in the sustained growth of the economy were prudent fiscal, exchange rate, trade, investment and monetary policies.

33. In Comoros, economic growth rose from 2.8% in 2016, to an estimated 3.4% in 2017, and is projected to reach 3.7% in 2018 and 4.1% in 2019. Growth was spurred by a broad investment programme with both public (roads and a national hospital) and private (tourism and hospitality) components. In order to support the sustainability of peace by promoting youth employment in Comoros, the FAO is focusing on providing its expertise for the recovery and revitalization of the agricultural and rural sector. It will assist in creating stable and remunerative employment for rural people in order to increase income and improve food security.⁷

34. The Seychelles’ economy is estimated to have grown over 5.0 percent last year, up from a 4.5 percent growth in 2016, supported by buoyant tourism activity, strong output in the fishery industry and expanding credit to the private sector.

35. In Cabo Verde, during 2016, the implementation of the DRT funds and the joint programme on the implementation of the national strategy for employment, by UNDP and ILO, led to many key achievements in the areas of employment and decent work. In 2016, the National Strategy on Employment helped improve the management of the labour market, in terms of strategy for creating new tools for self-job creation. In 2017, the economically active population represented 59% (232,198 people), and the economically inactive population represented 41% (160,157 people) of the total population, aged 15 years and older.

36. In the Maldives, the economy is heavily dependent on tourism, construction and fisheries, which are the major source of foreign exchange and government revenue. In 2016, tourism contributed 25 per cent, construction contributed 7 per cent and fisheries sector contributed 4 per cent to the country’s GDP. The GDP growth rate reduced from 7.3 per cent in 2014 to 6.2 per cent in 2016, and 6.9 per cent in 2017. The public sector of the country is the largest employer in the capital Male’, whereas in the outer atolls, the majority of people are employed in the manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries. In 2014, the unemployment rate was 5.2 per cent of the working population, whereby 9 out of 10 people are employed from the labour

⁶ See: <https://www.wwinye.org/evidence/the-challenge>

⁷ FAO Activities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

force. The government has initiated loan schemes that aim to encourage entrepreneurship and engage the youth more in the development process of the country, leading to a more inclusive economic growth. These schemes also provide support and facilitate technical guidance needed for entrepreneurs to launch startups, thus encouraging participation in the labour force through innovative methods. However, more efforts are needed to cater to the growing workforce of the country and to provide decent employment opportunities.

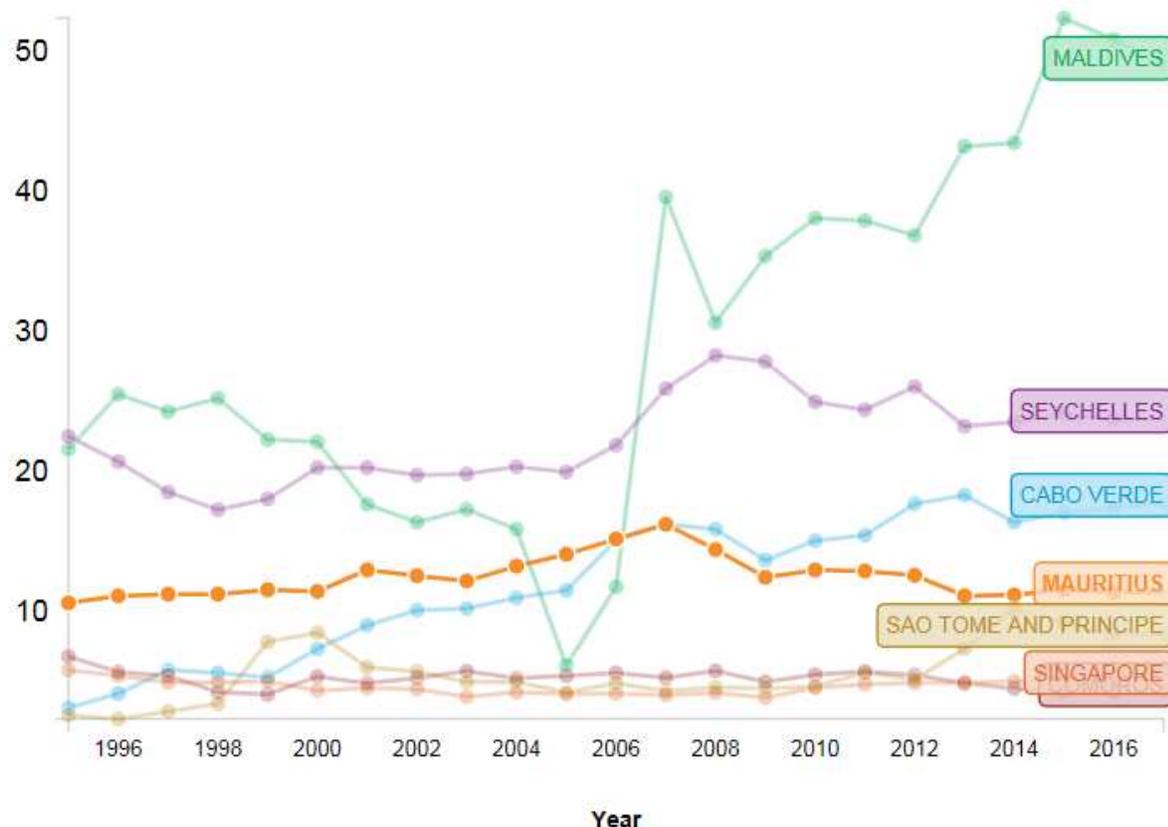
Sustainable Tourism

37. Sustainable tourism is the heartbeat of the economy for the majority of SIDS and among the most important sources of foreign exchange. Tourism has contributed much to the development of SIDS and has served as the main engine of growth, a source of demands on natural resources, infrastructure and services. SIDS characteristics provide both an opportunity and a challenge to tourism and development: their small sizes make travelling to these islands attractive, though at the same time, limits their wealth of natural resources and diversity of their economies. Their remote locations and isolation fosters rich culture and unique biodiversity. This is particularly important for SIDS since their distinctive cultures are one of their most unique tourist attractions, and if not properly planned and managed, tourism can significantly degrade both cultural heritage and the environment, on which SIDS are so dependent.

38. The number of international tourists visiting SIDS destinations increased from 28 million in 2000 to 41 million in 2013. In the same period, exports from tourism grew from US\$ 26 billion to US\$ 53 billion. Tourism accounts for over one quarter of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in at least seven SIDS and represents 9% of the overall exports (US\$ 61 billion). Moreover, tourism has played a key role in the recent graduation of Samoa, Cabo Verde and the Maldives, from Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

39. As can be seen below, travel and tourism provides varying degrees of contribution to GDP for the AIMS SIDS. For the Maldives, travel and tourism's contribution to GDP increased significantly from 43.49 per cent in 2014 to over 50 per cent in 2016. Though for most of the other AIMS SIDS, these percentage levels were more constant over this three year period, at around 23 per cent for Seychelles, 11 per cent for Mauritius, and a little over 4 per cent for Comoros

Figure 2: Travel and Tourism Direct Contribution to GDP, % share of total GDP for AIMS SIDS



Source: World Bank, 2018.

Table 2: Travel and Tourism Direct Contribution to GDP, % share of total GDP for AIMS SIDS

	2014	2015	2016
Cabo Verde	16.38%	17.06%	17.42%
Comoros	4.49%	4.28%	4.23%
Maldives	43.49%	52.41%	50.89%
Mauritius	11.18%	11.56%	11.35%
São Tomé and Príncipe	10.17%	9.18%	8.41%
Seychelles	23.54%	24.14%	23.74%
Singapore	5%	4.85%	4.91%

Source: World Bank, 2018.

40. In Guinea-Bissau, tourism and sustainable ecotourism have enormous potential and is the fourth sector in the creation of wealth for the country. Tourism has been an important activity in the coastal zone, resulting in the proliferation of small hotels in the Archipelago of BÍjagós, considered a main tourist resource. This area of the country is rich in its variety of marine life. Tourism can play an important role in valuing ecosystem services in protected areas, while ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and the social structures needed to implement this protection, as well as creating livelihood options and economic benefits for local communities and the economy in general.

41. In Singapore, the tourism board (STB) has been driving sustainable practices in the tourism sector by developing the capacity and capability of their workforce and through local engagement and partnerships. The STB works with industry stakeholders to develop skilled workers and leaders, and ensure that the tourism sector continues to offer exciting career opportunities. To help structure jobs in the Hotel and Accommodation Services sector for progression and greater stability, STB developed a Skills Framework in partnership with employers, training providers, industry associations and unions. This framework provides up-to-date information on employment, career pathways, job roles, existing and emerging skills and competencies, as well as relevant education and training programmes.

42. The Union of Comoros has an extremely rich and varied tourist heritage, consisting of an important environmental wealth, which remains under-exploited. In addition to exceptional sites such as the Karthala volcano with the largest crater in the world for an active volcano, the country has a flora and fauna with some unique elements, such as the Coelacanth, fish more than 65 million years ago, whales, turtles, dolphins and Livingstone bats. In addition, the Comorian coast is home to the largest nesting site of marine turtles in the Indian Ocean and the 10th in the world. There are also on each of the islands sandy beaches very varied, located in a tropical environment particularly attractive. Tourism development should promote the creation of decent and sustainable jobs and generate significant resources for the country. The main challenge remain the lack of infrastructures.

43. Mauritius is known as an upmarket tourism destination and the tourism and travel industry accounts for over 10% of the Mauritian GDP. It generates a wide range of employment and it holds promise for even more in the future. The Mauritian tourism sector operates in rapidly changing world and is vulnerable to external shocks. However, the sector has been resilient and accounted for 7.1 per cent of GDP in 2017. Some 1.3 million tourists visited the island, representing an increase of almost 39 per cent during the last five years. This was possible due to a diversification programme undertaken by Government in 2015-16, increases in air seat capacity from scheduled and charter flights, and a significant drop in oil prices which benefits long-haul destinations such as Mauritius. An aggressive marketing strategy in the emerging markets during the past few years saw tourism earnings to increase by 36 per cent and reach Rs 60.2 million in 2017.⁸

44. For São Tomé and Príncipe, their Preparation of the Tourism Marketing Strategical Plan (PEMT) for 2018-2025, aims to maximize the tourism contribution to national employment and generation of revenue, and to ensure that social and economic tourism benefits are equally distributed. This new plan aims to prepare São Tomé and Príncipe for sustainable tourism, with positive impacts on local development and ensure sustainable economic growth, promote social inclusion and employment, and strengthen mutual understanding and safety.

45. Most SIDS share a number of key challenges related to financing for development, which directly impact their capacity for sustainable tourism. Challenges include limited capacities to mobilize domestic resources, high per capita costs for essential service provisions and vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks. Climate adaptation costs are also among the highest in the world for SIDS, when measured as a proportion of national output.

46. A lack of financing still hinders tourism to fully unfold its potential as a key instrument for sustainable development, green growth and poverty reduction. The sector is still underrepresented in aid flows, as only 0.09 per cent of total ODA and 0.78 per cent of total Aid for Trade (Aft) disbursements were directed to tourism in 2013. The horizontal nature of the sector and its many linkages to other activities

⁸ The Board of Investment (BOI) has merged with the Financial Services Promotion Agency (FSPA) and the Enterprise Mauritius (EM) to become the Economic Development Board (EDB) in January 2018. <http://www.investmauritius.com/investment-opportunities/ict.aspx>

along the value chain requires that the international community develops an approach to tourism financing that promotes cross-sector cooperation and solutions (Medellin, Colombia, 15 September 2015).

47. Tourism is often one of the few activities for which their location, isolation, coupled with exceptional natural and cultural resources, is a strong competitive advantage for SIDS. At the same time, it is exactly the characteristics such as remoteness, which places SIDS at an economic disadvantage especially in terms of transport and communication and access to world markets. Many SIDS are often excluded from main air and sea transport routes, eroding economic competitiveness. Given the significance of the tourism sector to the economies of many SIDS, tourism can strongly contribute, both directly and indirectly to all 17 SDGs and the realization of the priorities outlined in the SAMOA Pathway.

Climate Change

48. As recognised in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS adopted in 1994, SIDS are particularly vulnerable to global climate change, which is influenced by large ocean-atmosphere interactions such as trade winds, El Nino, monsoons and tropical cyclones. With populations, agricultural lands and infrastructure tending to be concentrated in the coastal zone, any rise in sea level will have significant and profound effects on settlements, living conditions and island economies. These climate characteristics, combined with their particular socioeconomic situations make SIDS some of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. In addition, the fact that SIDS have a combined population of around 65 million people contributing to less than 1 per cent of global GHG emissions, means that they stand to suffer disproportionately from the damaging impacts of climate change and as a result, some SIDS may become uninhabitable.

49. Guinea-Bissau, a coastal and archipelagic country with 1,584,791 inhabitants, is particularly fragile and vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change. It is exposed to several natural hazards such as strong winds, extreme weather events, coastal erosion and loss of biodiversity. During the last few years the considerable loss of land (coastal erosion) has devastated the northern part of the country, which large stretches of beaches. In response, Guinea-Bissau has undertaken an enormous effort to develop a strategic framework that resulted in the elaboration of the Strategic and Operational Plan of the country, with special consideration for natural capital, biodiversity, environmental governance and increased protected areas from 15 per cent to 26 per cent of their national territory.

50. For the Maldives, development challenges are exacerbated by impacts from climate change and vulnerability to both internal and external shocks. Their acute vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events remains a serious concern, impinging on the sustainable development agenda of the country. In particular, increased beach erosion and more frequent flooding from tidal swells have prompted the implementation of infrastructure development policies emphasizing climate change resilience in recent years. This includes the development of safer, environmentally resilient islands and greater commitment to renewable energy sources. In March 2017, a project funded by the Green Climate Fund was initiated to support vulnerable communities in Maldives to manage climate change-induced water shortages during the dry season. The project aims to provide safe water to vulnerable households, introduce cost-effective dry season water supply systems and improve quality of ground water to build long-term resilience.

51. In Mauritius, climate change adaptation and mitigation are among the top priorities in the Government's Programme 2015-2019. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), which were approved and submitted by Mauritius on 28 September 2015, is now considered the first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Mauritius. The Mauritius INDC pledges for a quantified, economy-wide target, to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30% by the year 2030, relative to the business as usual scenario, and subject to support from international communities. The Agence Francaise de

Developpement (AFD) has set up the Adap'Action Programme to help vulnerable developing countries from Africa and Small Islands Developing States to achieve low-carbon and climate resilient development with a focus on adaptation to climate change. In this connection the AFD has mobilised a total of around EUR 30 million to assist 15 countries including Mauritius.

52. In Comoros, the initial national communication on climate change reveals that, like other small island countries, Comoros is very vulnerable to climate change. As a result, the country is exposed to increased number of cyclones, their increased violence, rising sea levels, drought, and floods. Moreover, a rise in sea level of about 2 to 3 meters (it will still take 300 years to reach 2 meters) would be enough to plunge a large part of the big cities (Moroni, Mutsamudu, Fomboni, Mitsamiouli, etc.) under the waters of the Indian Ocean.

53. According to the 2015 CDPN, the proportion of vulnerability is estimated at 82.1%, with damage caused by climate change that will exceed the value of GDP by 2020. The vulnerability of the Comoros is based on sensitivity to climatic hazards and adaptability. It depends in fact on physical, human and socio-economic factors, the country's poverty being the main cause

54. As indicated by Singapore, it is important to pursue economic development without disrupting the natural environment. Today, Singapore is widely-recognised as a City in a Garden, with nearly 50% green cover and 72 hectares of rooftop gardens and green walls. Singapore is among the 20 most carbon efficient countries. Natural gas generates 95% of their electricity. They are actively addressing climate change, which poses an existential challenge to them as an island city state. Singapore has designated 2018 as the Year of Climate Action to raise domestic awareness and are implementing an economy-wide carbon tax from 2019, without exemption. These climate actions, including their commitments under the Paris Agreement, will build a sustainable future for generations to come.

55. Through the African Solidarity Trust Fund, a USD 1.5 million project was funded to help small-island nations in the AIMS region to adapt to impacts of climate change. The activities will focus on mitigating and adapting agriculture production to changing climate conditions, and make farming practices overall more efficient. The project focuses on farmers in Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles that can potentially benefit from training and knowledge exchanges on climate-smart food production, as well as ways to create viable market opportunities for nutritious food. Among these climate-smart agriculture practices are the use of a range of easy-to-grow crops of high nutritional value that will make production more resilient to adverse conditions. Other initiatives focus on innovative ways to increase food production. These include the introduction of fish aggregation devices - also known as fish magnets - to attract more fish to catch areas and increase the availability of nutritious seafood in local markets.

Sustainable Energy

56. The generation and use of energy are crucial to the development of SIDS. Most of SIDS lack the capacity to fully utilize their potential with respect to energy resources, and as a result, are highly dependent on oil imports in order to meet their energy needs. This has placed a great strain on the economies of many SIDS, and increases their overall vulnerability, as they have to depend on the volatile prices of fossil fuels. Access to energy has a significant influence on the livelihoods of individuals and communities. Energy serves as a catalyst for poverty reduction, equity, social progress, gender equality, women and youth empowerment. Access to energy varies by the characteristics of each SIDS, with some lacking proper access to energy, and others struggling with energy security. The challenges that many SIDS face with regards to energy, affects every aspect of life and hinders efforts to achieve sustainable development.

57. Pursuant to the energy needs and high cost of imported energy for SIDS (SAMOA Pathway para. 23), and sustainable energy which highlight the importance of access to electricity, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe all experienced an increase of access to electricity.⁹ For Comoros, the increase was from 39.43 per cent in 2000, to 73.76 per cent in 2014, and 78 per cent in 2016. For this same time period, the increase was much higher in urban areas (65.83 to 96.10 per cent of the population), than rural (29.13 to 64.99 per cent of the population). In Guinea-Bissau, access to electricity increased from 9.37 per cent in 2011 to 17.2 per cent in 2014, and similarly experienced a greater increase in urban locations (16.22 to 33.1 per cent) than rural locations (3.6 to 4 per cent). In São Tomé and Príncipe, access to electricity increased from 52.9 per cent in 2000 to 68.6 per cent in 2014. In urban locations, the increase was from 64.09 to 75.8 per cent and in rural, 38.97 to 54.8 per cent. The Government of Guinea Bissau envisions to attain universal access to modern, reliable and affordable energy services by 2030.

58. In São Tomé and Príncipe, access to electricity increased from 52.9 per cent in 2000 to 68.6 per cent in 2014, however it dropped to 65 per cent in 2016. In urban locations, the increase was from 64.09 to 75.8 per cent and in rural, 38.97 to 54.8 per cent. The São Tomé and Príncipe Power Sector Recovery Project, implemented in 2016 together with the World Bank¹⁰, aims to increase renewable energy generation and improve the reliability of the electricity supply in the country. The Minister of Finance of STP introduced the \$29 million Power Sector Recovery Project in a national address in the margins of the signature of the parallel financing of USD \$13 million from the European Investment Bank (EIB) on February 23rd, 2017. In order to promote the use of renewable energy and alternative sustainable habits, UNDP-GEF, together with the Ministry of Public Works, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment (MPWINRE) and other implementing partners, carried out a project that promoted environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient grid/isolated grid-based hydroelectric electricity.¹¹

59. In Cabo Verde, the National Action Plan for Renewable Energies 2015-2020/2030, stipulates that the choice of sustainable energy in Cabo Verde transcends the competitive availability of energy for the economy and for families, and transforms the entire energy sector into an engine for economic development.

60. In Mauritius, an emphasis is made regarding universal access to energy, building infrastructure and expanding energy generation, using cost-reflecting pricing to ensure sustainability, and institutional improvements. By 2025, the Government of Mauritius aims to increase use of renewable sources of energy from the current 22 per cent to 35 per cent. It aims to do this through wind farms, solar energy, biomass and waste-to-energy projects. While bagasse (sugarcane waste) remains the key source of renewable energy (16%), Mauritius derived the remaining renewable electricity generation from hydro, wind, landfill gas and solar. In 2016, the government created the Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency (MARENA) to oversee the development of renewable energy in Mauritius. In 2015, 99.6 per cent of the population in had access to the national electricity grid; 97.9 per cent relied primarily on clean fuels and technology; and about 20.1 per cent of renewable energy sources contributed to electricity generation.

61. In the Maldives, a provision of 24 hours of electricity service throughout the country was achieved in 2008. However, the country's energy needs are met through imported fossil fuel products and as a result, the over reliance on fossil fuel imports leaves the country highly vulnerable to global fuel price fluctuations, bringing positive and negative impacts on the balance of payments. In light of the geographical dispersal and the small size of the islands, storage of fuel in the islands has been a major challenge and subsequently, the current fuel storage capacity is greatly limited, with existing capacity that lasts only 10 days. Fuel needs

⁹ Sustainable Energy for All Global Tracking Framework.

¹⁰ See project document: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/329671467813442450/pdf/PAD1736-PAD-P1570976-OUO-9-IDA-R2016-0150-1-Box396267B.pdf>

¹¹ See project document:

<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/STP/PIMS%204602%20STP%20MFA%20ProDoc.pdf>

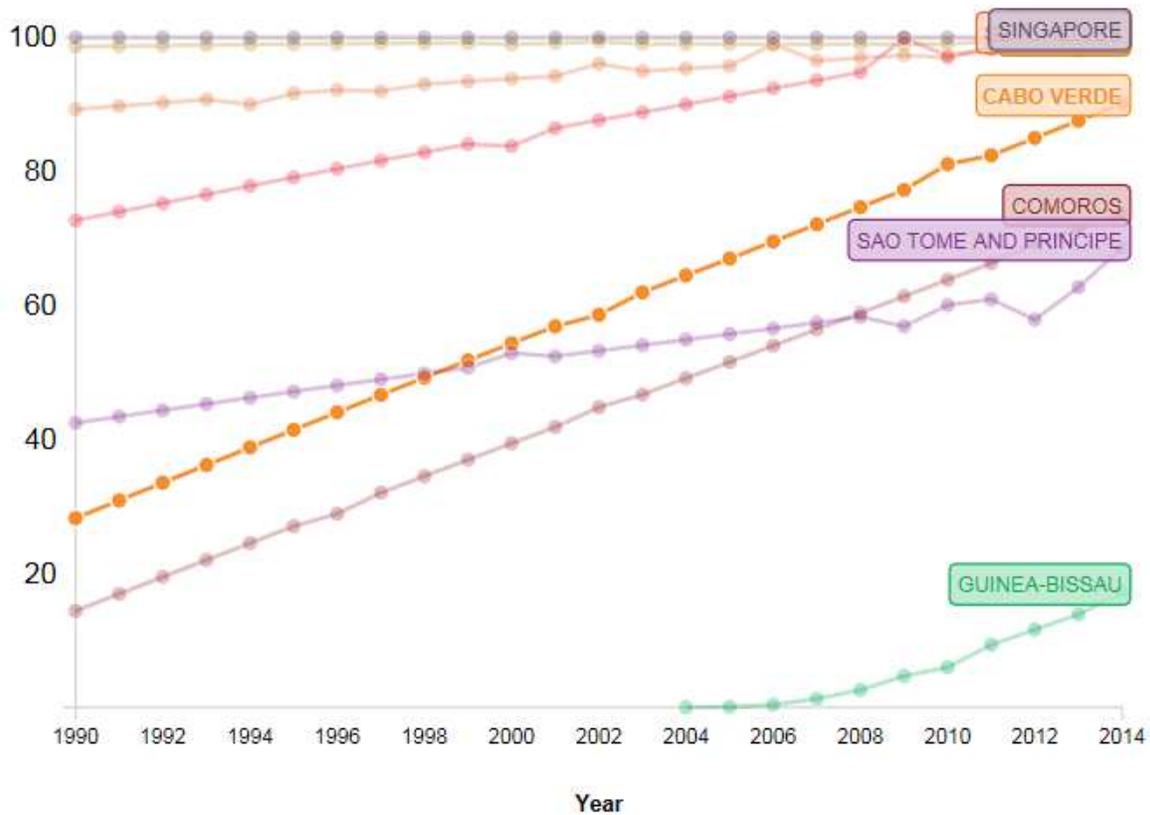
to be imported twice or three times a month, which increases the cost of fuel imports. To overcome these challenges, enhance the energy security and achieve a low emissions development economy, the Maldives government launched a programme in 2014 to diversify the energy sector through introduction and promotion of locally available renewable energy sources. Through these initiatives, the government will install renewable energy systems up to 30 per cent of day time peak load of electricity demand, in all inhabited islands by the end of 2018. Solar PV-diesel-hybrid systems have already been installed in some of the islands and work in the rest of the islands is currently on going. In addition, the government is also exploring the potential for wind energy across the country. In order to encourage renewable energy investments, the government has launched “Green Loan” facility, in collaboration with the Bank of Maldives in 2016 which provides loans to customers, both private businesses and households, at concessional rates. In addition, the government continues to conduct energy efficiency awareness programmes and energy efficient equipment distribution programmes to increase awareness on energy efficiency and conservation among the public.

