

MEETING SUMMARY
Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
Date: 06 May 2020
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Time: 3:00pm – 5:00 pm (New York Time)

Members in attendance: CARICOM, DCO, ECLAC, ESCAP, OLA/DOALOS, FAO, GEF, GLIPSA, ILO, INTRACEN, IOM, IRENA, ITC, PIFS, UN Comoros, UNDESA, UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNEP, ZHUN-HABITAT, UN-HABITAT NY, UN-OHRLLS (Organizer) UNOPS, UN RC (FIJI), World Bank, RC office (Caribbean)

Chair: Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director of OHRLLS

Summary:

The IACG meeting, the first in 2020 and since the COVID-19 pandemic, held a focused discussion on COVID-19, including its impact and the response by the UN system. The meeting received a briefing on the UN Country Team's (UNCT) COVID-19 response in SIDS and on the response at the regional level in the Pacific and Caribbean. The meeting was briefed by the World Bank on its response to COVID-19 as one of the international financial institutions at the forefront of the global response. UN-DESA informed the meeting of the impact of the pandemic on the Ocean conference, HLPF and other key events related to SIDS. OHRLLS briefed members on the impact of COVID-19 on the IACG work plan for 2020 and outlined some steps going forward.

1. Opening remarks by IACG co-chair(s)

- **Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox**, Director of [OHRLLS](#), noted the impact of COVID-19, which has brought human suffering, the destabilization of the global economy and immense disruption of life. She noted that vulnerable countries including SIDS are disproportionately impacted. The pandemic is an added burden for SIDS, who already face challenges pertaining to their limited fiscal space, dependence on trade, tourism, remittances, and high vulnerabilities to external shocks and climate change. COVID-19 is generating a further liquidity crisis, with huge negative socio-economic impacts. SIDS revenue sources including remittances and tourism are badly hit – a devastation to SIDS economies whose “tourism sector accounts for almost 30 per cent of their GDP”. This “share is over 50 per cent for the Maldives, Seychelles, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Grenada.”

SIDS are clear on the type of support they require to respond to the pandemic; they are urging the International financial institutions (IFIs) to establish a dedicated funding window for SIDS; and they are calling for assistance with an urgent stimulus package for liquidity concerns and debt relief, as many SIDS are highly indebted. The COVID-19 debt relief package, of no more than 400 million dollars for low income countries, and other IDA members, is small and excludes many SIDS. SIDS are calling for ease in accessing funds, because they lack capacity in terms of personnel which is a disadvantage to readily access available funds.

Food security is also a major issue for SIDS due to the disruption in food supply chains. Together with FAO and WFP, OHRLLS will have a briefing for SIDS on the topic. OHRLLS continues to raise the profile of these issues for SIDS. OHRLLS calls on members to drum up support for SIDS, in particular, as they feel their special case may be eroding in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the IACG should remain steadfast in the implementation of the SAMOA pathway, and the SDGs, including responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Director echoed the SG's call for a "coordinated multi-agency, multi-sectoral response for priority national and local actions to address the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis", led by Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in swiftly supporting and enabling governments to (1) suppress the transmission of the virus to control the pandemic; (2) safeguard people's lives and their livelihood and (3) build back better.

- **Mr. Alexander Trepelkov**, OIC, DSDG/DESA noted the unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a consuming global crisis, that has left no country untouched. For SIDS, the pandemic is posing significant health and socio-economic risks due to the small scale and openness of their economies, high vulnerability to economic and climate shocks and heavy external debt burdens. COVID-19 has already disrupted the very fabric of these societies, resulting in profound socio-economic impacts.

The whole of Government approach taken by many SIDS to manage the impact of COVID-19 is to be commended, including their swift and coordinated responses, putting in place the health, education, social, economic and security protocols needed to reduce the effects of the crisis on their social sustainability and economic resilience.

UN-DESA has been focusing on providing the evidence-based analytical support and policy advice to Governments through a new series of policy briefs on the impacts of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Policy brief \(PB 64\)](#) is devoted specifically to the SIDS issues and highlights some key messages of special concern to them: the sharp fall in tourism revenues and remittance flows, heavy debt-servicing burdens, high risks to ensuring food security, severe constraints to the fiscal space and vulnerabilities to natural disasters brought about by climate change. It will be extremely difficult for SIDS to withstand a double impact when they are hit by hurricanes or cyclones. Scaled-up international development cooperation is critical for ensuring that SIDS are able to stay on track towards sustainable development.

