

Aide Memoire

**Symposium on**

**“Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS):  
Equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships”**

Hosted by the Government of the Bahamas with the support of  
the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

Bahamas, 21 – 23 February 2017

**1. Background**

At the United Nations Summit held in New York in September 2015, World Leaders adopted an ambitious roadmap to guide the sustainable development of all countries over the next 15 years. This new Agenda – entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”<sup>1</sup> – defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to stimulate actions for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

The 2030 Agenda recognized the specific challenges faced by the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and their particular vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Along with its overarching principle to ensure that “No One Is Left Behind”, it called for a special effort to ensure that SIDS make rapid progress towards realizing the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda also encouraged all United Nations Member States to “develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda”<sup>2</sup>.

Implementation requires that each country undertakes various steps such as: (i) setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances<sup>3</sup>; (ii) incorporating the targets in national planning processes, policies and strategies<sup>4</sup>; and (iii) conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels<sup>5</sup>.

This comes at the time when SIDS have to implement the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway of September 2014, which is the key intergovernmental agreement serving as the blueprint for addressing SIDS’ continuing sustainable development challenges, as well as the Sendai World Conference outcome on disaster risk reduction of March 2015, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of July 2015, the climate change agreement of December 2015, the New Urban Agenda of October 2016 and the outcome of other related major United Nations Conferences.

The implementation and review of every single SDG and of many other commitments will depend critically on capable public institutions and committed and ethical leadership. With the 2030 Agenda,

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<sup>1</sup> GA Resolution 70/1 of 21 October 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* paragraph 78

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* paragraph 55

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* paragraph 55

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* paragraph 79

world leaders have committed to making institutions effective, accountable, transparent and inclusive at all levels (SDG 16). Institutions need new capacities and knowledge to provide integrated support to implementation and to “leave no one behind”. This reinforces the message of the 2014 Samoa conference on Small Island Developing States.

Many countries are already quite advanced in setting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in motion. They have started to review and adapt their institutional frameworks. Good practices, lessons and challenges are already emerging. These were discussed at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2016 when 22 countries carried out the first voluntary national reviews. The discussions will continue at the HLPF in July 2017 for which there is expressed interest of over 30 countries to present their national follow-up and review.

Against this backdrop, the Government of the Bahamas, with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, will organize a Symposium from 21 to 23 February 2017 on **Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships**. This Symposium will reflect on how SIDS can integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway in national planning processes, policies, strategies and public institutions – along with other recent United Nations agreements -- such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the Climate Change Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. The Symposium will place a special focus on how best to equip public institutions and mobilize partnerships and cooperation for realizing the 2030 Agenda and other commitments. It will discuss options and innovative solutions for planning and policy making. The Symposium will also reflect on the special vulnerabilities of SIDS to the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural and man-made hazards, including earthquakes, extreme weather events, flooding, storms, heat waves, water and air pollution, and sea level rise. It will examine possible ways to implement a range of integrated and inclusive measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience.

Countries and other participants will learn from each other through an exchange of experiences and lessons.

## **2. Main Themes**

Accordingly, the main themes of the Symposium will be as follows:

**Integrated national development plans and policies and their role in realizing the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway and other international agreements:** The meeting will discuss how best to: (i) develop or update national development plans and policies so that they incorporate priority national targets drawn from the SDGs and national/local objectives; (ii) ensure that plans and policies respond not only to the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, but also to the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Climate Change Agreement and the New Urban Agenda; (iii) integrate in policy making the interrelationships between economic, social and environmental dimensions and between various SDGs areas, including humanitarian, climate and institutional dimensions; (iv) ensure that plans and policies are “risk informed” and “risk resilient” i.e. take into account risks associated with economic and social shocks as well as natural disasters and the potential critical associated losses and costs; (v) ensure that plans and policies are elaborated and implemented in a coherent and integrated way by national government

and local authorities as well as by all ministries and public institutions -- which will also allow looking at impacts and trade-offs and; (v) engage various actors including the private sector and civil society at large in implementation. Attention will be given to how best to overcome other related challenges such as keeping the focus on national priorities and strategies, mobilizing financial resources, technologies and capacity development as well as ensuring that the principle to Leave No One Behind cut across all policies.

