

## **Report of the AIMS Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway**

Mauritius, 23-25 May 2017

### **Report of the Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea preparatory meeting for the Midterm review of the SAMOA Pathway**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea preparatory meeting for the Midterm review of the SAMOA Pathway was held in Mauritius from 23-25 May, 2017.
2. The meeting held five sessions. Session 1 on country presentations on progress of implementing the SAMOA Pathway was chaired by Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations; Session 2 on possible regional approaches to implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS group was chaired by Azeema Adam, Envoy on Financing for Development, Maldives; Session 3 on means of implementation was chaired by Fatouma Abdallah Office of the Vice President; Session 4 toward a regional coordinating mechanism to support implementation of the SAMOA Pathway was chaired by Maria Antonieta Pinto Lopes D'Alva, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations; and Session 5 which was split into: (i) consideration and adoption of the regional report on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and (ii) consideration and adoption of the regional report on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, both of which were chaired by Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations.
3. The text of the decisions adopted by the Meeting is contained in annex I. The Chair's summary of the Meeting is contained in annex II

#### **II. Opening of the Meeting**

4. Opening statements were made by U.D. Canabady, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mauritius, Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Azeema Adam, Envoy on Financing for Development, Maldives – Chair of AOSIS, Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Co-Chair of the SIDS Partnership Steering Committee, Christine N. Umutoni, United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles, Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius.

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5. U.D. Canabady, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mauritius, in her welcome remarks, noted the discussions that took place the two previous days. She commended the discussions that gave way to concrete outcomes and 5 partnerships that promote sustainable development in the AIMS region. She stressed on the different agenda (AU Agenda 2063, Mauritius 2030, etc) that all point in the same direction and the importance to map out steps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, as well as the need to bring new ideas and challenge established thoughts, in preparation to the Mid Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway.

6. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States expressed appreciation to the Government of Mauritius for hosting the meeting as well as the series of preparatory meetings. She expounded on the sustainable development challenges the SIDS are confronted with. The mid-term review of the SAMOA pathway provides the opportunity to bring sustainable development to the foreground of the international community and provides a space to ask what has been achieved and what has not and the reasons thereof, as well as what needs to be done. She explained that the mid-term review of the SAMOA pathway is an important milestone that enables setting of priorities, given the diverse challenges, such as the absence of a formal coordination mechanism. She commended the AIMS region for showing innovation, creativity and resilience and for helping to put sustainable development in practice. Many SIDS have embraced the blue economy and innovative financing, and have shown leadership in this domain. Many SIDS have also made great strides towards graduation from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) status. She also highlighted the support extended by the UN system to SIDS. The UN system intends to improve support to LDCs and those in transition, as well as address the challenges which SIDS face. In doing so, there is a need to understand those challenges, as well as prioritise and propose concrete steps towards implementation of the Samoa pathway and the SDGs.

7. Dr. Azeema Adam, Envoy on Financing for Development, Maldives – Chair of AOSIS, Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Co-Chair of the SIDS Partnership Steering Committee highlighted the work of Maldives, as chair of AOSIS, in gathering support for SIDS which face various challenges such as rise in sea level, the vulnerability of their economies against external shocks and vulnerable infrastructure. Maldives indicated that vulnerability is the common condition with which SIDS live. There is therefore a need for capacity building, namely for negotiation. SIDS also have a need for market access for exports and face technical barriers to trade.

8. H. E. Ms. Lois Young, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Co-Chair of the SIDS Partnership Steering Committee, presented several key items brought forward by stakeholders in the partnership dialogue, including the need to clarify the kind of partnerships for SIDS. She highlighted the importance to focus on implementation, national enabling environments, give due attention to the sharing of best practices regularly and enhance the online SIDS action platform. Ambassador Young highlighted the need to focus on forging partnerships, building capacity, and engaging youth meaningfully in programs and advocacy. Partnerships need to be based on collaboration, respect and trust, and projects need to be stakeholder-driven and carried out through simple protocols. The Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations highlighted

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that the AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Mid Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway provides an opportunity to set the stage for dialogues to come.

9. Ms. Christine N. Umutoni, United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles expressed her thanks to the various stakeholders that extended their support to the preparation of the meeting. She explained that the UN is a demand-driven organisation and supports country priorities. The UN has put efforts to achieve sustainable development, namely in the fields of sustainable tourism, climate change, etc. Emphasis is more on integrating the SDGs into national plans as well as developing priorities and actions among various agencies for the implementation of SDGs. Progress was highlighted on various issues but also challenges. Opportunities to discuss the various themes and desired outcomes. Additional issues to consider included multi-country nature of UN presence, multi-institution representation and regional nature of the work. Finally, the importance of coordination was highlighted within the UN itself and among the countries.

10. Mr. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius, provided an overview of different characteristics of SIDS. Mr. Lutchmeenaraidoo highlighted an inherent challenge in the small size of SIDS is that they can be easily ignored. He highlighted the importance that SIDS have access to finance. He mentioned that for Mauritius, consideration needs to be given the status of ocean state with a view to improving the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources.

11. Following the opening of the meeting, Member States adopted the agenda and organization of work of the Meeting.

### **III. Sessions**

12. The Meeting held 5 sessions comprised of presentations followed by interactive discussions.

#### **Session 1: Country presentations on progress of implementing the SAMOA Pathway**

13. The session was chaired by Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations. In this session, Member States presented their country reports addressing progress in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, best practices and lessons learnt, constraints and challenges as well as identification of emerging challenges facing small island developing States. The following Member States made country presentations: Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore and Mauritius.

14. Cabo Verde: Mr. Jose Maria Jesus Tavares Silva thanked the government of Mauritius for the welcome. He explained that there are constraints in translating the SAMOA Pathway into Cabo Verde's national development plan— Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (PEDS). This is mainly due to a lack of statistical information on the priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway, weak coordination among the stakeholders involved in the process of implementation and difficulties on applying the Vulnerability Resilience Country Profile (VRCP) methodology. He further outlined the structure of PEDS, which has three (3) pillars, four (4) goals, thirty-five (35) programs, and an estimated \$4.3million for its implementation. He

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noted that PEDS is inherently linked to the SDGs. The aim of PEDS is to address the development challenges of Cabo Verde through inclusive and sustainable economic growth, governance efficiency (through the reduction of social and regional asymmetries), unemployment and especially youth unemployment reduction, capitalizing on demographic dividends, promoting innovation, fostering excellence in education and security. The four goals of the PEDS comprise: 1. Transforming Cabo Verde into a platform in the Atlantic (namely an aerial, digital, financial and oceanic platform in the Atlantic; 2. Guarantying economic and environmental sustainability; 3. Guarantying social inclusion, and; 4. Strengthening the sovereignty of the country. Mr. Tavares Silva also presented on the major challenges of development which comprise: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth; Governance efficiency; Unemployment reduction; Demographic dividends; Innovations; Excellence in education; and Security. The main trends experienced by Cabo Verde include a decrease in the relative share of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to GDP and a sustained and substantial increase in the public debt to GDP level from 2008 onwards, which can be attributed to heavy public investments.

