

United Nations General Assembly
Second Committee Special Event
Panel discussion on
“Strengthening the Resilience of Small Island Developing States
within the context of Sustainable Development”

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 2 (CB)
November 1, 2013, 10 AM – 1 PM

Concept Note

Background

The special case of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for sustainable development and their unique and particular vulnerabilities has been acknowledged by the international community at least since the Rio Summit in 1992. The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in Barbados in 1994, and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in 2005, set forth actions and strategies to build resilience. Most recently, the special case of SIDS was reaffirmed in “The Future We Want”, during the Rio+20 deliberations.

SIDS vulnerabilities span across all sectors of sustainable development. During Rio+20, the international community acknowledged that SIDS remain a special case in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, their exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, and the impacts from climate change, particularly sea level rise, and natural disasters.

As a result of these vulnerabilities, “The Future We Want” noted that SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings in economic terms, and that their overall progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven.

With the acknowledgement by the international community that SIDS remain a special case within the context of sustainable development, Rio+20 called for the convening of the Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014. General Assembly resolution 67/207 subsequently welcomed the offer of the Independent State of Samoa to host the Conference, and the dates have been set as 1-4 September. The objectives of the Conference are to:

(a) Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, building on, inter alia, existing reports and relevant processes;

(b) Seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to address effectively the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, 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 small island developing States 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 small island developing States for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda;

The Small Island Developing States also endorsed the overarching theme of the Conference to be:

“The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships”

When discussing the potential benefit of partnerships, and indeed throughout the sessions of the SIDS Conference preparatory meetings, SIDS delegates cast the issues in terms of building resilience. They asserted that SIDS governments and the international community need to devote significant attention and effort to building SIDS resilience in innovate ways. The debate of the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly’s 68th Session offers an opportune moment to continue this discourse on the issue of SIDS resilience.

Objective

The discussion of resilience of Small Island Developing States has occurred since the consideration of the sustainable development challenges of SIDS first began. In recent years however, the sentiment is that more is needed in order for resilience strengthening to take place.

The objective of the Second Committee’s proposed side event on “*Strengthening resilience of SIDS within the Context of Sustainable Development*” is to discuss potential initiatives that could help with the strengthening of the SIDS abilities to address their vulnerability and structural challenges and respond to external shocks. To this end, the panel will engage a range of distinguished experts, government officials and development actors to present their perspectives and concrete suggestions.

Themes for panel presentations

- The Special Case of SIDS

This presentation will focus on a country case study that has faced various vulnerabilities quite characteristic of SIDS. It will showcase how a country has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the challenges impacting the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy of BPOA, identifying priority areas and actions needed through a series of multi-stakeholder consultations, and how these have been reflected onto a national sustainable development strategy (Maurice Ile Durable), which would serve as basis to strengthen resilience building addressing identified vulnerabilities and priority areas for follow up national actions and for exploring partnership opportunities.

- Means of Implementation towards the strengthening of SIDS resilience

The different approaches to resilience building and strengthening will require means of implementation if they are to be successful. This section will examine the different options available to SIDS and the international community in the area of financing for development and related technical cooperation, including how to access them.

- Partnerships among SIDS and for SIDS

The University Consortium of SIDS (UCSIS) has a membership of national and regional universities based in SIDS including Universities of West Indies, South Pacific, Mauritius, Seychelles, as well as University of Malta and University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Under the Auspices of UCSIS, these universities have developed a joint Master's programme on Sustainable Development for SIDS, a concrete example of SIDS-SIDS and tripartite partnership among higher education with the potential for building research collaboration, such as in marine science and oceanography.

- Resilience-building initiatives and options for SIDS

The role of the private sector, especially in terms of small enterprises and cottage industries and the economic empowerment of women will be highlighted as well. The best option to addressing vulnerabilities is to focus on building resilience. If resilience is strengthened, the impact of external and environmental shocks can be lessened. However, rather than focusing on one or two initiatives, this section will consider how the private sector and women entrepreneurs are playing an active role in mobilizing the local communities and strengthening broader networks.

SPECIAL NOTE

Previously, there had been no analytical framework with effective indicators or criteria to comprehensively assess progress in addressing the vulnerabilities of SIDS through implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The key issue is not only the availability of reliable data and information but having a user-friendly analytical framework for policy makers to assess the extent of vulnerabilities and resilience of SIDS on a country-by-country basis. Such methodology has been developed by DESA and is currently being pilot tested in a number of SIDS.

Moderator

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Panellists

- Dr. Jose Regidor Garcia, Rector Magfco, Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Sede Institucional, Member of the Board of Trustees of the University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS)
- Ms. Adi Tafuna'i, Executive Director, Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI), Samoan Entrepreneur
- Mr. Osman Mahomed, Executive Chairman, Commission on Maurice Ile Durable, Mauritius
- Mr. Peter Allum, Assistant Director, IMF's Strategy, Policy and Review Department

Format

The Panel discussion will be a series of presentations by the panellists followed by an open debate. At the end a summary of the debate will be provided and the chairperson will conclude.

