

# **Meeting of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the SIDS Partnership Framework**

**Conference Room 9, UNHQ, New York, 27 February 2017, 10:00AM-12:00 PM**

## Summary

The first meeting in 2017 of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held on 27 February 2017, Conference Room 9, United Nations Headquarters, New York. The meeting, which was held at an expert level, was chaired by Ms. Farzana Zahirm Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations, and Ms. Cristiana Mele, Counsellor-Sustainable Development and Environment, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

The meeting focused on three agenda items; the activities stemming from the SIDS Partnership Framework in 2016; a briefing on the recently held Bahamas Symposium; and the proposed activities of the Steering Committee for 2017.

## **2016 Activities**

Mr. Ola Goransson, Partnership Coordinator of the Division for Sustainable Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), provided an overview of the activities that had taken place in 2016 under the guidance of the Steering Committee.

1. Steering Committee meetings – the Steering Committee held four meetings in 2016; two on the expert level and two on the Ambassadorial level. These meetings had provided an opportunity approve the working methods of the Steering Committee, discuss the partnership reporting template, and decide on the 2016 work plan of the Steering Committee. In addition, it had also ensured that the momentum for SIDS partnerships was maintained.
2. Partnership reporting template – the establishing SIDS Partnership Framework resolution (A/RES/70/202) requested UN DESA to develop a partnership reporting template for all partnerships to report on their progress of their SIDS partnerships. Following this mandate, the template was developed by UN DESA, in broad collaboration with the Steering Committee, then launched and announced to all focal points in the beginning of May 2016. The elements of the reporting template include: the reporting year, status of the partnership, achievements at a glance, challenges faced in implementation, next steps and measurable outcomes for its beneficiaries. To date, 46 reports have been received. The Secretariat will make an effort to collect additional reports for 2017.
3. SIDS Partnership Dialogue during High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – the Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Secretariat, organized a SIDS partnership dialogue on 18 July 2016, on the margins of the 2016 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The meeting focused on reviewing three existing partnerships for SIDS.
4. SIDS Partnership Dialogue during General Assembly – The first mandated annual Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue was held during the 71st session of the General Assembly as a High-level Breakfast Event, focusing on the launch of new partnerships devoted to SIDS, and the announcement of new commitments from existing SIDS

partnerships. Several new partnerships were launched at the event, which included participations from member States, UN system and the private sector.

5. Publication on Partnerships for SIDS – on the occasion of the Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue, the Steering Committee prepared, in collaboration with UN DESA, a publication on SIDS Partnerships. The publication reviewed, in-depth, 6 SIDS partnerships (2 from each SIDS region), and a base review of 34 additional partnerships, based on submissions through the established partnership reporting template.

Mr. H. Damien Sass, Public Information Officer, United Nations Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), then presented the SIDS Global Business Network.

- The online platform and resource hub was launched last year at the Public Private Partnerships Conference in Aruba which was co-organized by OHRLLS and the Governments of Aruba and the Netherlands.
- The presentation touched upon some key aspects of the SIDS-GBN website including links to national, regional and global support for SIDS private sector, news articles including on policy, capacity building and resources.
- OHRLLS is collaborating with regional private sector organizations – namely the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization and the Caribbean Export Development Agency to exchange content from their respective activities in the regions so that the SIDS Global Business Network can better reflect and promote the private sector activities that are taking place on the ground.
- The SIDS Global Business Network is connected to the SIDS Action Platform. Aside from direct links on the home pages of both these platforms, importantly, we encourage private sector partnerships to be registered on the SIDS Action Platform to avoid duplication.
- Our immediate focus is on The Ocean Conference where we are looking to bring some of our private sector partners together and look at featuring ocean related SIDS partnerships and to see as well if there are new partnerships that can be announced.
- A reminder was also made to SIDS about Parley's Call to Action - for SIDS to join their A.I.R (Avoid – Intercept – Redesign) initiative to tackle ocean plastics. They are already working on the ground in some SIDS including the Maldives and Jamaica and together with our office we sent out this Call to Action to SIDS last year. We will recirculate this Call to Action to SIDS and hopefully we will have some concrete announcements to be made at The Ocean Conference regarding SIDS and the AIR initiative.
- While the online platform is an important aspect of the Business Network, bringing private sector stakeholders together is an equally important element of our work. Following on from the Private Sector Forum in Samoa, the office co-organized the Public-Private Partnerships Conference last year in Aruba. We've held an event in the Pacific, the Caribbean and we are now setting our sites on the AIMS region. We are tentatively looking at the second half of this year but this will depend on success in raising the necessary resources as for these particular events we are dependent on extra-budgetary resources to make them a reality. Our intention is that at the next private sector event, we will focus on the role of the private sector not only in continuing to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway but also how the private sector can support SIDS in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, especially at the national level and regional levels.

