

**REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES OF THE ATLANTIC INDIAN
OCEAN, MEDITERRANEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEAS (AIMS)
17-19th JULY 2013 MAHE, SEYCHELLES**

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/207, outlining the modalities of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be convened in Samoa in 2014, the AIMS regional preparatory meeting was held in Seychelles from 17 - 19 July 2013.
2. The objectives of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were defined as:
 - a. Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (MSI) building on, *inter alia*, existing reports and relevant processes;
 - b. Seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to effectively address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the BPOA and MSI, *inter alia*, through mobilization of resources and assistance for small island developing States;
 - c. Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS and ways and means to address them including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships between small island developing States and the international community;
 - d. Identify priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.
3. The meeting was officially opened by the President of the Seychelles his Excellency Mr. James Alix Michel. In his opening address, Mr. Michel highlighted the need for concrete platform for action for sustainable development and noted constraints that must be brought to the Samoa Conference. He asked that SIDS receive a fair deal at the international level and reiterated the need to focus on climate change and the blue economy. He called for island states to develop governance structures to maximize their oceanic resources within the concept of the blue economy. Most SIDS face economic challenges characterized by high debt to GDP ratio and overdependence on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In the face of limited resources SIDS are increasingly forced to fund climate change-related disaster recovery programmes. He noted SIDS dependency on fossil fuel and that the high cost of fuel encourages investment in renewable energy. Finally he recalled the recommendations of the youth conference held in Seychelles

from 11 to 16 July 2013, which called for a “youth initiative” to galvanise youth actions across the region towards sustainable development.

4. Mr. Wu Hongbo, UNDESA Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the Third International Conference for SIDS, pledged the support of the UN for the SIDS agenda and noted the many achievements of SIDS in the AIMS region.
5. In her statement, Ambassador Marlene Moses, Chairperson of the AOSIS, stated the need to be practical and encouraged the AIMS meeting to provide a clear roadmap for concrete actions.
6. Seychelles, as the host country, was elected as the chair of the meeting by acclamation. Cape Verde was elected Rapporteur to the meeting. Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles were elected as members of the Drafting Committee.

II. PROGRESS TO DATE AND REMAINING GAPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

7. Member States of the AIMS region reaffirmed the commitment to the principles and priorities of the BPOA, MSI, chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), and “The Future We Want,” the outcome document of the Rio + 20 Conference.
8. Member States of the AIMS region recalled that the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS have been acknowledged by the international community since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.
9. AIMS SIDS have made significant efforts at the national level to implement the BPOA and MSI. AIMS SIDS have become party to a number of important Conventions, developed national sustainable development plans and strategies, and strengthened institutions to address priority areas. In spite of these efforts, the last 20 years have shown that progress in the implementation of the BPOA/MSI has not been entirely successful, due primarily to a lack of financial resources. AIMS SIDS continue to suffer from, *inter alia*, food insecurity, lack of appropriate sanitation infrastructure, inadequate waste management, lack of adequate transport networks and dependence on carbon-based energy sources. In particular, access to fresh water remains a serious challenge for SIDS, and this issue is compounded by climate change, salt water intrusion, land degradation, soil erosion and deforestation.
10. The international community is urged to give adequate attention to and ensure a “smooth transition” for AIMS SIDS that have recently graduated from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. All but one of the countries that have graduated from LDC status have been SIDS, and once they graduate and lose their access to concessionary financing, commercial loans become their only option as they seek to diversify and strengthen their economies. As a result, many have fallen heavily into debt. Action should be taken, urgently, to extend the transition period until the economic vulnerability of the country has been adequately addressed.