2. Discussion on COVID-19 issues

a) UNCTs COVID-19 response in SIDS – DCO

- DCO underscored the call for global solidarity and an urgent and coordinated response to COVID-19, including cooperation on socio-economic fronts, issued by Secretary-General in his [Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity](#) report in late March. The UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) launched the [United Nations framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19](#) on 27 April 2020, a framework developed with strong collaboration of the

UNSDG Task Team, co-chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Development Coordination Office (DCO).

- The framework constitutes three critical components of the UN's efforts to **save lives, protect people, and rebuild better**, alongside the health response, led by WHO, and the humanitarian response, as detailed in the UN-led COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan. It presents the integrated support package that the United Nations development system (UNDS) can leverage as it tailors its response to each country to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic. Underpinned by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better, it includes five streams of work:
 - 1) ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems;
 - 2) helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services;
 - 3) protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive actors through economic recovery programmes;
 - 4) guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and to strengthen multilateral and regional responses; and
 - 5) promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

- The integrated support package has a specific focus on countries and people who risk being left behind, and stresses that the allocation of resources must pay close attention to the needs of SIDS in addition to other vulnerable groups of countries¹ for whom this current crisis presents specific and dire challenges. The framework also underscores that all economies will need the fiscal space to finance response measures. In addition to those countries that were already at high risk of or in debt distress before the pandemic hit, including some SIDS, several oil-exporting countries, as well as tourist dependent countries, are now likely at high risk of debt distress. Many middle-income countries and SIDS will likely require debt restructuring. Therefore, beyond the immediate crisis response and moratorium, the framework calls for additional resources, a new debt relief programme as well as a comprehensive and faster mechanism to restructure debt in the medium-term to facilitate economic recovery and SDG achievement in developing countries.

- UNDS is switching to emergency mode to support Member States on this response. A significant proportion of the UN's existing US\$17.8 billion portfolio of sustainable development programmes across all the Sustainable Development Goals will be adjusted and expanded towards COVID-19 related needs. Repurposing and reprogramming efforts have already started, in close collaboration with programme countries, donors and partners, without losing sight of the promise of the 2030 Agenda. Given the scale and scope of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, additional resources nevertheless will be required. For this reason, the Secretary-General established the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund in early April to help catalyze joint action by UN Country Teams, under the leadership of Resident Coordinators. The Fund's financial requirements target is 1 Billion for the first 9 months and 2 Billion in 18 months. It has

¹ Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, conflict- and disaster-affected countries and countries facing economic sanctions.

yet mobilized about 45 Million USD, and the first round of support targets 47 countries. It has issued the first call for proposals for 47 million – 11 SIDS are part of the targeted countries (Comoros, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Cape Verde, Micronesia, Tuvalu, Belize, Jamaica and the Maldives). The fund is operational, and disbursements are starting to go out to countries.

- There is also the SDG fund, with the first window focused on social protection. There was already a decision under the SDG fund that the 35 countries, which have already benefited from this fund, can repurpose 20 percent of their resources to ensure that they are responding effectively to COVID-19. Out of these 35, are three SIDS that were selected during the review of the Social Protection Fund; MCO in Barbados (10 SIDS Caribbean - the proposal was about a universal adaptive social protection in the eastern Caribbean), MCO SAMOA and a proposal for Sao Tome and Principe.

