



MEETING SUMMARY

Virtual Meeting of National Focal Points (NFPs) of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Caribbean Region

Wednesday, 29 July 2020 3:00pm – 5:00pm (NY Time)

(MS Teams)

“Enhancing coherence - A focus on the COVID-19 response”

1. Government designated National focal points and representatives of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) from the Caribbean Region met virtually on 29 July 2020 to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and share experiences and best practices on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the national, regional and global levels. The meetings also sought to share experiences and best practices on mainstreaming the SAMOA Pathway and SDGs into national development processes as well their implementation and follow up, in the context of COVID-19, in line with the principle to “build back better”.
2. The meeting was attended by participants from The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. UN agencies including the UN-OHRLLS (organizer), DESA, UNDCO, UNDP, UNDRR, UNEP, UNFPA, UNOPS, regional organizations including CARICOM, UNDCO_LAC, ECLAC, Resident Coordinators, development partners as well the GEF, ISA, ITC, WMO and Climate Analytics participated.
3. The structure of the meeting included an opening segment and 2 main sessions: (1) Response to COVID-19 (Global and Regional); (2) Country Experiences in Response to COVID-19 with Responses from SIDS NFPs and Interventions from (other) UN System and other organizations during the interactive discussion.
4. The opening segment was chaired by Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, Office of the High Representative of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), and commenced with remarks from H.E. Ms. Fekita ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS) and H.E. Ms. Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Chair of Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

5. Remarks from the opening segment acknowledged the impact that COVID-19 has had on the already vulnerable SIDS. The segment emphasized:
 - the importance of annual NFP meetings that allow NFPs to share information, lessons learned, and best practices in responding to the pandemic and other development challenges;
 - the effects of COVID-19 have exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities present in SIDS; the need for global economic restructuring that would allow SIDS to emerge cleaner, greener, and more resilient from the crisis; and
 - policies that not only help with the recovery from COVID-19 but also allow for the continued achievement of the SDGs, 2030 Agenda, and the SAMOA Pathway.

Session 1: Global and Regional Response to COVID-19

6. This session was chaired by Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, OHRLLS. The session provided background on:
 - the initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the global and regional level; the successes and challenges of these initiatives and how they could be integrated into SDGs and SAMOA Pathway implementation;
 - the emerging priorities of the SIDS in the Caribbean region and how they are being addressed; and
 - how international and regional platforms can support these priorities along with the implications of the MCO and Regional reviews.

Mr. Christian Salazar Volkmann, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, DCO, gave a presentation on the emerging priorities in response to COVID-19 and how they can be supported by international platforms. Mr. Didier Trebucq, Resident Coordinator, Barbados MCO, also gave a presentation on regional efforts that can address the emerging priority areas. After the presentations, a respondent Mr. Diane Quarless, Director, ECLAC Sub-regional Office, Port of Spain (POS), spoke on the impact that COVID-19 has had on the region.
7. The meeting stressed that countries in the region expect to suffer severe economic contraction as a result of COVID-19. The virus has led to border closures and reduced international economic activity. This has had a negative impact on the region's most vital sectors, including tourism and the trade of primary commodities. Additionally, in order to combat the transmission of the virus, stay at home orders and closure of non-essential businesses has reduced the overall level of economic activity in the region.
8. The meeting highlighted that to combat the immediate economic impacts of the crisis and support economic recovery, national governments have passed stimulus packages. These packages have largely provided support to small and medium-sized businesses and the large informal sector of the economy. It was noted that while the stimulus has been effective, tensions have developed as heavily indebted governments must borrow more while dealing with reduced levels of revenue and economic activity.