62. For Singapore, a reliable electricity supply is critical to their economic development, and they recognise that access to energy will always be a challenge as a small, densely populated city-state without natural energy resources and limited options for harnessing alternative energy. However, Singapore has risen to the challenge of ensuring that their population has access to reliable, competitively priced and environmentally sustainable energy. Their long-term strategy and efforts have enabled them to build the necessary infrastructure to provide electricity to the population and ensure the reliability of the national grid. Among their top priorities is ensuring adequate supply of essential utilities, including electricity. Previously, the electricity supply was frequently disrupted as the power grids in rural areas consisted of overhead bare and stranded copper conductors on poles. Singapore is committed to sustainable energy use, with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adhering to commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change. For instance, competition in the liberalized power generation sector spurred power generation companies to switch from steam plants powered with fuel oil to more efficient Combined Cycle Gas Turbines (CCGTs), fueled by natural gas.

63. In Comoros, the country wants to ensure both long-term access and substantial national autonomy of supply to the greatest number, at a lower cost, while diversifying energy sources (including especially clean and renewable energies) and promoting promotion of socio-economic activities. It must rehabilitate existing diesel fuel capacity. In the medium and long term, it will focus on developing an energy transition policy that aims to reduce costs, dependence on fuel imports and promote the development of clean energies (renewable) and green development of the Comoros. To this end, SCA2D will act on two essential levers, namely: (i) the development of the Hydrocarbons sub-sector, and (ii) the development of the Electricity sub-sector. The targeted target for this result is to raise the electrification rate from 60% in 2017 to 70% in 2021.

64. As seen below, in terms of access to electricity, there is a wide variation for the AIMS SIDS. The country with the most limited access to electricity is Guinea-Bissau, with 11.63 per cent access in 2012, and which increased to 17.2 per cent in 2014. On the other end of the spectrum is Singapore, with 100 per cent access across the same years.

Figure 3: AIMS SIDS Access to Electricity (% of Population)



Source: World Bank, 2018.

Table 3: AIMS SIDS Access to Electricity (% of Population)

	2012	2013	2014
Cabo Verde	85.01	87.6	90.19
Comoros	69.3	71.28	73.76
Guinea-Bissau	11.63	13.9	17.2
Maldives	99.25	99.76	100
Mauritius	99.1	99.13	99.17
São Tomé and Príncipe	57.9	62.72	68.6
Seychelles	98.67	98	99.54
Singapore	100	100	100

Source: World Bank, 2018.

Disaster Risk Reduction

65. Disasters continue to undermine sustainable development in many of the SIDS countries. Recognizing that addressing disaster risk reduction concerns in SIDS is key to advancing sustainable and resilient development, the SAMOA Pathway has identified DRR as a key priority. SIDS experience some of the most severe consequences of escalating environmental risks and because of this, these island states must be prioritized and backed by international support, to build disaster risk reduction capabilities and disaster resilience.

66. For Guinea-Bissau, the country prepared regulations of the Basic Law of Civil Protection activities and created the National Platform for Risk Management Disasters. Through UNISDR, the country received support to set up a database on loss and damage linked to natural hazards and disasters. For the sustainability of interventions and proactivity, the Strategic and Operational Plan will reconcile dimensions of environmental, economic, social and sustainable development governance. In addition, the sustainability of growth and its security, will necessarily imply a better consideration of natural resource management, adaptation to climate change and the dimension of disaster risk reduction.

67. In the Maldives, resilient infrastructure based on sustainability and green technology, is one of the major focuses of the country. Integrating mitigation and disaster risk management into infrastructure through innovation remains a high priority for the country. One of these initiatives is a pilot launched by the National Disaster Management Centre, to utilize GIS in mapping hazards and disaster management plans at the island level. Currently, this is being tested with further expansion of the model contingent on securing necessary funding. The NDMC also partnered with UNDP and DJI to provide drones to local response teams to facilitate mapping of island topography and track the changes to island landscape over time. As a low-lying nation, the Maldives is also highly vulnerable to coastal inundation and storm surges. This is exacerbated by the fact that 42 per cent of the population footprint and 47 per cent of all housing structures are within 100 m of the coastline. In addition, 97 per cent of the inhabited islands have reported beach erosion, of which 64 per cent reported severe erosion issues. Increasing the coastline resiliency of the islands constitute and integral component of reducing disaster risk in the Maldives.

68. In Mauritius, in an effort to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, safe housing is being promoted by taking Disaster Resilience and Recovery (DRR) measures into account when planning neighbourhoods. Moreover, having signed and ratified 12 multilateral environmental agreements related to waste, including the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) which promotes safe housing through removal of asbestos and taking Disaster Resilience and Recovery measures, a project has been carried out by the Ministry of Environment for the safe management and disposal of chemicals and POPs.

69. The development and disaster/climate risk management challenges converge in particular in African SIDS, due to high exposure, increasing vulnerabilities from climate change and weaker technical and resource capacities. The Indian Ocean islands experience almost annual storms, with Mauritius being impacted by a major storm nearly every 5 years and additionally inadvertently affected by 3 to 5 storms. In response to these threats and to safeguard their development gains, there is policy and programmatic changes to address these issues. As such, it makes prioritizing DRR a key objective for achieving sustainable development.

70. A number of recent initiatives with respect to the policy and institutional framework for DRR have been taken in the recent past. Most notably, the establishment of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC) since 2013 under the aegis of Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development. The Centre coordinates with all stakeholders to ensure that risk reduction and preparedness planning is included at all levels of the country, from individuals and communities, to Government policy and strategy. A Disaster and Risk Management Act was enacted in 2016 defining the roles and responsibilities of various national entities in this area.

71. Some of the key policy, programmatic and technical support initiatives undertaken to address the peculiar disaster and climate risk vulnerability of African SIDS include the following:

- Cabo Verde experienced significant consequences from a Volcano eruption in 2014, as well as El Niño related droughts between 2016 and 2017. In Cabo Verde, the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction was technically validated and submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers.

To support the implementation of the new DRR strategy, UNDP has supported capacities of central institutions and five Municipalities on disaster risk management. Furthermore, the National Disaster Observatory is being operationalized thanks to the support of UNDP to allow the Civil Protection Service to collect data nationwide.

- UNDP has supported capacity building training for recovery planning under the *Preparedness for Resilient Recovery* project in Cabo Verde. This will help pre-position capacities and resources to help initiate recovery process in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and avoid delays in provision of support to affected communities.
- At a programmatic level, in Mauritius, UNDP's support to the national government through an Adaptation project in the community of La Digue provided engagement on perception of climate change and flooding, and have led to increased awareness and ownership of the project within the community.
- Furthermore, recognizing the interlinkages between disasters and climate change, the government of Comoros, in collaboration with UNDP, has started the implementation of a GCF project, which aims at securing a sustainable water supply for drinking and irrigation in the context of climate change and recurring natural disasters.
- In line with Outcome-5 of the Strategic Plan and Priority-2 of the Sendai Framework for DRR, synthesized policy, programmatic and technical inputs on institutional, legislative, and policy frameworks for DRR-CCA were provided to Cabo Verde to develop and review their national laws. This included making a presentation to the Parliamentarians to identify the focus and process for developing/revising their national DRM law. As part of the UNDP-IFRC partnership, technical training and orientation was provided to Government officials, in partnership with the International Institute for Humanitarian Law (IIHL), to review and revise their legislative framework.
- Technical advisory support on the application of risk assessment was provided in Cabo Verde. The national risk assessment in Cabo Verde entered into its 2nd Phase of implementation in 2016, to develop nation-wide exposure and risk profiles. A technical mission was fielded in Cabo Verde to support the national counterparts to prepare a detailed implementation plan for the Detailed Urban Risk Assessment (DURA). The risk assessment process for DURA was formally initiated and has been progressing as planned. A set of methodologies, tools, and samples on the vulnerability assessment of the economic sector have been developed. It is proposed to further augment the same by undertaking a peer-review of the methodologies developed for DURA.
- Technical support was provided to finalize the regional programme document titled '*Strengthening Africa's Resilience and Capacities for Adaptation and DRR: Fostering Risk-informed Solutions for Sustainable Development*'.
- Support has been provided to integrate disaster and climate risk considerations into SDG implementation support processes, through the MAPS engagement in Comoros, Mauritius and Guinea. This helped develop a national roadmap and strategy to align the national development plans and programmes with the 2030 Agenda, and to mainstream risk considerations into its implementation. The process involved reviewing the national development plans and vision documents, and developing context-specific policy, programmatic, data, finance and capacity related interventions to risk, and to inform the development planning and implementation process.
- UNDP has been advancing partnerships and innovations for improving disaster loss accounting and risk mapping capacities especially in SIDS. For example, UNDP's pilot initiative on exploring using drone technology in the Maldives for risk mapping was undertaken with the private sector partner DJI and UNDP's support to develop disaster data and statistics was spearheaded in partnership with the Global Centre for Disaster Statistics (GCDS), Tohoku University, Japan.
- With a view to strengthen the national response and recovery capacity in a post-disaster context in SIDS, UNDP in partnership with the DHL undertook disaster preparedness training for the airport personnel and authorities in Mauritius and Maldives under the *Getting Airports Ready for Disasters (GARD)* project. The training included airport surge assessments and the action plan, which will be

integrated into the disaster management plan of the airports. This assumes critical importance in the SIDS context considering the overwhelming dependence on air based external support for quick search and rescue, response and recovery processes. GARD supported the national authorities by building partnerships with UN agencies and other entities. Incorporating GARD elements into the National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP) and SOPs will help automatically activate the action plan for emergency response.

- The GEF Small Grants Programme implemented by UNDP in Mauritius has supported through the Mauritius Red Cross Society, Community Disaster Preparedness Training for 30 to 35 community members in 5 flood-prone regions across the mainland and 1 in Rodrigues Island, in collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC). These Community Disaster Response Teams (CRDT) are now enrolled in the local and national drilling exercises and act as first emergency responders during torrential rains and flash floods.

Oceans and Seas

72. The SAMOA Pathway emphasizes the importance of healthy oceans for SIDS, many of which are, in fact, large ocean States. Their vast ocean spaces can account for 28 times more space than their actual land space - encompassing a significant portion of the world's ocean. In many SIDS, marine and coastal ecosystems are under pressure due to rapid coastal development, the petroleum industry, increasing pollution and climate change.

73. Guinea-Bissau's extensive and very shallow continental shelf provides favorable environmental conditions for development that is rich in biomass and diversity of species. These resources are associated with several factors which include the existence of an extensive and shallow continental shelf with sandbanks, as well as currents from the Canaries (to the North) and the Gulf of Guinea to the South. Guinea-Bissau also experiences a phenomenon caused by warm southern waters from the Gulf of Guinea and cold northern waters which facilitates the establishment of a temperature gradient which in the winter allows for the arrival of large amounts of nutrients and the presence of the mangrove ecosystem along the coast. Current data indicates that this sector has an estimated annual potential of 275,000 tons, but its current level of exploitation is around 60,000 tons, which represents 4 per cent of GDP and contributes to 40 per cent to the OGE through sales of fishing licenses. Only 25,000 tons are consumed at the country level.

74. As a small island nation, the Maldives has always depended on its rich natural marine resources for subsistence. Ninety nine per cent of the territory is comprised of ocean and as a result, the local population depends on the ocean for food with fish, especially tuna as the primary source of food. In light of this, sustainability of the fisheries sector is the key to ensuring livelihoods, as well as food security in the country. This is demonstrated through their commitment towards low impact fishing methods and long-standing commitment to safeguard fish stocks and promote sustainable fisheries. Pollution, both from land and sea-based sources are a significant threat to life below water. The Maldives is taking several initiatives to protect its ocean and to safeguard life below water. As such, a national campaign to reduce plastics in the Maldives was launched in June 2017, with the objective of reducing plastics used in various sectors of the economy, and progressively phasing out the use of non-biodegradable plastics.

75. For Mauritius, the aim of the Government is to develop the Ocean Economy as an important industry in view of sustained economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation. The vision of the Government is to transform Mauritius into a regional seafood hub. Their strategy is to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries resources while facilitating the growth and development of industrial fisheries for processing and export, transshipment of catch from foreign vessels, with the associated value addition derived from port chandlery and servicing facilities. The Fisheries sector accounted for about 1.4 per cent of GDP in 2016 with a turnover of Rs. 27.4 billion. The export of fish and fish products generated

revenue of Rs. 14 billion representing 18 per cent of the national exports. Revenue from fishing licenses amounted to about Rs. 54 million in 2016 and there were 977 calling fishing vessels in the port in 2016, which generated some Rs. 9.77 billion. Total active employment as at date is estimated to be 12,000. About 80 per cent of the labour force in the fish processing sector are women, thus, promoting the economic empowerment of women, and fulfilling Goal 3 of the SDGs.

76. The West Africa Regional Fisheries Program (WARFP) supported by the GEF and implemented by the World Bank, aims at addressing the regional challenges in West Africa fisheries. The program's overall development objective is to support countries to maintain or increase priority fish stocks and the benefits that they can provide to West Africa, with a focus on benefits for poverty reduction and food security, with a specific focus in Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau. In Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde, the project focused primarily on strengthening national level capacity for fisheries governance and management with the development objective to strengthen the capacity of the countries to govern and manage targeted fisheries, reduce illegal fishing and increase local value added to fish products.

77. Singapore is committed to doing their part to conserve and use our oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. They submitted voluntary commitments at the United Nations Oceans Conference in June 2017 and strive to maintain the delicate balance between economic, social, and environmental priorities in order to achieve long-term, sustainable development.

Food Security and Nutrition

78. Primarily net food importers, SIDS are vulnerable to the variable availability and price volatility of food imports. SIDS vulnerability to food insecurity is also due to their limited landmass, population and external economic shocks. Furthermore, SIDS environment are threatened by natural and human-induced disasters which put local food security and proper nutrition also at risk. Policy changes have seen this emerging issue increasingly added to national development strategies. Per capita food production has declined in SIDS from 1990 to 2011. Simultaneously, food imports have generally risen, though not consistently during the same period. Among most SIDS, threats to food security include land degradation, poor management of marine ecosystems and fisheries, lack of support for sustainable agriculture and other impacts of natural and human-induced disasters.

79. For São Tomé and Príncipe, Support Infrastructures to Food Security was implemented through the Infrastructure Rehabilitation for Food Security Support Project (PRIASA II, 2016-2020), as a result of a partnership between the Government, the African Development Bank and the World Environment Fund. These actions allowed for: sustainable land and water management techniques; techniques for efficient water management, collection and conservation; and protection techniques against coastal erosion and reforestation for windbreakers, coastal protection and for the reduction of soil and coastal erosion.

80. In Guinea-Bissau, the agriculture sector accounts for around 50 per cent of GDP and employs more than 85 per cent of the population, representing the backbone of their economy. This sector provides support to the overwhelming majority of the population and plays an important role in the country's external accounts – it is estimated that agricultural exports represent more than 98 per cent of total exports of goods. The agricultural sector accounts for 80 per cent of livelihoods and is developed by small farmers. The cultivation of rice for self-consumption is the main food product for Guineans. However, with increasing sea level rise, more and more salt water infiltrates the rice fields, thus negatively affecting the rice production and food security. As a result, Guinea-Bissau is forced to import processed rice. The forestry subsector represents a significant opportunity for generating income for government and more source of income and resources, contributing about 2 per cent to GDP. It is a source of food and fuel (wood energy) for small-scale domestic and industrial use, construction materials and fibers for the vast majority of the Guinean population.

81. In the Maldives, locally produced food items are limited and almost all products are imported. This makes the country highly vulnerable to external economic shocks. According to FAO data, it is estimated that the Maldives produces less than a tenth of its overall food requirements. Although there is no absolute hunger in the country, food security is an issue due to the high dependency on imports of staple and daily essentials. While absolute hunger has been eliminated, improving the quality of nutritional intake continues to be a high priority. In order to tackle the issue of food security, there is a need for promoting sustainable agriculture in the country. Therefore, encouraging and supporting local agriculture and promoting sustainable agricultural practices will be critical to enhance food security. In addition, educating locals to eat healthy and nutritious food is also a key priority.

82. In Mauritius, the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security released its Strategic Plan for the period 2016-2020. With a view to taking Mauritius to a higher level of food security whilst respecting the need for safe food and better nutrition of the population, it has taken on board the need for sustainable agricultural development in a climate friendly mode as well as safeguarding farmers' livelihoods. Its forestry and biodiversity components are now playing vital roles in the management of natural resources, and are recognised as significant contributors to sustainable development and to the mitigation of climate change impacts. Initiatives to shift towards bio-farming for safe and quality food, with standards and norms is underway. Through the provision of incentives for the adoption of sustainable production practices, clustering, exploitation of abandoned land, agri-business ventures in processing food for local and export market, and cross-border investment. There is an increase in research and development in new technologies to increase land productivity, sustainable production and ensure food and nutrition security in production systems, tools to Strategic Plan 2016-2020 for the Non-Sugar Sector. The Rain Water Harvesting Scheme encourages crop and livestock farmers to harvest rainwater to optimize use of water resources. It provides partial funding as grant for the acquisition of appropriate equipment to collect, store and supply rainwater on-farm for agricultural production solely, and light structures for collection of rain-water. With support from FAO, the Ministry of Agro-Industry in Mauritius has embarked on an Organic Agriculture Bill to regulate, and set the minimum requirements for, the production, handling, processing and labelling of organic products. UNDP, through the GEF Small Grants Programme which has pioneered several organic production and certification in the country, was consulted for the drafting of the bill.

83. In Singapore, due to competing land-use needs (e.g. industrial and residential uses), less than 1 per cent of their land is used for agriculture and more of their food is imported. This makes them vulnerable to fluctuations in food supply and prices, as well as overseas food safety incidents. Despite these challenges, Singapore is considered one of the most food-secure countries in the world. To ensure their food security, Singapore has adopted a holistic approach comprising four core strategies – import source diversification, local production, internationalization, and stockpiling. This is a whole-of-government effort and involves collaboration with industry stakeholders. To maintain food security, their ultimate goal is to ensure that everyone in Singapore has access to an adequate supply of safe and nutritious food at affordable prices in the short and long-term.

84. The Union of Comoros is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards such as storms, landslide floods and volcanic eruptions. These phenomena regularly cause considerable damage to infrastructure and significantly affect food security. To deal with risks and disasters, the Government of Comoros created in 2007 the Center for Relief and Civil Protection Operations (COSEP) and set up an institutional framework for disaster prevention and management. In 2012, COSEP was transformed into the Directorate General of Civil Security (DGCS), responsible for dealing with both disaster response and preparedness at the national level. Similarly, a national platform for disaster risk reduction (National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and Prevention, PNPRRC) has been established.

85. Progress has also been made in the areas of modernization of the Karthala Observatory and Volcano monitoring equipment, as well as in the development of special contingency plans for major hazards and early warning systems. Also, the country has subscribed to the commitments under the 2030 Agenda, by opting for a sustainable management of natural resources in order to support its dynamic of structural transformation.

86. Significant progress has been made in Comoros in the health and nutrition sector. It is noted that malnutrition is associated with more than 45% of the number of deaths observed each year around the world in children under 5 years. In the Comoros, according to the 2012 EDS-MICS, the contribution of malnutrition to child mortality was 43%, of which 9% was due to severe malnutrition, 30% of children under 5 suffer chronic malnutrition, 15% of which is severe. The prevalence of chronic malnutrition varies by island.

Water and Sanitation

87. Access to safe drinking water is a critical sustainable development issue for SIDS, with profound implications for economic growth, human rights, public health and the environment. Climate variability, water resource management and economic development are all closely linked to fresh water access. Vulnerability to natural disasters further affects the water supply and undermines poverty reduction goals. Although there has been an increase in access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities in SIDS, there still remains a disparity across the regions in the percentage of the population with access to these facilities.

88. Rates of access to improved drinking water sources have varied across SIDS in the AIMS region. In Comoros, the percentage of the population using an improved drinking water source has remained steady at 90.1 from 2011 to 2015, well above the average for Africa as a whole, which ranged from 58.2 per cent in 2011 to 62.5 per cent in 2015. In Guinea-Bissau, 71.7 per cent of the population used an improved drinking water source in 2011 compared to 79.3 per cent in 2015, and in São Tomé and Príncipe, the rate was much higher at 97 per cent from 2011 to 2015.

89. In Comoros, efforts have been made for water supply and management of water resources. The share of the population using an improved drinking water source is 13%. Progress should be made in the development of master plans for the entire Union of the Comoros, the creation of an information system, and the prioritization of access to water according to the degree of vulnerability the regions. The share of the population using improved sanitation facilities is 48.3% in urban areas and 30.9% in rural areas in 2015.

90. For Cabo Verde, the 2010 National Basic Sanitation Plan is currently being updated through the Waste Roadmap (Roadmap de Resíduos de Cabo Verde). The National Strategic Water and Sanitation Plan (Plano Estratégico Nacional de Água e Saneamento - "PLENAS") was launched and is currently preparing a series of detailed water and sanitation master plans (Planos Diretores de Água e Saneamento - PDAS) for each of the islands. The Plan provides strategic guidance to the different government levels and a detailed planning process to be carried out in the islands. The reformed Water and Sanitation Code (Código de Água e Saneamento) and the General Solid Waste Law are expected to be enacted soon. Cabo Verde has committed to providing proper waste management coverage (with waste segregation, recycling, and treatment in sanitary landfills) for 50% of the most vulnerable municipalities by 2030.

91. In Guinea-Bissau, in 2010, around two-thirds of the population indicated using an improved water source. However, the gap between urban and rural areas was high - 53 per cent of households living in rural areas indicated using improved water sources, while the percentage of users of improved water sources in urban areas was 84 per cent. Sanitation indicators highlighted disparities in the availability and use of improved infrastructure between urban and rural areas, where only 5 per cent of households living in rural

areas used improved sanitation facilities, compared with 35 per cent of urban areas that used improved sanitation facilities.

92. In the Maldives, solid waste, untreated sewage, oil pollution and ballast water constitute the major sources of marine pollution in the country. The growing amount of waste generated and the lack of sufficient capacity for sound management of waste on the islands are among the most challenging environmental issues related to life below water in the Maldives. In 2015, a Waste Management Policy was formulated to manage waste in a sustainable and feasible manner. The initiative will result in the establishment of waste management centres in all inhabited islands by the end of 2018.

93. In Mauritius, with a view to improving water security and mobilize additional water, several infrastructural projects are being implemented. These include the construction of the Bagatelle dam, Bagatelle Water Treatment Plant, and Riviere des Anguilles dam, as well as rehabilitation of La Ferme dam, and enlargement of La Nicoliere reservoir. In addition, the Government will undertake a review of the wastewater master plan, to ensure the most competitive wastewater disposal technology for environmental protection.

94. For Singapore, Water is considered an existential issue due to its scarcity and as the most water-stressed country in the world and their limited natural supply of fresh water is exacerbated by their small land area which limits the space to capture and store rainwater. However, Singapore has come a long way in achieving universal access to affordable and high-quality water, as well as modern and accessible sanitation for all. Their policies are guided by long-term planning, underpinned by the need to achieve water sustainability to support their population and economic growth needs. Singapore has adopted an integrated closed-loop approach to water management, and their national water authority optimizes the use of Singapore's water resources by integrating water supply, sewage and drainage functions to manage the entire water cycle, while harnessing opportunities for water reuse through wastewater reclamation technologies and innovation. Singapore's approach to water management is guided by three key strategies: Maximising their yield by collecting rain fall; making water and endlessly reusable resource by recycling and reusing wastewater; and Turning sea water into drinking water through desalination. Singapore puts a strong emphasis on technology and innovation into their water management efforts through investment in research and development for new technologies.

