



THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES: 1-4 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) opens today in Apia, Samoa, and will continue until 4 September 2014, on the theme ‘The Sustainable Development of SIDS Through Genuine and Durable Partnerships.’ UN Member States called for convening this conference at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or ‘Rio+20’) in June 2012, noting that SIDS are a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique vulnerabilities.

The Samoa conference will include six multi-stakeholder ‘Partnership Dialogues,’ which will take place in parallel with the plenary sessions. Other related events were organized prior to the conference, from 28-30 August 2014. The draft outcome document, titled ‘SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action [S.A.M.O.A.] Pathway,’ is expected to be adopted at the conclusion of the conference.

A ceremony and cultural performance took place on the eve of the conference, with an opening prayer, speeches, choral singing, and young people’s dance performances, including fire knife dancing. Prior to the ceremony, participants attended the launch of a photographic exhibition in celebration of the International Year of SIDS, which illustrates the lives of people living in SIDS.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SIDS CONFERENCES

The vulnerability of islands and coastal areas was recognized by the 44th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1989, when it passed resolution 44/206 on the possible adverse effects of sea-level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low-lying coastal areas. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, brought the special case of small islands and coastal areas to international attention when it adopted Agenda 21, a programme of action for sustainable development. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, on the protection of oceans, all kinds of seas and coastal areas, included a programme area on the sustainable development of small islands. Agenda 21 also called for a global conference on the sustainable development of SIDS.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS: Established by UNGA resolution 47/189, the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 25 April - 6 May 1994. The Conference adopted the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (BPOA), a 14-point programme that identifies priority areas and

specific actions necessary for addressing the special challenges faced by SIDS. The priority areas are climate change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental disasters, management of wastes, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism resources, biodiversity resources, national institutions and administrative capacity, regional institutions and technical cooperation, transport and communication, science and technology, and human resource development. The BPOA further identified the following cross-sectoral areas requiring attention: capacity building; institutional development at the national, regional and international levels; cooperation in the transfer of environmentally-sound technologies; trade and economic diversification; and finance. The Conference also adopted the Barbados Declaration, a statement of political will underpinning the commitments contained in the BPOA.

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development was given the responsibility to follow up on the implementation of the BPOA.

UNGASS-22: In September 1999, the 22nd Special Session of the UNGA (UNGASS-22) undertook a comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the BPOA. The Special Session adopted the ‘State of Progress and Initiatives for the Future Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS,’ which identified six areas in need of urgent attention: climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, energy, and tourism. In addition, the Special Session highlighted the need to focus on means of implementation. UNGASS-22 also adopted a declaration in which Member States, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the principles of, and their commitment to, sustainable development as embodied in Agenda 21, the Barbados Declaration and the BPOA.

MILLENNIUM SUMMIT: In September 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration (UNGA resolution 55/2) and, in doing so, resolved to address the special needs of SIDS by implementing the BPOA and the outcome of UNGASS-22 rapidly and in full.

WSSD: The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) convened from 26 August to 4 September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The WSSD reaffirmed the special case of SIDS, dedicating a chapter of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) to the sustainable development of SIDS that identified a set of priority actions, called for a full and comprehensive review of the BPOA, and requested the UNGA at its 57th session to consider convening a second international meeting on the sustainable development of SIDS.

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INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BPOA: The International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS convened from 10-14 January 2005, in Port Louis, Mauritius. Plenary panels convened on the themes of: environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS; special challenges of SIDS in trade and economic development; the role of culture in the sustainable development of SIDS; addressing emerging trends and social challenges regarding the sustainable development of SIDS; and building resilience in SIDS. At the conclusion of the meeting, delegates adopted the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of SIDS (MSI), which sets forth actions and strategies in 19 priority areas, including graduation from Least Developed Country status, sustainable consumption and production, health and knowledge management.

MSI+5: The High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the MSI (MSI+5) was held from 24-25 September 2010 at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates participated in two multi-stakeholder roundtables, which focused on reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience, and enhancing international support for SIDS, as well as an interactive dialogue on cross-regional perspectives on common issues and priorities for the way forward. The major outcome of the meeting was a political declaration that elaborated new and renewed commitments to implement the BPOA and MSI.