9. The meeting noted that despite early response measures that resulted in a low number of cases and limited transmission, COVID-19 has shown the weaknesses of the region's healthcare systems. The systems lack the capacity to handle any sort of 'second wave' or an unexpected number of cases. There have also been difficulties in acquiring the needed PPE and medical supplies that the virus requires. In addition, the presence of NCDs and an aging population put regional healthcare systems at a disadvantage.
10. The meeting highlighted that UN teams present in the region have also conducted and developed vulnerability assessments and socioeconomic response plans for the pandemic. They provide important data and analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on different groups of society, along with providing help in the decision-making processes of various stakeholders.
11. The meeting noted that COVID-19 has shown the need for greater expansion of social protection systems. It was noted that the current gaps must be filled so that no one is left behind in the socioeconomic response plans to the virus, especially those groups that are considered most vulnerable such as adolescents, women, the elderly, and those with disabilities.
12. The meeting highlighted the fear among participants that the pandemic will result in the loss of hard won sustainable development gains. Projections estimate that this event could push the Caribbean back 10 to 20 years in terms of sustainable development.
13. The meeting underscored the challenge of financing facing SIDS in the Caribbean. It was noted that the region has glaring socioeconomic vulnerabilities that need be addressed with development funding. However, access to these funds remains an issue. Regional advocates have continually pointed out the flaws in the international financial system that prevent SIDS from accessing the needed funds. This can be attributed to the criteria placed on access to ODA and concessional financing, which SIDS do not meet due to their middle-income status and high levels of debt.
14. The meeting also noted the need to move away from per capita income levels as a sole criterion of development financing. Many countries in the region have graduated from low-income status that prevents them access to such funds. It was recommended that a multi-dimensional vulnerability index be developed to take into account the physical vulnerabilities such as exposure to climate change and the frequency of hurricanes in the region, along with the socioeconomic vulnerabilities.
15. The meeting emphasized that debt sustainability and relief continue to be a challenge for the Caribbean region. High levels of debt to GDP ratios and debt service payments are prevalent, which can largely be attributed to the high frequency of hurricanes in the region that have devastating impacts on these small island states. The meeting called for outright debt cancellation, which many deemed was unsustainable pre-COVID-19.
16. The meeting stressed the need for economic diversification in the Caribbean economies. This included the need for the development of sustainable tourism, green and blue

technologies, and greater digitization. These efforts would not only diversify the narrow-based economies but provide resilience to handle future economic shocks.

17. The meeting also underscored the need for digital transformation in the region. It was noted that digital infrastructure is limited in the Caribbean in countries, but governments have made efforts to develop this portion of society so that the transition to the 'new normal' can be smoother. Digital platforms would make it easier for economic activity to resume and maintain educational integrity as schools remain closed due to the pandemic.
18. The meeting also called for greater regional cooperation and support during this time. It was noted that intraregional trade and production linkages would be beneficial.

Session 2: Country Experiences in Response to COVID-19 and Responses from SIDS NFPs and Interventions from (other) UN System - Interactive Discussion

19. This session was chaired by Ms. Marina Walter, Resident Coordinator, Trinidad and Tobago MCO. This session allowed countries to:
 - share some of their country experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in response to COVID-19, including from the national, regional, and international perspectives;
 - speak to the challenges and opportunities related to enhanced coordination in the region;
 - highlight the challenges and opportunities going forward, including in the context of the Multi-Country Office and Regional Reviews; and
 - anticipate the implications for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs along with the lessons learned from Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).National experience presentations were given by Ms. Aneesah Abdullah and Ms. Ketra Todd (Bahamas), Ms. Janelle Melissa Hannaway-Horne (St. Vincent and the Grenadines), and Ms. Kennethia Douglas (Trinidad and Tobago).

Country Experiences

20. Presentations underscored that COVID-19 has had a negative impact across all sectors and requires a multisectoral approach that focuses on health, macroeconomic, and social responses to fully address the impact it has had on society.
21. Presentations showed that countries took early actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that prevented them from developing a large number of cases compared to other countries. These steps, however, have come at a great economic cost as international trade has come to a halt and domestic economic activity has been limited.
22. Presentations noted that governments in the region also reallocated resources within the health sector to ensure that there was an appropriate amount of staff to handle the virus and have an adequate supply of PPE and test kits.

23. Presentations highlighted that SIDS in the Caribbean used social gathering rules, closed non-essential businesses, and required constituents to wear masks when going out. These measures have been effective in reducing the domestic transmission of the limited number of cases in the region.
24. Presentations noted that governments have provided economic relief to reduce the socioeconomic impact of the virus and provide macroeconomic stability. Measures included: rent relief and deferments; guaranteeing basic services such as power, water, and sewage; unemployment assistance; and aid to the elderly and disabled populations. Governments also gave funding to key sectors that have been impacted most directly by the pandemic such as the fishing, agriculture, and tourism sector.
25. Presentations emphasized that the crisis has provided an opportunity to develop alternative productive sectors. It was noted that ICTs, for example, could be used for the delivery of social services and manufacturing can be developed; and that PPE and medical equipment can be produced domestically.
26. Presentations highlighted the opportunity for greater private sector engagement to reduce the number of resources expended by governments.
27. Presentations stressed that funding to maintain the measures in place to combat the pandemic and ease the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic remains a challenge, due to the lack of access to funding and the criteria required for access.