15. Comoros: H.E. Ms. Fatouma Abdalla thanked conference organizers and informed that Comoros has integrated provisions of the SAMOA Pathway into the country's "Strategy of accelerated growth and sustainable development (SAGSD)" and subsequently, priority sectors addressed in the SAMOA Pathway are being implemented. She provided an overview of national progress, trends and challenges in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and in achieving sustainable development in SIDS. She underscored the inclusion of priorities of the SAMOA Pathway into their SAGSD, as well as the promotion of peace and the implementation of the Rio convention, including aspects on energy and waste management. Comoros shared that the identification of adaption and mitigation solutions caused by climate change has been completed and several national meetings have been organised on renewable energies. Comoros has also passed a fishing law, democratised telecom services by welcoming a second operator and improved the sanitary standards as regard to food. Ms. Abdalla mentioned that numerous hurdles still exist to this day, including the persistence of conflicts of competences between the Union and the Islands, coupled with low-qualified human resources and mobilisation of funds. Ms. Abdalla also mentioned that mismanagement and lack of transparency at all levels of decision-making is also very relevant to date. Comoros is also confronted with a serious legal gap regarding implementation and very low and slow rate of enactment of laws at the level of the parliament. Comoros is also in need of technical assistance to better and more efficiently deal with issues and strategies highlighted in the SAMOA Pathway. As such, she highlighted that many projects do not reach the implementation stage nor does the private sector contribute meaningfully. In terms of challenges ahead, Comoros indicated the following are needed: betterment of governance, financing for development projects, consultation and implications of civil society organisations, renewed dynamism for the Private Sector, more women in decision-making organizations, fight against corruption, societal violence, and implementation of new laws. In terms of partnerships, Comoros indicated that there is no legal framework or focal point for the implementation of the Samoa Pathway. The process is currently being managed by the office of the General Commissioner and UNDP though the rate of enactment of relevant laws is still slow. Comoros indicated translating priorities identified in the MTR of the SAMOA Pathway into practical and pragmatic action-oriented strategies for further implementation will require that SAMOA Pathway be effectively integrated into their 'Strategy of accelerated growth and sustainable development,' and other sectoral strategies and plans. Comoros is revising its

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development strategies and plans with the view to include the SDGs, Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. In conclusion, Ms. Abdalla expressed commitment to further cooperate in order to tackle its developmental and governance challenges and set Comoros in a course of fulfilling principles highlighted in the SAMOA Pathway.

16. Guinea-Bissau: Maria Antonieta Pinto Lopes D'Alva's presentation was based on the country reference documents, the Terra Ranka Strategic and Operational Plan (2015-2025) and its "Sol Na Yarde" Vision (2015-2025). The presentation is also informed by interaction with key national institutions. Ms. D'Alva's provided an overview of Guinea-Bissau, a coastal and archipelagic country with 1,584,791 inhabitants. She highlighted particularly fragile and vulnerable aspects of the country to climate change, similar to other Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The country is exposed to several natural hazards, such as strong winds, extreme weather events, coastal erosion and loss of biodiversity. She noted that during the last few years, considerable loss of land (coastal erosion) has devastated the northern part of the country, with large stretches of beaches. Faced with these vicissitudes, Guinea-Bissau has made enormous efforts to develop a strategic framework that has resulted in the elaboration of the Strategic and Operational Plan of the country, with preservation of natural capital and biodiversity as one of one of the pillars of sustainable development. Despite cyclical political crises, the country has made great efforts in the areas of environmental governance, as demonstrated through increased protected areas, from 15 per cent to 26.3 per cent of national territory, far exceeding goal 11 of Aichi. Ms. D'Alva discussed national progress, trends and challenges in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and sustainable development in SIDS. She also highlighted the country's experience with persistent political instability, fragility of the state and challenges to observe the principles of democracy and rule of law.

17. Maldives: Dr. Azeema Adam indicated that a High Level Ministerial Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing SAMOA Pathway for the Maldives and that a technical committee has been set up with all relevant stakeholders from implementing agencies. Dr. Adam mentioned that a policy mapping of SDGs strategy is currently being used while a data gap analysis of SDGs is carried out to minimise the risk of mis-informed policy decisions. Maldives indicated having an informal civil society network established, as also mentioned by previous speakers. She also shared that communication can be a real task and that there is work in progress to come up with a communication strategy for the SDGs. For example as regards Goal 2 of the SDGs, Maldives is working with the UN on better communication approaches. At the national level, sensitisation of all stakeholders is ongoing. Examples provided included, among others, working with media and the national Maldivian university to assess the needs of the country vis-a-vis the SDGs. Dr. Adam also mentioned that the identification of national priorities is still in progress. The Maldives provided an overview of national progress, trends and challenges in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and in achieving sustainable development in SIDS. As part of institutional coordination to implement the SDGs, it was noted that there is strong participation and engagement of social sectors, while there is weak participation of governance-related agencies and economic sector agencies. Therefore, a need to boost inter-linkages and to break silos was identified. Also, the lack of ownership and accountability among line ministries and clarity about 'means of implementation agencies' was highlighted. In terms of policy alignment with the SDGs, the Maldives mainstreamed the goals in their manifestos, policies and sectoral plans and laws. At the local level, SDG-based planning is being implemented. However, it was noted that there is a lack of a national development plan and long-term development planning processes. As far as human resource capacity is concerned, there is limited familiarity with SDGs among government agencies, a high rate of human

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turnover among ministries and poor knowledge and skills in all areas of the SDGs. Maldives is faced with several challenges to date. Dr. Adam highlighted data gaps, poor maintenance of sectoral, limited data-sharing practices, administrative inefficiencies and poor knowledge of data management and analysis. Maldives also mentioned that financing remains a problem for the proper implementation of the SDGs. Amongst others, reliance on external project-based funding for SDG activities proves cumbersome. Dr. Adam further added that national advocacy on SDGs, development of monitoring and evaluation of frameworks, improvement of coordination and cooperation, better resource mobilisation and building of new partnerships are now critical. Regarding means of implementation, Dr. Azeema noted that Maldives developed an informal network with the Civil Society and this has resulted in greater engagement and increased finance and grant opportunities. On partnerships, the Maldives indicated that, in the absence of concessional financing from traditional partners, the country sought finance from non-traditional partners and borrowed from international markets through the issuance of its first international sovereign bond last year. National priorities for the MTR of the SAMOA Pathway and proposals for practical and pragmatic action-oriented strategies for the further implementation include diversification of the economy, provision of advance health care and promotion of healthy life style, strengthening governance and building strong institutions, promotion of inclusive education, inclusive growth, efficient transport systems, water and sewage, and support to climate adaptation efforts. In conclusion, the Maldives pledged for more innovative financing such as green bonds, blue bonds and blended finance.

