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### Sustainable development

## **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**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/217](#). It covers the period from August 2019 to July 2020 and provides a review of the progress made, and the continuing challenges faced, by small island developing States in the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. The report contains a summary of actions taken by Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international development partners, submitted in response to the questionnaire issued by the Secretariat. It also provides an update on the status of implementation of additional mandates called for by the General Assembly. In the light of the present and ongoing global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the present report also contains a special section discussing COVID-19 and small island developing States.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 74/217 and to the request made in paragraph 36 of resolution 73/228. United Nations system organizations, including the regional commissions, as well as regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States, major groups and Member States were consulted during its preparation. The Secretariat issued a questionnaire: a total of 25 responses<sup>1</sup> were received, 10 of which were from Member States, 12 from United Nations system organizations and 3 from international organizations. Owing to word limits, the present report contains a summarized version of inputs. The full text of all responses and submissions received is available at: <https://sidsnetwork.org/>.

2. In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the present report contains three sections. Section II contains information relating to progress in implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, submitted in response to the Secretariat's questionnaire; section III provides updates on the status of implementation of additional mandates requested by the General Assembly for action by the Secretary-General; and section IV contains a discussion on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and small island developing States.

## II. Implementation, monitoring and follow-up

3. Small island developing States remain a special case with regard to sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. They are constrained in meeting their goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development. COVID-19 and its devastating socioeconomic impacts put further pressure on this vulnerable group of States.

### A. Updates from Member States

4. The Austrian Development Agency strategic framework (2019–2021), establishes Austria's priority areas for cooperation with least developed countries and small island developing States. These areas include water supply and sanitation, renewable energy and rural development for increased food security. The Foreign Disaster Fund<sup>2</sup> of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs to small island developing States provides support during emergencies. In support of the efforts of small island developing States to access modern energy and increased energy efficiency, the Agency continues to further strengthen its

<sup>1</sup> Submissions received from: Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Curaçao, Fiji, France, Malta, Qatar, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Global Environment Facility, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Renewable Energy Agency.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.entwicklung.at/en/themes/humanitarian-aid/foreign-disaster-fund-ffd](http://www.entwicklung.at/en/themes/humanitarian-aid/foreign-disaster-fund-ffd).

collaboration with the Caribbean Community<sup>3</sup> (CARICOM) and the Pacific Community<sup>4</sup> on developing the capacities of their respective centres for renewable energy and energy efficiency<sup>5,6</sup>). The Agency also takes strong action to empower women and girls and promote gender equality in all its cooperation programmes and projects. In 2018–2019, Austria spent a total of \$3.894 million towards small island developing States, in the area of sustainable energy.

5. Bahrain reported the continued implementation of its national development plan, the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030,<sup>7</sup> and its five-year action plan. Both are aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implement the small island developing States sustainable development priority areas highlighted under the SAMOA Pathway. The Supreme Council for Environment is the regulatory body responsible for the protection of all-natural resources in Bahrain. The Supreme Council has made considerable efforts in promoting environment protection and natural resource conservation. The percentage of marine protected areas in the country increased to 21 per cent, surpassing the international set target of 10 per cent.

6. Belgium renewed its support (a sum of \$980,000) to one of its funded ocean-related projects entitled Ocean Teacher Global Academy.<sup>8</sup> This project, implemented by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), renewed for a further three years, is aimed at building equitable capacity related to ocean research, observations and services in all Commission member States. The Global Academy gives priority to nationals of small island developing States in the selection of candidates. A total of 36 candidates from small island developing States have to date benefited from Global Academy grants, including 9 from the Dominican Republic, 5 from Mauritius, 4 each from Fiji and Singapore, 2 each from the Comoros, Seychelles and Timor-Leste and 1 each from Cabo Verde, Jamaica, Maldives, Sao Tome and Principe, Tonga and Trinidad and Tobago. Belgium announced the commencement of a new project entitled: Pacific Islands Marine Bioinvasions Alert Network. This project, also to be implemented by the Commission, is aimed at addressing the threat of invasive alien species in Pacific small island developing States. The project will run for 36 months, commencing in 2020, with a grant sum support of \$850,000.

7. Support from France to the most vulnerable countries, including small island developing States, is focused on climate change adaptation and resilience building. The French Development Agency project entitled: Adapt'Action<sup>9</sup> supports countries seeking technical assistance for the institutional, methodological and operational implementation of their commitments in relation to adaptation to climate change. The project (30 million euros over four years), supports 15 countries and regional organizations in Africa, in the least developed countries and small island developing States. In 2019, the Agency, through a Sunref project<sup>10</sup> launched a 10 million euro project to support the development of renewable energy in Mauritius.