b) Caribbean SIDS Covid-19 response – CARICOM

- **CARICOM** reiterated that SIDS have special vulnerabilities, and the Caribbean SIDS, in less than two weeks, will be facing an active hurricane season. The Caribbean region is probably the most dependent on tourism and trade in the world.
- In its response, the Caribbean took note of COVID-19 and started tracking its development early, led by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). At the political level, the chair for a conference of Heads, Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados, led the way in addressing various aspects of COVID-19. The CARICOM secretariat, led by the Secretary-General Ambassador LaRocque, also coordinated both technical and political efforts, with several meetings held at the ministerial level with those ministries at the forefront of addressing the issues related to COVID-19, including public health. Heads also met with representatives of the Cruise line industry, and negotiated very strongly with them, insisting on very firm public health guided scientific protocols, as the industry proved to be a weak link in the transmission of COVID-19.
- Other important stakeholders were the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management (CDEMA), the Implementation agency for crime and security (IMPACS), the council of ministers of agriculture to deal with the food security issues, as well as tourism and education ministers to further discuss the impact of COVID-19 (in northern SIDS it is end of year examination time). The Caribbean ministers of finance also met and as an outcome from that meeting CARICOM has written to the major international financial institutions indicating some of the issues. Most of Caribbean SIDS classified as middle or even high-income countries have been arguing strongly over the years that financing criteria needs to take into consideration many of the country's vulnerabilities. COVID-19 is making the case stronger, and the UN agencies, including UNECLAC, have been very supportive in advancing this argument.
- There is a challenge of supply chains, in particular health supplies. UN agencies have been very important in helping. Notably, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the WHO have played a significant role especially with regard to testing supplies. The WTO has been engaged to assist with access to some of these needed products. FAO has been assisting on issues of supply chain and food production.

- UN-ECLAC prepared a paper on the socio-economic impact of the region to enable the region to better anticipate the impact of COVID-19 and to position itself to address the situation better.
- The onslaught of COVID-19 has brought some opportunities for solidarity. CARICOM member states have demonstrated solidarity including sharing some scarce vital products. In the region, Cuba has been very generous in offering health care workers. Venezuela, despite their challenge, has also made offer of supplies to several member states. This is important to demonstrate **south-south collaboration** among SIDS and other states. Although SIDS depend significantly on the developed countries that are the drivers of the international financial institutions, SIDS have to do what they can among themselves to combat the onslaught of the challenges of COVID-19, and they have demonstrated willingness, and often have been **able** to do so.

c) COVID-19 Response in Pacific SIDS – PACIFIC (FIJI RCO office)

- **RCO (Fiji)** indicated that few cases have been reported in the Pacific Islands (less than 270 cases), but the situation has potential to change very quickly. Pacific countries have taken some steps to prepare and respond to COVID-19; many countries are declaring state of emergency and taking a proactive approach to preparing, responding and containing the virus. This is important for Pacific countries because of the high prevalence of pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity, making their populations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Compounding their vulnerability is that most countries also lack capacities for detection and responding adequately to COVID-19.
- The UNCT, led by the Resident Coordinators, Fiji and SAMOA, is leading the response in the Pacific. Working closely with the Pacific governments, it is supporting the multi-country office through two key mechanisms;
 - (1) *The Joint incident management team*: led technically by WHO and focusing mainly on health preparedness and response plans.
 - (2) *The Pacific humanitarian team*; which is focusing on system wide and multi-sectorial approach, going well beyond initial health response.

These two bodies are working in tandem and have representatives not only from UN, but from governments, from development partners, NGOs and international financial institutions.
- The Pacific will be launching the COVID-19 humanitarian response plan and a health sector response plan (phase 2), which is mainly focusing on containment and mitigation measures and detailing operational shifts in terms of preparedness measures for containment mitigation and recovery across all the countries in the Pacific. Together these aim to support an integrated and joint multi-sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic and address the immediate impacts of the pandemic on health, education, food security, logistics, shelter, protection, telecoms, water and sanitation amongst some key areas.
- A highly consultative process was followed with the governments in the Pacific, development partners and donors in preparing the plans. The humanitarian response plan (HRP) will continue to be updated as countries continue to develop their individual national response plans. Some of the components of this HRP are already supported through the Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, where some low income and low middle-income countries from the Pacific were selected for the first round of financing; Kiribati, Federated States of

Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Each of these countries will receive three hundred thousand dollars to address the immediate health emergency and to help reduce its social impact and promote economic recovery.