18. Sao Tome and Principe: Mr. Armindo Gonzaga Fernandes provided background information, including the general location of Sao Tome and Principe off the west coast of Africa, sea territory, population size, GDP growth rate and GDP per capita. The representative indicated that following the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway in 2014, the Government developed a plan of action called Transformation Agenda Vision. In 2015, the Government of Sao Tome and Principe organized an International Conference for Private Investors and Public Development Partners to seek assistance for its Transformation Agenda Vision (2015). The main points highlighted in this conference included the unparalleled geo-strategic location of the country, leverage of national assets and strengthening “food for the people”, fisheries and tourism, the possibility of developing Sao Tome and Principe into a Hub for business in the Gulf of Guinea and the economic transformation and modernization of the country. Sao Tome and Principe has an unspoilt beauty that it may capitalise for tourism, volcanic soil and climate conditions suitable for agriculture and abundant maritime territory conducive to fishing. Investment is needed to develop a deep-sea port and an international airport as well as infrastructure for provision of services (Logistics, Financial Services, Medicare, Entertainment, Education and ICT facilities). Mr. Fernandes highlighted other priority areas, including the establishment of transparent, efficient and attractive fiscal and taxation policies, and a predictable administration and legal environment. Sao Tome and Principe seeks to: (1) become less dependent on public international aid, (2) play a more prominent role in the sub-regional economy through private sector participation in the transformation agenda, (3) develop public infrastructure and human resources capacity, (4) mobilise contribution of Public Development Partners, and (5) align every public-private partnership deals with the Transformation Agenda. He mentioned that some actions needed to address the challenges faced by Sao Tome and Principe include: alleviating poverty; providing skills training and education for youth; upgrading the standard of health care; enhancing transparency, accountability and governance in public affairs; enhancing public safety, homeland security and coastal security; streamlining laws, legal system

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and judiciary processes; supporting infrastructures such as road, power supply, clean water, sanitation and housing; keeping a sustainable development, environment protection and control of collateral damage from growth; strengthening the foundations of the economy: Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism that offer social impact; and seeking public sector assistance. Sao Tome and Principe could witness some progress in the Adoption of National Biodiversity Strategy and Plan of Action (2015-2020) which includes: Purpose to diagnosis and identify appropriate measures for their protection (UNDP), the Adoption of National Programme of Action on Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation (WB), Technical Support to the National Climate Change Committee under the GCCA – Global Climate Change Alliance (EU), Children Education on Sanitation (UNICEF), Small Farmers Assistance (FAO) and Agriculture and Energy Sector (ADB).

19. Seychelles: Mr. Ronald Jumeau highlighted the role of Seychelles at COP21, in particular on issue of innovative financing to meet the financing status of high income countries. He added that Seychelles is currently in an era of strengthening constitutional consultations. He underscored the need to strengthen democratic foundations of the country. Seychelles is taking an integrated approach and not working in silos. Mr. Jumeau mentioned that the income gap is widening, which is has challenging political implications. The country is also confronted with challenges related to capacity building and a shrinking workforce. Seychelles has a large debt though the country has reduced it in the last ten years. Since the economic and financial crisis, Seychelles has had a budgetary surplus every year and tourism has increased every single year. Mr. Jumeau indicated that they have solidified their position as a tuna fishing capital of the Indian Ocean and has protection of 15 per cent of their EEZ. He indicated that Seychelles is leveraging on public-private partnerships to address risks of investing in small economies. Seychelles is home to the second largest canning factory in the world, which is owned by multi-stakeholders and which has secured 30 million euros of investment for the next 2 to 3 years. Mr. Jumeau also highlighted the need for innovation and the ambition of his country to be the first country to define what a blue economy is about. In this context, he recalled the process that is under way to define the blue economy. The process entails, among other things, a first presentation with the World Bank earlier this year and one-year consultations with all stakeholders to come up with the pathway to the blue economy. Mr. Jumeau noted that face-to-face consultations were a process owned by everybody, especially the youth. He also underlined the importance of including the youth when building the future. He then discussed resource flows to Seychelles and indicated that the largest sources of these flows have been China and India and added that South-South cooperation has addressed issues related to investment in a different manner than OECD. Mr. Jumeau highlighted support that Seychelles received from the World Bank, which includes blue bonds. He also mentioned that the World Bank stopped its development assistance to Seychelles 13 years ago, as the country moved to the high-income country category but added that the Bank has now started supporting Seychelles in the area of sustainable practices. As a suggestion for the way forward, Mr. Jumeau proposed strengthened South-South cooperation and SIDS-SIDS cooperation and exchange of best practices. He highlighted the importance to replicate and take to scale what SIDS have been doing. He warned that there are instances when SIDS solve problems only to inadvertently create new ones. He called islands should help other islands to find island solutions to island challenges.

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20. Singapore: Mr. Terence Tan, First Secretary (Political), expressed appreciation to the Government of Mauritius for hosting the AIMS Regional meeting. He indicated that, since 2014, Singapore has embarked in several national initiatives to integrate sustainability into national policies. He highlighted that Singapore is implementing the 2030 agenda and will undertake a voluntary national review this July. Mr Tan also mentioned that his country is implementing the Paris Agreement and will introduce a carbon tax by 2019. Mr. Tan highlighted that the national institutional set up for implementation of the SAMOA Pathway is an inter-ministerial committee on SDGs, which is co-chaired by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Environment and Water Resources. He underscored that the objective of the committee is to adopt a multi-stakeholder and holistic overview of progress made, as well as a whole of government approach. The implementation of the SAMOA Pathway included a multi-agency effort, the engagement of external stakeholders and learning from other countries and international agencies. Mr. Tan mentioned that Singapore has achieved progress in securing access to affordable and high-quality potable water for all of its people, in ensuring accessible and quality education for children, and in delivering access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing. He highlighted that constraints and challenges faced by Singapore include coping with an aging population, keeping relevance in an age of disruptive technologies and optimising land use as competitive priorities grow. Mr. Tan underscored that implementation monitoring is the responsibility of an inter-agency reporting process that focuses both on qualitative and quantitative aspects of the SAMOA Pathway. Partnerships are implemented through the Singapore development programme and Singapore has incorporated multi-stakeholder feedback in policy-making cycles and has developed ground-up initiatives while including civil society partnerships, youth and the private sector in the process. Mr. Tan underlined that the SAMOA Pathway is integrated into national priorities, policies, and development plans with a vision of a clean, green and sustainable Singapore. However, he indicated challenges in meeting this endeavour. These challenges include: the need for tailored approach, the fact that some of the targets and indicators do not apply to Singapore's national context, or that there is a lack of appropriate data. He indicated that Singapore's efforts are focused towards harnessing fresh water (Goal 6 of the SDGs). He recalled that despite desalination and treatment of waste water, Singapore is still dependent on imported water. Mr. Tan also highlighted the importance of climate change (Goal 13 of the SDG). He mentioned that there is limited scope for deploying renewable energy and insisted that further options need to be developed and deployed.

21. Mauritius: Mr. Rakesh Bhuckory, Minister Counsellor, began by acknowledging the many commonalities mentioned in the various national presentations. He highlighted that after the SDGs were adopted in 2015, Mauritius had a new government, a new vision and a new impetus. He recalled that the Government of Mauritius took the SDGs and matched them with the national aspirations of Mauritius. Over 2016, 60 per cent of the indicators (i.e. 130 indicators) were relevant to Mauritius. He highlighted that during this time, the statistics office of Mauritius started discussing with line ministries on how to do the mapping and subsequently, Mauritius came up with vision 2030, which is the framework through which the government implements the SDGs with the view to addressing unemployment, alleviating if not eradicating poverty, and supporting air connectivity and innovation. He highlighted that the process that led to the formulation of the vision 2030 was a participatory one, with NGOs, youth groups, the private sector and government bodies all involved. Mr. Bhuckory outlined Vision 2030, which has 5 pillars, and



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spoke about the vulnerability of Mauritius, its fuel dependency, and its environmental sensitivity. He emphasised that Mauritius is exposed to environmental hazards such as flash floods and thunderstorms. Mr. Bhuckory mentioned that Mauritius has a national programme with strong components for social programming and discussed the importance of social protection as a basic human right. He also highlighted that housing facilities and subsidies are provided for educating students with special needs.