8. France also provided updated information on its multi-donor initiative entitled Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems.<sup>11</sup> Launched in 2015, at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the initiative supports least developed countries and small island

<sup>3</sup> See <https://caricom.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.spc.int/](http://www.spc.int/).

<sup>5</sup> See [www.ccreee.org/](http://www.ccreee.org/).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.pcreee.org/](http://www.pcreee.org/).

<sup>7</sup> See [www.moic.gov.bh/en/Ministry/bahrain-economic-vision-2030](http://www.moic.gov.bh/en/Ministry/bahrain-economic-vision-2030).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://classroom.oceanteacher.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.afd.fr/en/ressources/what-adaptaction-facility](http://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/what-adaptaction-facility).

<sup>10</sup> See [www.sunref.org/en/](http://www.sunref.org/en/).

<sup>11</sup> See [www.crews-initiative.org/en](http://www.crews-initiative.org/en).

developing States and develops projects that help implement risk-informed early warning services, to save lives, goods and livelihoods. In Pacific small island developing States, a \$2.5 million project under the initiative is currently being implemented, directly benefiting Fiji, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, Samoa, Tonga, Palau, Nauru, the Marshall Islands and Tokelau. In addition, at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, the French Development Agency, together with the European Union, New Zealand and Australia announced the launch of the Joint Pacific Initiative on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Resilience (the KIWA Initiative)<sup>12</sup>. The overall objective of the Initiative is to organize an international coalition to mobilize greater financial resources to accelerate and simplify the funding of adaptation and biodiversity protections. The Initiative is aimed at supporting 19 Pacific small island developing States and Overseas Territories and their populations in adapting to the effects of climate change and to protect their biodiversity through the implementation of nature-based solutions. Canada has since joined the Initiative.

9. Malta reported that it spent \$55,000 during the reporting period towards the implementation of two small island developing States priority areas under the SAMOA Pathway, namely: oceans and seas and means of implementation, including partnerships.

10. The State of Qatar reported that, in 2019, it disbursed a total of \$559,302 towards small island developing States, as follows: \$196,000 and \$100,000 to the Governments of the Bahamas and Cuba respectively, to support hurricane and tropical storm response and relief; \$216,359 to Haiti to support the construction of schools in remote areas; \$13,888 to Timor-Leste towards education, including support to school dropouts; and \$53,055 to Guinea-Bissau to support universal access for vulnerable girls and boys to quality primary education.

11. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency is the official international development cooperation organization of Turkey. Active in 150 countries through its 62 programme coordination offices, the Agency is located in 60 countries across 5 continents, one of which is in the Comoros, a small island developing State. One of the main principles of Turkey's cooperation with its partners is a demand-driven approach. The higher education, agriculture and emergency response sectors have been the priorities most demanded and responded to in small island developing States to date. In 2019, Turkey disbursed \$1.5 million towards the following SAMOA Pathway priority areas: disaster risk reduction – \$5,000; food security and nutrition – \$90,000; sustainable transportation – \$5,000; means of implementation – \$100,000; higher education – \$1.2 million; emergency response – \$50,000; public sector policy and administrative management – \$25,000; and security system and management reform – \$15,000.

12. Since 2019, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been reviewing its policy approach towards small island developing States and is developing its ongoing strategy to reflect the recent COVID-19 challenges. The United Kingdom is focused, in particular, on addressing access for small island developing States to concessional finance. The date for a conference to be held on that theme is currently under review. The United Kingdom has allocated significant development funds to small island developing States in the Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific regions and will continue to do so. Going forward, the United Kingdom is considering how it can support small island developing States in pooling resources and managing their responses to COVID-19. The United Kingdom also supports the continued development of blue and green bonds, including through

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<sup>12</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/launch-joint-pacific-initiative-biodiversity-climate-change-and-resilience\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/launch-joint-pacific-initiative-biodiversity-climate-change-and-resilience_en).

the potential use of the London Stock Exchange for the launch of future financial instruments of this type.

13. In its comprehensive response, Fiji confirmed, *inter alia*, its continued commitment to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. Prior to COVID-19, Fiji predicted that its per capita income, which then stood at \$10,000.00, would increase fourfold by 2036. With its nominal gross domestic product (GDP) growth, it predicted that government debt would be reduced to 35 per cent of GDP over the next 20 years and the unemployment rate reduced to below 4 per cent. These predictions have all been drastically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. In terms of national budget allocations, the Government of Fiji reported that appropriate provisions, a sum of F\$2,678,967,858, representing 69.7 per cent of the total budget of F\$3,840,928,900, has been allocated to address each of the sustainable development priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway for 2019–2020.