Interactive Discussion

28. After the presentations, interventions were made by Ms. Ana Rodriguez (Cuba), Mr. Vincent Sweeney (UNEP), Ms. Amrikah Singh (CARICOM), and Ms. Petal Thomas (UNFPA). The chair of AOSIS, H.E. Ms. Lois Young (Belize) also made an intervention. Country teams were also given the opportunity to respond to the interventions.
29. The meeting considered strategies that will be deployed to revive the tourism sector. It was noted that due to the large number of people that are impacted by the tourism industry, comprehensive plans, including safety protocols for reopening, would need to be developed. It was also noted that some governments are advocating for domestic tourism initiatives.
30. The meeting noted the role of renewable energy and green and blue technologies in building back better. It was also noted that development partners and donors would be willing to support these initiatives.
31. The meeting highlighted the issue of regionalism in the context of COVID-19. Specialist regional institutions such as CARICOM, CARPHA, as well as the regional commission, ECLAC, supported regional efforts regarding food security, acquisition of medical supplies, and concessional finance advocacy.
32. The meeting once again stressed the critical issue of debt in SIDS, and the impact it has on the region. It was reiterated that debt relief is needed in all forms, especially debt cancellation.

33. The meeting welcomed the idea of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index that could be used instead of income-based criteria.
34. The meeting noted the increasing incidence of domestic and gender-based violence, and ways to address the issue during COVID-19. It was noted that some governments have launched spotlight programs to protect these groups, and are working with social services to make sure the issues are given priority. Data collection schemes have also been put in place to gauge the extent of the problem.

Closing

35. Ms. Marina Walter, Resident Coordinator, Trinidad and Tobago (MCO) provided a brief summary of the second segment. Concluding remarks were received from H.E. Ms. Fekita 'Utoikamanu, High Representative, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS).
36. The meeting underscored the best practices and lessons learned by national focal points in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic at the national, regional and global levels. The meeting also stressed the importance of continuing to share experiences and best practices on mainstreaming the SAMOA Pathway and SDGs into national development processes as well their implementation and follow up, in the context of COVID-19 in conjunction with need for building back better.
37. The meeting noted that discussions would continue at the in-person meetings of the focal points, which are still scheduled to be held in Antigua and Barbuda, when circumstances allow.

Participants List

1. National Focal Points

Name	Member State
Ms. Aneesah Abdullah & Ms. Ketra Todd	Bahamas
Mr. Sinckler Travis	Barbados
*Mr. Vidal Escarlen	Dominican Republic
*Mr. Walters Iyeeka	Jamaica
Mr. Victor Alegria	Belize
Ms. Janelle Melissa Hannaway-Horne	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Ms. Kennethia Douglas	Trinidad and Tobago
**Ms. Kitty Sweeb	Suriname

* in lieu of NFP

** Also Permanent representative

2. Permanent Missions to the UN representation

Name	Last Name	Organization	Title
Garfield	Barnwell	Permanent mission of Guyana to the UN	Senior adviser
Ronalda	Edwards-Horatio	Permanent Mission of Guyana	First Secretary
Loreen	Bannis-Roberts	Dominica Mission	Permanent Representative
Sharon	Lindo	Belize Mission	Advisor
Nyian	Farrell	Permanent Mission is St. Kitts and Nevis	Second Secretary
Tumasie	Blair	Antigua and Barbuda	Counsellor
Janine	Felson	Belize Mission to the UN	DPR
Asha	Pitt	Barbados' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade	Intern
Willy	Louis	Permanent Mission of Haiti	Charge d Affaires
Garicia	Roman	Permanent Mission of Suriname to the UN	First Secretary
Ana Silvia	Rodríguez	Mission of Cuba to the United Nations	Chargé d'Affaires, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative
Joel	Suárez	Mission of Cuba to the United Nations	Third Secretary

3. AOSIS Bureau

Name
H.E. Ms. Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Chair of AOSIS

4. Resident Coordinator Offices

Name	RCO
Mr Didier Trebucq	UN Resident Coordinator (Barbados MCO Serves 10 countries/territories (10 SIDS) Barbados, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines)
Mr. Consuelo Vidal Bruce	UN Resident Coordinator (Cuba)
Mr. Mauricio Ramirez-Villegas	UN Resident Coordinator (Dominican Republic)
Ms. Mikiko Tanaka	UN Resident Coordinator (Guyana)
Ms. Marina Walter	UN Resident Coordinator (Trinidad and Tobago MCO, Serves 5 countries (2 SIDS), Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curacao, Suriname St. Maarten)
Ms. Constance Vigilance	UN Resident Coordinator Office (PNG)