### **Closing Remarks**

22. The Chairperson, H.E. Mr. Jadjish Dharamchand Koonjul, Mauritius Ambassador and Permanent Representative, spoke about the vulnerabilities of SIDS. He highlighted that SIDS from the AIMS region have diverse economies, different levels of development, and different levels of achievement of the SAMOA Pathway. He underscored the commonalities in the region, including the need to streamline the international agenda of: Agenda 2063; Agenda 2030; Paris Agreement, and the SAMOA Pathway. Mr. Koonjul underlined vulnerabilities faced by SIDS. These vulnerabilities comprise: high debts due to limited access to concessionary financing as MICs; challenges to ensure inclusive economic growth; and challenges around governance issues, including how to address the problem of lack of coordination and coherence in implementation amongst Ministries. Mr. Koonjul underlined issues of accountability and transparency and underscored that some problems, such as human resource capabilities, data gaps, and climate change vulnerabilities and resilience issues, are faced in different ways by different countries. The Chairperson discussed issues regarding means of implementation and funding. He noted that some countries have difficulties to access financing, while others have found innovative ways to attract financing and in some cases added that there is a lack of regulatory frameworks. He also discussed training and capacity building, which are challenges faced by many countries. As a way forward, Mr. Koonjul emphasized the need for South-South cooperation, SIDS-SIDS cooperation, and inter-island cooperation.

### **Session 2: Possible regional approaches to implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS group**

23. The session was chaired by Azeema Adam, Envoy on Financing for Development, Maldives. Presentations were made by Riad Meddeb from UNDP and Tishka Francis from UN-OHRLLS, and Gina Bonne from the Indian Ocean Commission. This was followed by an informal discussion during which Member States identified regional priorities and possible future actions for the further implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

24. Ms. Tishka Francis provided an overview of the *Progress Report on the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS Region*, prepared by OHRLLS and UNDP. Ms. Francis indicated that the draft report was compiled based on National Assessment Reports received from Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Mauritius and Singapore, as well as other existing reports and relevant research. She highlighted that the purpose of the report is to serve as a discussion paper at the AIMS regional meeting, and to assist with the engagement of the AIMS SIDS in the Mid-Term Review process, leading up to the Interregional preparatory meeting in Samoa later this year. Ms. Francis shared that the draft is a technical paper and that it includes information on GDP rates, population, poverty and human development index. She further mentions that the report seeks to provide an overview of the wide variety of

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human, economic development and other priorities of the SAMOA Pathway for SIDS in the AIMS region.

25. Mr. Riad Meddeb of UNDP provided an in-depth overview of the regional report for AIMS. Mr. Meddeb discussed the common specific economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS in the AIMS region, such as inadequate supply of fresh water and land needed to manage waste, unique and fragile biodiversity, vulnerability to sea-level rise, dependence on imported fuels, expensive transport and communication costs, and their limited scale to compete in the global economy. He also discussed common sectoral challenges reflected in the SAMOA Pathway Priority Areas, such as sustainable growth and tourism, climate and energy adaptation, oceans and seas, and food security, to name a few. He elaborated on common cross-cutting challenges reflected in the SAMOA Pathway such as partnerships, financing, trade and capacity-building. He highlighted how the SDGs complement and bring a unified, coherent and integrated structure to the sectoral and cross-cutting challenges and processes. Mr. Meddeb highlighted the importance of integrating the SAMOA Pathway into the 2030 Agenda and effective inter-regional coordination to ensure a common approach for the AIMS region. He underlined successes in Cape Verde, Comoros, Guinea Bissau and Maldives (CSO network), Mauritius (Switch Africa Green), Sao Tome & Principe (Energy Sector Recovery Investments), Seychelles (integrated water and waste systems), and Singapore. For next steps, he underscored the importance of operationalizing the transition for SIDS to Ocean states, through connection of their EEZ's. He highlighted the need to accelerate implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the context of Agenda 2030, and recalled that it is essential to utilize opportunities that offer a smart islands approach and deliver digital transformation and innovative finance, including blue bonds, Islamic finance and green bonds.

26. Ms. Gina Bonne of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) provided an overview of the IOC as an intergovernmental organization for regional cooperation, headquartered in Mauritius with a strategic framework based on diplomacy, cooperation, economic development and infrastructure, sustainable environment, climate change, education, research and innovation. She highlighted that the IOC acts as a facilitator of dialogue and leverages funds. She shared that the IOC complements national efforts in specific thematic areas, and promotes collaboration through disseminating shared values and generating ideas and long-term solutions. Ms. Bonne highlighted that the IOC's mission is not to replace national efforts but to fill in gaps at the national level. She mentioned that levels of intervention through which the IOC operates include government institutions, non-state actors such as the private sector and NGOs, as well as regional bodies in ACP states. The IOC acts through regional programmes and projects funded by external funding partners, through partnerships with specialised institutions and organisations at the regional, interregional and international level, as well as through thematic regional networks, platforms and exchange programmes. Ms. Bonne underlined that opportunities exist for multiple partnerships of SIDS to raise awareness, leverage funds for actions, share experience and promote South-South cooperation. Coordination at the regional level is paramount to avoid duplication of efforts, and at the national level, to make better use of existing national mechanisms. Finally, Ms. Bonne highlighted that interregional cooperation is important for building and strengthening existing partnerships.

### **Summary of interactive dialogue**

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27. Member states underscored the importance of a common approach and for fluid information sharing. Common challenges, such as waste management, should be addressed collectively. Issues of climate change and disasters should be prioritised and strategies should be put in place to address immense recovery costs. Member states discussed the importance to find a regional approach in implementing the SAMOA Pathway. Such an approach should identify problems that impede SIDS from working together and identify regional priorities. Member states also inquired as to what the Caribbean and Pacific regions are doing for their regional reports and were informed by the Secretariat that other regions have already started drafting and that, once ready, these reports will be shared to support common and uniform reporting for the inter-regional outcome document. In conclusion, member states underlined the importance of identifying commonalities as a way to shape a regional approach for AIMS. Delegates also touched upon the importance of mapping priorities and added that this exercise should strengthen an approach to act together. They underscored that that a regional platform would be very useful and proposed that such a platform be outcome of the UNDS reform process.

**Session 2 (Informal Discussions cont.):**

28. The previous session continued under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Koonjul. Emerging from the discussion were proposals that the SIDS AIMS group meet on a more regular basis in New York. This was supported by several AIMS delegates, which also indicated that there will likely be challenges to agree on priority topics for these meetings.

29. Delegates discussed the importance of the creation of a regional coordinating mechanism to support organization in the region.

