

Inter-Agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States

Meeting Summary

9:00am-10:30am, 15 September 2016

Chair: Juwang Zhu, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, UN-DESA

Summary

During the meeting of the IACG, participants were briefed on the outcomes of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (11-20 July 2016, New York) and an exchange of views was held on the section on IACG in the JIU report (JIU/REP/2016/3). Participants were also encouraged to submit suggestions for possible thematic debates for consideration by the new President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Thomson of Fiji. In addition, IACG members shared their upcoming events related to SIDS.

1. A short briefing on the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

- The High-Political Forum was held from 11-20 July in New York, and this Meeting, marked the Forum's first session since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The theme of the Forum was "Ensuring that no one is left behind" and the Meeting included sharing of national experiences in putting policies and strategies in place for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as thematic discussions related to the themes and SDGs connected to the theme. There were also sessions that had focused on countries in special situations including SIDS and the means of implementation both at the global and national levels. The President's summary of the HLPF is available [online](#).
- Samoa was the only SIDS that presented its Voluntary National Review on progress with implementation of the SDGs. Samoa indicated that they first conducted an assessment of the level of alignment between their national Development Strategy (2012-2016) and the SDGs and related targets, which helped them to identify gaps and to form the basis for the development of their new national development strategy for 2016-2020 with the theme of 'accelerating sustainable development and creating opportunities for all'.

- DESA held five events related to SIDS during HLPF meeting. Two formal sessions of HLPF, and three events on the margins of HLPF. The summaries of those events are available online (by clicking the titles of the events below).
 - In the HLPF session on “Making the 2030 Agenda deliver for SIDS, building on the SAMOA Pathway”, speakers echoed the importance of implementing the Agenda 2030 in tandem with the SAMOA Pathway. As special relevance for SIDS, food security, oceans, and climate change were addressed. Building resilience to climate change and natural disasters, as well as access to financing was highlighted as critical in achieving SIDS’ sustainable development.
 - Another session on “Ensuring that No One is Left Behind: Challenges of countries in special situations” was moderated by Mr. Acharya, the High Representative of UN-OHRLLS. The Session highlighted the particular challenges faced by SIDS, LDCs, and LLDCs, as well as countries in conflict and post-conflict and MICs. The following ensued from this session: resource limitation remains a challenge thus they will largely depend on a strengthened global partnership. Data availability is severely limited in many countries in special situations. Several interventions during the forum requested the establishment of a dedicated UN interagency mechanism on middle-income countries in order to provide enhanced analysis of the challenges and needs of these countries.
 - One of the sessions of Partnership Exchange was on SIDS Partnership Framework, chaired by the co-chairs of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS, Maldives and Italy. UNEP and the World Bank were amongst the organizations which presented their partnerships. A respondent, Samoa, emphasised that involvement at all levels is crucial and that partnerships must be consistent with national laws and priorities. 25 partnerships were announced at the Partnership Exchange.
 - DESA held a SIDS lunch roundtable with the Chair of AOSIS and OHRLLS, which provided an opportunity for government experts from SIDS and non-SIDS, as well as relevant experts from the UN system and civil society organizations, to discuss areas for collaboration in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The discussion highlighted the need for more involvement of the capital-based officials in charge of the implementation and that SIDS focal point list in capitals should be updated and used as a communication channel. Participants agreed that the UN system needs to proactively pursue their mandated activities, and that the IACG could be a platform for ensuring coherence and a strategic approach.

- DESA also co-organized an Expert Group Meeting with the Chair of AOSIS and with the OHRLLS entitled “Moving from Vision to Implementation: Realising Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States”. In the session on UN System’s support for SIDS, participants highlighted the importance of connecting the global level and the national level as the work at the global level is not always being fully translated into the national context. Some participants noted that bringing capital-based officials together and developing effective information sharing mechanisms would help fill in the gap between different levels. Many participants emphasised that there is a need for more regional exchanges and that the UN system should engage with other actors such as private sector.