95. The "Implementing Integrated Water Resources and Wastewater Management in Atlantic and Indian Ocean Small Islands Developing States", co-implemented by United Nation Environment (UNEP) as lead agency and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and executed by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The goal of the project was to supports six (6) participating Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Atlantic Ocean (Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe) and Indian Ocean (Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles) to "accelerate progress on World Summit on Sustainable Development targets (WSSD, 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa) and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Use Efficiency (WUE) plans and water supply and sanitation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the protection and utilization of groundwater and surface water in the participating countries". The overall objective of the IWRM AIO SIDS project was to strengthen the commitment and capacity of the participating countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of freshwater resources, with a long-term goal of enhancing the capacity of the countries to plan and manage their water resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis. Along with pilot demonstration projects and national policy reforms, one of the component focused on the development of an IWRM and WUE Regional and National Indicator Framework as a long-term mechanism to assess the effectiveness of IWRM and WUE in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS.

Sustainable Transportation

96. The Government of Mauritius has set up the Smart City Scheme to provide an enabling framework and a package of attractive fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to investors for the development of smart cities across the island. The implementation of the Smart City Scheme intends to encourage the development of smart cities across the country. The smart city project is a new initiative to stimulate innovative scientific and technological activities, provide technology-driven facilities to the business community and create a vibrant city lifestyle. The Metro Express Project which is a new, state of the art transport system will be introduced in 5 years. It will provide rapid access and connectivity around the country and also help in alleviating traffic congestion. A new Road Decongestion Programme (RDP) has been put in place with a view to alleviating traffic congestion along the main roads across the country.

97. In Mauritius, Vision 2030 introduces the resilience dimension with respect to the development of infrastructure. It aims at physically securing infrastructure to both withstand and quickly recover from disasters. Public infrastructure and land transport will be a key component in transforming Mauritius into a modern, eco-friendly, vibrant and attractive place to live in, visit and do business. The airport was provided with necessary facilities to allow its development into a transit hub – an airport city was developed which will house a wide range of aviation and commercial activities. In an effort to improve air quality, the Ministry of Environment is implementing the Global Fuel Economy Initiative project, funded by the Global Environment Facility and the European Union, to reduce fuel consumption and pollution from vehicles through: introduction of cleaner fuels, promotion of hybrid and electric cars, improved traffic management and decongestion, vehicular air emissions monitoring, and sensitization and awareness raising for behavioural change. Also, the Metro Express Project, a new, state of the art transport system, will be introduced in five years and will provide rapid access and connectivity around the country and also help in alleviating traffic congestion.

98. The Maldives highlighted the main form of transportation used to travel from one island to another is sea transport and that domestic air transport is limited though gradually developing with three international airports and seven domestic airports throughout the country. The high cost of transportation remains a significant challenge to the sustainable development of the country. In 2006, the Maldives Transport and Contracting Company Plc. (MTCC) commenced the “Integrated Transport Networks” with the objective of linking the entire country through a well-organized transport network. Over the years, MTCC has increased its capacity and now provides ferry services within the island and the atolls across the country. The improved transportation links have allowed islands communities to travel and access better services. In addition, transport facilities such as bus services are provided by the private sector. The increased mobility has consequently enhanced the overall wellbeing of communities across the country.

99. Singapore emphasized their continuous investments in infrastructure while also making the best use of resources which includes enhancing the efficiency of transportation and logistics services and building up a strong information and communication infrastructure. They have started planning for airport expansion at Changi East, which will add a fifth airport terminal and additional infrastructure to serve another 50 million passengers per year by around 2030. To boost cross-border connectivity, Singapore is working with Malaysia to build the Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System Link and the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail by 2024 and 2026 respectively. Within the country, an extensive public transportation network has been built, with a well-connected rail network forming the backbone. Singapore has indicated that by 2030, the rail network will expand from 230 kilometers today, to 360 kilometers, and that eight in ten households will be within a ten-minute walk of a train station.

100. The development of infrastructure and transport services is crucial to boost the competitiveness of the national economy and private investment, the reduction of factor costs, the opening up of productive

areas, territorial continuity and the integration of the Comoros into regional and international economy. Due to its geographical position, the Union of Comoros experience difficulties of service and links linked to both objective constraints (distance from certain major international markets, very small size of its internal market and fragmentation between several islands), political followed in the development of transport by the various transport organizations housed in several ministries and the high transport costs. To achieve this result, the SCA2D will act on three essential levers, namely: (i) the development of the maritime and port network; (ii) the development of road infrastructure and associated services; and (iii) development of the air network and associated services.

101. The target targets for this outcome are: (i) to rehabilitate 400 km of roads by 2021, (ii) to reduce by 30% by 2021 the cost of transshipment of a 20-foot container (1,034 \$ US at Moroni in 2009), (iii) increase by 20% from 2017 to 2021 the capacity of airports in the country.

Sustainable Consumption and Production:

102. The SAMOA Pathway recognises the importance of promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production as an overarching objective of and essential requirement for sustainable development. With this in mind, SIDS are to develop and implement programmes under the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns to advance sustainable consumption and production, with an emphasis on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainable tourism, waste management, food and nutrition, lifestyles, education for sustainable development and linkages in the supply chain to promote rural development.

103. In Mauritius, the National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production has focused on strategic priority areas since 2008, with a number of SCP projects implemented to promote more sustainable lifestyles, and change consumption patterns through technological shifts and behavioural change. These have included a focus on energy and water resource efficiency through standards for household appliances, energy audits, purchase of energy efficient lighting systems, and solar installation in schools. In addition, the Mauritius Ministry of Environment is presently implementing the Switch Africa Green programme, a partnership between 7 pilot African countries to achieve sustainable development through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production practices. It mainly focuses on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and seeks to provide them with the necessary skills and enabling environment to transition to a greener and more sustainable production pattern.¹²

104. In the Maldives, although there is high dependence on imported food, agriculture constitutes an important sector for both livelihood and food security. However, reliance on chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides remain a concern in the agricultural sector. In addition, inadequate storage and transportation results in a significant amount of food waste. Interventions to promote sustainable consumption and production in agricultural sector need to focus on these challenges and issues. In addition, fishing constitutes one of the most important sectors for the country's economy. An innovative tool developed by the government of Maldives called 'Keyolhu', a web-based fisheries information system has allowed exporters to report fish purchase information and catch areas, and has assisted in tapping into new markets and keep track of vital data and information necessary for managing the sector. Yellow fin tuna is the second largest catch in the Indian Ocean and the latest stock assessments show overfishing of this species mainly due to increasing fisheries activity in the Indian Ocean by all countries. However, interim measures have been taken by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to recover the stocks by introducing catch limits, reduction of drifting fish aggregating devices and reduction of supply vessels.

¹² Mauritius submission.

105. Singapore's approach to sustainable consumption and production is to become a Zero Waste Nation, where energy and raw materials are used to produce and get goods to consumers. Energy is also needed to collect and transport the waste that is generated. Their aim is to conserve resources by extracting greater value from waste as a resource. Just as Singapore has been successful in closing the water loop by recycling water endlessly, the country also strives to close the waste loop through a circular economy. By reducing waste and their consumption of materials and goods, Singapore works to conserve precious resources and reduce the need for space-consuming landfills. Singapore works with industry stakeholders to incorporate reducing, reusing and recycling into business practices, and with the community to spread the message on responsible consumer behaviour. Singapore also seeks to ensure that these efforts are in-line with international norms and standards on the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes.

106. Agro-sylvo-pastoral production, by its significant contribution to GDP (on average 25%), will form the basis of the structural transformation of the Comorian economy. It will involve making productive investments to improve productivity in the sub-sector. To do so, the focus will be on two essential levers, namely: (i) increase agricultural productivity, and (ii) increase livestock productivity. Targets targeted at this level are: (i) increase the share of the agricultural sub-sector in GDP from 31.6% in 2017 to 35% in 2021, (ii) reduce external dependence on white meats by 80% in 2013 to less than 30% in 2021.

107. In terms of the increase in agricultural productivity, SCA2D will focus on the updating and effective implementation of the 2015-2020 Agricultural Strategy, which aims to develop ecologically intensive agriculture to sustainably increase agricultural production to contribute to sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security, creates jobs, distributes income to farmers, provides export revenues to the state and preserves the natural and cultivated environments that guarantee its sustainability and the development of other sectors (tourism, water resources). The aim will be to increase food production in food and vegetables and reverse the trend towards cash crops to at least double the volume or value of exports.

108. Priority actions include: (i) structuring investments in hydro-agricultural schemes; (ii) improvement of the regulatory and institutional framework of agricultural sectors to regulate their development, as well as land security; (iii) processing and marketing of agricultural products; (iv) facilitating access to inputs; (v) the operationalization of an information system; and (vi) the establishment of an appropriate funding system.

109. In terms of the crease in livestock productivity, SCA2D intends to create the conditions for reviving livestock farming so that it generates more added value and contributes to food and nutritional security objectives. It also aims to significantly reduce the external dependence on white meats, through the expansion of poultry production, the development of small ruminant farming, and the increase in milk production. To this end, emphasis will be placed on the following priority actions: (i) the development of meat production; (ii) the promotion of technical innovations in improving livestock production and productivity; (iii) the extension of short-cycle species (small ruminants and poultry); (iv) strengthening of the animal health system; (v) the establishment of adequate infrastructures (Ngazidja functional quarantine park for beef imports, sanitary slaughterhouses on all the islands, epidemiological surveillance network for animal diseases).

Management of chemicals and waste:

110. Waste management has been recognised as an area of national and international concern for SIDS. The lack of sound waste collection systems, improper disposal of waste in open or partially controlled landfills lacking technical and environmental controls, debris caused by crisis or disasters, and exposure to chemicals such as persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury, continue to challenge the sustainable development efforts of many SIDS. Toxic chemicals and waste present particular acute challenges to SIDS'

fragile ecosystems. Most chemicals are imported into these countries and many governments lack adequate legislation controlling toxic chemicals.

111. For Guinea-Bissau the management of chemicals and waste, including hazardous waste, included the preparation of an inventory of hazardous wastes, which is underway and produced under the Basel Convention. Drafted legislation on hazardous wastes and Persistent Organic Pollutants developed the Stockholm Convention Action Plan and implemented the Pilot Project on Biomedical Waste. The Government has included the elaboration of Policy and Strategy for waste management in general and the creation of a national structure for the management of waste and chemicals. One of the priorities is to build national capacities for statistical development and alignment of the Operational Strategic Plan with SDGs, SAMOA Pathway, African Union Agenda 2063 and New Deal.

112. In Mauritius, the management of hazardous waste is a major issue of concern. The country faces challenges of dealing with hazardous wastes with constraints specific to small islands developing states. In particular, it is not economically viable to set up treatment or disposal systems for several hazardous waste streams, as the quantities generated are too low and therefore exportation of these wastes for recovery or disposal is the most practical solution. According to the inventory of hazardous wastes carried out in 2011, around 17,000 tonnes of hazardous wastes, comprising around 5,000 tonnes of waste oil, 850 tonnes of lead from batteries, 7,600 tonnes of e-wastes, 1,600 tonnes of wastewater treatment sludge and around 200 tonnes of medical wastes (these pertaining however only to private clinics), among others were generated in Mauritius. Opportunities for the local recycling, treatment and disposal already exist for a few hazardous waste streams such as waste oil, and e-wastes.

113. However, there is, at present, a limited infrastructure for the management of the remaining hazardous waste streams such as spent solvents, organic sludges, wastes containing persistent organic pollutants (POPs), mercury-containing wastes, heavy metal wastes, acids and alkalis, obsolete pesticides, ozone depleting substances (ODS), compressed gas cylinders, cyanide wastes, among others and significant quantities of these hazardous wastes are either being stored on the premises of generators or discharged indiscriminately into the environment. UNDP through the GEF Small Grants Programme has supported a pilot project for triple rinsing, safe disposal and recycling of waste pesticide containers in 4 pilot regions. The Ministry of Agro-Industry plans to upscale this project to the whole island in view of the upcoming adoption of the Pesticide Use Bill.

114. Mauritius has ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 21 September 2017. The Minamata Convention is an important element of our efforts to achieve sustainable, inclusive and resilient human development through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SAMOA Pathway. It is closely linked to SDGs 1,2,3,7,8,12 and 14. In line with the Convention, Mauritius is in process of preparing the Draft Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) Report.

115. In Maldives, sustainable management of waste and chemicals pose a significant challenge in terms of protecting human health and the environment. The National Waste Management Policy, which was introduced in 2015, recognises these challenges and is geared towards institutionalizing appropriate, environmentally sound, commercially viable and sustainable models for waste management in the country. It includes targets for waste reduction, recycling and recovery, engaging communities, private sector and other relevant stakeholders, and developing an enabling environment for the sound management of waste. Moreover, the Ministry of Environment and Energy is developing a legal framework to reduce plastic pollution with the aim of reducing marine plastic pollution. This framework seeks to reduce marine pollution from land-based activities and contribute to protecting the marine and coastal ecosystems.

Health and Non-Communicable Diseases

116. Environmental-health risks account for a large fraction of the burden of death, disease, and disability, creating greater barriers to the sustainable, economic growth of SIDS. A healthy environment is a sound platform for good public, community, and individual health. Disease, disability, and death within these nations' population is one of the many challenges to the sustainable development of SIDS.

117. In Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe, population and primary health indicators have demonstrated improvements from 2011 to 2016, in terms of mortality rate under five, infant mortality rate, and from 2011 to 2015 for maternal mortality rate. The greatest improvement in mortality rate under five was observed in São Tomé and Príncipe where it decreased from 108.3 in 2011 to 90.7 in 2016, for a difference of 17.6.¹³ For infant mortality rate, São Tomé and Príncipe again had the greatest improvement of the three, from 69.2 in 2011 to 59.2 in 2016. However, for maternal mortality rate, Comoros experienced the greatest decrease, from 777 in 2011, down to 693 in 2015.¹⁴

118. The changes in indicators for the WHO's World Health Statistics reporting since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, makes comparison across the most recent (2017) and the previous data difficult to compare, however, a few indicators remained the same. For instance, based on the 2013 statistics¹⁵, the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel in São Tomé and Príncipe was 75% in rural areas and 89% in urban areas, while in the 2017¹⁶ the number was 93% for rural and urban areas combined, demonstrating an improvement within the past few years. The coverage of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP3) immunization among 1-year-olds (in percentage) increased from 2011 to 2015 in Cabo Verde from 90% to 93%, and in Guinea Bissau from 76% to 80%. In São Tomé and Príncipe, the coverage remained the same (96%) and in Comoros, it decreased from 83% to 80% for the same years, respectively.

119. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation data from 2016, noncommunicable diseases cause most of premature (before age 70) deaths in many countries.¹⁷ In Cabo Verde, ischemic heart disease and lower respiratory infections lead the statistics, and the third most common cause of death is HIV/AIDS. In Maldives, leading causes of premature death in 2016 were ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease and chronic kidney disease, and in Seychelles ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections and hypertensive heart disease. In some of the countries, infectious diseases are the main cause of premature death. In Comoros, the top three causes of premature death are lower respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and neonatal encephalopathy. However, the prevalence of all these diseases have been decreasing over 2005-2016, by 25% or more. In Guinea-Bissau, the lead causes for premature deaths in 2016 were HIV/AIDS, lower respiratory infections and diarrheal diseases.

120. Mauritius has a well performing health system grounded in the principle of universal access through free health care provision –basic and specialized care services. The Government of Mauritius acknowledges access to health as a human right. In 2017, health expenditures contributed 4.4 per cent of GDP and represented 8 per cent of government spending. Life expectancy currently stands at 74.4 years on average. The 2015 Mauritius Non-Communicable Diseases Survey indicated that the prevalence of diabetes among adults aged 25 – 74 years, had decreased from 23.6% in 2009 to 22.8% in 2015, and for hypertension had significantly decreased from 37.9% to 28.5% in the same period. Counselling and sensitization

¹³ Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation: <http://www.childmortality.org>

¹⁴ Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group: <http://www.maternalmortalitydata.org>

¹⁵ WHO, 2013. World Health Statistics.

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/81965/9789241564588_eng.pdf?sequence=1

¹⁶ WHO, 2017. World Health Statistics. <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/255336/9789241565486-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

¹⁷ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2016. <http://www.healthdata.org/>

campaigns on NCDs and healthy lifestyle have been further enhanced at the community level, worksites and secondary schools. In addition, physical activity programmes have been strengthened in the community. Additional health tracks and outdoor gyms have been set up. Screening for the early detection of NCDs and their related risk factors have been strengthened and in order to ensure that the whole population, in particular, those at risks, are screened on a regular basis. Furthermore, screening for diabetes in person with high risk are being carried out through the Mauritius Diabetes Risk Score and National Plans of Actions on nutrition, physical activity, smoking and alcohol are being implemented.

121. For São Tomé and Príncipe and within the scope of the fight against the noncommunicable diseases, the Government, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), implemented actions aiming to provide support for the development or implementation of policies, strategies and sectoral programmes, which include the research and production of reliable data, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the health situation and trends. This strategic priority also concerns the prevention and control of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, mental illnesses and use of illicit substances, as well as lesions or traumas, violence and its risk factors.

122. In Cabo Verde, the implementation of the Delivering Results Together (DRT) initiative by relevant UN agencies, contributed to the development of an integrated infant and maternal health quality services at the national and local levels, with a focus on neonatal care.¹⁸ In addition, national adolescent health programmes and integrated quality services were developed, based on human rights and a gender approach including sexual and reproductive health rights and prevention of drug use. Continued support was provided to strengthen national capacity in delivering integrated social services to women affected by ZIKA, in particular women who gave birth to children with microcephaly. The interventions allowed the Government, under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, to ensure for multi-disciplinary response to ZIKA and efficiently integrated the gender and social component into the planning and developing documents of ZIKA, and in measures undertaken to prevent and combat ZIKA.

123. In Guinea-Bissau, the health profile is characterized by strong regional, rural and urban asymmetries, both in terms of indicators of the health status of the population, existing health care infrastructures, and available resources. In rural areas, a major dispute continues between modern and traditional medicine. In Guinea-Bissau, malaria is an endemic disease of high prevalence with more than 90 per cent of cases transmitted through mosquito bites. Under the new financing model, the Global Fund Team, a total of EUR 38.1 million was allocated to Guinea-Bissau NFM Malaria grant managed by UNDP. The NFM Malaria grant has a health system strengthening component (HSS).

124. In the Maldives, the health status of people has significantly improved in the past few decades. Maldives Health Statistics show that from 2006 to 2015, the infant mortality rate decreased from 16 to 9 per 1000 live births. During this period, under 5 mortality rates also decreased from 18 to 11 per 1000 live births. Maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 69 per 100,000 births in 2006 to 13 per 100,000 births in 2012. The decline of maternal mortality ratio is due to factors such as the wide dispersion of obstetric and other health services to outer atolls, with access to skilled attendants in delivery and provision of antenatal care. In addition, the Maldives has made considerable achievements in the health sector through the provision of universal healthcare. In the past two years, extensive efforts have been made to expand the reach of pharmacies with the result that each inhabited island now has at least one pharmacy. The Maldives is the first country in the South Asia Region to be awarded certification of elimination of Malaria, Lymphatic Filariasis and Measles. Focus is also given to care for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, thalassemia and mental health.

¹⁸ See: http://www.un.cv/files/2016_Narrative_Report_CaboVerde.pdf

125. For Singapore, its people are living longer and in full health with a healthy life expectancy at birth of 73.6 years in 2016, which is the highest in the world. Singapore attributes this to several factors including the accessibility of quality and affordable basic medical services for all, the active promotion of preventive health programmes and medicine, high standards of living, clean water, hygiene and a culture of healthy living. Singapore's healthcare system has three distinctive features. First, their public hospitals function as corporate entities – although government-owned, they have operational autonomy for day-to-day activities for greater efficiency and competitiveness. Second, they offer universal healthcare coverage to all Singaporeans through a national medical savings scheme which helps individuals set aside part of their income to meet future medical fees. Third, there is tight regulatory supervision and control over all healthcare providers to ensure high quality healthcare services.

126. The epidemiological situation remains dominated by acute respiratory infections and malaria, although the country experienced a decline in malaria prevalence in 2013 to more than 98%, with only 1% in 2014. As for HIV / AIDS, the various seroprevalence surveys carried out up to 2012 show a prevalence of less than 0.5%, which places Comoros among the countries with a weak epidemic. The prevalence of Tuberculosis is 37 per 100,000 population with a cure rate of 94%. As for leprosy, it is endemic in the Comoros with a prevalence of 4 per 10,000 inhabitants. It is important to note that 90% of cases are detected in Ndzuwani where the prevalence is estimated at 11.8 per 10 000 inhabitants. Arboviroses continue to affect populations, while no communicable diseases are a major concern, with a prevalence of 25.4% in hypertension, 4.8% in diabetes and 25.9% in hypercholesterolemia in 2008.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

127. In some AIMS SIDS, societies operate in a matriarchal structure where women are the heads of households. However, these countries also face structural inequalities and slow progress towards equality between men and women. Women suffer more than men from poor health, under-schooling, sub-literacy and lack of skills, and often experience higher rates of unemployment and more difficulty accessing basic social infrastructure than men.

128. SIDS have been making progress in terms of gender equality in recent decades, as women are being incorporated into government and other aspects of public life that were once dominated by men. Female representation in national parliament is improving and over the past decade, the proportion of seats occupied by women has risen by about 5 per cent, though SIDS still lag behind the global average.

129. As in most regions around the world, the labour force in SIDS regions has traditionally been dominated by men and although this remains true today, the proportion of females in the labour force has been increasing slowly but steadily. Among the SIDS regions, the Caribbean registers a higher percentage of women in the labour force, compared to the AIMS and Pacific regions. The increase in women's participation in the labour force stems from a number of factors including improved access to and increased investment in formal and non-formal education, including skills development, for women and youth.

130. Women's parliamentary representation in AIMS SIDS was below the average for Africa as a whole, parliamentary seats held by women in 2011 was 19.9 per cent in 2011, and increased to 22 per cent in 2017. In Comoros, parliamentary seats held by women increased from 3 per cent in 2011 to 6 per cent in 2017, and from 10 to 14 per cent for Guinea-Bissau, and for São Tomé and Príncipe, these participation rates held at 18 per cent for the same dates.

131. In Mauritius, the Local Government Act has been amended in 2011 to provide for at least 30 per cent of women at local governmental level, resulting in a leap in the number of women from 6% to 26% in the December 2012. A cross-party Parliamentary Gender Caucus has been established at the level of the legislature with the overall objective of working for the promotion and attainment of gender equality. In

the same vein, all sectoral Ministries have formulated their respective gender policy statement in line with the National Gender Policy Framework and a National Steering Committee on Gender Mainstreaming established at the level of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare oversees the implementation of gender sensitive measures at the level of the Executive.

132. The Maldives has made significant strides in efforts to establish gender equality and the Gender Equality Act (Act no. 18/2016) is a milestone legislation which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, harmonizes the existing legal framework with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and promotes gender equality in the Maldives in a cultural, social, economic and political context. The Act outlines explicit duties and responsibilities on State and private parties, prohibits victimization, and introduces remedy for discrimination based on gender. Maldives has achieved equality in access to education and health services, and this is a gradual increase in women's participation in different sectors. Greater efforts are, however, required in increasing women's participation in political and public life, and increasing their representation in decision-making levels. Also, the National Action Plan to advance Gender Equality is currently being finalized and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) have also been appointed in line ministries and agencies to promote gender mainstreaming.

133. For Singapore, the country is fully committed to the advancement of all women and girls, with equal opportunities for all enshrined in Article 12(1) of their constitution which specifically provides that, "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law." Singapore takes a coordinated whole of government approach in advancing the status and well-being of their women, in addition to consulting various stakeholders and community groups. According to the latest UN Gender Inequality Index, Singapore ranked 11th out of 159 countries, and second in Asia. Life expectancy at birth for females was 85.1 years in 2016, and infant and maternal mortality rates are among the lowest in the world. In 2016, the literacy rate for women was 95.4 per cent and 52 per cent of university graduates are women. The employment rate for women aged 25 to 64 years has increased from 63 per cent in 2007, to 72 per cent in 2017.

134. In 2008, the Government of Comoros adopted a National Policy for Equality and Gender Equality (PNEEG), developed with the support of the TFPs, whose implementation helped create a favorable political and legal environment for gender equality and equity and to lay the foundations for national mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of all social strata in the country's development process. The Comoros union has made progress in terms of gender equality, particularly at the level of education with a ratio of girls to boys of 0.9 at the primary level and 1.01 at the secondary level. However, the weight of women in overall economic activity, participation in decision-making and representation in legislatures and other national structures (public and private) is marginal. Although the country has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, women remain underrepresented in all spheres of socio-economic activity, in politics at the national level, and at the local level, in the administration and in the legal and judicial professions.