Biographies of Proposed Panelists

Ms. Adi Tafuna'i

Ms. Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i is a co-founder and Executive Director of Women in Business Development Inc. in Samoa. For more than two decades, she has led the organization through several transitions, including a shift from supporting urban women to developing economies for rural families in Samoa.

In the 1990s, Mrs. Tafuna'i began a campaign to organically certify farms to add value to their products and also because of the offers for wellbeing and health organic produce.

Mrs. Tafuna'i was involved in bringing virgin coconut oil pressing to Samoa and in 2008 her expertise in developing relationships saw a fair trade contract confirmed with cosmetic giant and community fair trade leader, The Body Shop International of the United Kingdom. Mrs. Tafuna'i was also instrumental in reviving the dying art of Samoa's fine mat weaving and transforming it into an income-generating activity for Samoa's weavers.

Regionally, Mrs. Tafuna'i played a key role in the formation of the Regional Organic Task Force, which brought together regional organic practitioners to establish a Pacific Organic and Ethical Community, which went on to establish the Pacific Organic Standard – only the third regional organic standard world wide. She has also assisted other Pacific organizations to become organically certified and negotiated their inclusion in The Body Shop contract because she believes that sharing is the pathway to success for the Pacific.

In 2006, she served as the chair of the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organizations. As such, that year she was also a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group for the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Uganda. Her dedication and success was recognized in 2008 when she was awarded the New Zealand Prime Minister's Fellowship award.

In 2010, Samoa's Government named Mrs. Tafuna'i as "Person of the Year". In 2012 Mrs. Tafuna'i's work was acknowledged with an Economic Empowerment award at the Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards in Washington DC. As a keen proponent of women's rights, Mrs. Tafuna'i was last year a panelist, alongside US State Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, for the Gender Equality Dialogue during the Pacific Island Leaders Forum in the Cooks Islands in August.

Mr. Peter Allum

Mr. Peter Allum is Assistant Director in the IMF's Strategy, Policy and Review Department, where he currently provides leadership in the design and monitoring of the IMF's policy engagement with its small state members. In this role, he oversaw a March 2013 report to the IMF Executive Board on Fund engagement with small states. He has participated in meetings with small island developing states from the Caribbean and Pacific, and presented at the October 2013 meeting of the Small States Forum in Washington DC.

Mr. Allum has more than 20 years experience in the IMF. Over the past decade, much of this work was with African countries, including during 2004-06 as resident representative in Uganda. Outside of Africa, he has worked with country authorities from the Middle East, central Asia, and Latin America.

Prior to joining the IMF, Mr. Allum was an economist in the UK Department of Trade and Industry, UK Treasury, and in the British Embassy in Washington DC.

Mr. Osman Mahomed

Mr. Osman Mahomed has, since July 2011, overseen a national initiative that ensures the sustainable development of Mauritius and a bright future for all its citizens. Through the promotion of strategic areas in energy efficiency and independence, Mr. Mahomed and the Prime Minister's Office seeks to transform the social, economic, and environmental landscape of Mauritius as we know it.

Having honed his skills in the private sector, Mr. Mahomed first joined the Mauritian administration in 2003 with a particular focus on investment and infrastructure. A reflection of his international distinction, he comes with an engineering background from Singapore University, and an MBA.

Under Mr. Mahomed's direction, the MID has become a model institution of best practices in international capacity building and cooperation, working with such institutions and donors as the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD).

Dr. Jose Regidor Garcia

Dr. José Regidor García is Professor of Cell Biology, at the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He was Director of the Department of Morphology, and member of the Board of the Faculty of Health Sciences, representing the Degree in Medicine.

Founder and Patron of the *Fundación Universitaria de Las Palmas*, he was elected as Rector of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria on March 2007 and reelected on April 2012 for the period 2012-2017.

In June 2012, he was appointed as President of the Sectorial Commission of Communication within the CRUE (*Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas*). He is also Honorary Professor of St. Petersburg University of Water Communications.

He has been teacher in several national and international universities. He has taught at the College of Las Palmas (Spain, 1976-1983); been a Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Medicine at Boston University (United States, 1979-1980); Associate Professor of Animal Cytology and Histology at the University of Granada (Spain, 1983); Professor and Head of the Department of Biology at the College of Las Palmas (Spain, 1983-1987); Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Copenhagen (Denmark, 1985-1997), and Professor of Cell Biology since 1992.

His professional commitment is reflected in his work as Dean of the College of Biologists of the Canary Islands, Vice-President of the General College of Biologists of Spain and Spanish representative in the ECBA (European Countries Biologists Association).

His social commitment is supported by his membership at the Alzheimer's Association and the Spanish Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology, since he believes that the University should not stand apart from society, but linked closely to it.

He is an honorary member of the Medical School of Las Palmas and member of the Canary Academy of Science; on November 2010 he was appointed as member of the Royal Academy of Medicine.
