



United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries,
Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

Summary

First Preparatory Webinar for the SIDS Global Business Network Forum 2024

Wednesday 22 November, 2-3pm

Virtual

Opening

- Ms. Tishka Hope Francis opened the webinar, emphasizing that the imperative for resilience and sustainable development in SIDS has never it's been more pronounced, and that that public-private partnerships are a powerful catalyst for change.
- She noted that the process of building resilience in SIDS requires innovative solutions and that the private sector, with its potential for investment, innovation and job creation, plays a pivotal role in this process. She also noted that there is also a need to strengthen the resilience of the private sector.

Private Sector Discussion

- Ms. Karolin Troubetzkoy, Executive Director, Marketing & Operations, Anse Chastanet & Jade Mountain Resort, Saint Lucia spoke on resilience of the tourism industry. She noted that disasters and rising sea levels have a dramatic effect on tourism revenues. This has a large impact on countries that rely on tourism such as Caribbean countries. She highlighted energy efficiency, renewable energy and waste management as major challenge that the private sector cannot resolve themselves. She explained that that the policy environment hinders progress within the area, and also that there are many duplicating efforts. She highlighted the potential of public-private partnerships to overcome such challenges by pooling resources, expertise and technology, as well as leading sustainable infrastructure and resilience projects. She also highlighted the importance of embracing the destination stewardship model and seeing more community involvement. She mentioned the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre as well as the Belize Barrier Reef Conversation as best practices for collaborative efforts within the area. She also spoke on a partnership between the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and the Caribbean Health Authority to influence policy for the reopening of tourism after COVID-19. She emphasized the important role of governments, the private sector and local communities.

- Mr. Kyle Stice, Executive Director, Pacific Farmer Organizations, Hawaii spoke on the work of the association, which represents farmers across 14 Pacific Island countries. He noted that 3/4 of the Pacific population lives in rural areas and that many of these populations derive their livelihoods from agriculture. He spoke on threats that these people are facing, such as climate change, non-communicable diseases, and health. He explained that Pacific farmer organizations have developed a basic response to these interdependent threats as a locally developed solution which is to be developed with governments and development partners. The approach is centered around local food systems and local value chain development and anchors itself on strengthening local organizations to deliver local solutions. Mr. Stice highlighted that these organizations can complement government and aid agencies by being an intermediary to Pacific farmers who are essential for assuring traditional knowledge and innovation, and also for amplifying the voice of rural people. He also explained that organizations can help improve flows of information between big companies and suppliers. He called for development partners and governments to prioritize traditional crops, value traditional agriculture and work to enhance them, invest in local food systems and local value chain development and really focus on strengthening local organizations to deliver local solutions.
- Ms. Melissa Pierre Senior Trade & Policy Specialist, American Chamber of Commerce, Trinidad & Tobago spoke on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Trinidad and Tobago. She noted that the government has been to invest in large infrastructural projects without impacting the debt to GDP ratio, and that PPPs have helped gain the best of both worlds – the best of the private sector, which would bring to the table resources and efficiencies, as well as the public sector, which would be the operator within the space. She provided some examples of these PPPs, including private sector building homes, hotels, and a hospital which will also have offices for the Ministry of Health, and a project with bpTT, Shell Energy and NGC helping with the renewable energy transition. She stressed that for a PPP project to become successful, it is important to clearly define and communicate the milestones, deliverables, timelines, and incentives. She referred to the election cycle, noting that incentives tend to change when governments change, which has a direct impact on a project. She also noted that monitoring and evaluation tends to be weak in projects and also that the local private sector often is unable to participate within large scale projects due to their funding limitations. She explained that third parties like KPMG or Deloitte can help overcome such challenges by creating a business case for the project. Ms. Pierre also underscored the importance of business continuity, stressing that the private sector often is the first to respond when a disaster happens because they also are very much affected by it. This makes it natural to support their resilience building, since market stabilization is achieved faster when getting the private sector back up and running. She explained that the private sector helped the government reach communities and provide facilitations for COVID-19 vaccination. She highlighted the importance of knowledge sharing and exchanging lessons learned to prepare for future disasters.
- Mr. Tarlochan Singh, CEO/Principal Officer, Sun Insurance, Fiji spoke on the role of insurance in building resilience in Fiji in partnerships with the government and development partners. He noted that Sun Insurance is the only 100% locally owned general insurer, which is committed to supporting the resilience building of Fiji's 330 islands. He explained that insurance in the region

is deemed to be an expense rather than an asset protection plan which becomes a big problem for resilience building. He also noted that there is a lack of data in terms of modeling, a lack of expertise, and a lack of interest in the Pacific among global reinsurers, which makes it challenging to find innovative solutions. He spoke on a partnership with the Reserve Bank of Fiji to embark on massive insurance education across the country. He also spoke on the successful pilot of the first ever parametric insurance cover for farmers in Fiji, launched over the cyclone period in 2021, which had almost 1600 farmers and paid over 200,000 in claims within 24-48 hours due to rainfall, massive rainfalls, and other cyclonic events to help farmers get back on their feet. Today, Sun Insurance has taken over this product solely and has increased the reach to fishermen and others. He explained that the company is the first in the Pacific to launch the first ever anticipatory insurance cover for Fijian farmers, which is piloted with partners. Mr. Singh also stressed the importance for strong institutional frameworks, stakeholder engagement, a culture of risk management, and better monitoring and evaluation systems for resilience building in the region.

Open Discussion

- H.E. Kuymizakis Adam, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the UN in New York noted that private partnerships have a crucial role in overcoming challenges at the national and regional and international level, and spoke on the many initiatives of Malta to support SIDS with the facilitation of public-private partnerships.
- Mr. David Laborde, Director, Agrifood Economics Division, FAO noted that SIDS are both importers and exporters of food and highlighted the importance of public services and infrastructure including digital infrastructure during times of crisis. He explained that value chains, including global value chains, were more resilient during COVID-19 when businesses had access to digital infrastructure. He also underscored the need for stable policies and a stable political environment.
- Mr. Michelle Julian, World Tourism Organization noted that small islands in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and the Pacific are among the destinations that show the fastest recovery with many of them already exceeding pre-pandemic levels in arrivals, proving that tourism is an engine of economic and social recovery. He noted that tourism is also a major employer, particularly for women, youth and informal workers, making tourism a real lifeline for millions of people. He highlighted the need to achieve a more sustainable, inclusive, accessible and competitive tourism sector in small island destinations, and that public-private partnerships play a key role in these goals.
- Ms. Riya Rahiman, Coalition for Disaster resilient Infrastructure noted that there is a need for broader partnerships to build resilient infrastructure. She noted that PPPs play a big role in bringing in global private sector expertise along with long term private sector financing. She stressed that the state should make climate risk data available to the private sector to integrate risk and resilience parameters, for example when bidding for infrastructure planning and development projects. She spoke on the need for strengthening institutional frameworks, technical and capacity building, and support for embedding resilience such that there is an environment that is facilitated where resilience becomes a key parameter for the infrastructure lifecycle.

Closing

- Mr. Damien Sass underscored that the journey towards resilience is very much ongoing and requires sustained commitment from governments, from the business community, and from local communities.