135. In São Tomé and Príncipe, a partnership between the Government and UNFPA, focused on institutional support for the reinforcement of capacity to prevent and address violence based on gender (2014/2016), and on the evaluation of planning needs of the communication activities on Family Planning matters (2017). Partnership actions included: reinforcement of the capacity of the institutions to create and implement fighting strategies against violence based on gender, and execution of advocacy activities on violence based on gender, as well as technical and logistic support for the identification and planning of communication activities for FP and UNOC, on a national and district level for women, men and young people/adolescents.

Social Development

136. Among some of the common social issues faced by SIDS are a high incidence of non-communicable disease (NCDs), high levels of teenage pregnancy, and the working poor. These issues are interrelated and reinforce each other, thus, they require an integrated approach to achieve sustainable and fast progress.

137. A great example of integrated policy support, to achieve progress in entrenched social issues, comes from Mauritius. In 2015, Mauritius approached the UN for support in solving some of their most complex social development issues. Despite strong economic growth, poverty remained high in specific pockets of the population, unemployment was extremely high for the youth, and they were facing a significant housing deficit. To address these challenges, UNDP worked with the government of Mauritius and developed the Marshal Plan Against Poverty, an ambitious reform aimed at addressing the pressing and persistent issues of poverty and social exclusion in the country.

138. The Marshal Plan aims to improve the standards of living of the population and to introduce holistic approaches that will promote a sustainable socio-economic development and environmental protection in the republic of Mauritius. It consists of 39 actionable and costed proposals. So far, the plan has committed approximately 2.2 billion rupees, or \$63 million, over the next three years.

139. Part of the plan includes innovative approach to social protection, where Mauritians living in absolute poverty – defined nationally as US\$ 4.30 per person per day - receive cash transfers, and are accompanied by social workers as they address life challenges such as education of children, skills training, job search or placement, setting up or improving small businesses, social housing, child care, remedial courses, disability care, and drug addiction treatment, among others. Another actionable proposal of the plan is the School Completion Premium, that encourages youth from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete secondary education by providing a cash award when they turn 18. The plan also proposes a community-based approach to service delivery, based on the premise that addressing the social and economic issues facing vulnerable groups will result in their social, political and economic empowerment and integration.

140. A UNDP interdisciplinary team of experts supported the Mauritius government to develop the Plan. They undertook in-depth analysis, investigated the causes and drivers of poverty in the country, and made recommendations for action. This approach could be duplicated, including experts from across the UN System, to provide integrated policy support for the AIMS countries, on the issues that are most pressing in each country.

141. In Mauritius, a national database of vulnerable households living in absolute poverty under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) has been set up. As of March 2018, nearly 10,000 households were registered under the SRM and are benefiting from a monthly subsistence allowance, as well as support through various Empowerment Schemes, namely the School Materials Scheme, School Premium, Child Allowance Scheme, Free Exams Fees Scheme and Crèche Scheme.

142. Cabo Verde faces many development challenges. The challenges of the country's development agenda - the PEDS (Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development) and the 2030 and 2020 Agendas - represent the need to work simultaneously, in an integrated and coordinated way, inter- and intra sectorally to achieve the stated goals. Special attention is devoted to strengthening respect for human rights, civic participation and the integration of gender equality as a central factor to ensure socio-economic progress, reduce social inequalities and asymmetries at island level, as well as towards the consolidation of democracy.

143. Guinea-Bissau indicates that education is one of the most problematic sectors, characterized by poor performance and scarce human, financial and material resources. According to the latest data, less than 10 per cent of children aged 36-59 months received preschool education, a little more than half (53.7 per cent) of children aged 7–12 years attended primary school, and only 28.5 per cent of 7 year-olds were enrolled in the first year of primary school. The secondary school attendance rate among adolescents and young people aged 13-17 years old was only 7.7 per cent and of the children surveyed, only 79.7 per cent reached the fifth grade.

144. Poverty is an important issue that affects two-thirds of the population in Guinea-Bissau, where 66.7 per cent live on less than \$2 per day, and 20.8 per cent live on less than \$1 per day. The percentage of poor people is higher in rural areas and for people over 45 years old. According to the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2017), the Republic of Guinea-Bissau is 175th out of a total of 177 countries.

145. In the Maldives, one third of the total population lives in the capital city and many of the expatriates have also migrated to the country over the past few years for employment and are distributed unevenly across the country with the majority of foreigners living in the capital, resorts and industrial islands. Initiatives are being undertaken to address the needs of different groups of socially vulnerable people in the country. In 2015, there were a total of 1172 students enrolled in classes for students with disabilities. In addition, opportunities are created for the disabled in the job market and safety net mechanisms are in place for the vulnerable groups though additional effort is still required to reduce inequalities for the vulnerable groups.

146. For Singapore, mitigating income inequality, ensuring social mobility, and enhancing social integration are key to maintaining social harmony and stability. Singapore highlights that every citizen benefits from the country's economic progress and that no one is left behind through policies that allow for broad-based improvement in Singaporeans' well-being regardless of their ethnicity, gender, origin, religion, and economic status. Singapore highlights a home ownership rate of 90.9 per cent as of 2016. Singapore's high-quality public housing and integrated residential neighbourhoods are critical to their efforts to mitigate inequality. Singapore has no slums and neighbourhoods are designed with a mix of public and private housing for all income levels. The Ethnic Integration Policy for public housing has also helped Singapore avoid large ethnic concentrations in particular neighbourhoods. These policies, together with providing public spaces such as parks, eating establishments, and exercise facilities help to increase social interactions, which are important for achieving social integration.

147. The government of Comoros adopted a national social protection policy in 2015 with the support of the ILO, whose strategic axes concern: (i) the reduction of precarious employment, (ii) the improvement of accessibility to basic social services, and (iii) promotion of natural risk management strategies. In fact, the current social protection programs are reduced to the services provided by the National Pension Fund, the National Social Insurance Fund for public and private employees, mutual health insurance, survivors' pensions and those paid.

148. In a decision dated September 2014, the government mandated the affiliation of all private sector employees to the National Social Security Fund (CNSS). In addition, employers are required to establish a work contract in accordance with the Labor Code. However, the control structures lack adequate means for monitoring the implementation of these decisions. Also, in discussion with the unions organizations, is the government considering the establishment of a "universal social protection floor" to enable all segments of the population, particularly the vulnerable and the poorest, to have a minimum of essential services and social transfers.

Culture and Sport

149. Culture and heritage are both an enabler and a driver of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Culture has a positive contribution to sustainable development, in particular towards poverty reduction by creating employment, especially among youth, as well as contributing to the well-being of the community at large. In many SIDS, there has been a shift away from a traditional social system, and a focus on subsistence, strong units and communities, towards a more consumerist, individualistic society. Protecting tangible cultural heritage, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, promoting responsible sustainable tourism, boosting creative industries and transmitting traditional knowledge are crucial to SIDS and its people.

150. In the Maldives, a new value and skills-based curriculum with clearly defined learning outcomes and key competencies has been rolled out since 2015 with a focus on making learning more relevant and preparing students for the 21st century. The new school curriculum introduced a vocational training pathway at the secondary level and opportunities for vocational education through Technical and Vocational Educational Training programmes. Scholarships and loan schemes support students to pursue higher level training in the fields of their choice in the country and overseas.

151. For Mauritius, much of young people's learning goes through an informal education process, for which a multi-faceted development programme was created to include literacy promotion through a series of contests for students and out of school. Additional activities include tree planting, beach cleaning and other environmental sensitization components. Special recreational activities are scheduled during the Easter, Winter and Summer holidays and include artistic activities where young people get the opportunity to express their talents through hiking and mountaineering, youth concerts, craft workshops and talent shows.

152. Programmes initiated also include sensitization on the entrepreneurial culture mainly for students, workshops on creativity and innovation for youth leaders, regional training courses on entrepreneurship skills for potential entrepreneurs already contemplating setting up small enterprises. These courses culminate with preparation of business plans which benefitted from funding from the CONFEJES and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Exchange programmes for sharing of entrepreneurial experience are also organized and in the pipeline is the promotion of young women entrepreneurs as well the development of a Mentoring Programme to support young entrepreneurs, both men and women.

Promoting peaceful societies and safe communities

153. Displacement in SIDS' population is high, and their vulnerability to natural and human-induced disasters, high exposure to economic fluctuations and geopolitical circumstances, results in severe capacity and resource constraints to implement their national development goals. Promoting social justice, empowerment and strengthening the capacity of all segments of society in SIDS to increase their level of participation in developing and implementing national social and other related policies is, thus, crucial in achieving sustainability and improved quality of life of SIDS communities.

154. The Maldives is working on promoting democratic governance, rule of law and human rights though important challenges remain, particularly regarding the development of effective and inclusive governance institutions and processes, consolidation of the rule of law and evolution of an informed civil society. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen the justice sector, including through the strengthening of the legal framework, capacity development in institutions, access to justice, and civil society participation. Congestion is one of the major issues facing the people living in the capital Male'. The government initiative to develop Hulhumale, a reclaimed island within 25 minutes from the capital city is ongoing in order to

cater to the growing population of Male'. However, the high cost of developing cities and communities in a sustainable manner is a major concern in the country.

155. In Mauritius, the country has been actively involved in the promotion of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In order to improve accountability in national policy frameworks, there has been considerable changes in the citizens reporting mechanisms, which now involve technology, mobile technologies and an online portal. Mauritius has also been heavily engaged in institutions of global governance, through representation of its nationals.

156. Mauritius has a code of good corporate governance which has been in place for a few years and a Ministry of Good Governance has also been created to ensure compliance of same. The National Code for Corporate Governance (2016) which aims at advancing corporate governance reforms in both public and private sectors in Mauritius by creating a corporate governance framework of principles for business leaders to apply, became effective as from July 2017. With a view to sensitising and building capacity of institutions for a more effective compliance with the provisions of the Code and also to address governance issues, a Workshop on National Code of Corporate Governance for Mauritius was organized on 18 May 2018.

157. In Singapore, their journey as a nation is founded on a commitment to the rule of law. It has been the cornerstone of their development and has contributed to a sense of justice and security for the people. The rule of law has engendered confidence among businesses, which value an environment where contracts and property rights are respected and protected. Singapore has established, maintained and strengthened public institutions that are effective, fair, inclusive, and accountable to the people. The country has built a clean, efficient, and independent judiciary and public service. Singapore also has a zero-tolerance approach to corruption, which applies to all three branches of government.

Education

158. SIDS have sought to address the challenges they face in capacity development by improving access to and the quality of education. Education is a particularly high policy priority for SIDS because many SIDS have relatively young populations. Years of schooling among children in SIDS have increased in all three regions, and the AIMS region has registered the highest increase of 1.5 years, while the Caribbean and Pacific regions increased by 1.1 years, from 11.8 years to 12.9 years. Enrolment in primary education has also increased significantly, and primary school attendance is relatively high in all three regions.

159. In São Tomé and Príncipe, pupil to teacher ratio in primary education increased from 29.8 to 38.78, the per cent of gross enrollment in secondary education 51.42 to 84.94, and pupil to teacher ratio in secondary education increased from 19377 to 20.75 from 2011 to 2015.¹⁹ The youth literacy rate among 15-24 year old, from 2012 to 2016 in Comoros was 71.58, in Guinea-Bissau was 60.4, and in São Tomé and Príncipe was 96.74. Amongst females, these rates were lower at 69.6 for Comoros, 49.76 for Guinea-Bissau and 96.35 for São Tomé and Príncipe.

160. For Guinea-Bissau, education is one of the most problematic sectors of the country. It is characterized by poor performance and scarce human, financial and material resources though among the areas supported by development aid, education is the second highest receiving 30%, just after infrastructure at 32%. According to the latest data, less than 10 per cent of children aged 36-59 months received pre-school education. A little more than half (53.7%) of children aged 7 – 12 years attended primary school. Only 28.5% of 7 year-olds were enrolled in the first year of primary school. The secondary school attendance rate among adolescents and young people aged 13-17 was only 7.7%.

¹⁹ Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation; Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group; World Development Indicators; UNAIDS.

161. The Maldives has outperformed other countries in the South Asia region in its education indicators despite the country's challenges associated with a highly dispersed population. Maldives has realized MDG 2 on achieving universal primary education with a 7-year primary school cycle by the year 2000 and two years into the SDGs, the Maldives is well on track to achieve the targets of SDG 4. All children are now guaranteed 14 years of free education starting at age 4 in pre-primary education until they complete higher secondary education at 18 or 19 years old. A comprehensive inclusive education policy ensures and facilitates the education provision for children with disabilities across the nation. Furthermore, in line with the school attendance policy, every school age child is being identified and tracked, with mechanisms in place to monitor attendance and identify potential risks of dropout or exclusion.

162. In Mauritius, a higher education bill (Higher Education Act 2017) has been introduced as a new legal framework for the development of quality education and research in line with the objective of strengthening Mauritius as a knowledge hub and full subsidies on school certificate and higher-school certificate examinations have been extended indiscriminately to all pupils irrespective of their social background.

163. Nine-Year Schooling is the new educational concept developed in Mauritius with the perspective of favouring holistic learning aimed at the future of the Mauritian workforce. With its main intention of being a strategy that aligns Mauritius with international learning standards, its main objective is to ensure that children benefit from the Nine Year Continuous Basic education and develop essential competencies with equitable Learning for all opportunities.

164. The Government of Mauritius has committed to reinforce Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and provide a new legal framework to govern the sub-sector, including the review of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development. In addition, E-learning platforms are being introduced and will serve as a powerful lever to accelerate and enhance student learning with the acquisition of higher order skills. Finally, a special education needs strategy is being developed to provide for the legal framework, with the aim to achieve inclusion by creating and providing a disability-friendly environment to all learners.

165. Singapore's philosophy towards education depends on the continuous renewal and regeneration of their people. Their education system is aimed at providing each child with a solid foundation upon which they can build their knowledge and skills throughout life. It emphasizes broad-based and holistic education, bilingualism, well-trained teachers, and the integration of information and communication technologies to aid learning. Singapore highlights they have created an education landscape with diverse pathways so that students have access to learning opportunities that cater to different interests, strengths and learning needs. Their schools also work closely with parents and the community to create richer learning environments and better educational outcomes.

166. The government of Comoros sees education as an important lever in the country's political, economic and social development process. Progress has been made in recent years to strengthen the education system and ensure access to quality education for all children in the country. Indeed, the level achieved in terms of school coverage is manifested in 2014 by a net enrollment rate of 85%, a primary completion rate of 73% in 2015 (against 69% in 2013), a repetition rate in primary education of 17.7% in 2014 against 24% in 2013), as well as a gross enrollment rate of 104% (95% for girls), and a girls-boys ratio of 0.9 in primary and 1, 01 in high school. However, access to pre-school education remains limited, with a gross enrollment rate of 16% in 2011, which is essentially private and urban.

167. The offer of training at the University of the Comoros (UDC) is much more based on general training, to the detriment of scientific and professional sectors better adapted to the needs of the labor

market. Since its establishment in 2003, the UDC has always had a constantly growing workforce, with an increase by five of the workforce between 2003 and 2013 (see table below) without a significant increase in the teaching staff.

Tableau 1: Evolution des effectifs de l'UDC

Years	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of staff	1257	2083	2378	2796	2936	3921	3927	5516	6087	6631	6580
Annual growth rate		65,7%	14,2%	17,6%	5,0%	33,6%	0,2%	39,5%	10,4%	8,9%	-0,8%

Source : DES

168. Despite increased access to all levels of education, many challenges remain to this day. The State Report of the National Education System (RESEN) highlights four major constraints:

- The share of resources earmarked for primary education is rather low, while the share reserved for secondary education is particularly high and essentially intended to pay salaries. Hence the need to review the modes of redistribution of public resources between the sub-sectors of education.
- The existence of a structural imbalance in the education system between different levels of education, with nearly 40% of young people without primary schooling complete and 15% of children (56% of whom are girls) who do not have access to the primary cycle. On the other hand, at the higher education level, there is a very high proportion of trained students who are unemployed (50%).
- The situation is not satisfactory from an economic and social point of view in relation to the cost and efficiency of the educational services offered, particularly because of the low rate of use of teachers' time, the low mobilization of resources for the functioning and high frequency of school repetitions.
- The weakness of the technical, scientific and professional sectors which reinforces the maladjustment of education to the needs of the labor market.

169. The Ten-Year Education and Literacy Development Plan (PDDEA) 2017-2026 aims to address these challenges and stimulate efforts in the education sector over the 2017-2026 period, across seven areas of education intervention, namely: early childhood, primary school, literacy, secondary education, technical education and vocational training, higher education and scientific research, and sectoral management.

Biodiversity

170. Islands and their surrounding near-shore marine areas constitute unique ecosystems often comprising many endemic plant and animal species. They are also key to the livelihood, economy, well-being and cultural identity of 600 million islanders—which makes up around one-tenth of the world population.

171. Despite the high levels of biodiversity and the prevalence of endemism, island species are present in relatively small numbers, making them very vulnerable to extinction. Island flora and fauna in many SIDS are particularly vulnerable to extinction, given these human population pressures and resource consumption patterns. Of the 724 recorded animal extinctions in the last 400 years, about half were island species. Over the past century, island biodiversity has been subject to intense pressure from invasive alien species, habitat change and over-exploitation, and, increasingly, from climate change and pollution. As many as 75 percent of the birds and animals known to have gone extinct—including the dodo endemic to

Mauritius—lived on islands. Ocean islands are home to around one-sixth of all threatened plant species in the world, of which one in three are endemic. This pressure is also keenly felt by island economies. SIDS depend on the conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity for their sustainable development.

172. In addition to having significant biodiversity, the rich marine and coastal ecosystems account for almost one-third of all marine biological productivity (the amount of living biomass produced within oceans), and coral reefs harbor the highest levels of known diversity among marine species. These habitats also support large subsistence and commercial fisheries of international importance. SIDS marine and coastal resources are now highly threatened because of a combination of small land size, capacity and resource constraints, and high levels of endemism.

173. For São Tomé and Príncipe, actions on biodiversity include an integrated ecosystemic approach project for the biodiversity management and conservation with the Support Project to the Small Commercial Agriculture (PAPAC), as well as efforts to reduce soil degradation, protect biodiversity and promote resilience.

174. For the Maldives, the main threats to biodiversity are the loss of habitats that are associated with harbors dredging, reclamation and exploitation of resources, climate change and other human activities. Maldives has designated 42 protected areas and has successfully designated one of its atolls (Baa atoll) as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. In this regard, the government is committed towards conservation and expanding, where feasible, the network of marine protected areas. The government is continuously engaging with the tourism sector in promoting environmental protection and stewardship. Given that the house reef of resort islands are highly well managed areas, the government is collaborating with various resorts in examining the modalities in which these areas can contribute to the network of protected and managed marine areas.

175. For Comoros Natural capital is subject to strong human pressure that aggravates the degradation of the environment and consequently of biodiversity. In addition, the country remains exposed to the effects of climate change and the risks of natural disasters. Intensification of environmental degradation in the field of the environment, in recent years, we have witnessed an intensification of the degradation of all natural resources as a result of human activity. As a result, there is land degradation (57% of agricultural land) and rapid deforestation (400 ha / year) even in protected areas, due to increasing demand for wood, and agricultural land. The observed erosion of biological diversity in marine, coastal and forest environments is seriously affecting the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to renew naturally. This situation thus affects vital ecological processes such as the water cycle, the fight against pollution by the silting up of coastal and marine areas, as well as the dynamism of buffer zones protecting against natural disasters. The deterioration of the environment and biodiversity will intensify competition and the potential for conflict over access to shared resources such as fisheries and surface waters. These challenges are inextricably linked to environmental governance issues.

The value of biodiversity and ecosystem services

176. Islands contain a variety of ecosystems and vegetation types which provide food, fresh water, wood, fibre, medicines, fuel, tools and other important raw materials that support island livelihoods, economies and cultures.,

177. The value of biodiversity and ecosystem services is vast. For example, it helps protect coastlines, prevent natural disasters, and mitigate damages from unstable weather conditions or dangerous natural hazards. In this respect, human populations benefit greatly from healthy coral reefs and mangrove forests, as SIDS are proportionally more vulnerable to natural disasters. It is reported that the economic cost of the average natural disaster, for small states, is equivalent to almost 13% of GDP, affecting 10% of the

population. Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems enable to maintain nutrient cycling, and soil and sand formation; and they contribute to the regulation of climate and diseases.

178. Biodiversity is a crucial component of food security in SIDS. Small islands comprise a high proportion of marine and coastal areas, which are important sources of income. The continental shelves and coastal ecosystems of many SIDS are of major economic significance for settlement, subsistence and commercial agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. Coastal ecosystems also fulfill many ecological roles. Coral reefs provide an estimated US\$ 375 billion per year in goods and services to the world. This includes support for marine fisheries, which provide the principal protein source for many island populations, especially amongst SIDS.

179. The islands in the AIMS region are extremely ecologically diverse and feature numerous ecosystems and biomes. Coastal and marine habitats include beaches, dunes, coral reefs, and mangroves. Inland ecosystems include freshwater ecosystems such as wetlands, and forest ecosystems. AIMS are host to “reef islands,” where coastal vegetation, like mangroves, protect shores which could otherwise be vulnerable to erosion. Diverse plant and animal genetic resources can be found in all these ecosystems.²⁰

Threats to biodiversity- climate change impacts

180. AIMS Islands biodiversity is subject to intense pressure from invasive alien species, tourism development, natural disasters, overexploitation of natural resources stemming from unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation and illegal poaching, pollution and waste disposal and increasingly, from climate change and variability, which has direct impacts on the economy of its populations. Islands’ are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of global climate change, such as sea-level rise and coastal zone inundation, which could pose significant hazards to biodiversity in low-lying SIDS and cause land erosion and wide-scale habitat destruction. Due to the fragility of its economies, the conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity in SIDS is key to sustainable development.

181. The GEF and World Bank launched the West Africa Coastal Area Program (WACA) covering São Tomé and Príncipe and aims to improve the management of shared natural and man-made risks, including climate-change, affecting targeted coastal communities and areas in the West Africa region. The project will help protect coastal biodiversity, improve the management of marine transboundary issues, increase the knowledge and capacity of extreme weather events forecast for coastal areas prone to flood and erosion.

182. The Government of Seychelles - through the Ministry of Environment and Energy and UNDP – implemented the Ecosystem-Based Adaptation to Climate Change in Seychelles project with the aim to reduce the vulnerability of Seychelles to climate change, focusing on two key issues – water scarcity and flooding.

Protected Areas

183. Many AIMS islands have terrestrial and marine protected areas. For example, in Cabo Verde, the protected area (PA) system is recent, with 46 PAs established since 2003. These cover 205.513,09 ha of the country, of which 73.381,42 ha is terrestrial (18,2% land) and 132.181,67 ha marine ha (5,7% territorial waters)²¹; In the Comoros island of Moheli, a National Marine Park, was established in April 2001; in STP, The Ôbo Natural Park covers 29,500 ha. In Guinea-Bissau, the government is investing substantially

²⁰ CBD, 2018 website

²¹ The archipelago’s waters host one of the world’s top ten coral reef biodiversity hotspots; globally important mating and calving sites for humpback whales; and important breeding and foraging grounds for five species of sea turtle.

in conservation to the extent that approximately 26.3% of its national territory is protected. A UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, the archipelago contains both national protected areas (Orango, João Vieira-Poilão) and community reserves (Urok). The national parks of Boé and Dulombi on the country's mainland, close to the border with Senegal and Guinea, were set up to protect a representative sample of key habitats. Seychelles has a system of 21 formal protected areas covering a total area of 54,813 ha, of which 24,978 ha (~5.5% of the total landmass) is terrestrial and 29,836 ha (<0.0001% of the EEZ) marine. The Aldabra Special Reserve currently represents some 80% of the total extent of the Protected Area System (PAS).

184. Mauritius and Rodrigues island also have a network of marine protected areas as well as voluntary marine conservation areas set up by Non-Governmental Organisations in the northern part of the island through support from the UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme.

Desertification, land degradation and drought

185. The level of degradation varies but a common feature of all AIMS is lack of arable land due to population pressures and degradation. The latter originates from destructive agriculture uses, deforestation, and increasingly climatic variability and change, this leads to food insecurity. With increasing dependence on imported goods and fish based protein intakes. For example, Cabo Verde only ten percent of the land is arable because rainfall accumulation is minimal and irregular, the terrain is rough with high wind erosion. Share of food production is low, nearly 82% of food is imported. In terms of food security, fish provides the population of Cabo Verde with their main source of animal protein.

186. In Mauritius, a variety of measures have been undertaken to support the protection of terrestrial ecosystems. These include increasing tree coverage through the implementation of a nationwide campaign to plant 160,000 trees annually from 2016-2020. Additional efforts included selecting appropriate species and propagating materials corresponding to plantation sites to avoid loss of biodiversity through mixing of populations.