RIO+20: The third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Rio+20 Pre-Conference Informal Consultations facilitated by the host country, and the UNCSD convened back-to-back in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. The conference outcome document, titled *The Future We Want*, reaffirms in paragraphs 178-180 that SIDS are a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including climate change and natural disasters. *The Future We Want* also called for convening, in 2014, a third international conference on SIDS, building on the BPOA and MSI.

UNGA-67: Resolution 67/207, 'Follow-up to and Implementation of the MSI,' set up the modalities for the 2014 International Conference on SIDS, and welcomed the offer of the Government of Samoa to host the conference. The resolution called for the conference to: assess progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the BPOA and the MSI; seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to effectively address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions; identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS; and identify priorities for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: This meeting, held from 2-4 July 2013 in Kingston, Jamaica, issued a 44-paragraph document (the 'Kingston Outcome') reaffirming earlier commitments, including the BPOA, MSI and JPOI. The Kingston Outcome identified constraints to achieving the sustainable development of SIDS, including, *inter alia*: a lack of political will on the part of most developed countries to fulfill their commitments; SIDS' vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, and impacts on the tourism industry; and the classification of many Caribbean SIDS as middle- to high-income countries, which excludes them from some sources of development aid. It called for new, additional and predictable financial resources for sustainable development, including relevant regional financing mechanisms. It also highlighted: the role of women and youth; the

challenges and opportunities of migration; and the potential of international climate-related mechanisms. Other issues addressed included, *inter alia*: community empowerment; regional and national disaster risk reduction; a people-centered approach to poverty eradication; strengthening of health systems; and debt relief for small, indebted middle-income countries.

PACIFIC REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: This meeting, held from 10-12 July 2013 in Nadi, Fiji, adopted a draft outcome document, titled 'Accelerating Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development,' which contains recommendations on, *inter alia*: climate change; health, especially non-communicable diseases; social development; governance; infrastructure; sustainable energy; oceans; sustainable resource management and protection; UN institutional support to SIDS; national priorities and plans; inclusive and sustainable economic management; and means of implementation and partnerships.

REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: The Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) Regional Preparatory Meeting took place in Baie Lazare, Seychelles, from 17-19 July 2013. The outcome document calls for a paradigm shift in the approach to SIDS' sustainable development, recognizing that each country requires its own unique tools, and emphasizing the concept of SIDS solidarity as a necessary prerequisite to implementation of the BPOA and MSI. Priority areas include: the blue economy; financing mechanisms and trade instruments; regional collaboration and institutional arrangements and partnerships. The outcome document identifies a number of new and emerging challenges and opportunities, including: ocean governance, disaster risk reduction, international organized crime, population growth and urbanization, chemical and hazardous waste management, transboundary pollution, and food security and nutrition.

INTER-REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: The Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for the Third International Conference on SIDS took place in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 26-28 August 2013. Discussions over the course of the three days addressed, *inter alia*: the outcomes of the three regional preparatory meetings; identifying gaps and constraints in implementing the BPOA and MSI; the blue economy; debt management strategies; and celebrating the first International Year of SIDS. Extensive negotiations took place on the draft outcome document for the SIDS conference. Delegates provisionally adopted the Needham's Point Bridgetown Declaration; however, the final outcome document was not agreed, and delegates suspended the IPM. The IPM reconvened on 16 September in New York, where the outcome document was adopted. The outcome document was later issued as an annex to document A/C.2/68/7.

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE: The Preparatory Committee for the conference met in New York, US, in February, April and June 2014 to discuss the objectives and substantive theme of the Conference as well as organizational and procedural matters, and to finalize the outcome document. On 11 July 2014, the Preparatory Committee approved the draft outcome document of the Third International Conference on SIDS, titled 'SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.' The SAMOA Pathway draft outcome document calls for renewed UN system support for SIDS-SIDS cooperation and national, regional and inter-regional coordination, and underscores the importance of accessible and transparent support from the international financial institutions that fully takes into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS, for the implementation of the BPOA, MSI and SAMOA Pathway itself.