11. The absence of a definition of “SIDS” is a fundamental reason for which countries in that grouping are not able to gain special treatment with development organizations and donor countries. Considering the exceptional economic disadvantage faced by most SIDS as a result of their permanent handicaps, the notion of special treatment by virtue of SIDS status is important for SIDS in the multilateral trading system and the area of development financing.
12. For many years, SIDS have called for an alternative to GDP per capita, for measures that take into account the full picture of SIDS vulnerability and resilience in the context of economic development and climate change. Though tools have been developed, they have yet to be accepted as monitoring and assessment measures by SIDS decision makers and their development partners and financial institutions.
13. AIMS SIDS noted the gap in enabling environments at the regional and national levels, with inadequate integration of the BPOA and MSI into national plans and strategies, lack of an AIMS regional coordination mechanism, and a severe lack of monitoring and evaluation capacity.
14. Sustainable development of AIMS SIDS has also suffered from severe deficits in the international enabling environment. UN system support has not been adequately strengthened or coordinated, and international financial mechanisms have failed to fully recognize and account for SIDS vulnerabilities. As a result, SIDS have not been able to access the financing for development that they need and some have been “penalized for their success.”
15. AIMS SIDS asserted that without peace and security, no sustainable development is possible. For many member States in the region, international organized crime, drug trafficking, piracy and political instability have hobbled development and exacerbated the gaps across all sectors.

III. PRACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC ACTION FOR FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION

16. The meeting agreed unanimously that far more must be done; indeed, many called for a paradigm shift in the approach to SIDS sustainable development. While the meeting acknowledged that each country will require its own unique tools to accelerate implementation, there are certain approaches that prove useful across the region. The meeting emphasized the concept of **solidarity**—within the region, among the UN and regional entities, with SIDS from all regions—as a necessary prerequisite to implementation.
17. **Blue Economy:** SIDS are custodians of vast expanses of oceans and as such they must have ownership of strategies concerning the sustainable development of oceans. Fisheries, coastal tourism, possible exploitation of seabed resources, potential sources of renewable energy: these are the building blocks of a blue or ocean-based economy. By emphasizing the economic power of the ocean, AIMS SIDS as large ocean states can seize their competitive advantage and carve a niche in the global economy.

18. Noting the leadership of Seychelles with respect to the blue economy, the AIMS SIDS, together with partners present, agreed that a conference on the blue economy before the Samoa conference would contribute toward its conceptualization and promotion. AIMS SIDS also welcomed the support being provided by the United Arab Emirates to host the conference during the Abu Dhabi sustainability week in January 2014. AIMS countries encouraged the Pacific and Caribbean regions to participate actively in the process. The AIMS region further called for the setting up of a dedicated regional oceanographic center, the development of land-based ocean industry including the generation of renewable energy, and the elimination of subsidies supporting IUU and unsustainable fishing activities.
19. **Financing mechanisms and trade instruments:** SIDS reiterated the need to have access to adequate financing to implement their development agenda. In this regard there is a need for capacity building for negotiating trade and partnership agreements and navigating the complex requirements for accessing certain funds. AIMS SIDS called for simpler, more flexible and favorable access to funds. Whilst AIMS SIDS should take advantage of existing financial mechanisms, new and additional sources are also required. Priority areas include climate change, energy, coastal protection, waste management, food security and water and sanitation. The AIMS SIDS urge all development partners that have made pledges to fulfill their commitments.
20. Given the vulnerability of SIDS and their disadvantage with regard to traditional markets, trade policy is instrumental in the developing and strengthening of SIDS resilience. AIMS SIDS urge UNCTAD to further develop ways and means to promote movement of SIDS goods, capital and professional services and preferential access to key markets with flexible rules of origin. The impact of Non Tariff Measures (NTMs) and Non Tariff Barriers (NTBs) on SIDS should be effectively addressed.
21. **Regional collaboration and institutional arrangements:** While the other regional SIDS groupings of the Pacific and the Caribbean have coordinating bodies and an institutional set-up to facilitate their respective regional interactions, AIMS SIDS reiterated the coordinating role being played by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and called on UN agencies to collaborate with the IOC in the implementation of BPOA and MSI.
22. An AIMS regional mechanism could ease the process by which SIDS in the region access financing and technology transfer and capacity building. In addition, with such a range of levels of development within the AIMS region, a regional coordination mechanism could facilitate potentially transformative SIDS-SIDS partnerships. The three key concepts that came out of the Rio +20 conference were *integration, coherence and engagement*, and a regional coordination mechanism would allow AIMS SIDS to accomplish all three.
23. Taking into account that all AIMS countries in the Atlantic are lusophone, arrangements for Portuguese translation in AIMS SIDS meetings is of great importance.
24. AIMS SIDS recommended that UN entities need to build institutionalized support to SIDS into their programs and undertake activities that are responsive to the needs of SIDS—as articulated by the SIDS themselves. In this regard, AIMS SIDS called on the UN secretariat to enhance the human and financial resources currently available to the

SIDS Unit in UNDESA. At the regional level, AIMS SIDS called on the UN organisations already established in the region to make concerted efforts to institutionalize their support to SIDS.