Forests

187. In many SIDS in the AIMS region like Comoros, the Maldives and Singapore, the forest area is virtually insignificant, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total land area. One sub-group of SIDS is the Small Island States that have a significant share (over 20 per cent) of their land under forest cover, even though the absolute forest area is not very large. In the AIMS region these countries include São Tomé and Príncipe and Seychelles. (CBD, 2018). Only Guinea-Bissau contains a large area of primary natural forests with great biodiversity resources (940,000 ha) (FAO 2005). Forests in these countries can provide significant environmental services and local sources of income.

188. According to FAO (FRA 2005), the majority of SIDS have maintained their forest area at a steady rate from 1990 to 2005. In the AIMS region, Cabo Verde has actually increased its forested area. Unfortunately, forest area has decreased in the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and Mauritius. In the Comoros, the deforestation rate has been alarming (-7.4% during 2000-2005), especially in light of the already scarce forest resources the island has. According to the Global FRA 2005, in addition to having forest land and other wooded land, many SIDS possess considerable areas categorized as "other land with tree cover". In the AIMS countries, São Tomé and Príncipe have such land areas which amounts to 10,000 ha.

189. Areas under protection of forests is considerable when compared with the area of production forests. The Comoros, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritius have over 50 per cent of their forests classified as protection or conservation forest. However, most of them lack the capacity to monitor forest use and enforce legislation protecting forests. Cabo Verde and Seychelles have over 50 per cent of their forest areas under

conservation or protection status. Similar to one another, they experience problems in law enforcement.²² More recent figures on forest area are shown in the table 4 below.

190. From 2005 to 2015, AIMS SIDS have experienced varying degrees of deforestation. The forest area as percentage of land area in Comoros has receded from 22.6 per cent in 2005 to 19.9 per cent in 2015. In Guinea-Bissau, forest areas receded from 73.7 per cent to 70.1 per cent, and from 58.3 to 55.8 in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Table 4. Forest Area (% of land area), 1990-2015

Cabo Verde	N/A
Mauritius	20.2 – 19
Comoros	26.3 – 19.9
Guinea Bissau	78.8 – 70.1
Maldives	3.3 – 3.3
Seychelles	88.4 – 88.4
São Tomé and Príncipe	58.3 – 55.8
Singapore	24.4 – 23.1

Source: World Bank Country Data – FAO 2015

Table 5. Agricultural land (% of land area), 1990-2015

Cabo Verde	16.9 – 19.6
Mauritius	54.7 – 41.9
Comoros	61.3 – 71.5
Guinea Bissau	51.5 – 58
Maldives	N/A
Seychelles	8.7 – 3.4
São Tomé and Príncipe	43.8 – 50.7
Singapore	3.0 – 0.9

Source: World Bank Country Data – FAO 2015

Invasive Alien Species:

119. Invasive alien species are plants or animals that are introduced by man, accidentally or intentionally, outside of their natural geographic range into an area where they are not naturally present. They are often introduced as a result of the globalization of economies, for instance by trade via ships, shipment of wood products infested with insects, or the transport of ornamental plants that then establish themselves into the wild and spread.

192. In Mauritius, 575 hectares of land have already been cleared of invasive alien species, including national parks, mountain reserves and nature reserves. In addition, a new project has been developed to safeguard globally significant biodiversity in vulnerable ecosystems through the prevention, control and management of Invasive Alien Species. The project duration is 6 years starting end of 2018 and it has three components. The first is policy, regularly and institutional framework and capacity for effective IAS management. The second is the incorporation of risk-based management of IAS into pathways and ecosystem management. The last is knowledge management and learning. The project value is estimated at Rs 28 million USD.

²² INDUFOR: BACKGROUND TO FOREST FINANCING IN SIDS. First macro-level paper. 20 August 2010

Partnerships

193. Singapore adopts a multi-stakeholder approach to the global partnership. They work through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), their flagship technical assistance and capacity-building programme. Specific initiatives include the Sustainable Development Programme in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Third Country Training Programme in collaboration with other countries and international organisations. Singapore also drives several initiatives through their chairmanship of ASEAN in 2018, such as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and Special ASEAN Meeting on Climate Action. They also engage civil society, private sector, academia and the youth - such as the World Toilet Organisation and The Singapore Institute of International Affairs - in various collaborations and projects.

194. In 2016, new partnerships were established in the areas of employment and employability policies in Cabo Verde. A continuation partnership of between UNDP, ILO, and Luxembourg, was due to the success of the first phase of the joint programme on the implementation of the national strategy for employment. With the same development partner, it was possible to develop and implement a partnership in the area of decentralization and strengthening of national and local capacity for public service provision, a partnership between UNDP and Luxembourg, which would be a response to the new Government programme to strengthen local structures in the provision of quality and timely service to the islands and municipalities. A second phase of the joint ILO and UNDP employment project was funded by Luxembourg in 2016, which will cover from 2016 to 2018. In addition, UNDP has mobilized USD 2 million for the public administration reform, including a new and very challenge process of public decentralization services among the island.

195. In Guinea-Bissau, development aid is largely used to finance capital expenditures and implement its development policies. The country is very dependent on aid, and the share of aid to GDP has been among the highest in Africa. The largest share of aid in Guinea-Bissau is for the education and infrastructure sectors, followed by health. Education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and peace and security are considered crucial for the improvement of human capital and long-term growth. Spending in these areas is critical to human capital formation and improved public services, and is expected to increase productivity in the long run. The donors leading the education sector in Guinea-Bissau are Portugal, the World Bank, Spain and France. The infrastructure sector is funded mainly by multilateral donors, especially the European Union and the World Bank. The main bilateral and multilateral donors in Guinea-Bissau are the EU, the US, IDA, Portugal, and Japan, which provide the bulk of aid. Guinea-Bissau's development partners provide substantial amounts of support in a number of areas. In the field of environment (land degradation, climate change, biodiversity, etc.), agriculture, fisheries, etc., partnerships with a number of multilateral implementing agencies are: UNDP, WB, FAO, UNIDO, UNITAR, IFAD, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, AfDB, GEF, among others. At the sub-regional and regional levels, existing partnerships are with ECOWAS at the economic and political level, UEMOA at the economic level, which governs inflation and exchange policies, but also promotes common fiscal rules that strengthen finances and the African Union is an important political partner. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are also important partners for the Government and donors in a similar way. The role of CSOs are fundamental in the transition from fragility to stability, usually filling gaps where there is a lack of political will or an inability of the Government to provide basic services to excluded populations. They are also often important advocates of the peace and reconciliation process, a particularly relevant role in the context of a fragile country such as Guinea-Bissau. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), for example, are vital partners in community-driven projects. Often the Government implements projects in partnership with NGOs.

196. For the Maldives, the role of development partners and assistance, including through North-South,

and South-South, are crucial to realizing the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs. The Maldives has made significant progress in terms of sustainable development since the adoption of Rio Agenda and the Barbados Programme of Action. While the Maldives has already made headway in sectors such as health and education, more technical and financial support from domestic and international development partners is necessary to successfully implement the SDGs, particularly given the challenges in capacity development and resource mobilization.

197. In Mauritius, a series of successful partnerships have proved to be an important complementary for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. The Ministry of Environment is presently implementing the Switch Africa Green programme, a partnership between 7 pilot African countries including Mauritius and the European Union to achieve sustainable development through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production practices.

198. São Tomé and Príncipe highlighted strategic partnerships for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in areas of health, water and sanitation, climate change, sustainable energy, food and nutritional safety. In the area of health, there is the programme “Health for All – Fields of Expertise”, a programme of cooperation through partnership with the Ministry of Health and Marques de Valle Flor Institute with the main support of the Portuguese Cooperation and the Calouset Gulbenkian Institution. This project arises from the need to monitor the paradigm change on health on the archipelago, deriving from the aging population with the consequent increase of prevalence of chronic diseases (noncommunicable). The project contributes to the improvement of health and equity of care for the most vulnerable populations, in line with the specific Sustainable Development Goals for São Tomé and Príncipe.

199. Singapore’s global partnership for sustainable development adopts a multi-stakeholder and whole-of-government approach, which is integral and a core component of their policy-making. Singapore indicates their government-led sustainable development journey has been enhanced by efforts of stakeholders from different sectors of society. Singapore’s experience has been that there is no single model of development for all and that countries should be free to pursue the SDGs in the manner of their choosing, taking into account their national priorities and circumstances. Singapore’s efforts towards the global partnership for sustainable development centres on capacity building and human resource development, and the belief that the multiplier effect of investing in human capital will be the key driver behind the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) is their flagship technical assistance programme and since its beginning in 1992, over 119,000 officials from more than 170 developing countries have joined SCP programmes in areas such as education, transport, economic development and trade promotion, judiciary and public administration.

200. Comoros has important assets that can be used to promote partnership and the country's integration into the regional and international economy. In addition to its strategic geographical position, which places it at the crossroads of Asia and Africa, it is part of regional arrangements such as the COMCEC (OIC FTA), GAFTA (League of States FTA) Arabs), COMESA and IOC. The Comoros is also participating in the negotiations for the creation of a more tripartite COMESA / SADC / EAC Free Trade Area and intends to reactivate the negotiations with the European Union to establish Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in the same way other countries in the region. In addition, the multilingualism of the country and its crossroads of many civilizations and cultures offer enormous opportunities for partnership and exchange development. The country does not have an important infrastructure heritage that can form the basis of its development. It will involve the support of partners and the private sector in providing the credit sector with significant investments and strengthening management capacity. The objective is to establish quality economic infrastructures and modern equipment to facilitate the movement of goods and people, promote internal, intra-island, inter-island and external trade and consolidate the foundations for strong and sustainable growth. It develops and maintains bilateral and multilateral partnerships: The Union of Comoros currently has 27 development partners (multilateral, bilateral, NGOs). The former are more important in

terms of volume of aid. The AfDB and the UN Agencies, the European Union and the World Bank remain the largest multilateral donors. France, China, and Japan, for their part, are the main bilateral partners. The other key development partners in the Union of the Comoros are the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the United States, China, India, and the Arab Development Funds are still more active in the Union of the Comoros, but for the moment not closely associated with coordination efforts with other donors. Turkish cooperation is also very active in the Comoros.

Financing

201.. The extreme variety of human and economic development patterns in AIMS impede a group single statement on financing for development. Some enjoy very high levels of human development such as Seychelles and Singapore; others, such as Comoros, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe score poorly. A few countries experienced graduation: Seychelles to upper middle-income status in January 2018 and Cabo Verde from LDC status in 2007. Despite these differences, many share paramount challenges when it comes to financing Agenda 2030. These challenges include inadequate capacities to mobilize domestic resources, high costs for the provision of public services and vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks. Climate adaptation costs are also among the highest in the world.

202. For the Maldives, given their development status as a middle-income country, domestic resource financing is key to implementation of SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. As such, it is crucial that the SDGs be integrated and prioritized within the budgeting process. In this regard, the government has developed mechanisms to screen medium term budgets, including through assessments for ‘New Policy Initiatives’ (NPI) and utilizing the newly adopted functional budget classification to conduct SDGs based budget analyses. However, some of the challenges in budgeting include the reliance on external/donor funding for some sectors and the challenges related to internal budget prioritization practices. Although the Maldives is working towards results-based budgeting, these reforms will require time to be fully implemented. A potential gap to establish results-based budgeting is the limited results-based planning and targeting that is practiced within ministries and sub-sectors or programmes within the government of Maldives. While domestic financing is integral to achieving the SDGs, additional external financial support will be required to continue making progress and consolidate the gains made thus far.

203. Since 2008, the Government of Comoros has initiated fiscal consolidation efforts as part of the reform program with the IMF. To this end, a first public finance reform strategy was prepared and adopted in April 2010 for the period 2010-2012. In 2013, a Public Finance Management Reform Strategy (SR-PFM) was adopted with an action plan for the 2014-2016 period. Several other reforms have been initiated, including the promulgation of a public procurement code in 2012 and the computerization of the expenditure chain (SIM-ba) in 2016. These reforms have resulted in fiscal consolidation. Thus, tax revenues increased from 10.9% of GDP in 2009 to 12.1% in 2013, thanks to an improvement in the mobilization of receipts, especially customs revenues, and the good performance of non-tax revenues. It fell to 11.1% in 2015, compared with 11.8% in 2014. Tax revenues are still too low to support the Government's development program with a tax rate below the UEMOA standard of 17% over the entire year period. Insufficient taxation of petroleum products, institutional weaknesses in the management of the Port of Moroni and insufficient performance of the tax and customs administration are the main causes of the low tax return.

204. However, the proceeds from the sale of a second telecommunications license in December 2015 increased non-tax revenue by more than 2% of GDP. External donations have increased in recent years, from 7.5% of GDP in 2011 to 9.3% in 2013 and 9.4% in 2014, with a peak of 9.6% in 2012 (excluding HIPC and MDRI assistance).

205. On the expenditure side, the Government managed to achieve some consolidation of the wage bill from 8.5% of GDP in 2011 to 7.6% in 2013. However, total public expenditure continues to rise from 22.1% of GDP in 2010 to 25.1% in 2013, both driven by capital expenditure financed from own resources (from 0.7% of GDP to 3.4% in 2013) and resources (from 4.8% to 6.4%). Current expenditure decreased from 16.6% of GDP in 2011 to 14.8% in 2013.

206. Improved fiscal management has resulted in a positive budgetary balance (commitment base) over the 2011-2013 period, from 1.4% of GDP in 2011 to 3.6% in 2012 and 18.7% in 2013. It also resulted in the reduction of the public debt stock due to the debt relief obtained under the HIPC initiative (144.8 million in net present value at the end of 2009), a cautious external debt policy and consistent with the macroeconomic framework, as well as the timeliness of external public debt. In 2015, a large donation from Saudi Arabia in December 2015 dramatically changed the fiscal situation; it cleared arrears, had an overall budget surplus of 2.9 percent of GDP, and had significant funding for the first six months of 2016. Despite these relatively satisfactory results, efforts still need to be made to improve the efficiency of public spending and put in place sound fiscal management mechanisms in support of economic growth and in response to external shocks.

207. For the lower income constituency grants, allocations and the establishment of effective tax administration remain core priorities along with the expansion and balancing of the tax base. Countries with higher income face the middle-income trap where they need to find concessional resources to fund the transition to advanced and sustainable economic activities. Limited fiscal space, despite some progress in debt sustainability, remains a common feature in AIMS. Fiscal adjustment for example is still needed to restore financial sustainability in the Maldives and reduce external imbalances. Mauritius, despite drawbacks, has responded by strengthening public finance management and achieved important milestones in programme-based budgeting. Comoros, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe need to find solutions to close the investment gap required for growth-enhancing infrastructure and urgent social spending. Long term investment channels are needed to nurture a domestic private sector.

208. Necessity has driven innovation, pushing AIMS governments to rethink financing and look at their vast ocean possession as an investment opportunity. Seychelles has pursued alternative finance schemes, such as the debt Swap for Conservation and Climate Change Adaptation and probably the world-first Blue Bond. The country successfully attracted international support from philanthropists, the Nature Conservancy on the first-the Debt Swap-and the World Bank and a GEF on the second as innovative finance instruments often demand high sunk investment costs. The Blue Bond is expected to mobilize capital in the range of US\$15 million to finance the Mahe Plateau Demersal Fisheries Management Plan and the scale-up of sustainable artisanal fishery. The proceeds from the Seychelles Debt swap will be channeled to the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust. The Housing Development Finance Corporation of the Maldives announced a second Sukuk in 2017-with the first emission offered back in 2013-taking advantage of the booming impact investment opportunities in Islamic Finance.

209. This evolving development financing landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. Future opportunities include an expansion in environmental and climate financing combined with new and innovative financial instruments. The responsible investment pool is also expanding benefits the most for countries that can intercept investment grade deals and to a lesser scale, the other AIMS. Constraints include AIMS capacities to access resources and use them effectively along with persistent risks of debt vulnerability. The absorption capacity of the private sector also limits the available financial instruments for many AIMS.

210. SIDS tend to have small and erratic domestic revenues, which combined with high costs for providing public services and the fiscal impacts of natural disaster, often result in limited fiscal space for development investments. The debt situation of the five SIDS that benefitted from the Heavily Indebted

Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative has drastically improved in the past 15 years, but the remaining SIDS have seen on average an increase in their debt to gross national income (GNI) ratios, which, at 57%, is currently above the average for other developing countries (47%). Foreign direct investments and other private finance flows are highly volatile and on average, contribute little to SIDS' external sources of financing: only 12% in 2012-15. Owing to large diasporas, remittances represent the largest flow of external finance for SIDS: 52% in 2012-15. Concessional finance (i.e. grants and concessional loans from bilateral and multilateral providers) is the second largest flow of external finance on aggregate, and the largest for 22 out of 35 individual SIDS.²³

Concessional finance and overall external financing

211. The table below provides a snapshot of several external financial flows that reach SIDS. These flows include: (i) ODA (ii) remittances, (iii) private flows at market terms (e.g. foreign direct investments, and total bank and non-bank purchases of bonds and other securities, including equities), (iv) private grants, and (v) non-concessional flows from bilateral and multilateral providers (i.e. official flows that do not meet the ODA definition).

212. For all SIDS, remittances account for the largest share of external finance or 52 per cent (i.e. a total of USD 36.1 billion) of 2012-2015. Though for SIDS in the AIMS region, private flows provide for the largest share of 48 per cent (i.e. a total of USD 1,124 million). Remittances make for a large share of GDP in many SIDS: Cabo Verde (10%), and Comoros (20%).

213. Total non-concessional official flows are less significant (USD 5.8 billion in 2012-15, i.e. 8% of the total). Across SIDS, these flows are highly concentrated, as they are primarily channeled to more developed or larger markets.

214. Private financial flows can be very volatile: in 2007 they represented 49% of total external flows but became recently negative (years 2013 and 2014). The volatility of market-term flows became particularly visible after the global financial crisis, with several extreme peaks and troughs. 218. In 2012-15, these flows represented on average 12% of the external financial flows reaching SIDS and less than 20% for 18 individual SIDS out of 35. In addition, private finance out-flows exceeded the inflows in nine SIDS, resulting in negative net private flows in this period.

215. In the AIMS countries, debt ratios are above the average for developing countries as a whole. The Maldives has seen its public debt to GDP ratio climb considerably over recent years. Debt to GDP in São Tomé and Príncipe, meanwhile, rose from 60% in 2008 to 85% in 2013. High levels of debt have also been a problem in the Seychelles, and the country recently restructured its commercial and bilateral debt.

Table 6. Key figures on concessional finance to individual SIDS, 2012-2015

	ODA Volume in USD Millions	ODA Per Capita in USD	Top 3 Providers	Top 3 Sector	External financing in USD Millions				
					Concessional DAC and multilaterals	Remittances	Non-concessional DAC and multilaterals	Private grants	Private flows
Cabo Verde	869	336	Portugal (54%), EU Institutions (8%), IDA (7%)	Other social (18%), Transport and storage (14%), Energy (11%)	212	97	25	4	42

²³ OECD (2018), Making Development Co-operation Work for Small Island Developing States.

Comoros	391	89	IDA (38%), France (26%), ADF (13%)	Education (13%), Health (10%), Government and civil society (10%)	65	15			4
Guinea Bissau	368	54	EU Institutions (23%), IDA (12%)	Health (31%), Government and Civil Society (15%), Education (10%)	120	25		5	-4
Maldives	156	107	AsDB (16%), IDA (14%), Australia (12%)	Government and civil society (17%), Multisector (17%), Water and Sanitation (14%)	54	2	21	1	30
Mauritius	545	94	France (50%), EU Institutions (40%), Japan (2%)	Energy (17%), Transport and storage (15%), Education (8%)	124	212	118	1	1118
São Tomé and Príncipe	187	280	Portugal (39%), EU Institutions (13%), African Dev. Fund (8%)	Health (18%), Education (13%), Agriculture (7%)	56	2		1	-2
Seychelles	87	118	EU Institutions (30%), UAE (25%), France (11%)	Energy (24%), Water and sanitation (13%), Communications (10%)	23	12	11		-64
Totals	2,603	1,078			654	365	175	12	1,124

²⁴ Source: OECD, 2018.

216. Several SIDS present special, and in some cases longstanding, debt sustainability challenges. High levels of debt are especially evident in the Caribbean. The problem is severe but is often overlooked, due in part to the higher per capita incomes enjoyed by many SIDS when compared to other developing nations. Income indicators mask, however, these countries' inherent fragility and vulnerability to a range of external shocks such as extreme weather events, climate change and terms of trade shocks.²⁵

217. SIDS are on average, more severely indebted than other developing countries. In 2014, SIDS' debt to GDP ratios stood at, on average, 57% as compared to 44% in all other middle and low-income countries. However, there are wide variations between countries. In 2014, SIDS in the Caribbean were the most heavily indebted (at on average 73% of GDP) while SIDS in the Pacific had the lowest levels of debt (33%). Debt levels in the AIMS SIDS stood at on average 65% of GDP in 2014.

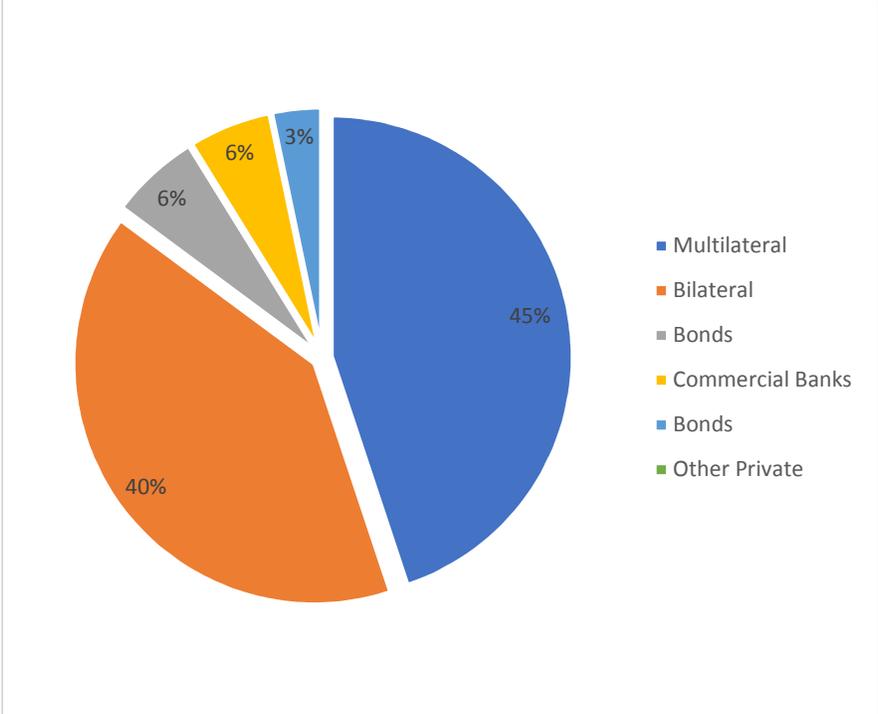
218. It is important to consider balances between private and official, concessional and non-concessional, short and long-term debt, which also influences debt sustainability. Private debt is often highly volatile, procyclical and subject to abrupt changes due to perceptions of risk by lenders, exchange rate fluctuations and broader conditions in global capital markets. Maturities can sometimes be very short.

Country profiles are provided in Annex II.

²⁵ Financing for Development and Small Island Developing States: A Snapshot and Way Forward, UNDP & UN-OHRLS Discussion Paper, June 2015.

Consequently, countries which rely more heavily on capital markets to meet fiscal deficits and fund development are more vulnerable to sharp and unforeseen interruptions in their access to finance, changes in the cost of that finance and the rapid exit of capital which in turn poses risks of debt default and economic contraction.

Figure 4: AIMS Long Term External Debt Composition (2012)



Source: World Bank, 2014.

ODA from the OECD DAC donors to SIDS

219. ODA is a key element in financing for development lands Cabo for SIDS. In 2013, SIDS as a whole received around US\$4.3 billion in ODA. Total ODA for that year was just under US\$ 135 billion which means that SIDS received about 6.7% of total development aid for that year.