- In parallel, there were also discussions with governments to revise the 2020 country action plans, aligning them with the priorities of the respective countries in terms of the response to the pandemic.
- A well-coordinated and multi-sector approach is integral in the case of Pacific Islands because they are facing multiple disasters. The tropical cyclone Harold, which recently impacted Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga has further complicated the ability of the governments and other partners to deliver assistance. With teams already in the country before COVID-19, humanitarian supplies were able to be distributed and 3.58 million in funding secured for Vanuatu and Fiji.
- The socio-economic impact of the crisis in the Pacific remains largely unknown. A joint assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in line with the SG's global framework has been launched. The assessment will serve as a planning tool to inform the policy response and actual budgetary allocations in terms of COVID-19.

d) International Financial Institutions' response – World Bank

- The **World Bank** underscored that the global economy is experiencing an exceptional negative shock as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic is disrupting trade, supply chains and investment flows, while leaving financial and human capital idle. Remittances, transport revenues, income from tourism are rapidly diminishing.
- Responding to COVID-19, on 17 March, the World Bank board approved a new fast track facility with an initial sum of 14 billion to assist countries and companies in their efforts to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-19. On 2 April, the board also approved the Strategic Preparedness and Response Program with six billion of the initial Fast Track Facility (FTF) for the initial twenty-five projects in 25 countries. This saw rapid growth, and ninety-three (93) countries are assisted with COVID-19 related projects, and another 18 country projects is in the pipeline to be board approved.
- The World Bank will deploy as much as \$160 billion over the next 15 months, of which \$50 billion will be in either grants or highly concessional terms from IDA, the World Bank's fund for the poorest. The three pillars of the programme include:
 - (1) protecting the poorest and most vulnerable households.
 - (2) supporting businesses and saving jobs by working with private sector clients
 - (3) helping developing countries implement emergency health operations and strengthen economic resilience.
- The World Bank is working very closely with development partners, the multilateral development banks, the UN system and the IMF, coordinating to ensure that the money is deployed effectively and rapidly to the front lines.
- Debt is a growing burden for many. More and more countries immediately need liquidity to tackle these challenges. Half of IDA countries assessed in 2019 are at high risk or already debt distressed. The COVID-19 outbreak is likely to overwhelm even more fragile health systems and

put strain on populations suffering from poverty and deprivation – which is why the group is putting out grants and highly concessional IDA 19 resources.

- The World Bank is in a strong financial position to support our members. IDA 19 was approved last year with a three year eighty-two-billion-dollar envelope, and in addition the IBRD and IFC capital increases have just been approved. In addition, President Malpass and Managing Director Cristina Georgieva together championed a moratorium on official bilateral debt repayments. From 1 May 2020 until the end of the year, official bilateral creditors will allow IDA countries that request forbearance to suspend repayment, as announced by the G20. This was a huge achievement by the international community, and the expectation is that governments will seek comparable terms from their commercial creditors as well.
- Small island economies' tourism and remittances have been severely hit. Small islands are facing sharp contractions in GDP in 2020. For example, Palau is expected to contract by 16%, Antigua and Barbuda (9.5%) and Belize (3.9%). Governments are having difficulty with the delivery of basic services, including education, health, security, water and sanitation in the midst of the pandemic. There are already many small states who have had projects approved via this fast track facility: Cabo Verde, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Haiti and Maldives. Fiji and Solomon Islands are in the pipeline for board approval.
- There is a discussion around non-IDA eligible small island States that is ongoing, but no decision has been made yet. The World Bank group management is working to create new tailored proposals to allow non-IDA eligible small island economies to access the crisis response window on an exceptional basis.

Discussions

- **UNDP** indicated its support for COVID-19 is aligned to the UN's overall strategy. Under the resident coordinators, UNDP has developed programmatic support for SIDS, focusing mostly on health systems support and sectoral crisis management. UNDP first established a rapid response facility with \$30 million, to be disbursed within 72 hours and will launch a new rapid funding facility with hundred million dollars that will be mostly targeting fragile states, the low-income countries and SIDS. The UNDP accelerator is developing many digital tools for all SIDS regarding the monitoring of the COVID-19.
- **UNFPA** highlighted that its approach has underscored the need to continue to strengthen health systems, particularly in SIDS. It has also underscored the need to continue to pay close attention to the issue of gender-based violence in SIDS. It has been widely publicized that the incidence of domestic violence has increased, and the Caribbean and the Pacific have not been immune. Maintaining the supply of sexual health services in SIDS is also key. Young people need access to information, which has become even more dire in during the lockdowns. UNFPA has been working with other UN agencies on the Secretary General's plan on humanitarian response – and this is more relevant, particularly in the Pacific due to cyclone Harold.
- **FAO** indicated it estimates that the number of undernourished people could increase by 14 million to 80 million (<https://bit.ly/2UwcYsf>) because of COVID-19, SIDS included. FAO is calculating these numbers based on the expected economic recession caused by COVID-19.