30. Member states acknowledged that organization for the region is not materializing due to lack of a regional commission or platform. The discussion highlighted the importance to ensure coherent regional organization that is reputable and that will support the region to receive recognition, funding and other benefits associated with an established and legitimate group.

31. Delegates suggested that a meeting of the 8 AIMS SIDS should be held in September. Such meeting will demonstrate full support and political leadership and ensure that the necessary ministries are working together and have a platform to organize SIDS in the AIMS region.

32. Delegates also highlighted the importance of identifying regional priorities that include capacity building in the eight countries. Turning to the way forward, participants identified the following challenges and common areas: 1. Climate change; 2, Sustainable Energy; 3. Disaster Risk Reduction; 4. Finance for Development (debt sustainability); and 5. Oceans. Delegates clarified that topics and issues not explicitly included in these 5 priority areas were still important for the region.

33. In closing, particular issues raised by delegates included: 1. The need to meet more regularly in New York; 2. The need to address difficulties at the national level, including coordination among ministries, UN Resident Coordinators, and UN Agencies. Common challenges identified by delegates included: 1. Development Finance; 2. Data gaps; and 3. Lack of a regional structure. Regarding a regional structure, it was suggested that 4 or 5 priority areas be proposed. These include: capacity building, oceans, gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction. It was

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suggested that, going forward, UNDP should make a proposal that can be shared, approved by capitals, and included in the inter-regional meeting. Delegates highlighted the importance of strengthening strategic partnership frameworks and of ensuring that governments know what each other is doing.

### **Session 3: Means of Implementation**

34. This session was chaired by Ms. Fatouma Abdallah, Office of the Vice President, Comoros. The session included a panel discussion with presentations by the following: Marjaana Sall, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius and Seychelles; Sainivalati Navoti, Chief of SIDS Unit, UNDESA; Jean-Claude Mporamazina, UNCTAD; Maurizio Maria Gazzola, Chief Strategic Solutions, UN Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) (through Skype); Ms. Khalissa Ikhlef - UNESCO; Mr. Rafik Mahjoubi-Paris 21; Mr. Leighton Waterman- IRENA. This session highlighted means of implementation and commitments to address systemic issues, including, but not limited to, policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, data, monitoring and accountability. This session also focused on overcoming the challenges faced by SIDS and on strengthening the delivery of all means of implementation to the countries.

35. Marjaana Sall, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius and Seychelles, highlighted financing as a priority for Disaster Risk Reduction efforts. She discussed the IOC project on biodiversity, renewable energy, fisheries and indicated the importance to support fishery partnerships with countries to develop marine resources, and ocean health. Ms. Sall also highlighted that the EU – African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) relationship is a top priority for the coming years. EU member states are in the negotiation process currently until the end of May, to agree on a mandate and encouraged discussions with ACP partners. She stated that a very important meeting, of the ACP - EU joint ministerial council, will take place at the end of May. This meeting will set the tone for future negotiations to be held in August and September. H.E. Sall highlighted her commitment to supporting SIDS in the future and emphasized the importance to work together on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, for which EU and SIDS share a commitment.

36. Mr. Sainivalati Navoti, Chief of SIDS Unit of UNDESA, provided an overview of his office's role and collaboration with partners at regional and country levels, in helping countries to formulate and implement national sustainable development strategies. Mr. Navoti provided an overview of the mandate of the SIDS Unit, which is to promote and facilitate the SIDS' efforts to implement the BPOA and the Mauritius Strategy (MSI). He also explained internal organisation and work of the SIDS Unit in broad categories, including normative functions that support SIDS delegations in intergovernmental processes; technical and advisory services; and coordination, consultation and think-tank functions. Among other roles, he highlighted the monitoring and reporting duties to the GA and ECOSOC on progress achieved in implementing priorities, commitments, partnerships and other activities of SIDS.

37. Mr. Jean-Claude Mporamazina of UNCTAD presented on issues regarding sustainable energy in SAMOA Pathway, the nexus between energy and structural transformation, access to modern energy in SIDS from AIMS, as well as fossil-fuel problems and renewal energy solutions. Mr. Mporamazina highlighted the importance of increasing access to modern energy in SIDS, as this source of energy has the

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potential to stimulate their economy's structural transformation. He indicated that energy access is important for the AIMS group but that fuel dominance in imports of these countries is a worsening challenge. He encouraged the development of renewable energy and highlighted that what is needed to more political will, promotion by stakeholders, as well as more international support for SIDS that are lagging behind.

38. Mr. Maurizio Maria Gazzola, Chief Strategic Solutions at OICT, encouraged the use of UN Technology Labs (UNTIL), highlighting that technology has changed in virtually every industry in the last decade. He added that now it is time to apply that change to delivery on UN mandates. He provided an overview of how UNTIL uses the latest technology innovations including artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, drones, Internet of Things, machine learning and FinTech. Mr. Gazzola highlighted that all tools will be available on an open source platform, to enable sharing and technology transfer among member states, and that the labs network will work collaboratively with diverse expertise across disciplines and industries, to develop innovative technology solutions.

39. Ms. Khalissa Ikhlef of UNESCO presented an overview of their action plan for SIDS and their interdisciplinary mandate, which is highly relevant to priorities identified in the SAMOA Pathway. She listed the five priority areas covering UNESCO's multidisciplinary mandate and how it addresses many of the SDGs. Ms. Ikhlef stressed their work on education, water science, DRR, youth, statistics, and indigenous persons.

40. Mr. Rafik Mahjoubi of Paris 21 discussed strategic planning and coordination to enhance statistical systems. He presented on the organisation of Paris 21, which was established for more than 15 years, and its work to promote data and statistics for development. He provided an overview of the locations where their work globally, regionally and nationally. Mr. Mahjoubi highlighted statistical challenges for SIDS, including sustainability of funding/investments for statistics programmes. He proposed the establishment of regular meetings for SIDS to discuss developments in statistics and regional statistics co-ordination and co-operation in AIMS. He also underscored the importance of collaborative support to countries in monitoring and reporting on SDGs. He also emphasised the need to establish a SIDS Centre of Excellence and to strengthen advocacy.

41. Mr. Leighton Waterman of IRENA SIDS Lighthouses initiative presented on partnerships between SIDS, IRENA and other development partners. He highlighted the strategic objectives of the initiative, which is to enable a sustainable energy transformation for people on the front line of climate change on small islands around the world, and to enhance energy independence and economic prosperity in SIDS. He underscored that main elements of the initiative are accelerated renewable energy deployment in the power sector, well-structured systems transitions, information exchange between partners, and capacity building in SIDS.

### **Session 3 (continued): Means of implementation, Financing for Sustainable Development in SIDS**

42. This session was chaired by Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations. The session included presentations by Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director, UNOHRLLS; Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles;

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Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief, UNOHRLLS; Chantal Naidoo, GCF; Bilal Anwar, General Manager, Commonwealth Finance Hub; Cyrille Barnerias, GEF.

43. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director of UN-OHRLLS, provided an overview of the third SIDS Global Business Network Forum, which held over two days, just prior to the regional AIMS meeting. Ms. Schroderus-Fox reported on what emerged from the Forum, including the acknowledgement of the spirit of collaboration and willingness to work together and the commitment to find solutions that benefit each other. She provided takeaway messages from the GBN which included: the private sector role in implementation of the SAMOA Pathway; the importance of creating an enabling environment for investment in research and development; significant of strengthening public-private partnerships; no one-size fits all approach to partnerships; and the need to strengthen cross-sectorial partnerships. Ms. Schroderus-Fox congratulated the announcement of five partnerships and encouraged continued discussions at this event, and through the SIDS-GBN platform that leads to additional partnerships.

44. Ms. Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles, underlined the importance of financing for development initiatives in the AIMS region and particularly, the success of the Rodrigues Lime Juice Multi-purpose Cooperative Society Ltd. and Gravieres Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd., which provide support to livelihood diversification and marine conservation through operationalization of a lime fruit processing plant. Ms. Umutoni discussed how this initiative is led by a women's group who plant lime trees and process the limes into brine. She also emphasised that the initiative has also engaged youth in the business and production of juice. Ms. Umutoni highlighted that this initiative has experienced large-scale growth as a result, has enjoyed revenue of 25M Rs, and subsequently has not been able to deliver production that can keep up with demand. Ms. Umutoni also discussed the importance of environmental protection, invasive alien species clearing and restoration of native forests through private sector partnerships.

45. Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg, Chief of UN-OHRLLS provided an overview of development indicators and financing for SIDS in the AIMS region. Mr. Erdenebileg highlighted the wide variety of human and economic development patterns in AIMS, citing GDP per capita rates, GDP growth rates, population, per cent below national poverty line and HDI, all of which which make it difficult to have a single statement on financing for development for the group as a whole. He highlighted ODA recipients, external financing figures and top bilateral and multilateral donors for the region. Figures for concessional finance received in the different SIDS regions, debt to GDP ratios and climate finance flows were also provided. In conclusion, Mr. Erdenebileg stressed that SIDS need additional support and that the cost of adaptation is very high and that the scale of finance needed outstrips current concessional and non-concessional finance available to SIDS.

46. Ms. Chantal Naidoo of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) presented on how the GCF can support implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. He highlighted that GCF is a financial mechanism of the UNFCCC that promotes low-emission and climate-resilient development in developing countries. Ms. Naidoo provided an overview on how GCF engages with countries on projects and their type of financial instruments of grants, loans, guarantees and equity. He explained that funding partners go through an accreditation process and that the fund aims for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation investments over time. Ms. Naidoo underscored how GCF assesses proposals and key impacts of reduced emissions and increased resilience.

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47. Mr. Bilal Anwar, General Manager, Commonwealth Finance Hub, highlighted that the Commonwealth is composed of 52 independent and sovereign states of the world, 25 of which are SIDS. He framed the SIDS financing challenge by highlighting that these countries receive around 3.5 billion USD of total net ODA. He noted that the SIDS share of total ODA is on a declining trend, from 3.5 per cent to around 2 per cent. Mr. Anwar highlighted that while volume of climate finance is available, accessibility remains a challenge for various reasons, including the unique structure of SIDS economies, difference between mitigation and adaptation measures, and lack of technical capacity to develop commercially bankable projects, among others. Mr. Anwar explained current achievements, including 18 requests for technical assistance from member states, 6 national advisers already deployed in SIDS and 6 more at the advance stage of deployment.

48. Mr. Cyrille Barnerias of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) underscored that GEF is a financing mechanism since it was founded in 1991. Each country has an operational focal point and an allocation and small grants programme, and projects are presented and implemented by one of 18 agencies (UNDP, WB, FAO, UN Environment, AfDB, IUCN, CI, WWF, etc.), and executed by the ministries and state agencies. Mr. Barnerias provided an overview of GEF 6 (2014-2018) for the AIMS, highlighting its involvement in land degradation, biodiversity, climate change, total cost and per cent of use. Mr. Barnerias focused on regional projects in the AIMS on fisheries and coastal areas that support regional collaboration and knowledge sharing.

### **Summary of interactive dialogue**

49. The presentations were followed by an interactive dialogue, which highlighted the vulnerability of SIDS due to climate change and the need for resilience building. Discussions covered the indebtedness of SIDS, consideration given to classification based on income level criteria, as well as the suggestion for re-classification criteria, or another type of support that would be more specific and tailor made for SIDS, especially middle-income SIDS. The challenge of domestic mobilisation of resources was highlighted and reference was made to Mauritius, which has tried to streamline physical systems, enlarge their tax base and utilize fuel sales to create funds for infrastructure.

50. Member states discussed finance issues, recalling that the SAMOA Pathway defined many areas in need of support for finance. Areas identified for improvement included access to funding, aid for market access, economic partnership agreements and the importance to work closely with the World Bank and UNCTAD in these areas. The role of private investment and innovative finance were highlighted, as well as the use of green bonds to provide resources for renewable energy.

51. In closing, on-going political processes at the UN, such as that of the Committee for Development Policy, were discussed, as well as the conversation over the consideration for a third category of countries vulnerable to climate change. The importance of funding to address climate change and resilience was specifically mentioned. National vision and an enabling environment were identified as very important for attracting partnerships. Public-private partnerships are an important way to attract investment although it was also mentioned that a lack of capacity is sometimes a challenge that needs to be addressed. There is a need for regulatory frameworks for private participation and a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for SIDS. All SIDS were encouraged to participate in ECOSOC discussions regarding the creation of a third category of vulnerable countries.

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#### **Session 4: Toward a regional coordinating mechanism to support implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and 2030 Agenda in AIMS**

52. This session was chaired by Maria Antonieta Pinto Lopes D'Alva, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations. Presentations were made by Raj Mohabeer, Indian Ocean Commission; Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles; Artie Dubrie, UNECLAC (through Skype)]. Presentations were followed by an interactive discussion, during which participants noted the importance of consensus in moving forward with a platform that can serve the AIMS region as a regional coordinating mechanism.

53. Artie Dubrie from UNECLAC highlighted lessons learnt from Caribbean SIDS on a regional coordinating mechanism to support implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and 2030 Agenda for SIDS in the AIMS region. Ms. Dubrie provided a short history of the Caribbean RCM, highlighting objects, functions and challenges of the mechanism. The establishment of the Caribbean RCM grows out the realisation that the absence of such a regional mechanism was a critical factor contributing to the slow pace of implementation of policies and programmes, at both the national and sub-regional levels. Cognisant of this, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) agreed to setting up the RCM in 2006. Objectives of the RCM were to ensure achievement of effective coordination of sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean, including enhancing coherence, complementary and consistency of activities. There continues to be interest among member states and other partners in the work of the RCM, although the regional mechanism continues to be under-resourced. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed if it is to fulfil its founding vision, objectives and functions.

54. Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles highlighted the need for an important role of UNDP in any regional coordinating mechanism in supporting the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Ms Umutoni mentioned that the UNCT recently held a retreat, where the development of an Integrated Regional Framework for IOC States was considered. Ms. Umutoni noted that such considerations could be broadened to a discussion on how UNCTs in the region could better coordinate support to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs, within broader regional coordinating mechanism.