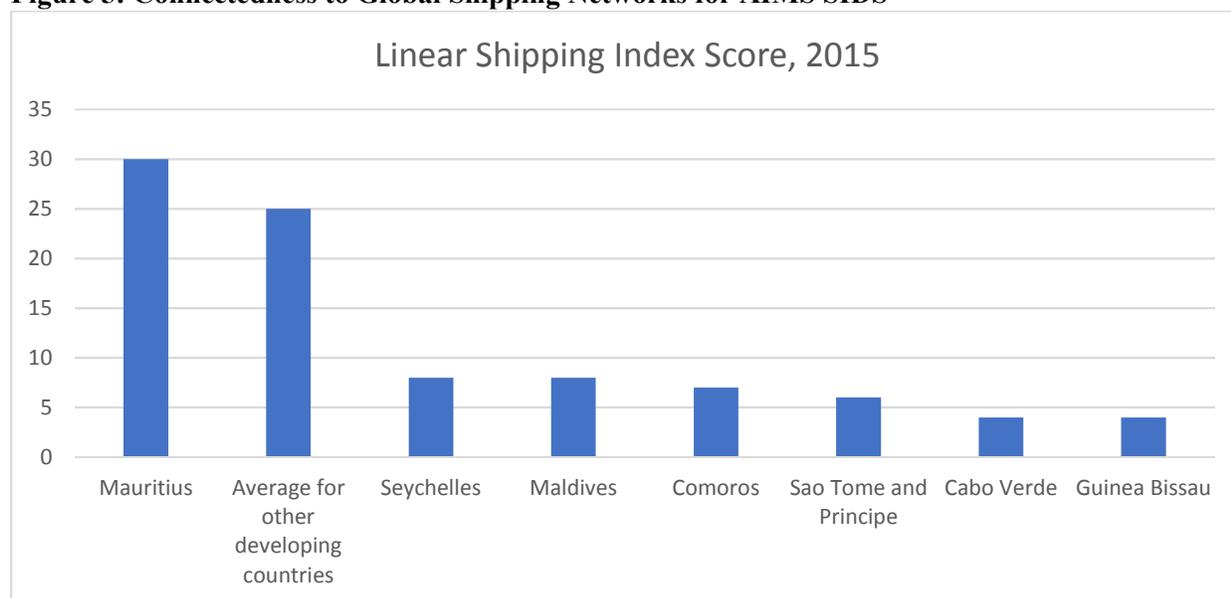
220. On average, the Pacific region also receives much more ODA on a per capita basis than do the Caribbean or AIMS countries. In 2013, SIDS in the Pacific region received on average US\$ 916 per capita, while SIDS in AIMS and Caribbean regions received US\$ 199 and US\$ 183 ODA per capita respectively. In the Pacific, there is a much higher degree of aid dependency; the Caribbean and AIMS countries, in contrast, rely much more heavily on debt finance.

Trade

221. For Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe, the percentage of exports of the world’s total exports, 0 per cent and remained unchanged for all three countries from 2011 to 2016.

222. In terms of connectedness to global shipping networks, SIDS are less than one third as well-connected as other developing countries.

Figure 5: Connectedness to Global Shipping Networks for AIMS SIDS



Source: OECD, 2018.

223. Comoros: Economic outlook for the country looks positive with GDP growth expected to stabilize at around 2.7% in the coming years, above growth in the recent past. The country faces significant challenges in terms of international competitiveness and economic diversification. Improvements in the business environment are essential for the development of the private sector and the creation of jobs in the formal economy. The poor quality of its infrastructure, the limited size of its domestic market, frequent water and electricity shortages, limited natural resources and an unskilled workforce are all factors that hinder FDI (Société Générale).

224. The country is a small economy, opened to trade with a trade-to-GDP ratio of 65% (2016, World Bank). Export revenue is generated primarily by the three main crops of vanilla, cloves, and ylang-ylang. This makes the country vulnerable to international price shocks and to weather-related disasters. The country faces a structural trade deficit including by the weight of food imports in the trade balance since the country imports 70% of its food needs. Comoros seeks to diversify exports and trade including through its participation in regional integration schemes such as COMESA whose free trade area joined in 2006. The country is working in earnest towards its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

225. Guinea Bissau: The economy is dominated by agriculture, accounting for over 40 percent of GDP and employing about 80 percent of workers, high by regional standards. The production and export of raw cashews nuts constitute the main source of income for more than two thirds of the households (and for virtually all small farmers) and represent over 85 percent of the country's total export earnings (World Bank, 2016). The high degree of economic concentration in raw cashew production and exports subjects Guinea Bissau to significant risks and vulnerabilities to external shocks. The country depends on imports for its food requirements. Economic and export diversification is important for building resilience and creating jobs in the formal economy.

226. The private sector in the country is in fact embryonic. The main factors undermining the competitiveness of enterprises include: the weak business environment including legal and regulatory frameworks; limited and low quality of business services to enterprises by either public or private-sector entities; constraints to access to finance; weaknesses in human capital and poor quality of infrastructure in terms of access and reliability, cost, etc.

227. Mauritius: The economy was broadly resilient to the 2008 financial crisis. GDP growth is expected to pick up further in 2018 to 3.9 percent.²⁶ The financial and insurance sectors make up 10.5 per cent of GDP and employ over 13,500 people, equivalent to around 2.4 per cent of the labour force in 2016.²⁷ Market capitalization of the *Official Market* on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius crossed the Rs 400 billion mark in June 2017, representing around 92 per cent of GDP.²⁸ On the institutional front, a new Ministry dedicated to Financial Services and Good Governance was created with the aim of consolidating Mauritius's position as a Financial Hub.

228. Growth has been led by the service sectors, especially expanding financial services and tourism, but with substantial contributions also from other services sectors (ICT, real estate, and retail trade). Competitiveness, productivity and investment rates have been declining over the recent past, however, and the labour force is projected to shrink, potentially retarding growth.

229. Mauritius has a liberal economic and trade policy, with a trade-to-GDP ratio of nearly 110% (2015). The country is a member of the WTO, as well as many other regional economic groups (COMESA, SADC, IOC).

230. The government's economic strategy as outlined in the Government Programme 2015-2019 and the Prime Minister's 2030 vision statement of August 2015 sought to (i) address unemployment; (ii) alleviate, if not eradicate poverty; (iii) open up the country; and (iv) promote sustainable development and innovation. Recognizing that achieving high income country status will depend on Mauritius' ability to improve the labour force's skill set, develop infrastructure, and further improve the business environment to attract FDI and generate domestic investment, the economic model focuses on a number of core areas to fundamentally transform the economy. These four core areas are:

- First, a **revamped and dynamic manufacturing base** with a clearly identified focus on promoting high end, precision driven and technology enabled manufacturing in the country. The aim is to increase manufacturing's share of the economy significantly, to 25% by 2019.
- Second, **development of the Ocean economy** by transforming the country into a major regional fishing centre, setting up fishing and seafood processing facilities locally, offering bunkering and other related services in order to transform Port Louis into a leading regional petroleum hub, improving sea connectivity by forming a regional shipping company, and supporting the development of tourism with more cruise traffic and cruise linked activities.
- Third, **transforming the services sector** to embrace higher value-added services and activities and turn Mauritius into a vibrant and sophisticated International Financial Services Centre. Foreseen actions include streamlining tax policy to making the country a hub for investments in Africa; developing capital markets and the National Stock Exchange through selected partnerships; promoting innovation, and the adoption of technology and communication solutions for high end activities like software and animation development, big data analytics, disaster recovery and cloud computing. The strategy also includes support SME development as the backbone of the economy with the creation of high end and state of the art incubators and develop the country as a regional hub and centre of excellence for Africa in education, healthcare and medical services.
- Fourth, **position the country as the regional platform for trade, investment and services in Africa**. Over the last year, the country has already signed MOUs with several countries for the development of Special Economic Zones, including Ghana, Senegal and Madagascar.

²⁶ Historical Series National Accounts (2007-2017), Statistics Mauritius

²⁷ Supplement to Budget 2018-19

²⁸ The Stock Exchange of Mauritius (2017). Annual Report 2017.

231. Maldives: The country made the transition from LDC to middle income country by harnessing growth in the tourism sector and related activities, and fisheries. Average economic growth for the period of 1986-2014 stood at 7.4%. Maldives faces a number of development challenges. Tourism and fisheries direct contribution to GDP is estimated at 40% of DGP while its indirect contribution would be larger. This points to high economic concentration and vulnerability to external shocks. The country is also dependent on imports for most of its economic activities.

232. Implementing economic reforms to strengthen the business environment could be confidence in investors helping to diversify the economy and build long-term resilience. Inadequacies in maritime transport and limited availability of domestic skilled labour hold back private sector investment outside high-end tourism (AsDB).

233. Seychelles: GDP growth was estimated at 4.4% in 2016 (World Bank) driven by strong growth of the tourism, the main economic sector of the country together with fisheries. The small size of the economy and isolation, limit the opportunities for economic diversification, with Seychelles highly dependent on imports.

234. Trade is extremely important to the Seychelles' economy. The combined value of exports and imports equals 181 percent of GDP. In recent years, the government has encouraged foreign investment to upgrade hotels and other services. At the same time, the government has moved to reduce the dependence on tourism by promoting the development of farming, fishing, and small-scale manufacturing (IndexMundi). Additional reforms and market-opening measures are critical to improving competitiveness.

235. São Tomé and Príncipe: the country is a small economy that depends on government expenditure as a major driver of economic growth. Historically, the agriculture sector has performed well with exports of cocoa, coffee, and palm oil increasing in recent years (World Bank). The country is developing oil fields in the Gulf of Guinea jointly with Nigeria, but whether the project will prove commercially viable is unclear. Given the limited economic base, the country is highly dependent on imports and faces a structural current account deficit.

236. São Tomé and Príncipe is a member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), and has observer status in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). The Participative Support to Family Agriculture and Artisanal Fishing Programme (PAPAFPA), allowed the possibility to organize the association of exporting culture producers, create cooperatives, finance the development of cocoa, coffee and pepper cultures. In addition, partnerships were established with external buyers to ease the trade of the above-mentioned products, including the pre-funding of cultures, agricultural techniques and products conservation.

237. Cabo Verde: In spite of limited natural resources (extractive/minerals and arable land), Cabo Verde made significant development progress achieving graduation from LDC status and significant poverty reduction. Economic growth has been fueled by fast growth in tourist-related activities, increasing remittances and investment in rural infrastructure.

238. Since 2008 the government has been investing heavily in the country's economic infrastructure, focusing especially on fostering transformation in key sectors like agriculture, fisheries, tourism and creative industries.

239. Cabo Verde already has a high degree of trade integration. Its development strategy for transformation can be viewed as primarily a trade-driven strategy for growth and poverty reduction.

Building national trade capacity is essential to Cabo Verde's next development transition. It will be an indispensable factor in the country's ability to assure and support increasing living standards for its citizens.

240. Despite its narrow productive base and reduced scale for export, Cabo Verde has good potential to be competitive in certain niche markets and segments, both as a low volume-high value-added exporter of niche products and services (agro-foods and liquors; fresh and processed fisheries; digital cultural content and other cultural exports such as music) as well as global services (tourism; back-office services; maritime and air transportation services; other internet-based services). The country needs to enhance the business climate -recognizing that major improvements in this area have been achieved, improve the quality of trade-related institutions, and enhance its quality infrastructure.

Table 7. International Merchandise Trade

	Merchandise exports growth rate in 2016	Merchandise exports	Merchandise imports	Merchandise trade balance
Cabo Verde	-10.6 %	60	666	-606
Comoros	80.8 %	31	219	-189
Guinea Bissau	8.8%	274	221	53
Maldives	6.9 %	256	2,125	-1,869
Mauritius	-10.7 %	2,376	4,655	-2,278
São Tomé and Príncipe	20.6 %	14	139	-126
Seychelles	11.1 %	460	1,040	-580
Singapore	-2.5 %	338,082	291,908	46,174

Source: UNCTADSTAT, 2016.

241. The ambition of the national development strategy SCA2D is to make Comoros, the country at the crossroads of trade between the countries of the Middle East, COMESA and the Indian Ocean. To translate this vision, it proceeded to the revision of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) in view of a move towards a National Integrated Trade Program. The successful implementation of the revised EIF requires continued efforts to strengthen existing institutional capacities, strengthen the coordination and monitoring of aid for trade, as well as the mobilization and absorption capacities of trade aids. The SCA2D intends to establish the structural transformation dynamics of the Comorian economy on regional integration and trade, using the regional economic spaces to face the world market and the opportunities of the increasing commercial opening resulting from the belonging to regional arrangements. To this end, it will build on the updated DTIS and its matrix of actions, as well as on the multilateral program on aid for trade with the introduction of the EIF and the PMT for trade integration. SCA2D will also promote trade infrastructure, in partnership with the private sector.

Capacity-building

242. To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, the Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD) has set up the Adaptation Action Programme to help vulnerable developing countries from Africa and Small Island Developing States to achieve low-carbon and climate resilient development with a focus on adaptation to climate change. Under this programme, Mauritius is benefiting in terms of capacity building, feasibility studies and impact assessment worth EUROPEAN UNION 2M. The assistance will help Mauritius to access funds from the Green Climate Fund and other funding institutions for the implementation of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).²⁹

243. Another initiative undertaken in Mauritius is a toolkit for “Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Identification of Adaptation Options” has been designed to strengthen the internal capacity of local authorities and their staff, to manage the local impacts of climate change within their respective jurisdictions. The toolkit also provides guidance to:

- Identify, assess, priorities and manage risks related to climate change;
- Pave the way towards engaging with communities potentially at risk; and
- Adopt climate resilient adaptation plans.

244. The Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 for the Food Crop, Livestock and Forestry Sectors, which is the most recent agricultural policy document that addresses comprehensive food security issues in Mauritius, implements Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Smart Agriculture for the crop and livestock sector. One part of this strategic plan highlights training and capacity building on climate change and climate smart agriculture at all levels (policy, technical, financial, monitoring), with emphasis on knowledge sharing, facilitation and coordination.

245. For the Maldives, the importance of mobilizing financial resources through ODA, concessional loans and South-South cooperation initiatives were highlighted and related to this, capacity building features as a key determinant in the success of implementing the needs of the nation.

246. In Singapore, efforts towards the global partnership for sustainable development centre on capacity building and human resource development. In addition, the Government has highlighted the multiplier effect of investing in human capital as a key driver behind the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Under the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), their flagship technical assistance programme in areas of education, transport, economic development and trade promotion, healthcare, judiciary and public administration. Under the SCP, Singapore launched the Sustainable Development Programme (SDP) in 2015 which aims to support developing countries’ achievement of the SDGs by building capacity at three levels – leadership, city and community – through partnerships with UN agencies and local non-governmental organisations. The SDP is specifically tailored for developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, with a variety of courses on SDG-specific areas, such as water and sanitation, sustainable cities and climate change.

Technology

247. To increase connectivity and use of information and communications technology through improved infrastructure, training and national legislation, as well as public and private sector involvement (SAMOA Pathway para.111), productive capacity has increased for individuals using the internet as well as mobile cellular subscriptions (per cent of population) for Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe

²⁹ Mauritius National Input, 2018.

from 2011 to 2016.³⁰ In Comoros, there was an increase from 5.5 per cent to 7.94 per cent of individuals using the internet, and from 30.91 to 57.66 mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people. In Guinea-Bissau, the increase was from 2.67 to 3.76 per cent increase of individuals using the internet and 45.11 to 70.26 per cent mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people. In São Tomé and Príncipe, individuals using the internet increased from 20.16 to 28 per cent from 2011 to 2016, and 62.80 to 85.28 per 100 people.

248. In Mauritius, implementation of the Smart City Scheme to encourage the development of smart cities nationwide is a new initiative to stimulate innovative scientific and technological activities. It will provide technology-driven facilities to the business community and support the creation of a vibrant city lifestyle. Moreover, with technical assistance of the Climate Technology Centre Network (CTCN) and financial support from the Green Climate Fund, a Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Study for the Port of Port Louis will be carried out shortly.

Data and Statistics

249. The concept of National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), introduced by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), is to assist countries in developing their statistical systems and mainstream statistics into national policy and planning processes. The main benefits and advantages of this approach were seen as:

- Being instrumental in the *promotion of statistics* as a major tool in the development process;
- Representing the *output of a participatory process*, with NSDSs intended to mobilise all stakeholders around the promotion of a performing national statistical system (NSS);
- An *inclusive approach*, involving all components of the official statistical system;
- As a *demand driven process*, where NSDS intend to respond to use needs.³¹

250. The majority of SIDS were notably absent during the early years of NSDS development, with a slow initial uptake until well into the second half of the MDG period, 2000-2015, with only three SIDS, Belize (2006-2011), Cabo Verde (2006-2011), and Mauritius (2007-2012), having developed an NSDS during the first half of this period. This was an unfortunate reality, considering that the major driving force behind conceptualizing the NSDS approach was the widespread absence of quality and timely statistics and indicators for countries to be able to reliably benchmark their development status across 8 MDG goals, 21 development targets and 60 associated indicators, to allow them to plan evidence-based interventions, and to regularly monitor their development progress. This means that SIDS, perhaps more than other developing countries, missed most of the MDG period: they were not only left behind in strengthening their national statistical systems, but by lacking quality and timely statistics, they were unable to accurately identify and document the magnitude of their specific development challenges, establish credible benchmarks and targets, and develop evidence-based policy, development priorities and funding proposals, in support of their national development efforts.

251. In the Maldives, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) together with the SDGs Division has made substantial progress in assessing data and statistical capacity for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Key assessments undertaken included: Assessment of data availability status for each SDG indicator using the tier category provided by UNDESA; Diagnostic assessment of data across all ministries and government agencies which identifies national indicators, additional data sources and baseline data availability; Baseline data for all SDGs known as SDG goal updates. Preliminary data review conducted by the NBS shows that for 64 indicators, data is being collected through ongoing statistical efforts, and 57 indicators were identified as data that can be collected with additional effort.

³⁰ International Telecommunications Union.

³¹ SNDS Guidelines 2.3, April 2017.

252. For Mauritius, official statistics are provided by Statistics Mauritius (SM), which under its chairmanship created a committee of representatives from various organisations and in collaboration with national data producers, constructed an SDG database for the Government. As at March 2017, the database comprises data on around 130 (60%) indicators of the total 216, that have been determined relevant for Mauritius.

253. The first National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for Mauritius was developed for the period 2007 – 2012 and the majority of the goals therein have been attained. The economy has undergone major transformations over the years, and will continue to evolve to meet the objectives of Vision 2030. Concurrently, the demand for new statistics for planning and progress monitoring will increase.

254. A new strategy, the National Strategy for Official Statistics (NSOS), working towards a transformation of the National Statistical System (NSS) to make it fit for purpose, covering the period 2019 – 2023, is currently being developed with the assistance of the Partnership in Statistics Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB). Its main objective is to address the evolving data needs for policy making and monitoring, taking into account the three-year Strategic Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21 of Government, Vision 2030, the Global Action Plan for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, other international and national initiatives, and best practices.

255. NSOS will be developed in a participatory approach to include producers of statistics, data providers and users. The exercise will entail a review of the National Statistical System (NSS), consultations with stakeholders, and a series of workshops, among others.

256. As part of the preliminary phase of the new strategy, consultations and sensitisation of stakeholders, design of a roadmap and preparation of an NSOS bulletin have already been done and an assessment of the state of statistics in the selected sectors is currently being undertaken.

Table 8: Small Island Developing States: Status of NSDS development, 2017

Country	NSDS Status	Time period	Next NSDS	
			Status	Time period
AIMS Region (7)				
Cabo Verde	Implementation	2012-16	planned	2017-21
Comoros	Implementation	2015-19		
Guinea-Bissau	Implementation	2015-17	planned	2018-22
Mauritius	Strategy expired	2007-12	planned	2019-23
São Tomé and Príncipe	Implementation	2009-18		
Seychelles	Implementation	2014-20		
Maldives	Implementation	2010-19	planned	2018-22
Pacific (14)				
Cook Islands	Implementation	2015-25		
Fiji	No strategy		being designed	2016-20
Kiribati	No strategy		planned	2018-23
Marshall Islands	No strategy		not yet planned	

Micronesia	No strategy		being designed (*)	2018-23
Nauru	No strategy		planned (*)	2018-23
Palau	No strategy		not yet planned	
Papua New Guinea	Awaiting adoption	2015-24		
Samoa	Implementation	2011-21		
Solomon Islands	Implementation	2016-30		
Tonga	No strategy		being designed	2017-25
Tuvalu	No strategy		not yet planned	
Vanuatu	Implementation	2016-20		
Timor-Leste	Implementation	2010-19	not yet planned	
Caribbean (16)				
Antigua and Barbuda	No strategy		not yet planned	
Bahamas	No strategy		planned	2017-25
Barbados	No information			
Belize	Strategy expired	2006-11	not yet planned	
Cuba	No information			
Dominica	No strategy		not yet planned	
Dominican Republic	No information			
Grenada	No strategy		being designed (*)	2018-22
Guyana	No strategy		being designed (*)	2018-22
Haiti	Awaiting adoption	2016-21		
Jamaica	No strategy		being designed (*)	2018-22
Saint Kitts and Nevis	No information			
Saint Lucia	No strategy		not yet planned	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	No strategy		not yet planned	
Suriname	No strategy		not yet planned	
Trinidad and Tobago	No strategy		planned	2018-22
<u>Source:</u> Annual PARIS21 update (www.paris21.org/nsds-status). Entries highlighted with (*) are based on more recent information available				

257. Nearly three years after the conclusion of the MDG period, and three years into the implementation of the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development (SDGs), this situation remains an acute challenge for at least half of all SIDS, where the status of NSDS development is slow and is most urgent:

- AIMS region, where 5 of 7 SIDS currently implement an NSDS, and;
- The Pacific Islands, with 5 countries currently implementing an NSDS, 2 awaiting adoption, and a further 3 at different stages of their NSDS design;
- Caribbean region with 1 NSDS currently being implemented and 3 being designed.

258. The political commitment by SIDS governments to implementing the SDGs provides a unique opportunity for countries to fast track developing an NSDS, or review an existing one to ensure it addresses SDG data requirements along with its national development priorities. However, one of the defining features of SIDS statistical systems is a lack of strong and consistent political recognition of and support to statistics. Two key illustrations of limited political recognition of and support to statistics are:

- the chronic under-resourcing of national statistical agencies due to limited government resources and competing priorities;
- lack of regular demand for statistics, illustrating weak links between statistics and policy.

259. One aspect SIDS do not have in common is smallness, apart from their population and land size, some SIDS do not really constitute islands at all.³² Notwithstanding pronounced contrasts in the size of SIDS national statistical agencies, a recent comparative review of SIDS national statistical systems highlighted an important point, that “while many NSSs share the same constraints and challenges, a number of distinct characteristics are made much more acute in SIDS”, referring to population size, land area and statistical capacity index challenges across SIDS statistical systems.

Table 9: Contrasting pictures of "smallness"

		Country	Value
Population size	High	Guinea-Bissau	1 932 871
	Low	Seychelles	97 539
Land Area (square km)	High	Guinea-Bissau	28 120
	Low	Maldives	298
Statistical Capacity index	High	Mauritius	91.1
	Low	Guinea-Bissau	42.2

Source: PARIS21, 2018.

260. The 2030 agenda overlaps with the thematic issues of the Samoa Pathway and there is close integration of the priority areas of Small Island Developing States into the 2030 Agenda. All Member States have taken the commitment to report to the UN on the progress made towards the 229 SDG indicators that were officially launched in 2016. Statistics Mauritius (SM), as provider of official statistics, in collaboration with national data providers, constructed a first Sustainable Development Goals database for the Republic of Mauritius. As at March 2017, the database comprises data on around 130 (60%) indicators out of 216 total indicators that are relevant to the Mauritian context.³³

261. Mauritius has set up a national database of vulnerable households living in absolute poverty under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM). As at 31 March 2018, a total of 9,987 households were registered under the SRM and are benefiting from a monthly subsistence allowance, as well as support through various Empowerment Schemes, namely the School Materials Scheme, School Premium Scheme, Child Allowance Scheme, Free Exams Fees Scheme and Crèche Scheme.

³² NSDS Guidelines for SIDS (2018). Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century.

³³ Contribution from Mauritius.

Monitoring and Accountability

262. In order to ensure good monitoring of the SAMOA Pathway implementation, it is necessary to establish a specific institutional arrangement for the implementation of SAMOA Pathway. The lack of recent and reliable statistical data creates a challenge for monitoring and evaluation, and for policymaking decisions. Country submissions highlighted that improvements need to be made to increase the availability and accessibility of reliable statistical data.

263. In the Maldives, the lack of data and adequate reporting mechanisms constitute a significant challenge in reporting on the goals and targets of the SDGs. Nevertheless, the government is committed to institutionalizing robust and holistic mechanisms, for periodic and regular data collection to institutionalizing.