15. Curaçao<sup>13</sup> also submitted a substantive response. With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support mission, Curaçao confirmed that 69 per cent of its national development plan is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals. The mission identified five priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway, namely: water management, ocean management, sustainable energy, sustainable economic growth and improved education system as positive drivers, having a multiplier effect on Sustainable Development Goal implementations. Curaçao allocated the following sums towards the implementation of these SAMOA Pathway priority areas in 2020: climate change – \$8,000; disaster risk reduction – \$100,000; water and sanitation – \$165,000; sustainable transportation – \$1.65 million; and \$20,000 towards the management of chemicals and waste.

## **B. Updates from United Nations system organization**

16. Small island developing States make up the majority of countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices and have called for additional and better support, tailored to meet their needs with respect to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the achievement of the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. This includes: increasing physical presence; policy and technical resources; facilitating deeper engagement in global and regional intergovernmental forums; strengthening data capacities and enhancing access to financing for sustainable development and South-South and triangular cooperation.

17. The Secretary-General wishes to reiterate that, in his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([A/75/79-E/2020/55](#), paras. 145–170), in response to the above request and on the basis of work carried out by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, he recommended a number of detailed commitments in six areas of action, including the commitment that the United Nations development system will review its specific programmatic assistance to small island developing States and develop new or updated offers and programmes for them by the end of 2020. In parallel, the United Nations development system entities will revisit existing entity resource allocation models, in consultation with their respective governing bodies, to explore the possibility of going beyond country typology and national income, and incorporating vulnerability aspects into the allocation criteria for core resources.

18. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) continues to maintain a focused programmatic and institutionalized structure

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<sup>13</sup> See Associate member of ECLAC.

dedicated to supporting the national and regional sustainable development priorities of the Caribbean small island developing States. The expected outcomes of this service include: the promotion of sound fiscal management and market diversification; the promotion of the wider application of information, communications and technology for development; improved monitoring and reporting mechanisms at the national level for measuring progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway; enhanced social development, including gender issues; the promotion of the integration of disaster risk reduction measures into national planning; strengthened statistical capacity of Caribbean countries to support more effective evidence-based policymaking; and the provision of timely support on new and emerging subjects for sustainable development, guided through General Assembly resolutions and other inter-governmental decisions.

19. Delivered through technical assessments and national workshops, ECLAC programmatic support for Caribbean small island developing States is aimed at improving national capacities to design and implement evidence-based development planning and capacity to review and follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Recipient countries include Dominica, Saint Lucia, Aruba, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Sint Maarten. Other notable ECLAC undertakings reported include the Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap initiative;<sup>14</sup> the damage and loss assessments;<sup>15</sup> and the “Caribbean First” initiative.

20. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has developed a draft Pacific strategy for 2020–2024. Implementation of the strategy will be guided by the ESCAP core functions, namely: the convening function, the thinktank and knowledge management function; and the capacity-building function. For the remaining life of the SAMOA Pathway, ESCAP support for small island developing States will be delivered under the following five areas of proposed focus and result: (a) Climate change and disaster risk reduction; (b) sustainable management and use of the oceans; (c) regional integration and connectivity; (d) social inclusion, poverty alleviation and gender equality; and (e) partnerships, data, monitoring and reporting. In terms of expenditures disbursed or planned for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, ESCAP reported that a sum of \$1,467,968 was allocated for 2019, of which \$467,457 was for the Asia-Pacific region with the participation of small island developing States.

21. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provided two updates of its programmes in small island developing States. In Haiti, the Office works closely with the Directorate for Civil Protection, to strengthen the capacities of first responders and improve the country’s disaster preparedness. These included supporting the Directorate in the development of the national contingency plan, training on needs assessments and on the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team methodology. The Office’s 2019 priorities in Haiti include: supporting the Directorate for Civil Protection to prepare for the hurricane season; supporting humanitarian partners to overcome the access challenges and ensure the availability of accurate information about situations on the ground; the development of an evidence-based humanitarian needs overview and a well-prioritized humanitarian response plan for 2020; and raising the financial resources required for response to increasing humanitarian needs.