**Effective, accountable, transparent and inclusive institutions:** Many countries are in the process of reviewing and adapting their institutional framework for implementing the SDGs. They are using various arrangements and structures to ensure the continued engagement of the highest level of Government and enhance policy coordination and integration in implementing the SDGs. The symposium will discuss the experience being gained with such institutional arrangements and how to make them most successful. It will also focus on the capacities, knowledge, resources and tools that public institutions need to realize the SDGs. There will also be discussions on how to step up efforts to ensure effective public service delivery for all people along with public accountability through ethical leadership, transparency and combatting corruption. Approaches to ensuring participatory decision making, as called for by the 2030 Agenda, will also be examined as well as how to make institutions themselves inclusive so that they deliver policies, services and actions that respond to the needs of people.

**Mobilizing ICTs and e-government for delivering the SDGs and other agreements:** ICTs are increasingly pervasive. They bring new opportunities and tremendous impacts on improving the lives of people. They will be essential to realizing the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. The Pathway recognized that the ability of SIDS to sustain high levels of economic growth and job creation has been affected by the lack of adequate information and communications technology infrastructure networks. At the same time, ICTs need to be supplemented by other measures, such as people engagement at the community level in order to reach out to the poorest and most vulnerable. Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders have been developing relevant strategies on ICT for development in the follow-up to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit of Information Society (WSIS). This session will explore the tremendous opportunities offered by ICT and e-government for supporting the implementation of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. It will allow sharing the unique challenges of SIDS in this area as well as innovative approaches to overcome them, mobilize ICT for the SDGS, contain the related risks and mobilize all stakeholders and regional and international cooperation as called for in the WSIS outcome document.

**Effective partnership for implementing the SDGs:** Partnerships were an official part of the outcome of the Samoa Conference on SIDS. Since then, arrangements have been developed to ensure information sharing and accountability on partnerships for SIDS as well as to promote the launching of new partnerships at the global, regional and national levels, including public-private partnerships and multistakeholder partnerships. Such partnerships exist in many areas of the SDGs. For example, the overall review of the General Assembly on the World Summit of Information Society in December 2015 (WSIS+10) underscored the importance of public-private partnerships, along with universal access strategies and other approaches, to leveraging ICTs for sustainable development. The Symposium will take stock of those efforts and reflect on the delivery of commitments made by partnerships thus far. This session will also identify emerging models of partnerships such as those where the private sector or civil society take leading roles and multistakeholder collaboration. Another focus of the discussion will be how mobilize the private sector to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. Participants will exchange experiences on how to build the right infrastructure and conditions

to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) toward building a low-carbon economy. They will also reflect on how to ensure corporate social responsibility and combat corruption. The session will also allow an exchange of experience on different ways to strengthen the capacity of civil society in supporting sustainable development through effective partnerships, Special attention will be given to whether public institutions have the necessary capacities, information, safeguards and culture to mobilize partnerships for delivering quality public services to all people, including the poorest and most vulnerable, and realizing the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway.

**Policy coherence to bolster—not undermine—development progress:** Member States around the world are implementing the universal 2030 Agenda, each within pre-existing domestic policy frameworks and also within a regional and global landscape. In many cases, the various policy frameworks are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Developing countries are, for instance, often building on policies created to advance the Millennium Development Goals, taking advantage of good practices and learning from MDG-era challenges. Small island developing States are also pursuing simultaneous and interconnected implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, in some cases overlaying this integrated work also with region-specific strategies like the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015-2019. On the other hand, there are instances where SDG progress is being stymied by bilateral or multilateral policies that contradict the stated objectives of the Agenda. The SAMOA Pathway also specifically calls for improving existing mechanisms so as to provide coherent UN system-wide capacity-building programmes for SIDS. The session will address the policies and elements for creating enabling environment which is conducive to SDG and SAMOA implementation including de-risking and subsidies.