5. Other UN and international organizations

Name	Last Name	Organization
Diane	Quarless	ECLAC POS
Artie	Dubrie	ECLAC POS
Mara	Murillo	UNEP
Vincent	Sweeney	UNEP
Alexandra	Karekaho	UNEP
Petal	Thomas	UNFPA
Donna	Pierre	World Meteorological Organization
Sarah	O'Neill	UNOPS
Rodney	Martinez	World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
Nahuel	Arenas	UNDRR
Nneka	Henry	ITC
Jair	Torres	UNDRR
David	Stevens	UNDRR
Julian	Baez Benitez	WMO
Marie	Bourrel-MCKinnon	International Seabed Authority
Asha	Bobb-Semple	Global Environment Facility
Monica	Nogara	DESA
Julie	Andersen	UNDP
Riad	Meddeb	UNDP
Donna	Lagdameo	UNDRR
Nahuel	Arenas	UNDRR
Anyia	Thomas	UNDESA
Christian	Salazar-Volkman	UNDCO LAC

Vincent	Sweeney	UNEP
Jair	Torres	UNDRR
Amrikah	Singh	CARICOM
Frances	Fuller	Climate analytics
Doris	Ngirwa-Mpesha	FAO

6. Organizers

Name	UN-System
H.E. Ms. Fekita 'Utoikamanu,	High Representative, Under-Secretary-General, OHRLLS
Heidi Schroderus-Fox	Director, UN-OHRLLS
Sandagdorj Erdenebileg	Chief, UN-OHRLLS
Oumar Diallo	OHRLLS
Tishka Francis	OHRLLS
Themba Phakathi	OHRLLS
Per Magnus Andresen	OHRLLS
John Henry Gordon	OHRLLS



Virtual Meeting of National Focal Points (NFPs) of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Wednesday, 29 July 2020 3:00pm – 5:00pm (NY Time)
(MS Teams)

“Enhancing coherence - A focus on the COVID-19 response”

AGENDA

<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: orange;">01</p>	<p>OPENING</p> <p><i>(3:00pm-3:10pm)</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director (UN-OHRLLS)</p> <p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Fekita ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS) • H.E. Ms. Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Chair of Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: orange;">02</p>	<p>RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL)</p> <p><i>3:10pm – 3:40 pm</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director (UN-OHRLLS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation I: Response to COVID-19 (emerging priority areas and how international platforms can support or continue to support the response) - Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, DCO • Presentation II: COVID-19 response – Regional (emerging priority areas and how regional platforms can support or continue to support the response) - Resident Coordinator, Barbados MCO • Respondent – Director, ECLAC Sub-regional Office, POS <p><i>Guiding Questions:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the COVID-19 response initiatives at the global and regional level? What have been some of the successes and challenges? How has the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs factored into these initiatives?</i> • <i>What are the emerging priorities for small island developing States in the Caribbean in the context of the COVID-19 response? How are these priorities being addressed?</i> • <i>How can international and regional platforms support these priorities? What are the implications for the Multi-Country Office and Regional Reviews?</i>
<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px 15px 0 0; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> 03 </div>	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px;">COUNTRY EXPERIENCES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19</div> <p><i>(3:40 – 4:50pm)</i></p> <p>Moderator: Resident Coordinator, Trinidad and Tobago MCO</p> <p>Caribbean SIDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation I: The Bahamas • Presentation II: St Vincent and the Grenadines • Presentation III: Trinidad and Tobago <p>Responses from SIDS NFPs and Interventions from (other) UN System</p> <p>– Interactive Discussion</p> <p><i>Guiding Questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are some of the best practices, and lessons learnt in response to COVID-19, including from the national, regional and international perspectives?</i> • <i>What are the challenges and opportunities going forward, including in the context of the Multi-Country Office and Regional Reviews?</i> • <i>What are the implications for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs? What are the lessons from Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)?</i>
<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px 15px 0 0; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> 04 </div>	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px;">CLOSING</div> <p><i>(4:50 pm – 5:00 pm)</i></p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 3 Moderator brief summary/takeaways • H.E. Ms. Fekita 'Utoikamanu, High Representative, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS)