55. Raj Mohabeer from the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) highlighted the importance that greater focus is paid to the identification of tangible, implementable and targeted interventions to strengthen opportunities for cooperation and collaboration across the three SIDS regions. Mr. Mohabeer underlined the need for paradigm shift in the way the SIDS in the AIMS region are viewed—from being perceived as a group of scattered countries in different regions of the world to a consolidated block or grouping with sufficient collective strength to influence decision making processes in the UN system. Mr. Mohabeer proposed that IOC could offer collaborative arrangements for the coordinating mechanism. Such arrangements could include a national task force on sustainable development, national focal points, all supported jointly by AOSIS, UNDESA and other UN agencies and partners.

#### **Summary of interactive dialogue**

56. The presentations were followed by an interactive dialogue, where delegates highlighted the complexities with respect to a coordinating mechanism for the AIMS



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region. Delegates mentioned that a sub-regional mechanism is already in place and highlighted that these sub-regional mechanisms would need to fit into a broader regional structure. Additionally, the importance of ensuring that all States in the region were represented in institutional configurations were discussed and a proposed mechanism was underscored. Further, Member States discussed the various forums, including UNHQ in NY, within which SIDS from the AIMS region could meet, at different levels and on different themes. In closing, it was recommended that Permanent Representations of AIMS to the United Nations in New York should meet regularly to prepare for a high-level meeting in the margins of UNGA and to promote regional cooperation among the AIMS region. It was also recommended that the OHRLLS and the DESA organize regular skype meetings with the AIMS National Focal Points and the UN Country Teams, to facilitate preparations for the high-level meeting and to finalize the draft AIMS regional report.

#### **Session 5: Discussions on the Elements for the Regional Report on the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway**

57. This last session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations. [Raj Mohabeer, IOC; Christine N. Umutoni, UN, Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Mauritius and Seychelles.] The outcome of this session resulted in the conclusion of the meeting, provided in Annex I herewith.

### **IV. Conclusions of the Meeting**

58. The AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting came to a successful conclusion, following presentations on possible regional approaches to implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS Group, which was followed by a general informal discussion session on the same subject. Delegates heard presentations from the UN Systems on their support role to SIDS. Making presentations were OHRLLS, UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNOICT, UNESCO and IRENA. These were followed by sessions featuring: Country presentations on progress of implementing the SAMOA Pathway; Possible regional approaches to implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS group; Means of implementation; Financing for sustainable development in SIDS; Discussions toward a regional coordinating mechanism to support implementation of the SAMOA Pathway; the Regional report on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway; and consideration and adoption of the regional report on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. (see annex I).

### **V. Closing of the Meeting**

59. At the closing of the Conference, the meeting heard statements by Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, UN-OHRLLS and by H.E. Mr. Jagdish D. Koonjul, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations.

60. The USG of UN-OHRLLS, in her closing statement, expressed thanks to the Government of Mauritius, Ambassador Koonjul and the people of Mauritius for hosting the Regional Meeting and their hospitality. She congratulated the delegates

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and participants on the outcomes of the meeting, highlighting that the conclusions outlined trends on the progress and challenges of the region in implementing the SAMOA Pathway, and common priorities to guide the AIMS region through the preparatory process toward the MTR in 2019. The USG underscored the meeting's focus on means of implementation, to effectively address the range of challenges of the AIMS countries, in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and specifically citing climate change, water and sanitation, data and statistics, financing for development, capacity building, gender equality and women's empowerment.

61. H.E. Mr. Jagdish D. Koonjul, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations, highlighted a variety of challenges and recalled some of the main messages discussed during the AIMS Regional Preparatory meeting. He underscored the urgent need for a better organized regional coordinating structure for SIDS in the AIMS region. He underlined concern over the ad-hoc arrangements observed in the past, during MSI, highlighted the previous coordinating role of IOC, and commended their performance in their preparatory role. Ambassador Koonjul discussed the importance of focal points and underlined that they need to be maintained and strengthened, and that consideration should be provided for horizontal communication among the focal points to aid their ability to coordinate amongst one another. He also mentioned the importance of communication, stressing the importance of regular Skype meetings and mentioned that teleconferences can be organized to connect the AIMS regional focal points and with counterparts at the UN Secretariat. It was suggested that the SIDS AIMS group meet during the upcoming high-level meetings in September 2018. He recalled that Carbo Verde took initiative during the 2016 meeting of African SIDS and Madagascar in the context of protecting SIDS in AU. He discussed the AIMS acronym and recalled that upon its initial creation, that the A stood for Atlantic, not Africa. Ambassador Koonjul indicated that the region as a group should proceed slowly and incrementally, with support from their political leaders, and work together at the mission level in New York, with clear messaging and, hopefully commitments with the support of the UN system.

62. The Meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on 25 May 2018.

### Conclusion

**AIMS Regional Preparatory Countries for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA  
Pathway  
23-25 May 2018  
Balaclava, Mauritius**

1. Representatives of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) Region met in Balaclava, Mauritius on 23-25 May 2018 in preparation for the one-day High Level Conference on the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway to be held in New York in September 2019 as mandated by the UNGA Resolutions 70/292, 71/225 and 72/217.

2. The representatives of the SIDS made presentations on the progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway which focused on the national priorities, successes, challenges and lessons learnt, noting that some national reports were yet to be finalized. The meeting discussed the possible regional approaches to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS region, the means of implementation including financing for sustainable development in the SIDS, the necessity for a regional coordinating mechanism to support the implementation and had an exchange of views on the elements for a regional approach to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the purposes of the midterm review.

3. The country presentations underlined the intricate interlinkages between the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognized that the monitoring of the progress in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway was best carried out in the context of the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs and their targets based on the SDG indicators. The meeting recognized that there exist sufficient commonalities in the priorities of the AIMS countries that could form the basis for a regional approach while emphasizing that, because of their diverse economic development levels, their geographical dispersion and other particularities, attention should also be given to their pressing national priorities.

4. In the context of a regional approach to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for the AIMS region, the representatives agreed that the following thematic areas represented the collective priorities that should be addressed in the context of the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway:

- Climate Change
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building
- Water and Sanitation
- Data collection and interpretation gaps
- Means of implementation including financing for development
- Capacity Building
- Gender equality and women empowerment
- Food security

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5. The meeting recognized that while an overall AIMS regional approach was desirable, the geographical dispersion of the countries of the AIMS region also provided opportunities for action at a sub-regional level to address issues related to the geographical position of certain AIMS countries, language commonalities and similarities of the challenges faced.

6. The meeting expressed continued concern over the difficulties faced by the SIDS in accessing funding and financing for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, especially for SIDS which had graduated from LDCs, including the challenges faced in accessing funds pledged under the Green Climate Fund in the context of combating climate change and its effects as well as other such initiatives. The meeting, recognizing the efforts by the Green Climate Fund, the global environment facility and others in improving access to funding, underlined the importance of further streamlining the procedures for accessing funding for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. In this regard, they called on the funding/financing institutions like the Green Climate Fund, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Hub and the Global Environment Facility, and traditional partners such as the EU to address these SIDS concerns. The meeting also stressed on the importance of domestic resource mobilization and leveraging funds, and also considered the possibility of using innovative financing instruments such as Islamic Finance, blue bonds, debt swaps and called for the lowering of remittance transaction costs.