Current estimates point to a shrinking of the economy between 2% and 10%. Net food importing countries particularly low-income food deficit countries would be most impacted. SIDS are vulnerable as they are food importing countries and also witnessing losses in terms of tourism and remittances. FAO has been issuing a series of policy briefs on COVID-19 and its impact on food systems and is now finalizing a brief that looks to the specific impacts of COVID-19 on SIDS and possible responses to be published in a few days. FAO is also offering support at the national and regional level as part of the broader UN system response. One example is the support being offered in the Caribbean where a rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture, livelihoods and on food security are being planned under FAO technical cooperation programme. Together with OHRLLS, FAO is going to have a briefing with SIDS that will speak to the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition.

- **UNESCO** is committed to assist its member states in the response to COVID-19. Actions in the education sector have included a ministerial dialogue on how to close schools for confinement, how to reopen schools, and exploring private sector partnerships for technology and remote schooling in specific regions. There are various regional actions that have been undertaken, including the use of cell phone technology to support teacher training or support to countries in Asia-Pacific. Regional actions also include the organization and dissemination of education support materials on the UNESCO Cluster Office website for ministries of education and regional stakeholders in the Caribbean; and in Africa, national learning platforms for broadcasting, for example, in Cabo Verde, Mauritius and Sao Tome and Principe.

In the area of Culture, UNESCO is working on 4 pillars of a Covid-19 response:

- 1) Communicating, advocacy and awareness-raising on access to culture during the pandemic;
- 2) Impact assessments at country level and support for public policy making;
- 3) Support for artists, cultural professionals and communities; and
- 4) Technical assistance to protect heritage during the pandemic.

UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is hosting a series of online information sessions (webinars) on key programmatic matters to support Member States on ocean science and services during these trying times. Some initiatives include monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on ocean observing systems.

- **UNEP/UN Environment** remarked that the pandemic has exposed that the economic model that the world is following is not working. Transformational changes are needed. There is need for a sound environmental response to the crisis and to take the opportunity of building back better to recognize those linkages between the health of the planet and the health of people. UNEP is adjusting plans and programs to make sure that the way it supports member states, considering their priorities, is also responding to the changes that are needed in order to make a positive impact on nature.

UNEP is also working in several of the countries on waste management. One area of concern is the increase of waste, especially hazardous and other medical and hospital waste. This requires strengthening of waste management and improving waste facilities all over the world. For SIDS,

it is very important to address waste because of its impact on the health of the ecosystems and nature that is an integral part of the tourism that SIDS offer. Building back better means building back greener.

- **GLIPSA** together with Hawaii Green Growth launched a new network in 2019 during the UNGA - [the Local2030 Islands Network](#) – which is connected to the Local2030 Initiative out of Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed’s office, and which connects early island leaders on local SDG implementation. The focus currently is on supporting island solidarity, solutions and support through repurposing initial activities in the network to a Virtual Platform related to COVID-19 -on the socio-economic impacts. GLIPSA undertook a survey to see which islands wanted this and have so far had two webinars:

- 1) The first webinar focused on Tourism, Islands and COVID-19 (speakers were Hawaii, Galapagos, Curacao, Cook Islands and Philippines). The recording is here and includes the messages, summary and more: <https://www.islands2030.org/tourism>
- 2) The second webinar was focused on the network and the Virtual Platform and was held during the opening of the University of Guam’s Conference on Island Sustainability.

Future webinars will look more at the economic recovery and resilience space:

- 18 May 10 am (US Hawaii time): Improving Food Security
- 3 June 10 am (US Hawaii Time): Economic resilience and recovery (note change of day)
- UNDER DISCUSSION
- *June Strengthening Island Resilience - responses to crises and risk reduction*
- *June Data tools for building back better*

GLIPSA is working with a group of partners including the Commonwealth Secretariat, Small Islands Organisation, Sustainable Travel International, Pacific Islands Development Programme, University of Guam, UN Foundation, Green Cross France and Territories, as well as the steering committee of the Local 2030 Islands Network - FSM, Curacao, Bonaire, Guam, Hawaii, Seychelles, Grenada, Ireland. GLIPSA also has had help from GLIPSA’s members, from OCTA, ECLAC and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. To get involved, find more information on the website for the virtual platform: <https://www.islands2030.org/virtual-platform> .