III: WAY FORWARD

Conclusion

AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway 23-25 May 2018 Balaclava, Mauritius

1. Representatives of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) Region met in Balaclava, Mauritius on 23-25 May 2018 in preparation for the one-day High Level Conference on the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway to be held in New York in September 2019 as mandated by the UNGA Resolutions 70/292, 71/225 and 72/217.
2. The representatives of the SIDS made presentations on the progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway which focused on the national priorities, successes, challenges and lessons learnt, noting that some national reports were yet to be finalized. The meeting discussed the possible regional approaches to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS region, the means of implementation including financing for sustainable development in the SIDS, the necessity for a regional coordinating mechanism to support the implementation and had an exchange of views on the elements for a regional approach to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the purposes of the midterm review.
3. The country presentations underlined the intricate interlinkages between the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognised that the monitoring of the progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway was best carried out in the context of the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs and their targets based on the SDG indicators.

The meeting recognised that there exist sufficient commonalities in the priorities of the AIMS countries that could form the basis for a regional approach while emphasizing that, because of their diverse economic development levels, their geographical dispersion and other particularities, attention should also be given to their pressing national priorities.

4. In the context of a regional approach to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS region, the representatives agreed that the following thematic areas represented the collective priorities that should be addressed in the context of the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway:

- Climate Change
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building
- Water and Sanitation
- Data collection and interpretation gaps
- Means of implementation including financing for development
- Capacity Building
- Gender equality and women empowerment
- Food security

5. The meeting recognised that while an overall AIMS regional approach was desirable, the geographical dispersion of the countries of the AIMS region also provided opportunities for action at a sub-regional level to address issues related to the geographical position of certain AIMS countries, language commonalities and similarities of the challenges faced.

6. The meeting expressed continued concern over the difficulties faced by the SIDS in accessing funding and financing for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, especially for SIDS which had graduated from LDCs, including the challenges faced in accessing funds pledged under the Green Climate Fund in the context of combating climate change and its effects as well as other such initiatives. The meeting, recognizing the efforts by the Green Climate Fund, the global environment facility and others in improving access to funding, underlined the importance of further streamlining the procedures for accessing funding for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. In this regard, they called on the funding/financing institutions like the Green Climate Fund, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Hub and the Global Environment Facility, and traditional partners such as the EU to address these SIDS concerns. The meeting also stressed on the importance of domestic resource mobilization and leveraging funds, and also considered the possibility of using innovative financing instruments such as Islamic Finance, blue bonds, debt swaps and called for the lowering of remittance transaction costs.

7. The meeting recalled the recommendations by the Committee on Development Policy (CDP) to ECOSOC to consider, at its forthcoming session, the creation of a new category of countries which are or have graduated from LDC status and which face extreme vulnerability to climate change and other environmental shocks and encouraged SIDS to actively participate in the discussions.

8. The meeting acknowledged the importance and the scaling up of strategic partnerships in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway while underlining the need for them to be geared towards addressing the national priorities of the countries.

9. The meeting also agreed that the private sector had a very important role to play in the implementation process and highlighted the need for facilitation of public private partnerships in that regard. The meeting also recognised that there was a need for greater access to finance by small and medium enterprises which can represent a powerful vehicle for attaining the SAMOA Pathway objectives and for creating jobs and wealth. The meeting further stressed the need for the involvement of civil society, youth and other stakeholders in the decision making process.

10. The meeting underlined the difficulties faced by the AIMS countries in accessing funding and financing under favorable terms especially by the middle-income and high-income countries. The meeting expressed concern that the level of income continued to be the overriding consideration in determining conditions for access to funding and financing without due attention being paid to the vulnerabilities of the SIDS. They called on agencies and partners to increase their assistance to SIDS in building their capacity to access the available funding/financing. They impressed on the capacity to formulate bankable projects and successfully addressing the complicated modalities associated with the access to funding/financing for both projects and infrastructure development.

11. The meeting also stressed the need to facilitate transfer of technology to and promote innovation in SIDS.

12. The meeting recognised the role being played by relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the UN System in addressing and mainstreaming the priorities of the SIDS in their action programmes and encouraged them to continue their good work especially in the fields of food security, trade, environment, the oceans, education, culture, social development and sustainable tourism and country support in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in general.

13. The meeting recognised the strategic role of UNDP at national level in supporting the development of national development plans and/or long-term development plans and the mainstreaming of the SDGs in the national policies leading to the integration of the SAMOA Pathway. They called on UNDP, which was preparing the AIMS regional report on the progress in the SAMOA Pathway implementation, to use its network of country offices, in collaboration with UNOHRLLS and UNDESA, to pay particular attention to the priorities and challenges identified by the AIMS region. They also called on UNDP to continue extending its full support to the SIDS in the enabling the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda.

14. The meeting of the AIMS countries also underlined the difficulties faced in coordination and monitoring at the regional level due to the lack of a formal mechanism to cater for the region's needs.

15. The meeting agreed that a coordination mechanism is crucial to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS region and recommended the holding of a high-level meeting of the AIMS region in the margins of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018 to decide on the creation and the modalities of such a mechanism.

16. The meeting called on the Permanent representations of AIMS to the United Nations in New York to meet regularly to prepare for the high-level meeting and to exchange views on promoting regional cooperation among the AIMS countries. The meeting also recommended that the UNOHRLLS and the UNDESA organize regular skype meetings with the AIMS National Focal Points and the UN Country Teams. The meeting also called on the AIMS UN country teams to coordinate amongst themselves to more effectively support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Pending the setting up of a regional coordination mechanism, the meeting recognised that the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) may help to facilitate future coordination, in collaboration with the non-IOC Members of the AIMS, in accordance with the IOC's role as coordinator for the AIMS region during the 2005 SIDS Conference.

17. The meeting recommended that in order to accurately reflect the region's composition, the regional nomenclature should be modified to "Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) to be pronounced as "ACE" Small Island Developing States" and adopted in the context of the High-Level Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019.

18. The meeting expressed its appreciation to the UNOHRLLS and the UNDESA for their continued support to SIDS in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

19. The meeting agreed that the AIMS regional report which together with these conclusions and the report of the Preparatory Meeting will constitute the input of the group to the Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting in SAMOA in November 2018. The AIMS regional report will be finalized in New York by the group, following the receipt of the remaining national reports, by July 2018.

20. The meeting expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for ably hosting the AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway.

25 May 2018
Balaclava, Mauritius

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Annex I - Country presentations on progress of implementing the SAMOA Pathway

1. Below are summaries of country presentations delivered at the AIMS Regional Preparatory meeting for the mid-term review of SAMOA Pathway on 23 May. The session was chaired by Ambassador Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations. In this session, Member States presented their country reports addressing progress in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, best practices and lessons learnt, constraints and challenges as well as identification of emerging challenges facing small island developing States. The following Member States made country presentations: Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Singapore and Mauritius.

2. Cabo Verde: Mr. Jose Maria Jesus Tavares Silva thanked the government of Mauritius for the welcome. He explained that there are constraints in translating the SAMOA Pathway into Cabo Verde's national development plan— Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (PEDS). This is mainly due to a lack of statistical information on the priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway, weak coordination among the stakeholders involved in the process of implementation and difficulties on applying the Vulnerability Resilience Country Profile (VRCP) methodology. He further outlined the structure of PEDS, which has three (3) pillars, four (4) goals, thirty-five (35) programmes, and an estimated \$4.3million for its implementation. He noted that PEDS is inherently linked to the SDGs. The aim of PEDS is to address the development challenges of Cabo Verde through inclusive and sustainable economic growth, governance efficiency (through the reduction of social and regional asymmetries), unemployment and especially youth unemployment reduction, capitalizing on demographic dividends, promoting innovation, fostering excellence in education and security. The four goals of the PEDS comprise: 1. Transforming Cabo Verde into a platform in the Atlantic (namely an aerial, digital, financial and oceanic platform in the Atlantic; 2. Guarantying economic and environmental sustainability; 3. Guarantying social inclusion, and; 4. Strengthening the sovereignty of the country. Mr. Tavares Silva also presented on the major challenges of development which comprise: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth; Governance efficiency; Unemployment reduction; Demographic dividends; Innovations; Excellence in education; and Security. The main trends experienced by Cabo Verde include a decrease in the relative share of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to GDP and a sustained and substantial increase in the public debt to GDP level from 2008 onwards, which can be attributed to heavy public investments.

3. Comoros: H.E. Ms. Fatouma Abdalla thanked conference organizers and informed that Comoros has integrated provisions of the SAMOA Pathway into the country's "Strategy of accelerated growth and sustainable development (SAGSD)" and subsequently, priority sectors addressed in the SAMOA Pathway are being implemented. She provided an overview of national progress, trends and challenges in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and in achieving sustainable development in SIDS. She underscored the inclusion of priorities of the SAMOA Pathway into their SAGSD, as well as the promotion of peace and the implementation of the Rio convention, including aspects on energy and waste management. Comoros shared that the identification of adaption and mitigation solutions caused by climate change has been completed and several national meetings have been organised on renewable energies. Comoros has also passed a fishing law, democratised telecom services by welcoming a second operator and improved the sanitary standards as regard to food. Ms. Abdalla mentioned that numerous hurdles still exist to this day, including the persistence of conflicts of competences between the Union and the Islands, coupled with low-qualified human resources and mobilisation of funds. Ms. Abdalla also mentioned that mismanagement and lack of transparency at all levels of decision-making is also very relevant to date. Comoros is also confronted with a serious legal gap regarding implementation and very low and slow rate of enactment of laws at the level of the parliament. Comoros is also in need of technical assistance to better and more efficiently deal with issues and strategies highlighted in the SAMOA Pathway. As such, she highlighted that many projects do not reach the implementation stage nor does the private

sector contribute meaningfully. In terms of challenges ahead, Comoros indicated the following are needed: betterment of governance, financing for development projects, consultation and implications of civil society organisations, renewed dynamism for the Private Sector, more women in decision-making organizations, fight against corruption, societal violence, and implementation of new laws. In terms of partnerships, Comoros indicated that there is no legal framework or focal point for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway. The process is currently being managed by the office of the General Commissioner and UNDP though the rate of enactment of relevant laws is still slow. Comoros indicated translating priorities identified in the MTR of the SAMOA Pathway into practical and pragmatic action-oriented strategies for further implementation will require that SAMOA Pathway be effectively integrated into their ‘Strategy of accelerated growth and sustainable development,’ and other sectoral strategies and plans. Comoros is revising its development strategies and plans with the view to include the SDGs, Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. In conclusion, Ms. Abdalla expressed commitment to further cooperate in order to tackle its developmental and governance challenges and set Comoros in a course of fulfilling principles highlighted in the SAMOA Pathway.

4. Guinea-Bissau: Maria Antonieta Pinto Lopes D’Alva’s presentation was based on the country reference documents, the Terra Ranka Strategic and Operational Plan (2015-2025) and its "Sol Na Yarde" Vision (2015-2025). The presentation is also informed by interaction with key national institutions. Ms. D’Alva’s provided an overview of Guinea-Bissau, a coastal and archipelagic country with 1,584,791 inhabitants. She highlighted particularly fragile and vulnerable aspects of the country to climate change, similar to other Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The country is exposed to several natural hazards, such as strong winds, extreme weather events, coastal erosion and loss of biodiversity. She noted that during the last few years, considerable loss of land (coastal erosion) has devastated the northern part of the country, with large stretches of beaches. Faced with these vicissitudes, Guinea-Bissau has made enormous efforts to develop a strategic framework that has resulted in the elaboration of the Strategic and Operational Plan of the country, with preservation of natural capital and biodiversity as one of one of the pillars of sustainable development. Despite cyclical political crises, the country has made great efforts in the areas of environmental governance, as demonstrated through increased protected areas, from 15 per cent to 26.3 per cent of national territory, far exceeding goal 11 of Aichi. Ms. D’Alva discussed national progress, trends and challenges in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and sustainable development in SIDS. She also highlighted the country’s experience with persistent political instability, fragility of the state and challenges to observe the principles of democracy and rule of law.

5. Maldives: Dr. Azeema Adam indicated that a High Level Ministerial Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing SAMOA Pathway for the Maldives and that a technical committee has been set up with all relevant stakeholders from implementing agencies. Dr. Adam mentioned that a policy mapping of SDGs strategy is currently being used while a data gap analysis of SDGs is carried out to minimise the risk of mis-informed policy decisions. Maldives indicated having an informal civil society network established, as also mentioned by previous speakers. She also shared that communication can be a real task and that there is work in progress to come up with a communication strategy for the SDGs. For example, as regards Goal 2 of the SDGs, Maldives is working with the UN on better communication approaches. At the national level, sensitisation of all stakeholders is ongoing. Examples provided included, among others, working with media and the national Maldivian university to assess the needs of the country vis-a-vis the SDGs. Dr. Adam also mentioned that the identification of national priorities is still in progress. The Maldives provided an overview of national progress, trends and challenges in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and in achieving sustainable development in SIDS. As part of institutional coordination to implement the SDGs, it was noted that there is strong participation and engagement of social sectors, while there is weak participation of governance-related agencies and economic sector agencies. Therefore, a need to boost inter-

linkages and to break silos was identified. Also, the lack of ownership and accountability among line ministries and clarity about ‘means of implementation agencies’ was highlighted. In terms of policy alignment with the SDGs, the Maldives mainstreamed the goals in their manifestos, policies and sectoral plans and laws. At the local level, SDG-based planning is being implemented. However, it was noted that there is a lack of a national development plan and long-term development planning processes. As far as human resource capacity is concerned, there is limited familiarity with SDGs among government agencies, a high rate of human turnover among ministries and poor knowledge and skills in all areas of the SDGs. Maldives is faced with several challenges to date. Dr. Adam highlighted data gaps, poor maintenance of sectoral, limited data-sharing practices, administrative inefficiencies and poor knowledge of data management and analysis. Maldives also mentioned that financing remains a problem for the proper implementation of the SDGs. Amongst others, reliance on external project-based funding for SDG activities proves cumbersome. Dr. Adam further added that national advocacy on SDGs, development of monitoring and evaluation of frameworks, improvement of coordination and cooperation, better resource mobilisation and building of new partnerships are now critical. Regarding means of implementation, Dr. Azeema noted that Maldives developed an informal network with the Civil Society and this has resulted in greater engagement and increased finance and grant opportunities. On partnerships, the Maldives indicated that, in the absence of concessional financing from traditional partners, the country sought finance from non-traditional partners and borrowed from international markets through the issuance of its first international sovereign bond last year. National priorities for the MTR of the SAMOA Pathway and proposals for practical and pragmatic action-oriented strategies for the further implementation include diversification of the economy, provision of advance health care and promotion of healthy life style, strengthening governance and building strong institutions, promotion of inclusive education, inclusive growth, efficient transport systems, water and sewage, and support to climate adaptation efforts. In conclusion, the Maldives pledged for more innovative financing such as green bonds, blue bonds and blended finance.

6. São Tomé and Príncipe: Mr. Armindo Gonzaga Fernandes provided background information, including the general location of São Tomé and Príncipe off the west coast of Africa, sea territory, population size, GDP growth rate and GDP per capita. The representative indicated that following the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway in 2014, the Government developed a plan of action called Transformation Agenda Vision. In 2015, the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe organized an International Conference for Private Investors and Public Development Partners to seek assistance for its Transformation Agenda Vision (2015). The main points highlighted in this conference included the unparalleled geo-strategic location of the country, leverage of national assets and strengthening “food for the people”, fisheries and tourism, the possibility of developing São Tomé and Príncipe into a Hub for business in the Gulf of Guinea and the economic transformation and modernization of the country. São Tomé and Príncipe has an unspoilt beauty that it may capitalise for tourism, volcanic soil and climate conditions suitable for agriculture and abundant maritime territory conducive to fishing. Investment is needed to develop a deep-sea port and an international airport as well as infrastructure for provision of services (Logistics, Financial Services, Medicare, Entertainment, Education and ICT facilities). Mr. Fernandes highlighted other priority areas, including the establishment of transparent, efficient and attractive fiscal and taxation policies, and a predictable administration and legal environment. São Tomé and Príncipe seeks to: (1) become less dependent on public international aid, (2) play a more prominent role in the sub-regional economy through private sector participation in the transformation agenda, (3) develop public infrastructure and human resources capacity, (4) mobilise contribution of Public Development Partners, and (5) align every public-private partnership deals with the Transformation Agenda. He mentioned that some actions needed to address the challenges faced by São Tomé and Príncipe include: alleviating poverty; providing skills training and education for youth; upgrading the standard of health care; enhancing transparency, accountability and governance in public affairs; enhancing public safety, homeland security and coastal security; streamlining laws, legal system and judiciary processes; supporting infrastructures such as road, power supply, clean water,

sanitation and housing; keeping a sustainable development, environment protection and control of collateral damage from growth; strengthening the foundations of the economy: Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism that offer social impact; and seeking public sector assistance. São Tomé and Príncipe could witness some progress in the Adoption of National Biodiversity Strategy and Plan of Action (2015-2020) which includes: Purpose to diagnosis and identify appropriate measures for their protection (UNDP), the Adoption of National Programme of Action on Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation (WB), Technical Support to the National Climate Change Committee under the GCCA – Global Climate Change Alliance (EU), Children Education on Sanitation (UNICEF), Small Farmers Assistance (FAO) and Agriculture and Energy Sector (ADB).

7. Seychelles: Mr. Ronald Jumeau highlighted the role of Seychelles at COP21, in particular on issue of innovative financing to meet the financing status of high income countries. He added that Seychelles is currently in an era of strengthening constitutional consultations. He underscored the need to strengthen democratic foundations of the country. Seychelles is taking an integrated approach and not working in silos. Mr. Jumeau mentioned that the income gap is widening, which has challenging political implications. The country is also confronted with challenges related to capacity building and a shrinking workforce. Seychelles has a large debt though the country has reduced it in the last ten years. Since the economic and financial crisis, Seychelles has had a budgetary surplus every year and tourism has increased every single year. Mr. Jumeau indicated that they have solidified their position as a tuna fishing capital of the Indian Ocean and has protection of 15 per cent of their EEZ. He indicated that Seychelles is leveraging on public-private partnerships to address risks of investing in small economies. Seychelles is home to the second largest canning factory in the world, which is owned by multi-stakeholders and which has secured 30 million euros of investment for the next 2 to 3 years. Mr. Jumeau also highlighted the need for innovation and the ambition of his country to be the first country to define what a blue economy is about. In this context, he recalled the process that is under way to define the blue economy. The process entails, among other things, a first presentation with the World Bank earlier this year and one-year consultations with all stakeholders to come up with the pathway to the blue economy. Mr. Jumeau noted that face-to-face consultations were a process owned by everybody, especially the youth. He also underlined the importance of including the youth when building the future. He then discussed resource flows to Seychelles and indicated that the largest sources of these flows have been China and India and added that South-South cooperation has addressed issues related to investment in a different manner than OECD. Mr. Jumeau highlighted support that Seychelles received from the World Bank, which includes blue bonds. He also mentioned that the World Bank stopped its development assistance to Seychelles 13 years ago, as the country moved to the high-income country category but added that the Bank has now started supporting Seychelles in the area of sustainable practices. As a suggestion for the way forward, Mr. Jumeau proposed strengthened South-South cooperation and SIDS-SIDS cooperation and exchange of best practices. He highlighted the importance to replicate and take to scale what SIDS have been doing. He warned that there are instances when SIDS solve problems only to inadvertently create new ones. He called islands should help other islands to find island solutions to island challenges.

8. Singapore: Mr. Terence Tan, First Secretary (Political), expressed appreciation to the Government of Mauritius for hosting the AIMS Regional meeting. He indicated that, since 2014, Singapore has embarked in several national initiatives to integrate sustainability into national policies. He highlighted that Singapore is implementing the 2030 agenda and will undertake a voluntary national review this July. Mr Tan also mentioned that his country is implementing the Paris Agreement and will introduce a carbon tax by 2019. Mr. Tan highlighted that the national institutional set up for implementation of the SAMOA Pathway is an inter-ministerial committee on SDGs, which is co-chaired by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Environment and Water Resources. He underscored that the objective of the committee is to adopt a multi-

stakeholder and holistic overview of progress made, as well as a whole of government approach. The implementation of the SAMOA Pathway included a multi-agency effort, the engagement of external stakeholders and learning from other countries and international agencies. Mr. Tan mentioned that Singapore has achieved progress in securing access to affordable and high-quality potable water for all of its people, in ensuring accessible and quality education for children, and in delivering access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing. He highlighted that constraints and challenges faced by Singapore include coping with an aging population, keeping relevance in an age of disruptive technologies and optimising land use as competitive priorities grow. Mr. Tan underscored that implementation monitoring is the responsibility of an inter-agency reporting process that focuses both on qualitative and quantitative aspects of the SAMOA Pathway. Partnerships are implemented through the Singapore development programme and Singapore has incorporated multi-stakeholder feedback in policy-making cycles and has developed ground-up initiatives while including civil society partnerships, youth and the private sector in the process. Mr. Tan underlined that the SAMOA Pathway is integrated into national priorities, policies, and development plans with a vision of a clean, green and sustainable Singapore. However, he indicated challenges in meeting this endeavour. These challenges include: the need for tailored approach, the fact that some of the targets and indicators do not apply to Singapore's national context, or that there is a lack of appropriate data.

9. Mauritius: Mr. Rakesh Bhuckory, Minister Counsellor, began by acknowledging the many commonalities mentioned in the various national presentations. He highlighted that after the SDGs were adopted in 2015, Mauritius had a new government, a new vision and a new impetus. He recalled that the Government of Mauritius took the SDGs and matched them with the national aspirations of Mauritius. Over 2016, 60 per cent of the indicators (i.e. 130 indicators) were relevant to Mauritius. He highlighted that during this time, the statistics office of Mauritius started discussing with line ministries on how to do the mapping and subsequently, Mauritius came up with vision 2030, which is the framework through which the government implements the SDGs with the view to addressing unemployment, alleviating if not eradicating poverty, and supporting air connectivity and innovation. He highlighted that the process that led to the formulation of the vision 2030 was a participatory one, with NGOs, youth groups, the private sector and government bodies all involved. Mr. Bhuckory outlined Vision 2030, which has 5 pillars, and spoke about the vulnerability of Mauritius, its fuel dependency, and its environmental sensitivity. He emphasised that Mauritius is exposed to environmental hazards such as flash floods and thunderstorms. Mr. Bhuckory mentioned that Mauritius has a national programme with strong components for social programming and discussed the importance of social protection as a basic human right. He also highlighted that housing facilities and subsidies are provided for educating students with special needs.

Annex II – SAMOA Pathway priority areas and the SDGs

SAMOA Pathway priority areas	Sustainable Development Goals
Sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all Development models in small island developing States for the implementation of sustainable development and poverty eradication	SDG 1, 5, 8
Climate change	SDG 13
Sustainable energy	SDG 7
Disaster Risk Reduction	SDG 11
Oceans and seas	SDG 14
Food Security and Nutrition	SDG 2, 3
Water and Sanitation	SDG 6
Sustainable Transportation	SDG 9
Sustainable Consumption and Production	SDG 12
Management of chemicals and waste, including hazardous waste	SDG 6
Health and Non-Communicable Diseases	SDG 3
Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment	SDG 5
Social Development	SDG 1, 5, 10
Culture and Sport	SDG 4
Promoting peaceful societies and safe communities	SDG 16
Education	SDG 4
Biodiversity	SDG 15
Desertification, land degradation and drought	
Forests	
Partnerships	SDG 17
Financing	
Trade	
Capacity-building	
Technology	
Data and Statistics	
Institutional support for small island developing States	QCPR
Monitoring and accountability	Five-year Review Sep 2019

Annex III– Country Profiles

Country profile: Biodiversity, Desertification, Land degradation and drought and Forests

Cabo Verde

Biodiversity/ ecosystems

The islands can be characterized by four bio-geographical zones: arid, with herbaceous steppe vegetation (up to 200 m asl.); semi-arid where most subsistence farming takes place (200 and 400 m asl.); semi-humid, characterized more by tree and shrub species (400 to 600 m asl.); and wetland zone (over 700 m asl.), which is the most productive in terms of agriculture and livestock production. The wetland zone is considered of vital importance for the infiltration of rainwater and recharge groundwater, and has an average annual rainfall of 600 mm.

Protected areas

The archipelago's waters host one of the world's top ten coral reef biodiversity hotspots; globally important mating and calving sites for humpback whales; and important breeding and foraging grounds for five species of sea turtle. The protected area (PA) system is nascent in Cabo Verde with 46 PAs established since 2003. These cover 205.513,09 ha of the country, of which 73.381,42 ha is terrestrial (18,2% land) and 132.181,67 ha marine ha (5,7% territorial waters).