7. The meeting recalled the recommendations by the Committee on Development Policy (CDP) to ECOSOC to consider, at its forthcoming session, the creation of a new category of countries which are or have graduated from LDC status and which face extreme vulnerability to climate change and other environmental shocks and encouraged SIDS to actively participate in the discussions.

8. The meeting acknowledged the importance and the scaling up of strategic partnerships in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway while underlining the need for them to be geared towards addressing the national priorities of the countries.

9. The meeting also agreed that the private sector had a very important role to play in the implementation process and highlighted the need for facilitation of public private partnerships in that regard. The meeting also recognized that there was a need for greater access to finance by small and medium enterprises which can represent a powerful vehicle for attaining the SAMOA Pathway objectives and for creating jobs and wealth. The meeting further stressed the need for the involvement of civil society, youth and other stakeholders in the decision making process.

10. The meeting underlined the difficulties faced by the AIMS countries in accessing funding and financing under favorable terms especially by the middle-income and high-income countries. The meeting expressed concern that the level of income continued to be the overriding consideration in determining conditions for access to funding and financing without due attention being paid to the vulnerabilities of the SIDS. They called on agencies and partners to increase their assistance to SIDS in building their capacity to access the available funding/financing. They impressed on the capacity to formulate bankable projects and successfully addressing the complicated modalities associated with the access to funding/financing for both projects and infrastructure development.

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11. The meeting also stressed the need to facilitate transfer of technology to and promote innovation in SIDS.

12. The meeting recognized the role being played by relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the UN System in addressing and mainstreaming the priorities of the SIDS in their action programmes and encouraged them to continue their good work especially in the fields of food security, trade, environment, the oceans, education, culture, social development and sustainable tourism and country support in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in general.

13. The meeting recognized the strategic role of UNDP at national level in supporting the development of national development plans and/or long-term development plans and the mainstreaming of the SDGs in the national policies leading to the integration of the SAMOA Pathway. They called on UNDP, which was preparing the AIMS regional report on the progress in the SAMOA Pathway implementation, to use its network of country offices, in collaboration with UNOHRLLS and UNDESA, to pay particular attention to the priorities and challenges identified by the AIMS region. They also called on UNDP to continue extending its full support to the SIDS in the enabling the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda.

14. The meeting of the AIMS countries also underlined the difficulties faced in coordination and monitoring at the regional level due to the lack of a formal mechanism to cater for the region's needs.

15. The meeting agreed that a coordination mechanism is crucial to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway in the AIMS region and recommended the holding of a high-level meeting of the AIMS region in the margins of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018 to decide on the creation and the modalities of such a mechanism.

16. The meeting called on the Permanent representations of AIMS to the United Nations in New York to meet regularly to prepare for the high-level meeting and to exchange views on promoting regional cooperation among the AIMS countries. The meeting also recommended that the UNOHRLLS and the UNDESA organize regular skype meetings with the AIMS National Focal Points and the UN Country Teams. The meeting also called on the AIMS UN country teams to coordinate amongst themselves to more effectively support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Pending the setting up of a regional coordination mechanism, the meeting recognized that the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) may help to facilitate future coordination, in collaboration with the non-IOC Members of the AIMS, in accordance with the IOC's role as coordinator for the AIMS region during the 2005 SIDS Conference.

17. The meeting recommended that in order to accurately reflect the region's composition, the regional nomenclature should be modified to "Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) to be pronounced as "ACE" Small Island Developing States" and adopted in the context of the High-Level Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019.

18. The meeting expressed its appreciation to the UNOHRLLS and the UNDESA for their continued support to SIDS in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

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19. The meeting agreed that the AIMS regional report which together with these conclusions and the report of the Preparatory Meeting will constitute the input of the group to the Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting in SAMOA in November 2018. The AIMS regional report will be finalized in New York by the group, following the receipt of the remaining national reports, by July 2018.

20. The meeting expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for ably hosting the AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway.

25 May 2018  
Balaclava, Mauritius

## Annex II

### Participants List from the AIMS Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway

FIRST NAME	FAMILY NAME	JOB TITLE	ORGANIZATION
<i>AIMS SIDS Representatives</i>			
Ms. Maria Isabel	Gomes Monteiro	Counsellor	Cabo Verde Mission to the United Nations
Mr. Jose Maria Jesus	Tavares Silva	Counsellor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communities/ Cabo Verde
H.E. Abdallah	Ahmed	Ambassador DPR	Permanent Mission of the Union of Comoros
Ms. Fatouma	Abdallah Epse Ali	Vice President in charge of the Ministry of Environment	Department of Sustainable Development/ Comoros
Ms. Maria Antonieta	Pinto Lopes D'Alva	Counsellor/SIDS Focal Point at the Permanent Mission	Permanent Mission of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations
Dr. Azeema	Adam	Government of Maldives Envoy on Financing for Development	Permanent Mission of Maldives
Ms. Aishath	Saadh	Deputy Director General	Ministry of Environment and Energy/ Maldives
H.E. Jagdish Dharamchand	Koonjul	Ambassador and Permanent Representative	Mauritius Mission to the United Nations, New York
Mr. Vishal Anand	Luchoomun	Second Secretary	Mauritius Mission to the United Nations, New York
Mr. Armindo	Gonzaga Fernandes	Counselor - Head of Department	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communities/ Sao Tome and Principe
Ms. Nadia Alexandria	Bom Jesus Lima Viegas	Second Secretary	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communities/Sao Tome and Principe
H.E. Ronald	Jumeau	Ambassador and Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of the Republic of Seychelles to the UN

Mr. Terence	Tan Qiyang	First Secretary (Political)	Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations
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***Republic of Mauritius MoFA***

Hon. Seetannah	Lutchmeenaraidoo	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade
Mr. Rakesh	Bhuckory	Minister Counsellor	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade
Ms. Vimla	Huree-Agarwal	First Secretary	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade
Ms. Disha	Ragnuth	Second Secretary	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade
Ms. Tejaswinee	Burumdoyal		Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade
Ms. Shalini	Gungaram		Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Int. Trade



### *Other Representatives*

Ms. Lois	Young	Permanent Representative	Belize Mission to the United Nations
Ms. Marjaana	Sall	Ambassador	EU to the Republic of Mauritius and Seychelles
Mr. Brian	Flynn	Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative	Ireland Mission to the United Nations

### *United Nations*

Ms. Fekitamoeola	‘Utoikamanu	USG and High Representative	UN-OHRLLS
Ms. Heidi	Schroderus Fox	Director	UN-OHRLLS
Mr. Sandagdorj	Erdenebileg	Chief	UN-OHRLLS
Ms. Tishka	Francis	Sustainable Development Officer	UN-OHRLLS
Ms. Shifaana	Thowfeequ	Programme Management Officer	UN-OHRLLS
Mr. Hans Damien	Sass	Public Information Officer	UN-OHRLLS
Mr. Andrew	Lange	Associate Programme Management Officer	UN-OHRLLS
Mr. Anthony	Flores	Staff Assistant	UN-OHRLLS
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