- **IRENA** underscored that renewable and sustainable energy plays an important role, both in the immediate response in terms of powering essential services such as health care, water and food supply, but also in the medium to longer term response, where it can be instrumental in sustainable recovery, creating jobs and strengthening resilience.

Renewable energy projects can be deployed, and investments can be mobilized quite rapidly. For IRENA, sustainable recovery is important, and IRENA is fully aligned with the UN system approach, working with national governments and a number of regional organizations like the Pacific community and others institutions to see to how sustainable energy can be a part of the recovery packages and the recovery measures.

IRENA just issued a press release today with ESCAP and is driving various initiatives at the regional level. IRENA is involved in the climate investment platform with the UNDP and the GCF and is looking at holding investment forums as soon as conditions are permitting to attract investments in sustainable energy to accelerate recovery.

IRENA, together with UNDP and the NDC partnership, is working with many SIDS on enhancing, the renewable energy component of their NCDs in line with their ambitions expressed to achieve hundred percent renewables, if possible, in the power sector.

- **CARICOM** commented that the Caribbean, for example, has made use of its major tertiary institutions, the University of the West Indies, which served the region very well with some very useful modelling of the projections on COVID-19, and encouraged the use of own indigenous institutions.

Considering that the WHO has recommended "face-covering" vs medical masks, for the use by the general public, CARICOM added they have been promoting the use of "washable/reusable" masks which will reduce "waste " generation and also promote local entrepreneurship for the production of "face-covering".

CARICOM also wanted to know from IRENA how the low cost of oil is affecting investment in Renewable Energy. Responding, **IRENA** clarified that while renewable investments under COVID-19 have been a bit affected, the impact is less than other economic sectors. IRENA also explained that much of their work is in the context of the [Lighthouse's initiative](#).

- The **World Bank** underscored the need not only to address the immediate concerns, but also the long-term development priorities. This necessitates a shift towards a more sustainable outlook, ensuring affordable energy prices, building energy security, putting more investments in human capital and in other important areas like education and health services, and to be able to mitigate the potential impact of future pandemics.

3. Impact of COVID-19 on the Ocean conference, HLPF and other key events - DESA

- **The OIC of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of UNDESA, Mr. Alex Trepelkov gave and update on this agenda item as follows:**
- **2020 Ocean Conference:** On 13 April, the General Assembly adopted, through "silence procedure", decision 74/548, postponed the [2020 UN Ocean Conference](#). A later date will be decided by the GA, including new deadlines for its preparatory process. Although at a slower pace, the momentum for the overall preparation of the Conference is being maintained.
- Deadlines for submission of concept papers for the eight Interactive Dialogues were extended, as requested by Member States. The Informal Preparatory Working Groups (IPWGs) for each of the dialogues, comprising relevant entities from the UN system and beyond, continues. The

themes of all the dialogues are of relevance to SIDS. The new challenge is how to adequately reflect the impact of and policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The co-facilitators of the inter-governmental consultations, Denmark and Palau, circulated, under cover of their letter dated 29 April 2020, a revised draft of the outcome document, based on the inputs received from Member States last month. The co-facilitators will not convene a second round of informal consultations at present and the negotiation process is now put on hold, pending a proposal from the co-hosts of the Conference (Portugal and Kenya), in consultation with the President of the General Assembly, on new dates for the Conference and a new timeline for the preparatory process. Once the General Assembly decides on these issues, negotiations will resume. The document is now available on the [2020 UN Ocean Conference website](#).
- The second round of special accreditations for non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions and scientific communities to attend the Conference has been concluded, with additional 384 such entities having been accredited by the General Assembly. In total, 558 non-state organizations have been accredited to the Conference, including 174 organizations approved in the first round.
- **HLPF 2020** : A total of 51 countries (28 for the first time, 22 for the second time and 1 for the third time) will present their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the [HLPF 2020](#). The VNR presentations will begin on Monday, 13 July 2020, and proceed for the three days of the ministerial segment of HLPF (14–16 July 2020). Preparations for the six thematic sessions of HLPF are progressing well, with contributions from UN system and external experts continuing. A one-and-a-half-hour special session on SIDS, under the theme “Accelerated actions and pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway” is scheduled for Friday, 10 July, from 10 to 11:30 am. Substantive preparations, including identification of potential speakers and panellists, are under way. Due to COVID-19, all HLPF side events will be held virtually. Interested parties (including members of the IACG) are invited to submit applications to organize a side event. The [guidelines and criteria](#) circulated by the Secretariat, which you can find on the [HLPF 2020 website](#). The application process will be open until 29 May 2020. There are no official updates on the [format](#) of HLPF itself yet.
- **Other DESA-organised events**: The [second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference](#), which was scheduled to take place from 5 to 7 May 2020 in Beijing, China, has been postponed.
- ECOSOC has postponed the [2020 Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs \(STI Forum\)](#) to the next year’s cycle. Since 2016, the STI Forum has provided key inputs to the review of the SDGs at the HLPF. Because of the postponement, inputs from the STI Forum will not be available to HLPF this year, in the traditional form of co-chairs summary. Instead, the President of ECOSOC invited, on 27 April, all interested policy makers, scientists, engineers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and organized science communities, to consider