22. For the period 2020–2021, Pacific Office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will support Pacific small island developing States in building

<sup>14</sup> See [www.cepal.org/en/news/eclac-establishes-task-force-caribbeans-debt-swap-initiative](http://www.cepal.org/en/news/eclac-establishes-task-force-caribbeans-debt-swap-initiative).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.cepal.org/en/publications/4900-economic-impact-disasters-evidence-dala-assessments-eclac-latin-america-and](http://www.cepal.org/en/publications/4900-economic-impact-disasters-evidence-dala-assessments-eclac-latin-america-and).

capacity for climate resilience by strengthening coordinated emergency responses, operational readiness (preparedness) and strategic and operational partnerships. These overarching priorities underscore the ongoing role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in supporting government-led response efforts in the Pacific, ensuring that emergency responses are context specific, as localized as possible, tailored and demand-driven and capitalizing on the complementary response capabilities of key partners. The technical training and capacity-building efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – especially for national disaster management offices are in the areas of coordination and information management in the priority countries most at risk, namely, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu and also the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue and Tuvalu. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also engages with other regional stakeholders active in climate change and resilience-building, including the Pacific Community, the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat, the Pacific Islands Development Forum, the University of the South Pacific and the regional and national meteorological services.

23. In addition to advocacy and resource mobilization, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is mandated to enhance coherence and ensure the mainstreaming of small island developing States sustainable development priorities in the work of the United Nations system and processes, including at the national, regional and global levels. The Office will continue to organize meetings for small island developing States national focal points,<sup>16</sup> providing them with the opportunity to share experiences and best practices and network and with a better understanding of existing means of implementation, including financing and business models, to address implementation gaps and challenges.

24. For 2019–2020, a sum of \$113,800<sup>17</sup> has been set aside to support national focal points. \$105,655<sup>18</sup> has also been set aside by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to implement its “Island voices” journalism campaign.<sup>19</sup> In 2020, the Office plans to convene its Small Island Developing States Global Business Network forum.<sup>20</sup> The forum will also support consultations among Governments of small island developing States, civil society and the private sector in the margins of the 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Ocean Conference),<sup>21</sup> and the Our Ocean Conference,<sup>22</sup> scheduled to be held in Palau in December 2020.

25. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is mandated, inter alia, to address the persistent trade, investment and development challenges of small island developing States and its strategy for implementation is four-tiered, as follows: (a) underscoring the need for the United Nations to have well-defined criteria for identifying small island developing States; (b) raising the visibility of acute island vulnerability issues; (c) identifying most desirable special support measures for small island developing States; and (d) providing selected small island developing States with relevant advisory services. This multi-faceted action is

<sup>16</sup> See <https://unohrlls.org/sids-national-focal-points/>.

<sup>17</sup> Support from the Government of Italy.

<sup>18</sup> Support from the Government of the Netherlands.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://unohrlls.org/island-voices/>.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://sidsgbn.org/>.

<sup>21</sup> See [www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2020](http://www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2020).

<sup>22</sup> See [www.ourocean2020.pw/](http://www.ourocean2020.pw/).

largely geared to supporting the productive capacity-building efforts of small island developing States.

26. For the remaining life of the SAMOA Pathway, UNCTAD has identified the following as areas of priority: (a) help the least developed small island developing States “graduate smartly”; (b) encourage and attract foreign direct investment; (c) support efforts to foster small enterprise creation; (d) help find trading opportunities in the ocean economy; (e) support the gender dimension of trade; (f) encourage e-commerce and the digital economy; (g) invest in science and technology for innovation and entrepreneurship; and (h) support trade logistics and maritime transport.<sup>23</sup>

27. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) hosts the Small Island Developing States Unit (see [A/50/422](#), para. 7), in its Division for Sustainable Development Goals. The Unit is mandated inter alia to provide substantive secretariat support to intergovernmental and inter-agency mechanisms and prepare reports on the sustainable development priorities of small island developing States, including monitoring of the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. Small island developing States and the least developed countries are the two vulnerable groups identified by DESA for its prioritized support. DESA delivers its support to small island developing States through a Department-wide approach. Several divisions of DESA have or are currently implementing capacity-building initiatives in small island developing States. The Division for Public Institutions and Digital Governance and its United Nations Project Office on Governance, for instance, have made consistent efforts to support small island developing States by conducting research, implementing capacity development activities and providing intergovernmental support to raise awareness of the unique challenges confronted by such States in implementing the SAMOA Pathway. The Division, in collaboration with the Unit, is currently implementing a governance and public institutions-focused capacity-development project in Fiji and Vanuatu.

28. To ensure a more tailored policy and technical support to the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, DESA has identified the common country analysis as a key entry point to channel its thought leadership and capacity development support from the global to the regional and country levels, including through multi-country offices. A DESA common country analysis task team was established with the objective to identify and coordinate how the Department can effectively and systematically support the new common country analyses within existing capacities and resources and to facilitate its engagement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. DESA and the Pacific United Nations country Team are now collaborating under this initiative. DESA also provided departmental support to Aruba for the review of its 2020–2025 national development plan. The Small Island Developing States Unit is currently implementing a blue growth capacity development project targeting the Caribbean and Pacific small island developing States.

29. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction oversees the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Under the Framework, the particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States to disasters are recognized as an impediment, delaying their progress towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda. Key activities of the Office include: (a) supporting the development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies that are consistent with national adaptation plans and strategies for sustainable development; and (b) development of disaster risk profiles. The Office has scaled up its targeted capacity initiatives for small island developing States through the conduct of tailored training and peer learning exchanges to address their particular challenges, including

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<sup>23</sup> For a full narrative of UNCTAD activities in support of SIDs, see: [TD/B/64/9](#).



in relation to the collection and sharing of disaster and climate risk data and information, to support the effective joint monitoring of progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

30. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction also reported the creation of an e-learning course on the Sendai Framework Monitor which complements its national training workshops, enabling participants to learn the system independently, thereby reducing training costs. National training workshops on the use of the Framework Monitor and the development of disaster loss databases have been undertaken in several Pacific small island developing States, including Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga. Going forward, the Office will pursue further engagements with Pacific small island developing States through the Pacific Resilience Partnership.<sup>24</sup> In Africa, the Office supports the efforts of Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Príncipe to join and benefit from the African Union African Risk Capacity insurance pools and to develop a system to match incoming donor financing with national priorities and needs based on a risk-sensitive budget review.

31. In the Caribbean, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction supports the Network of Caribbean Chambers of Commerce,<sup>25</sup> a network of 21 national chambers of commerce, whose aim is to: advocate and create enhanced value for members of their respective chambers; to reduce the risk of members and their countries with regard to disasters; share knowledge and best practices among the Network; and to enhance transportation, trade facilitation and promotion. The Office also collaborates with ARISE,<sup>26</sup> a private sector initiative seeking to reduce risks through better decision-making informed by the risk related to preparedness, response and recovery, following a disaster, including risk-informed investment decisions for a sustainable future. The combination of intellectual, implementation and capital assets collectively available within the public and private sectors will support substantial progress towards the creation of resilient communities. Country-level ARISE networks have been launched in Dominica, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Saint Lucia, British Virgin Islands and Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of the Office. The Office also collaborates very closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency<sup>27</sup> to ensure harmonized reporting and monitoring of progress on the Sendai Framework through the Agency's monitoring system.

32. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) does not have a specific subprogramme for small island developing States, however, United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/4 serves as the basic document for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. The Programme has incorporated priority activities for small island developing States into its seven subprogrammes. Financial resources for their implementation are provided under each subprogramme.

33. The UNEP Green Fins programme<sup>28</sup> has been extended to include more small island developing States. The Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, the Dominican Republic, Maldives, Palau and Singapore are all implementing Green Fins activities for sustainable scuba diving tourism. Green Fins was originally initiated under UNEP and the regional seas programmes as part of an effort to increase public awareness and management practices to support the conservation of coral reefs and reduce

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<sup>24</sup> See [www.resilientpacific.org/pacific-resilience-partnership/](http://www.resilientpacific.org/pacific-resilience-partnership/).

<sup>25</sup> See [www.linkedin.com/company/caricham/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/caricham/).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://eird.org/americas/news/the-caribbean-strengthens-its-business-resilience-and-drr-initiatives.html#.XxC3FChKJIU>.

<sup>27</sup> See [www.cdema.org/](http://www.cdema.org/).

<sup>28</sup> See [www.greenfins.net/](http://www.greenfins.net/).

unsustainable tourism practices. It is now the only global environmental certification standard for scuba diving tourism. In line with United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 413, UNEP and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network organized a series of regional workshops, including in all regions of small island developing States, to collate information and data to produce UNEP regional coral reef reports and a global summary report.

34. UNESCO implementation of the SAMOA Pathway is guided by its Small Island Developing States Action Plan (2016–2021).<sup>29</sup> The Plan was developed to address issues concerning small island developing States in the areas related to the Organization's mandate and is fully aligned with the SAMOA Pathway, the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Its objectives cover the following action areas: (a) enhancing island capacities to achieve sustainable development through education and the reinforcement of human and institution capacities; (b) enhancing the resilience of small island developing States and the sustainability of human interactions with ecological, freshwater and ocean systems; (c) supporting small island developing States in their management of social transformations and the promotion of social inclusion and social justice; (d) preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage and promoting culture for island sustainable development; and (e) increasing connectivity, information management and knowledge sharing.

35. UNESCO support for small island developing States is carried out through regular programme budget and extrabudgetary programmes.<sup>30</sup> Small island developing States are also supported through the UNESCO Participation Programme and emergency assistance. For 2019, UNESCO reported that it invested \$3,316,368 towards the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway priority areas, from a total budget allocation of \$7,684,505.

36. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) delivers its support to small island developing States through its regional and subregional offices. Priority areas include, population data, health, including reproductive health, empowerment of young people, women and girls, gender equality and humanitarian response. The Pacific subregional programme (2018–2022) covers 14 countries. The Caribbean subregional programme (2017–2021) addresses the development needs of 21 countries.

37. Collaboration with regional entities such as CARICOM, the Pacific Community and other international development partners has enabled UNFPA to support the statistical offices of small island developing States to generate high quality data for tracking progress towards both global and national targets, and to inform the formulation of evidence-based and effective policies and programmes to improve human lives. Key actions and deliverables include the launch of the Kiribati Social Development Indicator Survey and support the utilization of findings to inform policy and programming related to the International Conference on Population and Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway. UNFPA is also finalizing the Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu multiple indicator cluster surveys. Workshops on housing and population led to South-South cooperation between national statistical offices in Belize and Haiti. A memorandum of understanding was signed between UNFPA and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to support national and regional disaster preparedness, response and recovery, given the high vulnerability of Caribbean small island developing States to climate change.

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<sup>29</sup> See [www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/sids/sids-action-plan-2016-2021/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/sids/sids-action-plan-2016-2021/).

<sup>30</sup> With the financial support of donors, including the Japanese funds-in-trust, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the United Nations Joint Programme funds-in-trust.

38. UNFPA reported that its budget allocation supporting implementation of the SAMOA Pathway priority areas in 2019 was as follows: for the Caribbean subregional programme: (a) sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth – \$75,228; (b) disaster risk reduction – \$626,136; summary of the Caribbean and Pacific subregional programme: (c) health and non-communicable diseases – \$2,104,732; (d) gender equality – \$364,879; (e) means of implementation – \$643,216.

39. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Small Island Developing States Strategy 2019–2025<sup>31</sup> serves as a guiding framework steering the organization’s results-based interventions and cooperation with small island developing States for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9. Of the 38 United Nations small island developing States, 34 are members of UNIDO. In 2019, Antigua and Barbuda and the Federated States of Micronesia joined the organization. The number of UNIDO projects in small island developing States shows a growing trajectory. Currently, 42 country and regional-level technical cooperation projects are being implemented by UNIDO in 16 small island developing States. The overall UNIDO budget allocation for small island developing States amounts to \$45,374,692, and the total amount of expenditures for 2019 was \$4,603,209. UNIDO action is focused on four priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway, namely: (a) sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth; (b) climate change; (c) sustainable energy; and (d) means of implementation.

40. Designed as multidisciplinary interventions, UNIDO projects have positive spillovers on other priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway. For instance, many of the projects under climate change relate to the reduction of persistent organic pollutants, hydrochlorofluorocarbons and mercury – thus having a clear impact on “chemical and waste management”. UNIDO is currently implementing 10 projects with a total budget allocation of \$9,551,552 on sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Donors for these projects include China, Italy, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation and multilateral funding institutions such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Global Environment Facility. There are 12 ongoing projects under climate change, with a budget allocation of \$11,204,565, mostly funded by the Montreal Protocol and the Facility. There are 14 current projects under sustainable energy, with a budget allocation of \$22,507,683, mostly funded by the Facility, the European Union and individual European countries, notably Austria, Norway and Spain. Lastly, under means of implementation, UNIDO has developed 6 projects, with a total budget of \$45,374,692, the vast majority of which are aimed at supporting the Governments of small island developing States with policymaking, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation.

41. As a demand-driven organization, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) does not have a specific strategy for small island developing States. UNOPS is self-financed and works jointly with or on behalf of partners to implement projects, on the basis of their needs and priorities, and thus does not set programmatic goals and targets for its activities. However, in order to enhance coordination and improve the coherence of its delivery in small island developing States, in 2018, UNOPS tasked its New York Liaison Office to serve as an information bank on matters related to small island developing States. The mandate of the Liaison Office is to collect data on ongoing UNOPS projects in small island developing States, communicate with permanent representatives of small island developing States in New York and identify needs and opportunities for improved UNOPS support to this group of countries.

<sup>31</sup> See [www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2020-04/GC.18\\_CRP.05\\_UNIDO\\_s\\_Small\\_Island\\_Developing\\_States\\_Strategy\\_2019%E2%80%932025.pdf](http://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2020-04/GC.18_CRP.05_UNIDO_s_Small_Island_Developing_States_Strategy_2019%E2%80%932025.pdf).