25. **Partnerships:** AIMS SIDS have successfully mobilized partnerships of all types, especially SIDS-SIDS partnerships, to advance their sustainable development, and they call for their continued strengthening and expansion. The Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) is advancing conservation efforts for island biodiversity, SIDS-DOCK is promoting sustainable energy across all SIDS regions, and the Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge is championing innovative regional approaches to climate change adaptation. AIMS SIDS called for greater engagement with and support for SIDS-DOCK and active mobilization of additional adequate funding for implementation of renewable energy initiatives in SIDS. AIMS SIDS recognized that the University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS) has an important role to play in capacity building, innovation and technology that meets the specific needs of SIDS, and adequate resources need to be mobilized by relevant UN agencies.

IV. NEW AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

26. SIDS as large ocean states have opportunities to **develop their economy** by investing in capacity and infrastructures to further benefit from their oceanic resources. AIMS SIDS stressed the importance of the sustainable use of oceans and strengthening ocean governance for sustainability of the oceans. In particular, reversing decreasing fish stocks will address food security, and conserving coastal and marine ecosystems will be important for maintaining carbon sinks. AIMS SIDS call on partners to provide adequate assistance to enable the SIDS fishing and related industries to benefit from a greater share of the total catch and value in particular for highly migratory species.
27. **Climate change induced ocean acidification, natural disasters and extreme weather events** continue to set back human and economic development in SIDS and affect national security in and around SIDS regions. AIMS SIDS expressed deep disappointment at the non-replenishment of the Climate Adaptation Fund and called on the development partners to address as a matter of priority its recapitalization. They equally called for the early fulfillment of pledges made in respect of the Green Climate Fund. The AIMS SIDS urged the UNFCCC to finalize the international mechanism on Loss and Damage at COP 19. AIMS SIDS also called for the elaboration of a SIDS strategy for disaster risk reduction to enhance their capacity to address disasters.
28. AIMS SIDS remain vulnerable to international organized crimes such as drug and human trafficking, trade in counterfeit goods, and piracy, which increasingly threatens national and regional **peace and security** and progress toward sustainable development. The meeting called for support and international partnership to strengthen SIDS capacity to address these threats.
29. Population growth and urbanization in SIDS are putting additional pressures on infrastructure needs such as freshwater, sanitation, and housing. The meeting renewed the call for access to funding and technology, and exchange of experiences and best practices, including through SIDS-SIDS collaboration.

30. AIMS SIDS recognized the complexity arising from the **increasing international mobility of labor**, which in turn creates difficulties of unemployment and underemployment in SIDS, but also opportunities for economic development. AIMS SIDS took note of the outcome of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and recommended that human resource management of SIDS be strengthened, including through the elaboration of appropriate frameworks for labor mobility.
31. SIDS faces great challenges in **managing chemical and hazardous waste** including electronic waste. The meeting called for the establishment of technical cooperation programmes to enable the creation and the strengthening of regional mechanisms for the management of hazardous waste as well as ship-generated waste. The meeting also called for sustained financing for national waste management programmes, and for the further strengthening and expanded geographic coverage of oil spill contingency plans. The meeting further called for increased investment and cooperation in developing integrated waste management and technologies.
32. Access to affordable, clean energy is a crucial component of sustainable development and poverty alleviation in SIDS. The meeting called for continued diversification of energy sources, enhanced technology sharing and promotion of renewable energies that are readily adaptable to SIDS. In order to facilitate implementation, the meeting further called on relevant partners to provide resources to create enabling environments in SIDS. The meeting encouraged the strengthening of the work of IRENA in facilitating and supporting renewable energy efforts in SIDS.
33. SIDS are being increasingly impacted by issues which are **transboundary** in nature such as air pollution, haze due to unregulated burning of forests, and marine litter. The meeting called for regional cooperation and agreements to address this issue.
34. In the health sector, AIMS SIDS recognized that apart from HIV/AIDS, there is growing concern regarding **non-communicable disease (NCDs)** arising from changes of lifestyle as well as sporadic outbreaks of communicable diseases. AIMS SIDS called for increased capacity for a strengthened health system for the provision of universal equitable coverage. The meeting also recognized the role of regional cooperation in timely responses to these emerging health issues.
35. SIDS, being food net-importing countries, are exceptionally vulnerable to availability and price of food, which is a function of their remoteness and small size. Furthermore, climate change is impacting SIDS own ability to produce food products. The meeting urged support for the development and production of climate resistant food varieties, technologies for improving productivity and capacity-building. The meeting further emphasized the need for support in the development and implementation of SIDS-specific national and regional food security and nutrition strategies. The meeting called on large, food-producing countries to refrain from applying export restrictions on staple food products. AIMS SIDS also called for an insurance scheme to cater for food shortages resulting from natural disasters.

V. REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS (POST 2015)

36. AIMS SIDS recognized the importance of the Samoa Conference in ensuring the inclusion of SIDS priorities in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.
37. AIMS SIDS called for the strengthening of national governance mechanisms to promote long term planning, with sustainable development mainstreamed into national development. For AIMS SIDS, sustainable development rests on the foundation of a number of key regional priorities, which should be integrated as appropriate into the post-2015 development agenda.
38. **Oceans:** The oceans are the source of life, livelihood, and identity for the people of the AIMS region, and as such, AIMS SIDS assert that oceans should be given a prominent place in the post-2015 development agenda, with a dedicated sustainable development goal on oceans and support for the blue economy mainstreamed into the development agenda as a whole.
39. **Sustainable Energy for All:** AIMS SIDS join many across the developed and developing world calling for aggressive and innovative efforts to promote renewable energy. Wind, solar, and ocean thermal energy conversion should all be pursued, and their promotion should be integrated in the SDGs and post-2015 agenda. Support should be provided to enhance regional and SIDS-SIDS cooperation for research and technological development on SIDS appropriate renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. Such cooperation should include, *inter alia*, the setting up of a financing mechanism for the implementation of Renewable Energy (RE) projects, exchange of best practices, access to efficient technologies, harmonization of standards, smart grid technology development and internationally recognized regulatory frameworks for renewable energy.
40. **Strengthening of human capital in SIDS:** SIDS people are the greatest natural resource of SIDS, and the populations must be educated and opportunities created to allow them to reach their full potential. SIDS and the international community alike must invest in programs to develop the human capacity of SIDS, to build the resilience of SIDS societies and economies.
41. **Networking for optimal use of resources:** AIMS SIDS recognize the imperative for the efficient and effective management of natural resources—water, land, biodiversity—and call for advancement of sustainable consumption and production patterns by the international community and the SIDS themselves. Best practices exist within AIMS SIDS that should be shared and that could inform the discussion of resource management in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.
42. **Vulnerability and Resilience:** AIMS SIDS called for the elaboration of appropriate indices that better reflect the vulnerability of SIDS and guide them to adopt more informed policies and strategies for building and sustaining long-term resilience. In that respect, all aspects outlined in the BPOA and MSI should be taken into account in formulating these indices. Resilience building should be one of the standing goals of the post-2015 development agenda.

43. **Climate change:** Climate change will continue to be the most serious threat to SIDS in their pursuit of sustainable development and survival. The meeting called for integration of critical adaptation needs of SIDS including water, sanitation, coastal protection, and protection of critical coastal infrastructures, into the post-2015 development agenda, supported by measurable targets by developed countries on adaptation assistance to SIDS.
44. **NCDs:** The AIMS region, as so many other regions, recognizes the critical need to address the emerging health crisis represented by NCDs and calls for health issues to feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. Health issues need to be clustered into one goal entitled “universal health coverage,” which will provide a multi-sectoral approach with a view to reducing health inequities and increasing resilience.
45. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** AIMS SIDS called for the establishment of a robust global monitoring system to strengthen accountability at all levels and to ensure adequate and timely analysis of the implementation of the BPOA and MSI and the outcome of the 2014 Samoa Conference as an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda.