engaging in online consultations, including current and former members of the TFM 10-Member-Group and the Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs.

Discussions

- **DOALOS** informed that the Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) has been postponed through a [GA resolution](#) 74/543 of 11 March 2020. There is no further information on the next date. A [revised draft text agreement](#) is available on the DOALOS website.
- The [United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Ocean and the Law of the Sea – 21st meeting](#) has been postponed to 2021, following a decision by the Co-Chairs of the Informal Consultative process forwarded to all Member States by a letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 1 May 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Impact of COVID-19 on the IACG work plan – OHRLLS

- **OHRLLS** recalled that a draft IACG work plan, which seeks to facilitate a focused, inclusive and coordinated implementation of the main functions of the IACG, was shared earlier this year. The work plan put forward three workstreams for 2020:
Workstream One: includes the follow up on the High-level Review of the SAMOA Pathway, within the context of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and Sustainable development goals (SDGs)
Workstream Two: Support to the SIDS National Focal Points (NFPs)
Workstream Three: Support to SIDS MCOs and SIDS RC Network
- **Workstream One:** follow up on the High-level Review of the SAMOA Pathway et al. OHRLLS and DESA continue to give high importance to implementing the calls for action outlined in the political declaration from the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway. This includes working together on a number of activities, including preparing the necessary responses regarding the possible development of a targeted voluntary disaster fund, mechanism or financial instrument, as well as the possible development of targets and indicators to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.
OHRLLS is working with DESA to support the work of the steering committee on SIDS partnerships. Further information will be provided on the adjusted work programme for 2020 in due course.
Members will also need to revisit the development of the “post MTR matrix”, as called for by member States in the MTR, with the view to monitoring the implementation of activities of all the relevant agencies and stakeholders. This includes looking at those areas that may require more urgent attention in the context of the pandemic, including the need to initiate initiatives or activities relating to SIDS eligibility criteria for concessional finance.

○ **Workstream Two:** Support to the SIDS National Focal Points (NFPs)

The 3rd Annual Meeting of the SIDS NFPs, which was to be held in the Caribbean region in 2020 has been postponed. OHRLLS is looking at other alternative ways to engage NFPs including conducting virtual thematic meetings. We will keep you updated in this regard.

○ **Workstream Three:** Support to SIDS MCOs and SIDS RC Network

- 1) The implementation of the MCO review, which covers issues of effectiveness, impact and efficiencies of the UN development system in MCO institutional arrangements is more urgent in the face of the pandemic.

The Secretary-General has released his report on the QCPR, which includes his recommendations on the MCO review. It is anticipated that these recommendations will be endorsed at the upcoming OAS of ECOSOC, and that we will begin the process of implementation soon thereafter.

- 2) Through the IACG, the aim is to step up the exchange of information regarding the implementation of the MCO review, identifying critical issues for discussion, including the ongoing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with DCO, OHRLLS has set up an informal network of SIDS Resident Coordinators, with a view to bringing coherence to the support towards SIDS at global, regional and country level.

This network will provide members with the information and guidance needed to enhance our work at the global levels, including on COVID-19 issues, and modalities of the network's relationship with the IACG will be shared in due course.

5. AOB

There were no requests for the floor under any other business and the meeting was adjourned.