

**Background Note on the Third International Conference on Small Island
Developing States
1-4 September 2014, Apia, Samoa,**

Background Note

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will be held on 1-4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. The decision to hold this conference was an important outcome of the Rio+20 conference. Preparations are currently focusing on a robust, SIDS-led, multi-stakeholder national preparatory process. These national preparations will feed into regional meetings in July 2013, followed by an inter-regional preparatory meeting scheduled for late August 2013. Preparations are guided by the UN General Assembly resolution on the modalities of the Conference (A/Res/67/207) which outlined the basic objectives of the conference, namely to (a) assess the progress and gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, (b) seek renewed political commitment for the same, (c) identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities and ways to address them—including through collaborative partnership—and (d) identify SIDS priorities in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

National preparations

Most of the SIDS have undertaken national consultations and prepared national reports, for which DESA and UNDP have provided support. A small number are however yet to undertake such activities. Where possible, the outcomes of country consultations on the post-2015 development agenda were taken into account in the national preparatory process for the SIDS conference. To further strengthen the national process in the Pacific, ESCAP provided technical support to some countries.

All completed reports of the national consultations are available online at www.sids2014.org. The reports have also been distributed to all SIDS from the same region in advance of the regional meeting. In addition, these reports have been synthesized into a regional overview report.

Regional meetings

The General Assembly mandated regional consultations in each of the three SIDS regions: Caribbean, Pacific, and AIMS¹, and the meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Caribbean: Kingston, Jamaica, 2-4 July
- Pacific: Nadi, Fiji, 10-12 July
- AIMS: Mahe, Seychelles, 17-19 July

Regional overview synthesis reports on the national preparations will constitute the core inputs to the respective regional meetings. The regional meetings will be structured around the four objectives identified in the modalities resolution, with regional variations and reflections of host country preferences. The programmes for

¹ Atlantic, Indian ocean, and South China sea region

the regional meetings have been developed through a series of consultations among member States in the region, with initial guidance given by the Secretariat, Regional Commissions, UNDP and other relevant agencies.

It is expected that these meetings will be chaired by the ministers of the host countries and attended by SIDS Member States and associate members of Regional Commissions in each respective region, mostly at the senior expert level. A drafting committee will be formed from a subset of Member States in each of the respective regions, chaired by the host country, to prepare an outcome document. UN agencies, non-SIDS member States, Inter-Governmental Organizations, regional organizations and Major Groups are expected to be invited as observers.

Inter-regional meeting

The inter-regional meeting will take place in Barbados on 26-28 August 2013. SIDS from all three regions will participate in the inter-regional meeting at the ministerial level.

The outcomes of the three regional meetings will be synthesized into an inter-regional overview, which will provide a starting point for dialogue and negotiation in Barbados. The inter-regional meeting gives the SIDS the opportunity to define and crystallize the SIDS positions before the global preparatory committee (prep com) process is launched.

Second modalities resolution

The upcoming General Assembly (68th) session will negotiate and adopt the second modalities resolution for the 2014 SIDS conference, to define the number and nature of global prep com meetings, the Bureau, the modality of the Conference, participation, accreditation, themes and many other organizational matters. The global prep com process is to be launched in January 2014.

Substantive preparations

To support and enrich the intergovernmental process, a number of UN agencies and entities are providing substantive inputs to the regional and inter-regional meetings. DESA, UNEP, OHRLLS, ISDR, Regional Commissions, UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF and others are holding expert group meetings—organized jointly in some cases— as well as submitting papers and issues briefs, preparing publications, and sponsoring multi-stakeholder events around specific topics, all to contribute additional intellectual fodder to the preparatory process. These inputs are also made available on the conference website.

Partnerships

As host country, Samoa has expressed a desire to bring partnership into sharp focus as an additional key outcome of the 2014 Conference—announcing new

partnerships at the Conference but also featuring ongoing partnerships that can be held up as best practices. Samoa will graduate from Least Developed Country status in 2014, and they have made many public references to the major role that partnerships played in driving their progress.

Through the ECESA Plus, DESA has been encouraging efforts within the UN system to spearhead initiatives to strengthen existing SIDS partnerships, provide SIDS focus to broader ongoing partnerships, and to develop new partnerships in five concrete thematic areas of particular importance to SIDS, areas which have emerged for special attention ahead of the 2014 SIDS Conference: climate change, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism and natural disaster resilience (COWTD).

Resource mobilization

DESA has been mobilizing and already received several strong pledges from a number of traditional and non-traditional donors to support participation of SIDS delegations to attend regional and inter-regional meetings from the capitals. UNEP also provided financial contribution towards regional preparatory process. Some donors are providing contributions in kind.

Communications

DESA is working closely with colleagues in DPI and at the national level to develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy. The SIDS2014.org website will be a cornerstone of that strategy, with all relevant information posted and updates made regularly. The strategy will also encompass traditional media outlets as well as social media and other innovative approaches. The slogan for the Conference around which communication products are being developed is as follows:

Island Voices Global Choices

Inter-agency collaboration

Many agencies are undertaking important initiatives of relevance to SIDS. Regular and open communication about these activities through the ECESA Plus mechanism is important.