### C. Updates from intergovernmental organizations

42. The Global Environment Facility<sup>32</sup> does not have an institution-wide strategy on small island developing States. However, given that many such States have fragile environments and are uniquely affected by global change, they often receive special consideration in Facility focal area strategies. For more than 25 years, the Facility has supported projects in critical areas for small island developing States, such as biodiversity protection, resilience to climate change and other shocks, increased energy access through renewable energy and energy efficiency, halting and reversing land degradation, cooperation on international waters and improved chemicals management. By October 2018, the Facility had provided more than \$578 million in country-allocated finance across all focal areas.<sup>33</sup> Facility finance has leveraged several times that amount in additional resources for sustainable development.

43. The International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN)<sup>34</sup> is managed as a series of Global Environment Facility-funded projects implemented by UNDP and UNEP and currently executed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the Network is aimed at strengthening transboundary management of freshwater and marine resources around the globe by collecting and sharing best practices, lessons learned and innovative solutions to common problems across the Facility international waters portfolio. It facilitates a highly active community of Facility international waters project managers, country officials, implementing agencies, national and international non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and private sector partners. The latest phase of the Network (IW: LEARN 5) has allocated funding to directly support small island developing States through project twinning, an online international waters knowledge resource and targeted training courses and workshops. With this direct support to small island developing States, the Network aims to better strengthen relationships with the small island developing States community in close collaboration with the DESA Small Island Developing States Unit and the Inter-Agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States.

44. For the period June–December 2019, the Global Environment Facility Council has approved \$205 million in new funding towards SAMOA Pathway priority areas as follows: (a) sustainable energy – \$1.4 million; (b) disaster risk reduction – \$29 million; (c) ocean and seas – \$17 million; (d) food security and nutrition – \$19.9 million; (e) sustainable transportation – \$12.3 million; (f) chemicals and waste management – \$71.9 million; (g) biodiversity – \$30.4 million; (h) \$7.5 million set aside “incentive” resource towards integrated programming; and (i) \$15.63 million towards enabling activities towards Convention obligations.<sup>35</sup>

45. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Pacific Strategy 2017–2020<sup>36</sup> provides the framework for addressing migration challenges in the Pacific and to guide the responses of IOM to the needs of migrants, communities affected by migration and Governments in that region. The strategy is aligned to and guided by the IOM global Migration Governance Framework.<sup>37</sup> The IOM Pacific Strategy

<sup>32</sup> See [www.thegef.org/](http://www.thegef.org/).

<sup>33</sup> See Global Environment Facility, “Small island developing States and the Global Environment Facility: building lasting partnerships”, available at: [www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF%20and%20SIDS%20October%202018\\_r2.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF%20and%20SIDS%20October%202018_r2.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> <https://iwlearn.net>.

<sup>35</sup> Towards enabling activities (national communications, biennial update reports, technology needs assessments) and capacity-building initiative for transparency in small island developing States in 2019.

<sup>36</sup> See [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom\\_pacific\\_strategy.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_pacific_strategy.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> See <https://gfmf.org/pfp/ppd/5694>.

integrates the SAMOA Pathway by incorporating the unique vulnerability of small island developing States in the context of climate change and focuses on building resilience and establishing partnerships in pursuit of sustainable development. The three IOM strategic priorities for Pacific small island developing States are: (a) migrants and communities in the Pacific benefit from migration as a sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategy; (b) displaced persons and affected communities in the Pacific are protected from and resilient to the impact of natural disasters and climate change and (c) migrants in the Pacific enjoy protection from human rights abuses and are able to migrate in a safe, orderly and dignified manner.

46. In the Caribbean, IOM is coordinating with regional and international organizations the preparation and implementation of a Caribbean plan of action on human mobility,<sup>38</sup> which looks at different avenues to address the migration, environment and climate change nexus in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts. IOM partners with local government to establish sustainable livelihood actions in vulnerable receptor communities in response to increased numbers of Venezuelan migrants. These actions address food security through the establishment of small community farms; increase opportunities for economic growth within communities and strengthen community structures for sustainability. IOM continues to support Governments in recognizing the roles that migrants and diaspora communities play in contributing to development in their home countries. IOM has been working with Governments to harness skills within the diaspora and to identify opportunities for more meaningful engagement towards social and economic development in the Caribbean.

47. IOM is also supporting the development of policies and virtual platforms to facilitate exchange and strengthen the relationships with Governments and their diaspora. IOM works in Guyana to provide HIV/AIDS testing and sexual and reproductive health education and counselling to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the mining and logging sectors in the country's hinterland regions. For the period 2019–2020, IOM has invested the following towards the implementation of these priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway: (a) \$200,000 – sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth (Caribbean); (b) \$463,577 – climate change (Pacific); (c) disaster risk reduction – \$5,257,105 (Pacific) and \$3,400.00 (Caribbean); (d) food security and nutrition – \$2,727,327 (Pacific) and \$50,000 (Caribbean); (e) health and non-communicable diseases – \$87.413 (Pacific) and \$875,000 (Caribbean).