Discussion

- The preparation process for the next HLPF could benefit from the input of IACG members and in this regard a retreat inviting all IACG members could be held in New York prior to the HLPF 2017.
- The role of the IACG in encouraging SIDS to participate in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), for example, by looking at building programmes that would help SIDS to be ready for VNRs was discussed. It would be ideal to have at least one (1) presentation from each of the SIDS regions on a sustained basis.
- IACG could consider conveying one consolidated message to indicate what IACG composed of UN and non-UN entities can do collectively to support SIDS at the HLPF and other high-level events including the preparation meetings for the conference on SDG14. Another suggestion is to prepare one consolidated briefing note on what the UN System can do collectively to support SIDS to be ready for VNRs. This collective work could make for the efficient use of budget.

2. JIU report - section on IACG, views from IACG members

Background

- The Joint Inspection Unit issued the initial findings of the Comprehensive Review of UN System support for SIDS (JIU/REP/2016/3) which included and assessment of the role and functions of the IACG (P.46-52). Section C entitled “Findings and recommendations on the role and functioning of IACG” (P.52) states:

The Secretary-General should ensure that DESA and OHRLLS, in close consultation with all United Nations system entities supporting the SIDS agenda and members of the IACG, undertake a reform of the Group to clarify its role, programme of work, criteria for membership and outreach to stakeholders.

- The JIU further suggests that the IACG in rethinking its scope, role and functions should consider: developing a Programme of work; contributing to the SG's annual report on SIDS; chairmanship supported by a bureau/steering committee; planning of meetings and sharing of information; membership; and transparency and outreach.

Discussion

- The Meeting agreed that a Terms of Reference (TOR) of the IACG should be developed. DESA and OHRLLS will work on an initial draft of the TORs, for circulation to the Membership.
- The Meeting noted that the IACG is an informal mechanism with no funding for which agencies participated on a voluntary base. Participants felt that this open ended nature of the Group is beneficial as it gives space also for regional entities to contribute. In this regard, the Chair reiterated that besides the co-chairs of the IACG, other IACG members could take ownership of the meeting, for example, to provide inputs to agenda items for meetings or even rotational chairing can be considered.
- While noting the recommendation of the report, that Chairmanship of the IACG should be supported by a bureau/steering committee (para 201) the meeting felt that that creating another mechanism such as bureau/steering committee within IACG could lead to over burden on the Membership and wasn't necessary as would create another layer of bureaucracy.
- The UN Implementation Matrix of the SAMOA Pathway could be utilized to define a work plan for the IACG. In this regard the comments by the Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) on the JIU report could also be considered in defining a collective response and to monitor IACG's work.
- Collective feedback from IACG members on this section will be conveyed to JIU.

3. Ideas for thematic debate - in supporting the new President of General Assembly, Ambassador Thomson of Fiji

Background

- The United Nations General Assembly opened its 71st session on 13 September 2016. The President of 71st General Assembly, Ambassador Thomson of Fiji, said in his statement that "The 70th Session launched the SDGs and for integrity's sake the 71st

must be the year we witness the wheels turning on the implementation of all 17 SDGs". He also said that the theme of the 71st session is 'The Sustainable Development Goals: A Universal Push to Transform our World' and added that he had appointed a team in his Office specifically dedicated to the implementation of the SDGs. Ambassador Dessima Williams, former Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations, will serve as Special Adviser for Implementation of the SDGs in the Office of the President of the General Assembly. She can be invited to the next IACG meeting to discuss how IACG members can support her office.

- There will be thematic debates convened by the President of the General Assembly during the course of his Presidency. In view of supporting the PGA, IACG members are invited to provide recommendations for potential thematic debates that could be proposed to the PGA.

Discussion

- SIDS specific event could be held to discuss how SIDS are recognized in all outcome documents and how these commitments are benefiting SIDS. It is also important to discuss coherence between the different agendas (the SAMOA Pathway, Sendai Framework, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, 2030 Agenda, and Paris Agreement).
- Oceans and seas could be a theme for debate, as one of the PGA's priorities is the conference on SDG14 to be held next year.

