

QUARTERLY MEETING (3Q)
Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
Date: Thursday, 21st 2019
Conference Room: S-26MM2
Time: 3:00pm – 5:00 pm (New York Time)

AGENDA

Members in Attendance: UN-OHRLLS, UN DESA, UNIDO, IAEA, UNEP, UNFPA, UNDP(HQ), UN UNESCO, FAO, UNISDR, FAO, UN-ECLAC (Port of Spain), World Bank

Chair: Mr. Sai Navoti, Chief of SIDS Unit, DSDG/DESA

Summary: Discussions were held on the follow-up to the High-level Review of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SAMOA Pathway held on 27th of Sept. 2019 as well as the annual 2nd Committee SIDS resolution that had passed silence procedure on 25 Nov 2019. The meeting also received an update on the Multi-Country Office (MCO) Review process as well as UN support for graduating SIDS. In an effort to further enhance the IACG group as a platform for collaboration among its members, members were invited to participate more actively in future IACG meetings by *inter alia* proposing agenda items and reporting on their support to SIDS.

1. Opening remarks

Following brief remarks by the Chair of the Meeting, the Director of UN-OHRLLS thanked everyone for the successful SAMOA mid-term review. She highlighted that it had become clear that SIDS are recognized as a special case for sustainable development more than ever and stressed the need for the IACG to improve their approaches to SIDS through more coherent support. She informed that during the MTR and at the request of the SG, the USG of OHRLLS, presented a clear and detailed road map to increase SIDS capacities. This roadmap includes revitalizing the IACG on SIDS, working together with UN-DESA.

The Director also noted that the review of the Multi-Country Offices is of utmost importance to SIDS; the RC system currently has eight MCOs, out of which six cover SIDS. As a part of this process OHRLLS is leading consultations with Member States, together with the transition Team and UNDCO, on how best to step-up coordination and programme support in countries serviced by MCOs. In this regard, she advised that implementation is critical to enhance the support of the UNDS to SIDS.

Finally, noting that COP 25 is another opportunity for the IACG to work together, she thanked the DESA team, and closed her remarks.

2. Thematic Discussions:

a) Update on MCO Review

OHRLLS provided an update on the ongoing MCO Review, mandated by GA resolutions 71/243 and 72/279 which requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review of the configuration, capacity, resource needs, role and development services of multi-country offices (MCO) in full consultation with the countries involved, to improve the contribution of these offices to country progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda. The resulting SGs report includes several recommendations to improve MCOs for more and better support for SIDS in the MCO context.

To unpack the SGs recommendations, three tracks of work have been established. In one track, at the request of the DSG, OHRLLS is facilitating consultations with Member States on how best to step-up coordination and programme support in countries serviced by MCOs. Meanwhile, the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) was tasked with taking steps to enhance the capacities of Resident Coordinators and their offices in MCO settings in line with the SG's recommendations. In a third, the DSG in her capacity as Chair of the UNSDG, requested the UNSDG to establish an Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG), co-chaired by UNDP and UNEP to "develop a more detailed plan to operationalize the proposed recommendations of the UN Secretary General to enhance the support provided by the UN Development System through Multi-Country Offices" in support of Member States' consultations. All processes will be concluded by December 2019 to facilitate the Secretary General reporting to ECOSOC OAS meeting in May 2020.

UNDP and UNEP spoke further on the work of the IAWG. They advised that UN system agencies are currently examining how they will ramp up and/or consolidate their specific support to SIDS. In this regard the expectation is that proposals will be ambitious, while aiming to improve effectiveness and efficiency within the UN system on the ground and support SIDS to effectively address their challenges on the ground including investing in an enabling environment to accelerate the progress on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs.

Discussions

UNFPA requested information on the key issues raised by member states during the consultations. OHRLLS indicated that for the Pacific, those member states are asking for details on the establishment of the new MCO in the north-pacific office and how it will be operated and funded. In the Caribbean region, the key issue is access to effective UN system support and resources.

UNDP also elaborated on their own efforts in support of SIDS. They are taking a thematic approach to working on SIDS issues and are also considering the possibility of cost-sharing through delegation of authority. He also advised that the Deputy SG is requesting a commitment from all UNSDG Principals to improve their support and delivery to SIDS.

b) UN support for graduating SIDS

OHRLLS gave an update on their work with LDC SIDS that are about to graduate. Currently, six SIDS are about to graduate¹ from the LDC category and must now focus on appropriate transition strategies. The Secretary-General is keen on ensuring that the UN better supports these countries to make a smooth transition.

OHRLLS together with other UN partners formed a task team to determine how the UN could better support SIDS in this regard. A set of concrete measures were identified, one of which was a graduation workshop, in which the team which included various entities such as the WTO and World Bank visited São Tomé and Príncipe in October and Solomon Islands in November 2019. Discussions were held with the respective governments on their concerns and how the UN can best support the graduation process. It was found that there was a huge need for such workshops in SIDS and the need to tailor support to each country. Before the end of the year, OHRLLS will determine which SIDS are to be visited for the next workshop, depending on the availability of resources. OHRLLS encouraged relevant agencies to also be a part of this inter-agency team.

