



**Summary**  
**Fourth Preparatory Webinar for the SIDS Global Business Network Forum 2024**  
**Monday 18 March 7-8pm**  
**Virtual**

**Opening**

- Ms. Tishka Hope Francis, Team Leader of the SIDS sub-programme, UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) opened the webinar, highlighting the importance of strategic investments in the implementation of the new SIDS agenda. She noted that to attract investments, it is crucial to create an investor friendly environment and develop conducive policies.
- Ms. Heather Lynne Taylor-Strauss, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) spoke on ESCAP's work to promote foreign direct investment (FDI) for sustainable development, particularly related to climate action and digitalization, in the Pacific. She noted that both of these themes fit very nicely in the zero draft for the 4th SIDS International Conference.
- Ms. Taylor-Strauss noted that the idea behind the webinar was share best practices of investment promotion work in SIDS, discuss the opportunities and challenges related to this, as well as to identify action areas on investment that can be brought to the SIDS-GBN Forum 2024 and SIDS4.

**Panel Discussion**

- Mr. Ronald Theodore President, Caribbean Association of Investment Promotion Agencies CEO, Grenada Investment Development Corporation discussed the challenge of attracting investment into small states and, in turn, the aggregate advantage of approaching FDI as collection of states. Using the CARICOM region as an example, Mr. Theodore outlined how investment promotion can be undertaken as a regional grouping and this can not only increase the investment inflows into islands states as well as encourage flows to be more evenly distribute. In this context, Mr. Theodore further explained the advantages of developing and packaging regional investment projects which can help increase theeconomies of scale for investors while also boosting potential economic and social gains for host countries of investment projects. Mr. Theodore further outlined the work and advantages of establishing a regional investment promotion agency (IPA), i.e. the Caribbean Investment Promotion Agency or CAIPA. CAIPA has been essential to promoting the region as a bloc for investments, and also enabled Caribbean island states to undertake capacity building jointly to boost their ability to promote, attract and facilitate investment both at the national and regional level.
- Mr. Clive Kirkpatrick Head, Operational Fulfilment Pepper Advantage, highlighted the locational decisions which has driven Pepper Advantages investments and expansion into the Pacific, particularly into Fiji. In this context, Mr. Kirkpatrick noted that in expanding from the UK into the Pacific, Pepper choose Fiji because of its large talent and educated talent pool, English language skills, and stable and growing digital connectivity – a factor which is essential to their business model. In addition to these factors, Mr. Kirkpatrick highlighted the important role that government support, particularly from the investment promotion agency (Investment Fiji) has played in terms of both guiding Pepper Advantage into establishing their operations as well as in growing them.



- Mr. Corey Huber, Director, Pacific Consulting Limited discussed the challenges to attracting climate related investments, including human resources, technical expertise, and investment strategy. To this end, he noted their needs to be a shift in focus from just access to finance and investment on climate action to improving the absorptive capacity of countries once they receiving the investments. He further noted that need to develop realistic and bankable projects, and in this regard it would be interesting to work as regional bloc to group and pool investments into larger projects (including hub and spoke like projects) that might attract larger investors, such as institutional investors. He also highlighted that in preparation for COP29 and the submission of the new NDC 3.0 plans, countries will also be developing realistic investment plans to attract and leverage investment – including FDI – for their climate ambitions. It is important that in developing these investment plans, they also take into consideration the development of projects, procurement issues, and the absorptive capacity of investment in their countries.
- Ms. Cate Pleass Founder and Chief Executive Officer Pleass Global outlined the challenges for Pacific SIDS as exporters, including freight rates, land content rates, and shipping lanes - especially post-pandemic. She suggested governmental and economic stability as well as bureaucracy poses a challenge to the ease of doing business, and noted that a limited skilled labor force and productivity gains also presents a challenge. The mentioned that digitalization does seem to be addressing some of these challenges.
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### Lead Discussants

- The Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde to the UN in New York shared an example from Cabo Verde who signed a debt swap agreement with Portugal for investment in climate action.
- Ms. Glynis Miller outlined the role of Pacific Trade Invest and highlighted that in reality most investment going into the Pacific is government-to-government and not driven by the private sector. However, there is an urgent need to attract more private sector investors to explore and expand into the Pacific. She noted that boosting the capacity of businesses in the Pacific to attract FDI as well as developing investible projects, creating hub and spoke investment opportunities, as well as providing opportunities for gender integrate investment projects are all be essential to increasing the attractiveness of the Pacific SIDS for investment.



## Action Agenda on Investment into SIDS

- After the panel discussion, Ms Taylor-Strauss requested each panelist and lead discussant to propose up to 2 action items that should be taken up both at the SIDS GBN, as well as more broadly to accelerate investment, particularly FDI, into SIDS. In this context, the following action items were proposed by the panelists and discussants:
  - Develop and implement a targeted approach to investment attraction: this should include promoting investment in niche sectors, developing value propositions that actually define the opportunity profile for investing in SIDS, and developing investible projects.
  - Create a more enabling environment for investment through updating investment incentive schemes to become more transparent, modern, and also to cater to support climate FDI.
  - Embrace digitalization and develop infrastructure to support increased investments into the digital economy and digital transformation of SIDS. Similarly, improve the digital capacity within SIDS to forecast and identify potential investible opportunities in SIDS should be prioritized.
  - Improve shipping lines to increase the capacity of exporters in SIDS to grow their businesses, as well as increase the overall attractiveness of SIDS for export-driven modes of FDI.
  - Develop talent, both within the broader workforce to attract investors in niche sectors, but as well within investment promotion agencies so that they can proactively attract investment into their countries.
  - Explore the potential of a regional approach to investment promotion including through developing hub and spoke investment projects that would allow SIDS to pool investment opportunities and projects to increase scale and feasibility of investment into island states.
  - Ensure a gender integrated approach to investment promotion, attraction as well as in carrying out investment projects in SIDS.

## Closing

- Ms. Taylor-Strauss closed the webinar summarizing some potential action items, including an Investment Hub and its link to the Center of Excellence, and the need for capacity building.