

**Expert Group Meeting on
Integrated Approaches for the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway
and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:
Focusing on the Linkages between Small Island Developing States, Climate Change and
Oceans**

**United Nations Headquarters, New York
2-3 September 2015**

Summary of Discussions and Recommendations

I. Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), through its Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) at the UN Headquarters in New York on 2-3 September 2015. It brought together highly knowledgeable and experienced experts from the three Small Island Developing States (SIDS) regions, member states, and several UN agencies and regional entities (see attached List of Participants). The main objective of the EGM was to examine strategies for *integrated approaches* to addressing the nexus of climate change-SIDS and Oceans, where the interrelated issues of climate change impacts, oceans-related problems and adaptation and resilience actions in SIDS were discussed. *Holistic solutions* were identified for the sustainable development of SIDS, as well as the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, including through strengthening the means of implementation.

The participants recognized the timeliness and importance of this EGM, which was held exactly one year after the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and preceding the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Assistant Secretary General Thomas Gass noted, in his opening remarks, that the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while being a shared vision of humanity, it provides the *integrating force* and the best strategy to overcome the multiple and interrelated challenges facing SIDS.

Mr. Jeffrey Salim Waheed, Deputy Permanent Representative and Charge d'Affaires of the Maldives Mission (Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States), highlighted the climate change-related challenges facing SIDS, particularly that of ocean acidification and the need for oceans to play a central role in the development of SIDS. He underlined that a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the reaching of an ambitious yet equitable agreement at COP 21 in Paris will be key to mitigating adverse effects of climate change on SIDS.

II. Highlights of Discussions

Key challenges of Climate Change and Oceans

- In examining the key challenges of SIDS with respect to climate change and oceans, the experts examined the severely adverse impacts of sea level rise on SIDS, increased ocean acidification, degradation of coastal areas and coral reefs, decline in fish stocks, pollution, loss of cultural assets near the coast, and the potential losses to the island

tourism industries due to the resulting disappearance of natural attractions. Ocean acidification is one of the best examples which describe the changes in oceans, and demonstrates the interlinkages between oceans degradation, climate change impacts, and SIDS challenges and concerns.

- Also discussed was the blue economy as the next frontier for development, including its opportunities and challenges for SIDS. It is important to ensure that SIDS benefit from their marine resources. There is a need to explore the economic potential of the oceans while simultaneously identify and adopt specific adaptation and resilience-building measures to reduce key SIDS' vulnerabilities and enhance their adaptive capacities to cope with the negative consequences of climate change impact and to maximize on development opportunities.
- The need to ensure good ocean governance, delineate maritime zones and delimit maritime boundaries, promote effective ocean management and conservation, and develop national/regional ocean policies was also emphasized.

Science and Technology

- The role of science and technology with respect to both climate change and oceans was highlighted. It was felt, however, that improved data collection and more effective use of scientific information and technology, integrated with proven indigenous practices were needed, rather than simply implementing technological practices that may not be applicable to SIDS. Stronger science –policy interface can support better decision making in the oceans and how is it being utilized for conservation, management and economic development.

Integrative Approaches

- The process of community-based planning was highlighted as a helpful beginning to address some of the challenges, including those of governance issues, in particular, the process of project implementation on resource management planning helps communities learn and build capacities at the local level.
- Strategies for success include the need to focus on multilateral partnerships, as well as the strengthening of these linkages.
- Integration and translation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda into *national and regional sustainable development strategies* and regional frameworks is crucial. A strong political will with an effective governance modality at the national level and where applicable regional is essential for successfully pursuing integrated approaches.
- There is a clear need for an inclusive approach, which includes the involvement of all stakeholders; also, the necessity of empowering people and communities, raising awareness and educating citizens was emphasized. The focus on cultural awareness traditional and indigenous knowledge, and cultural responsibilities should be considered in the process.

Holistic Solutions

- Experts underlined that adaptation to climate change impacts and resilience building to cope with oceans-related pollution, particularly for local communities in SIDS, will continue to be critical areas for achieving SDGs and the 2030 Agenda objectives in SIDS.
- Holistic solutions, which integrate policy actions across sectors in SIDS with respect to climate change, oceans, coastal management, agriculture, industry, forestry, tourism, among others, were considered to be critical for achieving SDGs. Bringing together traditional and scientific knowledge for holistic solutions is key.
- Strengthening regional ocean governance arrangements was considered to be key in regions with SIDS. These arrangements are critical for transboundary issues, in compensating for low capacity in SIDS by sharing expertise and experience and in facilitating their collective voice in the global arena.

Means of Implementation

- In both the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda, means of implementation (MoI) were viewed as the engine to realize the aspirations of the documents. In examining the role of MoI in integrated approaches, different tools were discussed by participants. The importance of the role of the private sector was highlighted. The private sector is looking for opportunities; therefore, it is important to understand the existing island opportunities. For example, the blue economy opens up a new horizon for investment. Coordination among various funding mechanisms or partnerships is key in the efficient use of resources.
- With respect to financing, one of the challenges is the constraint to access funds from financial agencies due to a lack of capacities. Building capacity to overcome the lack of human resources in SIDS is therefore important. Training and capacity building allows for skills to be used nationally, regionally and internationally, and thinking on these levels will ultimately benefit SIDS.
- Greater coordination among different national research institutions, universities, and ministries to foster a more holistic approach is required. More involvement of financial authorities in environmental issues was also suggested.