### **Bahamas Symposium**

Ms. Tishka Francis, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of The Bahamas to the United Nations, provided an overview of the recently held *Bahamas Symposium*. The Symposium,

formally entitled “*Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway in SIDS: Equipping Public Institutions and Mobilizing Partnerships*”, was held in Nassau, Bahamas on 21-23 February 2017.

At the Symposium, delegates from Small Island Developing States, development partners and other stakeholders reflected on how SIDS could integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway in national planning processes, policies, strategies and public institutions.

Some of the key messages and recommendations that emanated from the symposium are:

- First, discussions reaffirmed the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway.
- On the issue of Integrated Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, discussions demonstrated that many SIDS are well advanced in their implementation plans for the SDGs. They have been adapting the SDG targets to their national circumstances and priorities and incorporating them into their development plans and policies.
- The meeting also stressed that the SDGs and the commitments contained in the SAMOA Pathway, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Sendai Framework are interrelated and mutually reinforcing—and that they need to be implemented in a complementary and synergistic way. One critical point made was the need to reflect the implementation of the SDGs in national budgets.
- Delegates underscored the adverse effects of climate change for SIDS, and the threat it constitutes for our efforts to achieve the SDGs. It was emphasized that the effects of climate change amplify the challenges associated with both poverty and sustainable development, and it was noted that many efforts have been made to include these topics in National Development Plans.
- The meeting noted that policies to achieve the SDGs should be informed by a sound assessment of the risks of natural disasters and economic shocks. It was recognized that there is a need to place disaster risk management and building resilience at the centre of policies and strategies for the 2030 Agenda and SAMOA pathway. Identifying vulnerabilities of SIDS would be important in this regard. The use of vulnerability indices and vulnerability-resilience tools in order to assess risks in SIDS and to assist them with accessing financial resources both domestically and internationally was supported. Partnerships around these issues were discussed, particularly with respect to the work of the World Bank.
- A major portion of the conference dealt with the realization that pursuing the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway requires the engagement of all parts of Government and society. A well-integrated and coherent implementation of the SDGs would require a strong political commitment and the continuing engagement of the highest level of Government.
- It was noted that institutions leading implementation need to have sufficient authority to mobilize other institutions and resources. Successful implementation in SIDS would require institutional frameworks, workflows and practices that bolster policy coherence and support integrated responses at all levels. Institutions and ministries should work closely together across silos.
- The Symposium noted that SIDS have been putting in place various coordination institutional arrangements, including inter-ministerial or multi-stakeholder coordination bodies. The need to focus on local authorities; and engaging parliaments and supreme audit institutions was also noted.
- The effort is to mobilize public servants around the SDGs was seen as vitally important. Delegates recognized the need to raise awareness about the SDGs and instill new working methods based on cooperation and consultation. Discussions revealed that there is also a need to bolster the capacities of public administrations to incorporate the targets in plans

and policies, embrace integrated approaches and consult civil society and the private sector. A major effort is required to train public servants. SIDS welcomed the support of the UN in this effort, including the offer to work with public administration schools. Delegates also looked to strengthen the incorporation of ICTs and Statistical Analysis for the implementation of the SDGs. Partnerships were discussed in this context, including SIDS-SIDS partnerships, as well as with other countries such as Republic of Korea, and Estonia.