Land degradation/ droughts/ water scarcity

The country has poor natural resource including poor soil for agriculture. Only ten percent of the land is arable because rainfall accumulation is minimal and irregular, the terrain is rough with high wind erosion. Share of food production is low, nearly 82% of food is imported. In terms of food security, fish provides the population of Cabo Verde with their main source of animal protein. ³⁴The country is living in water scarcity, with less than 500m³/year of fresh water per capita to meet the country's needs in terms of human consumption, agriculture, industry, energy and environment. Cabo Verde experiences long periods of droughts, with underground and surface sources are insufficient to meet the demand. Currently, major cities of Praia and Mindelo as well as tourist destinations Sal, Maio and Boa Vista are using desalinated water for human consumption, which is already a rather controversial³⁵ and expensive measure to increase water availability. Forecasts for water demand show a steep increase in the upcoming years.

³⁴ Fishing has generated an increasing number of direct jobs (i.e. fishermen, fish saleswomen, sailors and factory operators) that grew from occupying 5% of the active population in 2012 (i.e. 5.000 people, of which roughly a quarter are women³⁴) to about 7,5% in 2014.

³⁵From an environmental point of view, given that water desalination consumes fossil fuels in large quantities and changes the water temperature on location.

There is practically no forest lands. High level of degraded natural forest depletion with alien species, reforestation, agriculture expansion.

Climate change

The country is presently facing several climate change issues including extreme weather events, such as torrential rains and tropical storms, prolonged droughts, increased temperature and out-of-season precipitations. Impacts of these events further aggravate other environmental challenges experienced by the country such as soil erosion, desertification, salt intrusion in underground aquifers and low-lying land; and coastal erosion. Additional anthropogenic pressures on the environment, such as: deforestation due to demand for wood used as fuel; overfishing and illegal capture of protected species; landscapes and water pollution due to unsustainable waste treatment, industrial, husbandry and agriculture practices or transport sector's operations; and predation of endangered species.

Energy

Cabo Verde's energy sector is strongly characterized by consumption of fossil fuels (derived oil—primarily imported oil), biomass (wood) and use of renewable energy particularly wind and solar power. The country's high dependence on petroleum products is increasing with the demand for electricity, which is growing by 8.1% per year.³⁶This represents a heavy burden on the national economy. The installed capacity increased from 82.3 MW in 2010 to 155.8 MW in 2013. The country's total energy matrix as of 2013 (figure 1) includes the installed capacity by technology as 76% by diesel (imported), 19 % by wind, 5% by solar³⁷.

The country has high renewable energy potential including solar energy, wind and biomass. The share of renewable in the energy mix has increased to 21% in 2012. The Government's National Energy Policy (2008) sets target to achieve 50% of its electricity through renewable sources by 2020. The country is now looking at an ambitious target of reaching 100% of its electricity from renewable³⁸. Similarly under the Barbados Declaration, 2012 the Government of Cabo Verde has also established a target to increase energy efficiency by 30% by 2020.

Tourism

Tourism has emerged as a dominant sector in economy of Cabo Verde over the past decade, and helped facilitate the economic graduation of the former Less Developed Country to a Lower Middle Income country³⁹. Between 90% and 99% of recent foreign direct investment has been directed toward the tourism industry, and the sector's contribution to the economy was 21% in 2011 (c. USD 2 billion). The annual number of tourists entering Cabo Verde grew from around 30.000 in 1995 to 539.621 in 2014: a seventeen-fold increase (see Figure 1).

The coastal ecology and biodiversity of Cabo Verde has already been seriously affected by the rapid growth of the tourism sector, with a dramatic expansion of ribbon development of extensive resorts and limited control of nature-based excursions. Tourism on the islands is constrained due to scarce physical infrastructure and utilities, limited product diversification, weak strategy and regulations, insufficiently trained human resources, and limited economic

³⁶ Cape Verde: Country Strategy paper (2014-19)

³⁷IRENA Project Navigator Workshop- The current situation of RE- status and challenges – ELECTRA – Cabo Verde

³⁸ Cabo Verde: Country strategy paper 2014-18

³⁹ World Bank (2014) Doing business 2015: Going beyond Efficiency. Economy profiled 2015. Cabo Verde, 12th Edition, World Bank, Washington DC

linkages through employment or procurement. The rapid growth of the sector, and a target to increase visitation to 1 million international arrivals by 2020, poses significant potential threats for the biological integrity of the coastal zone.

Mauritius

Biodiversity

In spite of its recognised global and national significance, Mauritius' coastal and marine biodiversity has had limited protection. The main threats to the marine environment were as follows: over fishing, destructive fishing, and habitat degradation from poorly planned construction and infrastructural development in the coastal zone. The impacts include loss of biodiversity, depletion of target species, changes in species assemblages, coral damage, sedimentation and pollution.

Protected Areas

There are two Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) in the Republic of Mauritius. Blue Bay (353 ha) and Balaclava (485 ha) were established in 1997, under the Wildlife and National Park Act 1994 and reproclaimed in July 2000 under the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 1998. There are no MPA's on Rodrigues but five fishing reserves have been established, including an area, the Port-Sud-Est pass.

Mauritius has a terrestrial protected area network on the mainland, and associated offshore islets, comprising 20 formal state protected areas (8027ha). This is supplemented by a number of different types of less secure conservation areas (7,168ha), under varying levels of protection. The island has eleven **formal** state protected areas - one *National Park*, seven *Nature Reserves*, three *Forest Reserves* and one *Bird Sanctuary* - covering a total area of 7,292ha. The offshore islets of the island of Mauritius have 9 formal state protected areas - 1 *National Park*, seven *Nature Reserves* and one *Ancient Monument* - covering a total area of 735ha (see Table 4 and figure 4 below).

Forest /land degradation

Terrestrial biodiversity is forest-dependent. However, much of the extant forest has been lost: land clearance and forest degradation has already impacted more than 90% of Mauritius Island's land surface. Today 18.2%—or about 37,000 hectares—of Mauritius is forested. Of this, none is classified as primary forest. Mauritius lost 5.1% of its forest cover, or around 2,000 hectares between 1990 and 2005, and nearly 10% of its natural vegetative cover. Most of the useable land on the island of Mauritius has been put to production use.

Marine biodiversity is in a better condition, but is also threatened. Extensive reef systems surround all of the islands of the archipelago. Rodrigues, in particular, harbours a large reef expanse, three times the size of the island. In spite of the extensive degradation and transformation that has occurred in many areas, coastal ecosystems and adjacent landscapes still maintain their basic ecological functions. The coastal strip provides prime land for habitation, recreation and tourism, while seascapes provide the basis of food provision through fisheries and also the country's main touristic attraction—beaches, nautical sports and related activities. Lagoon habitats are especially important in this regard. They contribute to the overall productivity of coastal waters by supporting a variety of habitats, including salt marshes, seagrasses, and mangroves.

Economy

As outlined in the Mauritius Government Programmeme 2015-2019⁴⁰, there is now a commitment to making the “ocean economy”⁴¹ a key industry to sustain economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation. This reflects the identification by the Small Islands Development States (SIDS) of the “blue economy” as a tool for sustainable development, and the adoption of this concept by the African Union⁴² as a major component of the African continent’s development blue-print for the next 50 years. Along with other countries in the region such as Seychelles and South Africa, the RM considers that marine-based economic activities such as fisheries, marine transport and potentially offshore mineral exploration are crucial to growth.

At present, the principal sectors in the RM are: manufacturing (16.5%), wholesale & retail trade (12.5%), financial and insurance activities (10.3%), public administration and defence/compulsory social security (6.6%), accommodation and food service activities, including tourism (6.3%), transportation and storage (5.8%) and real estate activities (5.5%). Descriptions of the sectors of particular relevance to marine and coastal biodiversity are given below in relation to the RM as a whole. A description of the economy of Rodrigues, which is very different from that of the main island, is given separately.

Tourism

Tourism now contributes around 11% of total GDP (total revenue from the sector represents more than 30% of foreign earnings⁴³), and tourism gross earnings have increased over the last decade to reach USD 1,595 million in 2013⁴⁴.

The industry is concentrated along the coastline in both Mauritius and Rodrigues. In Mauritius, of the total 115 hotels in 2015, over 90% are on the coast with the greatest concentration in the coastal Districts of Pamplemousses, Flacq, Black River and Riviere du Rempart).

Most tourism expenditure is captured by large hotels, rather than smaller business.

Comoros

Biodiversity

As an archipelago of small volcanic islands, the Comorian Union does not have a high level of species diversity, however, **it is home to a large number of endemic species**. The rich waters of the Western Indian Ocean boasts some of the world’s most vibrant coastal cultures and biodiversity including coral reefs, globally important populations of whales, sea turtles, sharks, dolphins, and highly productive fisheries.

⁴⁰ <http://www.lexpress.mu/sites/lexpress/files/attachments/article/2015/2015-01/2015-01-27/govprog2015.pdf>

⁴¹ Prime Minister’s Office 2013. The Ocean Economy – A Road map for Mauritius. Government of Mauritius

⁴² 22nd Ordinary Session of the African Union, Addis Ababa, 2014. <http://www.afdb.org/en/annual-meetings-2014/programmeme/maximizing-africa%E2%80%99s-blue-economies/>

⁴³ WB Data.

⁴⁴ I.e. almost \$1.6 billion. WB Indicators. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.RCPT.CD>

Moheli is the smallest island of the Comorian Union, a nation in the Mozambique Channel. It's one of the poorest countries in the world, with about 38,000 inhabitants who rely on its diverse natural resources: the lagoon hosts dugongs, turtles and dolphins and along the sandy beaches, large fruit bats fly from one coconut palm tree to another. The island is on the 'tentative list' for nomination as a World Heritage site. Moheli island seems to be an ideal place for the development of sustainable tourism that would help support local communities.

The Comoro Islands form part of Madagascar's biodiversity 'hotspot', which include the other islands in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues and Seychelles). This area is considered to be one of the five 'hottest' biodiversity spots in the world due to the large number of endemic species⁴⁵.

Overfishing, overdevelopment, pollution, environmental degradation and climate change are seriously threatening the natural resources that fuel the region's economic activity.

Marine protected areas

In the Comoros island of Moheli, a National Marine Park, was established in April 2001. This is a sanctuary for many species and ecosystems representative at the regional and international levels. This is the first nesting site in the archipelago for the green turtle, an important breeding area for humpback whales and a refuge for the conservation of dugongs. The Marine Park of Moheli (PMM) is adjacent to the watershed of Mount Mledjelé where is located the nest of the largest bats in the world, endemic of the Comoros (*Pteropus livingstonni*) and many regional endemic bird species.

Land degradation

Comorian soils, of volcanic origin, are generally rich but in continuous degradation and very sensitive to erosion, especially from unsustainable agriculture practices (State of the environment in the Comoros, 1993). Soil degradation and erosion results from crop cultivation on slopes without proper terracing; and deforestation. In Greater Comoros and Moheli, the proportion of cultivated land to potential is 70%. It amounts to 80-90% for Anjouan (FAO / WB, 2013). And in the whole country, only 43% of arable land is arable and 30% is occupied by permanent crops. And every year the agricultural land decreases either because of the degradation of the grounds, or for the benefit of the urbanization (FAO, 2007). These data indicate that the Comoros are likely to know in the future serious problems of resources in water and agricultural land, if no major action is taken to remedy the situation.

Forests

Comoros is one of the world's poorest countries with few natural resources and a high population growth rate. Islanders are dependent on forest lands for subsistence cultivation and fuelwood. Since the close of the 1990s, deforestation rates have more than doubled, while the country lost 58 percent of its forest cover between 1990 and 2005. Today 2.9% —or about 5,000 hectares—of Comoros is forested. Of this, none is classified as primary forest. Between 1990 and 2000, Comoros lost an average of 400 hectares of forest per year. The amounts to an average annual deforestation rate of 3.33%. In total, between 1990 and 2005, Comoros lost 58.3% of its forest cover, or around 7,000 hectares (FAO 2010). Currently, 24 percent of the land area of Comoros is under some form of protection.

Natural Hazards

⁴⁵ <https://daharicomores.org/en/portfolio-view/la-biodiversite-des-comores/>

The country is subject to natural hazards such as seasonal cyclones during rainy season (December to April); and volcanic activity on Grand Comore *volcanism*: Karthala (2,361 m) on Grand Comore Island last erupted in 2007; a 2005 eruption forced thousands of people to be evacuated and produced a large ash clouds.

São Tomé and Príncipe

Biodiversity/Ecosystems services

São Tomé and Príncipe's ecosystems are rich and diverse and capable of providing multiple services and resources but they are also being significantly degraded. Six broad ecosystem and land use categories (encompassing terrestrial and aquatic habitats) exist: (i) Cloud & montane forests, (ii) Lowlands forests, (iii) Secondary forests, (iv) Shade forests, (v) Savana & dry forest, (vi) Mangrove.

Ecosystem functions, especially water resources regulation, are threatened across the country due to land conversion for agriculture, forests degradation, over-exploitation of wildlife and other natural resources, erosion and bushfires, exacerbated by climate change and droughts. The country's water resources are highly vulnerable to climate change, and water flows in the watersheds depend on a sustainable forest cover and on proper agricultural practices.

Forested area currently is 55% (2015) of land surface (FAO- WB DATA 2018).

Forests/land degradation

40% of the country is natural forest, called "Ôbô". The Ôbo Natural Park covers 29,500 ha. 21% of the country is secondary forest, called "Capoeira". These lands are abandoned cocoa and coffee plantations. 29% of the country is shade forest. These are productive lands (cacao and coffee) under trees cover Growing crops in these sloping lands, without application of measures against erosion, lead to soil degradation. Poorly managed shifting agriculture and the absence of forests management plan degrade soils and ecosystems. Lands under agriculture area represent 51% of the country. Major pressures on the ecosystems are driven by demand for wood and for charcoal as a domestic fuel in the capital, and by illegal trees cutting. The forest degradation rate at the national level shows that some forests in STP (a sample of about 46,000 ha outside the protected areas) are threatened by degradation⁴⁶. Soil erosion and loss is amongst the most serious environmental problem threatening the fragile ecological balance of the country.

⁴⁶ PPG PRODOC

50% of the population still doesn't have access to a modern source of energy. Firewood and charcoal remains the main source of energy (in addition to oil lamp used by households). The firewood consumption, after a decrease in the 80's (108,500 tons per year), has had been growing up to 136,600 tons per year since 2000. These trends show the growing needs of biomass for energy, as well as the need for renewable energy development.

Guinea Bissau

Biodiversity

Guinea-Bissau possesses one of the richest fishery resources in West Africa. A haven for hundreds of species of birds, fish, and mammals, Guinea-Bissau's Bijagós Archipelago is a collection of 88 islands that guard the country's capital Bissau. Local populations practice subsistence rice farming, fishing, and gathering of palm fruits and cashew nuts. Possessing an incredibly diverse set of eco-systems ranging from dense tropical forests to mangrove swamps, Guinea-Bissau has become increasingly more conscious of the value of its natural wealth, investing substantially in conservation to the extent that approximately 26.3% of its national territory is protected.

Protected Areas

A UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, the archipelago contains both national protected areas (Orango, João Vieira-Poilão) and community reserves (Urok). The national parks of Boé and Dulombi on the country's mainland, close to the border with Senegal and Guinea, were set up to protect a representative sample of key habitats. These parks now offer protection for lions, panthers, chimpanzees or elephants. Comprising of a Ramsar site, called Wendu Tcham, that is home to major waterbird populations, in addition to three (3) wildlife corridors, the Boé National Park ensures connectivity between the two parks and with the Lagoas de Cufada Natural Park and the Cantanhez National Park. The national protected areas system now covers 26.3% of the national territory, representing 12.4% of marine protected areas and 13.9% of terrestrial protected areas⁴⁷.

Natural resource/Land degradation

The context of poverty and weak economy translates into an increased pressure on natural resources resulting in their degradation. Guinea-Bissau climate variability phenomena, biodiversity loss, desertification and land degradation constitute a real threat to all vital sectors of the national economy.

Further complicating environmental threats is the low-lying nature of Guinea-Bissau's coastal zones, and the existence of many ecosystems that are based on a delicate balance of salt and freshwater. Expected changes to sea-level, temperature, and acidification will have major negative impacts. The primary drivers of the climate vulnerability of the coastal areas and communities are physical exposure, dependence on agriculture and fishing as main livelihood options, and poor governance⁴⁸. Sea-level rise exposes the population to risks of flooding and coastal erosion, which can potentially lead to the disappearance of beaches, vegetation, roads and touristic infrastructure, schools, homes, entire villages, in addition to important active biodiversity reserves on which the local economy

⁴⁷ <http://www.prcmarine.org/en/guinea-bissau-protected-areas-coverage-15-263>

⁴⁸ Prodoc PIMS 5737

is based (Republic of Guinea-Bissau, 2015). The majority of the Bissau-Guinean population directly depends on the exploitation of natural resources for their survival. The agriculture, forestry and, in particular, fisheries, are the basis for economic development of the country.

Guinea-Bissau marine and estuarine waters are known to be among the richest on the West African coast in terms of diversity, productivity and food potential. They are essential for the survival of several globally endangered or threatened species, migratory birds, and for species that are economically important. Practices such as intensive farming and fishing accelerate the natural resource and land degradation, which in turn threatens the loss of biodiversity.

Maldives

Biodiversity/ecosystems

Maldives, officially the Republic of Maldives, is an island nation consisting of a group of atolls in the Indian Ocean with a total of 1192 islands in a chain of 26 geographic atolls. Islands vary in size from 0.5 km² to around 5.0 km² and in shape from small sandbanks with sparse vegetation to elongated strip islands. All islands are very low lying and none exceeds an elevation of 3 m above mean sea level. More than 80% of the land area is less than 1 m above mean sea level. The total land area (covering all islands) is currently indicated to be in the order of 300 km² (30,000 ha). Of the 1192 islands, 199 are inhabited. The remaining 993 islands are “uninhabited,” of which 87 have been developed as tourist resorts, 47 as industrial islands and 32 as agricultural islands.

Island ecosystems are environmentally vulnerable. Land encroachment and groundwater depletion can impede sustainable economic and social development. Population concentration is a major threat, particularly on the Island of Male where about 151,769 persons (equivalent to 50 % of the total population) resides. This has increased the demand for housing, resulting in shortage of land for other uses. Expansion of housing and intensification of land use has led to over extraction of groundwater and contamination of aquifers. The demand for housing is also increasing on other island. Some 24 inhabited islands do not have adequate land to provide decent shelter for their populations.

All islands show the typical geohydrological sea island feature of a fresh water lens floating on deeper saline groundwater. The fresh water lens is periodically replenished by rainfall recharge and depleted by local groundwater use for household, irrigation and industrial water, groundwater uptake by vegetation and lateral outflow to the sea. Most houses have roof systems to collect rain water for cooking and drinking. The ground water table is present at depths of only twenty to fifty centimeters in most locations.

Climate change

Climate risks regularly include extreme weather events such as windstorms, heavy rainfall, extreme temperatures and draught, sea swells and storm surges, with the northern Atoll more exposed to cyclones than the south. Of these, the intensive risks associated with swell waves, heavy rainfall and windstorms can

be especially problematic, due to their high frequency and great potential for physical destruction and erosion. The combined effect of storm surges and tides, or storm tides, are perceived as especially destructive by tourism resorts. However, there is considerable variation in hazard patterns across the archipelago and even between islands in the same atoll, due to local variation in geophysical and climatic factors (MHAHE 2001; MEEW 2007; UNDP 2006 & 2007).

Equally critical with regards to climate risk resilience, are the effects of global warming on soil and water quality. Groundwater is a scarce resource in the Maldives, due to the hydrogeology of the country. Many freshwater aquifers are already stressed from over-extraction and face the risk of total depletion if dry periods extend. This already precarious hydrological system is further aggravated by climate change-induced effects of sea level rise and flooding during extreme weather events, which increases saltwater intrusion into the freshwater lens. Salinization of groundwater is therefore affecting the quality of life and vegetation on many islands.

Natural Hazards

Two monsoon seasons dominate the climatic regime; these are the high rainfall SW monsoon and the somewhat drier NE monsoon which prevail from May/June till September and from October/November till February, respectively.

Forest

Quantitative information concerning forest is very scarce. Typically on an inhabited island the habitation with scattered shade trees is located in the middle of the island, coconut groves surround the habitation and the outer perimeter of the island consists of littoral forest. Many islands, particularly the larger ones, have an area of natural forest of mixed species in the interior. There are varying estimates on the total forest area. FAO statistics show an area of 1000 ha without making a distinction between natural forest and man-made forest. In its October 2005 draft *of the Master Plan for Sustainable Food Security, Agriculture and Regional Development* FAO shows an estimated 3716 ha of jungle/forest on 86 islands.

Tourism

Tourism is the mainstay of the Maldives economy, with direct contributions of 30% and indirect contributions of 40% to annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The tourism sector accounts for over 60% of foreign currency earnings and provides direct employment for over 22,000 people working in 87 resorts. The sector also provides substantive indirect employment and a range of opportunities in the fields of transport, communications, agriculture, fisheries, construction and manufacturing, and maintains critical economic linkages with remote and highly dispersed inhabited islands. The tourism industry directly

and indirectly accounts for a high portion of government revenues.⁴⁹ Due to water scarcity and the impacts of climate change, tourism resorts are required to expand their natural water supply with desalination technology to meet their needs.

Seychelles

Biodiversity/Ecosystems

The biodiversity of Seychelles is especially vulnerable to environmental variation associated with global warming and ocean acidification – both traced to the increase in atmospheric CO₂. During the first half of 1998, the coral reefs of the inner granitic islands of the Seychelles were affected by the worst mass coral bleaching event in the Indo-Pacific region to date, caused by a mass of warm water spreading over the entire Indian Ocean. Coral mortality due to bleaching was on average 85-90%. (SEYMEMP, Final Report), although the Outer Islands were less affected⁵⁰.

Protected Areas

Seychelles has a system of 21 formal protected areas covering a total area of 54,813 ha, of which 24,978 ha (~5.5% of the total landmass) is terrestrial and 29,836 ha (<0.0001% of the EEZ) marine. The Aldabra Special Reserve currently represents some 80% of the total extent of the Protected Area System (PAS).

Deforestation/ Land degradation

Historical records indicate that much of the islands were originally covered by dense forests, supporting large populations of birds and reptiles. The physical development of the islands has contributed to the incremental loss and fragmentation of these terrestrial habitats over more than 200 years of human habitation. Coastal vegetation (up to 100 m above sea level) has been heavily altered by human settlement activities, and much of it was converted to coconut plantations in the 1800s and early 1900s. The lowland forests, originally covering most of the granitic islands up to about 200 m, were almost completely cleared for timber, fuel and the production of cinnamon⁵¹. The intermediate-altitude forests, ranging from 200 to 500m, once the richest in terms of endemic taxa, have now been extensively altered (except for the glacia areas).

The remaining land area suitable for development is limited. A significant proportion of the lower elevations of the main granitic islands of Mahé, Praslin and la Digue is now urbanised. The pressure for further residential development is strongest on the lower part of the mountains (up to around 200m high along the main roads crossing the main islands of Mahé and Praslin) and the coastal areas. The scarcity of land suitable for development has also prompted the

⁴⁹ PRODOC PIMS 4396

⁵⁰ Although Cosmoledo atoll was an exception

⁵¹ Cinnamon has subsequently become the most common IAS in the forests of Mahé and Praslin.

reclamation of some nearly 600 hectares of sea in the vicinity of Victoria and the east coast of Mahé. These reclamations have now interrupted what was one of the largest continuous stretches of fringing reef (27 km) along the east coast of Mahé.

Tourism

While the actual impacts of tourism development are largely unquantified, it is the cumulative impact of this rapidly growing sector that is considered to pose threats to biodiversity. Impacts from tourism can be grouped under two categories: the impacts associated with the construction or physical development of new infrastructure, and impacts associated with ongoing tourism operations.

Seychelles is typical of remote islands in the susceptibility of its terrestrial biodiversity to invasive alien species (IAS). Alien plant species now comprise 57 percent of the total terrestrial flora of the Seychelles, and this percentage is likely to increase with time. Both of flora and fauna.

In the marine environment, poaching (even within established PAs, especially the 6 Marine National Parks around the granitic islands) is an important problem for species such as turtles and sea cucumbers, while sharks, large groupers and other fish have been greatly diminished by overfishing in the artisanal fishing grounds. Demersal and reef resources targeted by line and trap fisheries are locally over-exploited, especially around the granitic islands