Discussions

UNIDO inquired on the approaches being employed to developing country action-plans for the SIDS. OHRLLS indicated that RCs as well as regional colleagues are included in these workshops to ensure that key issues are fed into the country-level programming and support for SIDS. UNIDO also inquired on how the UN agencies can ensure that all areas needed by SIDS are covered, in relation to integration of UN system in the context of MCO review. OHRLLS answered that usually the work is done through the UNCTs and so far, there had not been a situation where the UN did not have the capacity within the UNCTs. Many aspects are also related to the finance and trade and therefore the World Bank and WTO is also involved. The team worked together on finding a common message in the UN internal meeting to be presented to the government of SIDS.

UNFPA noted the work and the pilot workshops carried out by OHRLLS and appreciated the opportunity to participate as well as the open discussions and requested to share the next substances that is available.

OHRLLS informed that they are aiming to have another coordination meeting before the end of this year to discuss on the available resources to find out how many SIDS can be visited. UNEP requested that the outcomes of these meetings be shared with the IACG group so that it can also be shared with their regional offices.

¹ Kiribati, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

3. The High-Level Review of the SAMOA Pathway, including follow up

DESA presented on the high-level review as well as the follow up. The high-level review resulted in 8-9 key messages and emphasizing that the progress on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway for SIDS has been slow. Key issues raised include SIDS' improved access to concessional financing and resources, criteria other than GNI per capita, appropriate support for LDC graduation and more ambitious actions (NDCs) for climate change. The need for innovative and alternative financing including private finance and measures such as debt for swap was called for to alleviate the challenges faced by countries that are in high-debt. Indicators and data was also raised. There were also smaller conversations surrounding UN system's improved operational support to SIDS. The outcome document of the review has been adopted and can be accessed at the following link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/3>

4. The Annual 2nd Committee SIDS Resolution

UN-DESA briefed on the annual second committee resolution on the *Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*. This year's resolution attempts to move forward some of the issues from the MTR political declaration.

One of the key issues is the lack of indicators for the SAMOA Pathway. The resolution calls for this work to be done by the 76th session of the General Assembly. Once this work is done, the focus will be on building capacity of SIDS to collect the data. Secondly, the resolution also calls for a study to be done on an examination of the disaster-related funding and support environment, with a view to the possible development of a targeted voluntary disaster fund/mechanism to assist SIDS in managing disaster risk and building back better after disasters. This study is to be reported at the 76th session of the General Assembly. It was requested that this be carried out in consultation with Member States, all relevant UN system entities and other relevant stakeholders, i.e. IFIs.

Regarding financing there are two big ticket items; reviewing the rules governing access to concessional finance for SIDS and calling for Committee for Development Policy to give due consideration to the unique and vulnerabilities of SIDS that have graduated from least developed country status. Climate change is also a key issue which will be dealt in the UNFCCC COP.

Discussions

ECLAC highlighted the challenges faced while preparing for the mid-term review. The biggest concern was the need for popularization of the SIDS agenda at the national level. To move at a quicker pace for the remaining five years of the SAMOA Pathway, greater sense of responsibility is required at the ground levels to address the recommendations and lessons learned from the regional report as well as keeping them.

UNDP reiterated their commitment for the acceleration of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda and indicated that they have developed a new offer for SIDS, which will see investment in three main areas of development i.e. climate action, sustainable blue economy and digital transformation. They will also be implementing a cross-cutting 4th pillar, access to financing. UNDP is testing innovative tools such as green, carbon/blue bonds, insurance which will be implemented based on requests from the SIDS. UNDP noted that the approach will differ in each region; i.e. in the Caribbean access to innovative financing is more complicated due to debt issues, and in case of Mauritius or Seychelles, as they have graduated from the LDC category, they will look into what kind of tools they can access too.

In addition, UNDP also informed that they have put aside resources to support the NDCs of SIDS, based on request. Finally, the importance of strong partnerships among UN system agencies in support of SIDS is also key

OHRLLS noted some development in the areas of concessional financing e.g. the UK is planning to convene a meeting in spring 2020 to address these issues and come up with some concrete solutions. In addition, how SIDS issues and the review SAMOA Pathway are dealt in the 2nd committee and ECOSOC is also being considered. The ECOSOC review next year is the context where SIDS will bring this matter up.

UNDESA reiterated the call for the UN system agencies to better mainstream SIDS issues into their respective work programmes as called for in the outcome of the political declaration of the mid-term review.² The annual SIDS resolution this year requires inter-agency collaboration in preparing the targets indicators for the SAMOA Pathway which are not yet already covered by the existing framework³ as well as for preparation of the report on an examination of the disaster-related funding and support environment⁴. UNDESA noted the importance to popularize the SAMOA Pathway among SIDS, as indicated by ECLAC.