- It was also recognized that good governance is indispensable for realizing the SDGs. The need to make continuing efforts to make public institutions effective, inclusive and accountable and prevent corruption in SDG implementation was emphasized.
- Delegates agreed that social equity should be the central focus of the action of public administrations. The poorest and most vulnerable should have equal rights and access to public services. Public services and social benefits should help overcome inequality.
- Delegates encouraged further efforts to fully engage all sectors of society, notably civil society and the private sector, in decision-making and review of the SDGs' implementation, so as to ensure inclusive and accountable policy making.
- Delegates agreed to prioritize the engagement of youth as full partners in the SDG process, and underscored the need to ensure that such efforts are owned by all relevant stakeholders.
- Delegates noted that the SDGs require a change of mindset, in which education and training have a critical role to play. It was proposed, therefore, that as a concrete action emanating from the symposium, a UN General Assembly resolution be tabled that encourages all members states to include the Sustainable Development Goals in the education curriculum at all levels.
- As it regards financing for development, SIDS recognized the importance of ensuring that fiscal strengthening takes place. Delegates called for capacity building and new modalities for regional networks to strengthen utilization of existing funding and technical cooperation opportunities.
- The Symposium also drew the attention of the international community to the challenges many SIDS face in accessing external financing. Delegates stressed that the criteria for allocating concessional resources should take into account the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS.
- As the meeting concluded SIDS reaffirmed the commitment to work together with partners on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway.
- The Government of The Bahamas promised to post to the conference website, a draft informal communique based on the discussions of the conference. The document would be open for two weeks for comment. It would then be presented formally to the UN for further consideration, including in the context of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

### **2017 suggested activities**

The co-chairs and Mr. Goransson (DSD/UN DESA) then presented the proposed activities of the Steering Committee for 2017 to the members, which included:

- Organization of an **Ambassadorial level Steering Committee** between end of April/first days of May 2017, to get input from members on the organizational aspects of the second Global Multi-stakeholder High Level Dialogue on SIDS to be organized during the week of The Ocean Conference. The Ambassadorial Level Steering Committee will also give a first idea of any new partnerships that can be presented at the second Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue.

- **Second Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue** as a special event in the margins of the Ocean Conference in June when the new partnerships that can be presented as well as a review of the existing partnerships.
- A **second edition of the SIDS Partnership Publication**, possibly with a dedicated Ocean partnership focus.

## Open dialogue

The floor was then opened for all members to provide comments.

Appreciation was expressed by many participants for the ongoing work of the Steering Committee in keeping the momentum following the SIDS Conference in 2014. Participants expressed that the framework provides an important vehicle and for monitoring and ensuring the full implementation of pledges and commitments through partnerships for Small Island developing States, and to encourage new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of Small Island developing States. Appreciation was also expressed to the co-chairs and to the Secretariat for the activities undertaken in 2016, and for the proposed plans for 2017.

The Delegate from Norway presented that a new SIDS strategy is being drafted in their home Country.

The Delegate from New Zealand raised the possibility of linking the partnerships also to the topics of the Global Compact on Migration,

The Delegate from Russia expressed interest in the Agenda of the Ambassadorial Level Steering Committee. The Co-Chairs replied that the agenda drafting is in progress.

The delegate from UAE expressed the need to use the data from partnership reporting template to prepare a more analytical publication in 2017. Such analysis could then assist in identifying gaps in implementation among SIDS partnerships and beneficiaries, and for identifying where new partnerships are required.

The delegate from Japan asked, in response to the 2017 suggested activities, to clarify when and how many times, the Second Global Multi-Stakeholder SIDS partnership Dialogue is planned to be held considering the possible opportunities of the HLPF session, the ocean Conference and the [HLW](#) in September.

The EU asked if the Joint Unit Inspection Report will be discussed in the Steering Committee and it was answered that it will be discussed during the drafting resolution.

It was also expressed that the Secretariat could use the Dialogues and the upcoming publication to remind focal points to submit a progress report through the established partnership reporting template.

## Closing

The co-chairs then thanked all the participants for attending the meeting, and for their commitment to Small Island Developing States. Next steps of the Steering Committee will be announced in due time.

\*\*\*