III. Recommendations

1. Strengthen 'transformative' coordination mechanisms, such as national committees/councils to promote the implementation of the integrated approaches to the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda in SIDS.
2. Establish national and regional arrangements/alliances and ensure the sharing of expertise/best practice models/approaches/lessons learned on policy options and technology applications across SIDS regions through "knowledge-sharing platforms." Drawing on the experiences of the mountain knowledge-sharing platform, and building on existing mechanisms; a "global knowledge-sharing platform" for the above-mentioned purposes can be set up. DESA can play a facilitating role in this regard.
3. Shift from an "aid-focused" approach to a "development-(investment) focused" approach through partnerships, ensuring ownership by SIDS; move from a 'project-based approach'

to a 'programmatic' approach; attracting private capital as a viable strategy; position SIDS as attractive areas for private sector investment; debt for nature swap. Region/specific analysis can be made of the feasibility, options, and constraints for moving from an aid-focused approach to an investment-focused approach.

4. Implement capacity-building projects to enhance human capacities for collection and analysis of data in SIDS and promote integrated management of information and knowledge, which could be used for implementing holistic solutions across sectors in SIDS. Convene training workshops on integrated management of information and knowledge across ministries in SIDS.
5. Enhance partnerships between SIDS and international partners, as well as promote SIDS-SIDS cooperation and UN inter-agency coordination.
6. Explore appropriate technologies for sustainable waste management and coral reef rebuilding in SIDS and promote temperature adaptive coral species.
7. Specific mitigation and adaptation measures at the local level to reduce- and adapt to- *ocean acidification* should be identified and implemented in SIDS with the support of international partners. Specialized workshops and studies on potential and options in this regard, to be held at the regional level, can pave the way for effective implementation.

IV. Closing

- The participants expressed their appreciation to UN-DESA for its initiative in organising such a timely expert meeting on a pressing topic. They also expressed the view that DESA can play an enhanced role in promoting integrated approaches and in identifying and disseminating holistic solutions for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- In delivering his closing remarks, H.E. Mr. Peter Thompson, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, lauded the significance of education for the implementation of the SDGs. He also highlighted the importance of governance and accountability, as well as the role of partnerships. There was a need to identify gaps in implementation and to ensure that institutions for implementation are in place to take the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway forward.
- UN-DESA was tasked with the finalisation of the draft summary of the EGM, incorporating further comments from participating experts.

List of Participants

Entity	Name	Titles
Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat	Amrikha Singh	Senior Project Officer
Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat	Garfield Barnwell	Director, Sustainable Development
Fiji, Permanent Mission to the United Nations	Peter Thomson	Permanent Representative
Fiji, Permanent Mission to the United Nations	Peni Suveinakama	Second Secretary
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	Sarah Wyatt	Professional Associate, Biodiversity Conservation
Global Island Partnership (GLISPA)	Kate Brown	Coordinator
Italy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	Grammenos Mastrojeni	Counsellor, Coordinator for Development Cooperation Initiatives on Environmental Sustainability
Maldives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Hussain Niyaz	Additional Secretary
Maldives, Permanent Mission to the United Nations	Jeffrey Salim Waheed	Deputy Permanent Representative and Charge d'Affaires
Marshall Islands Conservation Society, member of the Maloelap Atoll Local Government Council,	Mark Stege	Executive Director
Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)	Asha Singh	Head, Ocean Governance Unit
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	Peniamina Leavai	Adaptation Planning Officer – Pacific Adaptation to Climate change
United States Department of State	Rona Rathod	Foreign and Ocean Affairs Officer
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Thomas Gass	Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Mohammad Reza Salamat	Officer-in-Charge and Editor-in-Chief of Natural Resources Forum (NRF)
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Hiroko Morita-Lou	Chief, SIDS Unit
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Julie Powell	Sustainable Development Officer
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Ling Wang	Sustainable Development Officer
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)	Saeko Kajima	Associate Expert in Sustainable Development
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Craig Hawke	Principal SIDS Advisor
United Nations Environment Programme	Maaike Jansen	Programme Officer

(UNEP)		
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention	Christopher Corbin	Programme Officer Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP) Officer in Charge Communication, Education, Training and Awareness (CETA)
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP)	Alf Blikberg	Programme Officer
University of Mauritius	Manta Devi Nowbuth	Associate Professor, Faculty of Ocean Studies
University of the South Pacific	Joeli Veitayaki	Associate Professor
University of the West Indies	John Agard	Professor , Faculty Of Science And Agriculture
University of the West Indies	Leonard Nurse	Senior Lecturer
University of the West Indies	Robin Mahon	Professor, Emeritus Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES)
UN-Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS)	Alice Hicuburundi	Senior Legal Officer
UN-Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS)	Valentina Germani	Legal Officer
United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)	Peter Kenilorea	Programme Officer
United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)	Damien Sass	Associate Sustainable Development Officer
World Bank	Valery Hickey	Biodiversity and Practice Manager
World Bank	Nick Bian	International Affairs Officer