UNFPA expressed their readiness to offer support based on the mid-term review as well as the annual resolution and requested that anything be made known and communicated to the agencies. In regard to agencies' mainstreaming SIDS' realities into their respective

² Paragraph 31 of A/RES/74/3 calls upon all entities of the United Nations system to address and integrate small island developing States-related priorities into their respective strategic and work plans, in accordance with their mandates;

³ Paragraph 20

⁴ Paragraph 10 of the annual SIDS Resolution calls upon the Secretary-General to conduct, in consultation with Member States, all relevant UN system entities and other relevant stakeholders, an examination of the disaster-related funding and support environment, with a view to the possible development of a targeted voluntary disaster fund, mechanism or financial instrument, coordinated with and complementary to existing mechanisms, to assist small island developing States in managing disaster risk and building back better after disasters, and to report at the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly;

programme, UNFPA reminded that agencies have different governing systems, and most likely this would have to be cleared by those systems prior to roll out.

UN-ECLAC reminded the Meeting about the difficulties faced by the regional commissions, while preparing the regional MTR review reports and once again underlined the importance of popularization of the SIDS documents. In this context, ECLAC is very supportive of making “I am a youth of SIDS” competition an annual event to make it more institutionalized in the schools and education system. This will contribute to having the young people understanding the SIDS agenda as they move on. Thus, ECLAC requested guidance from DESA on the continuation of the event.

UNEP emphasized the communication aspect of the UN sustainable development framework. She reminded that it is necessary to communicate with the public and to have them connected to the agenda and engaged the process. DESA assured that they will work closely with the agencies on the work on the follow-up to the mid-term view of the SAMOA Pathway as well as the annual 2nd committee resolution.

5. SIDS related events in UNFCCC COP25

OHRLLS in collaboration with UNDP and AOSIS are organizing a side-event on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as well as on loss and damage. The UN-Ocean is planning to have an event covering ocean and climate nexus as well as the inter-relation between these two. In collaboration with DOALAS, UN-Ocean will also organize one on the recent IPCC report on oceans and climate change.

6. SIDS Partnerships – Partnership Accelerator

UNDESA informed of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator that was launched earlier this year with the UN Office for Partnership and other partners. The Partnership Accelerator is a project that is aimed at accelerating and scaling up effective multi-stakeholder partnerships to deliver transformational impact for the SDGs, with focus on country level support. The project takes on multiple approaches, including:

- National Partnership Training workshops – capacity building for national development actors on the development of effective partnerships;
- Openly accessible research and training material, and organization of webinars;
- Establishment of a network of partnership practitioners - qualified partnership trainers to scale up training provision around effective partnerships in all countries, cascading capacity over time to the local level, ensuring both knowledge transfer and improved cost effectiveness.

The national partnership training workshops offer hands-on and in-depth training on the set-up and running of effective partnerships, including best practices on country driven partnership platforms, and are adapted, to the extent possible, to each country’s specific

context. Participants include around 40-50 representatives from government, private sector, academia, civil society and other stakeholders, selected in close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator. Four pilot countries will host national partnership training workshops in the coming months: Kenya (9 to 11 December 2019), Thailand (February 2020), Maldives (date tbc) and Samoa (Jan/Feb 2020).

This initiative is led by the UNOSD, project office of DSDG/UN-DESA located in Incheon and the project managers have been coordinating with the countries that are piloting these projects as well as with the RCs at the country level. More details will follow by UN-DESA on how the UN system can engage in this process for a more coherent approach in these efforts to search for new partnerships to be scaled up.

7. Any Other Business

a) Workplan for 2020

OHRLLS announced that a workplan for year 2020 will be structured and focused toward the groups' effort to better support SIDSs in 2020. The workplan will include the follow up on the mid-term review, thematic discussions and collaborative work along the implementation of the MCO Review to ensure more coherent and coordinated UN System support to SIDS. The group will also discuss how to collaborate programme projects in various levels. A discussion will be opened for the entire group and more information will be communicated soon.

The chair proposed that the IACG members to put forth more contributions as well as to inform their works and progress made, including those in the fields. The agencies were also asked to add to the agenda. This approach was endorsed by UNFPA as well as UNIDO as an effort to be more productive as a team and share information on what each agency are doing to identify areas to closely collaborate and work together for a better strategy for SIDS.

UNEP emphasized the need to look at the events that are taking place outside the SIDS agenda in order to hook into the opportunities for SIDS, such as the UN Ocean conference in June 2020 as well as its preparatory committee meeting in February 2020 in UNHQ. There will be also Biodiversity Summit as well as the Beijing 25+ process next year.

An annual meeting of the IACG, similar to that of the RC meeting that is held during the HLPF was also suggested.

The chairman expressed he is looking forward to work with the agencies for the next five years and the meeting was adjourned.