

## Concept Note

### Expert Group Meeting on “Integrated Approaches for the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the post-2015 development agenda: Focus on Linkages between SIDS, Climate Change, and Ocean and Seas”

2-3 September, 2015, UN Headquarters, New York, USA

Organized by the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD/DESA), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)

## Background

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were first recognized as a special case facing specific sustainable development challenges at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. Their challenges and vulnerabilities, which include, small size, isolation, lack of natural resources, vulnerability to climate change impacts such as sea-level rise and an increased frequency and intensity of weather and climate extremes, have been reaffirmed in various outcome documents of international conferences, namely in the *Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA)* (1994), the *Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI)* (2005), the *Future We Want* (2012), and most recently the outcome of the Third International Conference on SIDS (SIDS Conference), held in Apia, Samoa 2014, entitled the *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway)*.

In the *SAMOA Pathway*, Member States reaffirmed “that small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities”<sup>1</sup> and acknowledged that “climate change and sea-level rise continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability”<sup>2</sup>. They recognized that “the adverse impacts of climate change compound existing challenges in small island developing States and have placed additional burdens on their national budgets and their efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals”<sup>3</sup>. They also noted “the views expressed by Small Island developing States that the financial resources available to date have not been adequate to facilitate the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation projects, and we also recognize that, at times, complex application procedures have prevented some small island developing States from gaining access to funds that are available internationally”<sup>4</sup>. Member States noted “the importance of continued support to address gaps in the capacity to gain access to and manage climate

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<sup>1</sup> Para 5 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>2</sup> Para 31 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>3</sup> Para 15 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>4</sup> Para 15 of the SAMOA Pathway

finance”<sup>5</sup>. Member States in the SAMOA Pathway finally called for support for the efforts of the Small Island Developing States to, among others, “to build resilience to the impacts of climate change and to improve their adaptive capacity through the design and implementation of climate change adaptation measures appropriate to their respective vulnerabilities and economic, environmental and social situations”<sup>6</sup>.

As oceans play a central role in the culture of SIDS, while at the same time being tightly linked to their economies, the various climate change impacts such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification and the increased frequency and intensity of weather and climate extremes accompanied by increased flooding and inundation, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers, make Small Island Developing States all the more vulnerable, hence impeding the achievement of their sustainable development objectives.

DESA (through its Division for Sustainable Development-DSD) has held a number of expert consultations with experts from SIDS governments, research communities, regional organizations and UN entities earlier in the year in preparation for the Global Sustainable Development Report and the High-level Political Forum. A key issue highlighted through these consultations, has been the importance of using research evidence and scientific advice for policies and planning.

It is against this backdrop that DESA-DSD is organizing an Expert Group Meeting to identify integrated approaches and holistic solutions for the implementation of the *SAMOA Pathway* while focusing on the cross-sections of Small Island Developing States, oceans and climate change impacts.

## **Rationale for integrated approach**

The SAMOA Pathway emphasized that “there is a need for a more integrated approach to the sustainable development of Small Island developing States, with the support of the international community and all stakeholders”<sup>7</sup>. “Integrated” approaches or management have been mentioned in the outcome document in relation to natural resources and ecosystems<sup>8</sup>; innovative energy<sup>9</sup>; ocean-related activities<sup>10</sup>; enhancement of SIDS’ resilience to withstand pressures, including from ocean acidification and invasive species<sup>11</sup>; water resources<sup>12</sup>; and forest resources<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Para 15 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>6</sup> Para 44(a) of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>7</sup> Para 2 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>8</sup> Para 6 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>9</sup> Para 50 (h) of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>10</sup> Para 57 of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>11</sup> Para 58 (e) of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>12</sup> Para 65 (a) of the SAMOA Pathway

<sup>13</sup> Para 94 (f) of the SAMOA Pathway

The pursuit of sustainable development requires by definition an integrated approach, with attention given to the economic, social and environmental impact of any policy decision. Initial expert analysis of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals themselves and especially the associated targets has revealed that an integrated approach to implementation will be critical<sup>14</sup>.

In addition, the year 2015 provides an especially clear illustration of the interconnectedness of issues affecting the sustainable development of SIDS, with the follow up to the SAMOA Pathway bolstered and complemented by a number of other important inter-governmental processes. The synergies among these various processes will be achieved only if silos are broken down in favor of integration.

## **Objective**

The main purpose of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to identify integrated approaches and holistic solutions for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway with a particular focus on the identification of resilience-building and adaptation measures to minimize the impacts of climate change on oceans and seas in SIDS, and the identification of possible gaps. Recognizing the other intergovernmental processes – the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD), the post-2015 development agenda, and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21), the meeting will provide opportunities for participants to share experiences, lessons learned, and best practices on effective resilience-building and climate change adaptation measures in SIDS. In doing so, the EGM will bring together experts from governments and other stakeholders such as academia and think tanks to ensure that sound technical basis underlie recommendations for integrated solutions. The EGM will convene from 2-3 September 2015 at UNHQ in New York, inviting about 12-15 experts in different aspects of climate change and ocean from the three SIDS regions (AIMS, Caribbean, and the Pacific). Other experts from relevant entities could be invited at their own expenses.

## **Expected outcomes**

The outcomes of the interactive discussions and presentations to be made during the EGM can be important guidance and a set of recommendations for concrete follow-up actions and integrated solutions for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway in SIDS.

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<sup>14</sup> See International Council for Science (ICSU) and International Social Science Council (ISSC), “Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective,” and UN DESA Working Paper No. 141, David Le Blanc, “Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets”,