**Reviewing progress and building statistical capacities:** The 2030 Agenda also encouraged countries to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress towards the SDGs at the national and subnational levels. Countries will have the primary responsibility for such reviews. National country-level reviews and reports will also feed into regional dialogues and voluntary national reviews of progress to be carried out at the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF). The Symposium will discuss how best to carry out national country-level reviews and undertake national voluntary reviews at the HLPF, building on the experience gained with the first 22 HLPF national reviews in July 2016. In order to elaborate effective policies and review progress towards the SDGs, countries will require high-quality, accessible and timely disaggregated data. . The SAMOA Pathway recognized that improved data collection and statistical analysis are required to enable SIDS to effectively plan, follow up on, evaluate the implementation of and track successes in attaining the internationally agreed development goals. The 2030 Agenda likewise called for bolstering the capacities of national statistical offices and planning and other ministries. The Symposium will discuss approaches and tools to build the national statistical capacities of these institutions in SIDS.

### **3. Expected Accomplishments**

- Strengthen the knowledge and capacities of national institutions and local authorities in SIDS to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway along with the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other international agreements;
- Enhanced capacity for the elaboration of national development plans as vehicles to support the integrated delivery of the SDGs and targets;

- Increase the understanding of the capacities, knowledge, resources and tools public institutions in SIDS need in pursuit of the SDGs and SAMOA Pathway implementation;
- Exchange lessons on how to shape institutional arrangements to implement the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway and on how to ensure that public institutions are effective, accountable, inclusive and transparent;
- Improve the understanding of current trends regarding partnerships for SIDS and reflect on steps to ensure accountability, mobilize new partnerships and equip public institutions to engage in such partnerships.

#### **4. Expected Outcome**

- The symposium will issue an informal communiqué at the end of its three days. The Communiqué will be prepared under the leadership of the host country in consultation with participants. It will identify critical action points emanating from the discussions. It will help to ensure the follow-up to the symposium, which is seen as an important moment to build the understanding and agreement among SIDS on the theme of the symposium. A summary of discussions will also be prepared.

#### **5. Participants**

Approximately 300 participants are expected to attend the Symposium, including government officials, representatives of the United Nations, regional development banks, academia and other relevant organizations, including:

- Ministers and high-level government officials from planning and sectoral ministries, civil service ministries and statistical offices in SIDS and other invited countries
- Local authorities in SIDS
- UN system agencies including the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, the Landlocked development countries and SIDS (OHRLLS); the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); UNITAR; the World Bank; the International Monetary Fund; and the United Nations Global Compact
- The Caribbean Community (CARICOM); the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD); regional development banks notably Inter-American Development Bank; the Development Cooperation Directorate (DCD-DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) , and other organizations
- Representatives of the private sector, foundations, academia, research institutions, and civil society
- Other resource persons

#### **6. DATE AND VENUE**

- Date: 21 – 23 February 2017
- Venue: Nassau, The Bahamas

## **7. LANGUAGE**

The Symposium will be conducted in English

## **8. Documentation**

All the documents of the meeting will be posted on the online at:

[https://publicadministration.un.org/bahamas\\_symposium](https://publicadministration.un.org/bahamas_symposium)

## **9. Contact Information**

### **United Nations**

Mr. Wai Min Kwok

Governance and Public Administration Officer

Division for Public Administration and Development Management, UNDESA

Telephone: + 1 917-367-3026

Email: [kwok@un.org](mailto:kwok@un.org)

Ms. Anya Thomas

Sustainable Development Officer

Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA

Mr. Said Maalouf

Division for Public Administration and Development Management, UNDESA

Telephone: + 1 917-367-2424

E-mail: [maaloufs@un.org](mailto:maaloufs@un.org)

### **The Bahamas Government**

Ms. Nicola Virgill-Rolle

Director of Economic Development and Planning

Office of the Prime Minister

The Bahamas

Telephone: +1 242-702-5565

E-mail: [NICOLAROLLE@BAHAMAS.GOV.BS](mailto:NICOLAROLLE@BAHAMAS.GOV.BS)

Ms. Denise Hinds-Jordan

National Development Plan

Office of the Prime Minister

The Bahamas

Telephone: +1 242-702-5563

E-mail: [DENISEHINDSJORDAN@BAHAMAS.GOV.BS](mailto:DENISEHINDSJORDAN@BAHAMAS.GOV.BS)