4. Any Other Business

- **The First Annual Global Multi-Stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue** will be held on Thursday 22 September from 8:00am to 9:30 am in New York. This event will be hosted by Italy and Maldives, in collaboration with DESA and OHRLLS. The dialogue will provide an opportunity for launching new partnerships devoted to the sustainable development of SIDS and the announcement of new commitments from existing SIDS partnerships. The first Global Publication on Partnerships for SIDS will also be launched at the event.
- The **resolution on the modality for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to be held on 5th to 9th June 2017** was adopted.
 - The Member States decided that the theme of the conference would be "Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14" and that seven partnership dialogues will be held at the conference in parallel to the plenary meetings. The resolution also includes details of the preparatory processes for the conference. The seven themes of the partnership dialogues will be decided through a preparatory process. A political declaration will be adopted at the conference, and a report containing the

summaries of the partnership dialogues as well as a list of voluntary commitments for the implementation of the SDG14 will be prepared.

- The Member States have requested the Secretary-General prepare a background note by the end of January 2017, to which the IACG members can contribute.
- The co-hosts of the Conference (Fiji and Sweden) have established an Advisory Group that has been charged with providing advice to the co-hosts on substantive and logistical preparations for the Conference. The members of the Group consist of relevant bodies and agencies of the United Nations system and other stakeholders. The Advisory Group is informal in nature, with no legal status. The Group decided to establish seven subsidiary informal preparatory working groups (IPWG) in line with the targets of SDG 14. The IPWG will evaluate the current status of SDG 14, and provide recommendations on future actions and partnerships. The IPWGs will be reporting on their work to the Advisory Group. Currently, the members of the IPWGs are only UN agencies, but the co-hosts are considering involving also Member States. DESA and the World Bank are co-convening IPWG6 on blue growth. FAO is co-convening IPWG2 with UNEP on sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, and IPWG4 on sustainable management of fisheries. UNEP is co-convening IPWG1 on marine pollution, and IPWG5 on marine protected areas.
- DESA, OHRLLS, UN-Habitat, and the Chair of AOSIS are co-organizing **a high-level event on “urban resilience and urban sustainable development in SIDS” at Habitat III** on 18-October from 8:30am to 10:00am. The high-level event will provide an opportunity for governmental officials from SIDS and partners to discuss urbanization issues in SIDS, and how these issues can be addressed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway, and the New Urban Agenda.
- **The Global Sustainable Transport Conference** will be held in Turkmenistan 26 – 27 November 2016. Transport is also crucial to SIDS, and IACG members are invited to engage in the Conference. The outlook report on Sustainable Transport will be launched at the end of October 2016.
- FAO thanked the IACG members for their comments on **the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS**. A revised draft will be discussed in a meeting in Fiji in October 2016. FAO will circulate the revised version to the IACG members for their further comments.
- Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) will organize **the First High-Level Pacific Blue Economy Conference** in the early 2017, in collaboration with GLISPA and WWF-Pacific. PIDF will share more information in due course.

- UNEP and SPREP will convene a **blue economy workshop** for Melanesian countries in the near future.
- UNISDR will hold **the 5th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction** in Cancun, Mexico, from 22 to 26th May, 2017.
- CARICOM Secretariat will have a **ministerial meeting on the follow up to the SAMOA Pathway and synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** in the week of 3 October 2016, which we have since learned has been postponed to a later date.
- **The Bahamas Symposium** on “Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships” will be held in the Bahamas in February 2017. This event is co-organized by the government of the Bahamas, UN-DESA (DPADM and DSD), and OHRLLS.
- UN-DESA will organize the **Caribbean Regional Meeting** to derive a minimum set of core indicators to measure implementation of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway will be held late November or early December 2016.
- UN-DESA continues to undertake the Development Account project on **Vulnerability-Resilience Country Profiles (VRCP)** for 8 SIDS (Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome & Principe, Mauritius, Seychelles, Barbados, Jamaica, and St. Lucia). The majority of baseline reports have been finalized and the first round of the National Workshops will be organized from October 2016 until early 2017. These workshops will prepare the VRCP that allows integrated planning based on identified priorities in relation to the Samoa Pathway/SDGs/respective national planning framework and identify data and information gaps.
- The summaries of the IACG meetings held this year will be posted [online](#).