48. The International Renewable Energy Agency small island developing States Strategy is incorporated in the SIDS Lighthouses Initiative,<sup>39</sup> a framework for action to support small island developing States in the transformation from a predominantly fossil-based to a renewables-based and resilient energy system, coordinated and facilitated by the Agency. The Initiative addresses all elements of the energy transition, including policy and market frameworks, technology options and capacity building. It brings together 36 small island developing States and 27 development partners, including developed countries, regional and international organizations, private companies, research institutes and non-profits.

49. The International Renewable Energy Agency/Abu Dhabi Fund for Development Project Facility selected the following five renewable energy projects<sup>40</sup> in small island developing States for funding:

<sup>38</sup> See <https://caribbeanmigration.org/events/regional-consultation-towards-framework-regional-cooperation-human-mobility-context-disasters>.

<sup>39</sup> See <https://islands.irena.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> See [www.irena.org/ADFD/Selected-Projects](http://www.irena.org/ADFD/Selected-Projects).

- (a) Antigua and Barbuda – a transformation and resilience building of the water sector project;
- (b) Cuba – a solar photovoltaic farms with battery storage project in Isla de la Juventud;
- (c) Maldives – a waste-to-energy project in Addu City;
- (d) Saint Lucia – a Troumassee solar and battery storage project;
- (e) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – a renewable energy transition project for Bequia residents.

### III. Updates on action requested in General Assembly resolutions

50. The General Assembly, through successive resolutions,<sup>41</sup> has requested additional specific action from the Secretariat. This section provides brief updates on the status of implementation of three such requests.

#### A. Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework

51. In 2015, following the establishment of the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework,<sup>42</sup> the General Assembly requested the Secretariat, DESA and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to support the Steering Committee on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States in following up existing and promoting and advocating the launch of new small island developing States partnerships. In January 2020, the President of the General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Walton Alfonso Webson, and the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, Vanessa Frazier, as co-chairs of the Steering Committee for 2020–2021, replacing Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason, and Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, Lois Young. The Steering Committee has since adopted its programme of work for 2020<sup>43</sup> and organized the sixth annual global multi-stakeholders SIDS partnerships dialogue.<sup>44</sup>

#### B. Needs assessment

52. In 2018,<sup>45</sup> the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, by 2020, within existing resources, to ensure the allocation of adequate resources to respond to the expanding mandates in support of the sustainable development agenda of the small island developing States and to include in his report at its seventy-fifth session information on what has been done to address the needs resulting from the expanded mandates given to the small island developing States units of the Secretariat.

53. The DESA Small Island Developing States Unit and the small island developing States Subprogramme of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing

<sup>41</sup> See [A/70/472/Add.2](#), para. 11 (a)–(c).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 11.

<sup>43</sup> See [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25860Final\\_\\_Approved\\_2020\\_Work\\_Programme.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25860Final__Approved_2020_Work_Programme.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=3305&menu=1634>.

<sup>45</sup> See General Assembly resolution [73/228](#), paras. 35 and 36.

States continued to leverage their complementary strengths, improve their coordination and collaboration, including through regular meetings at all levels, joint planning and implementation of activities, and improve communication and consultation with Member States. The two Units have also leveraged the strengths of other key partners in the United Nations system, including through the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for Small Island Developing States, and the multi-country office review process, so as to enhance implementation and the translation of global mandates relating to the sustainable development priorities of small island developing States to the regional and national levels.

54. Important steps have been taken to bridge the resource gaps of the Secretariat's units. The small island developing States subprogramme of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is designated as one of the Secretary-General's three budget priorities for 2021. The proposed resources for the 2021 programme budget thus entail both post and non-post funding for the subprogramme. The resource needs of the DESA Small Island Developing States Unit have been addressed by the creation of an additional post, supported for the next two years by the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation. Both units are now also jointly benefiting from a much-needed and timely consultancy resource support, provided by the Government of Ireland.

### C. The high-level review

55. As follow-up to the high-level review of the SAMOA Pathway,<sup>46</sup> both small island developing States units of the Secretariat, in consultation with Member States, all relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant stakeholders, are coordinating the implementation of the requests contained in paragraphs 10 and 20 of resolution 74/217. The first request involves the 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. The second involves the identification of the Samoa Pathway priority areas not covered by the Sustainable Development Goals or the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk and the possible development of targets and indicators for those priority areas (if any).

56. For both undertakings, in view of available resources, implementation will involve a two-phased approach. The Secretariat will provide regular updates on the progress of phase 1 to all stakeholders and will submit a report to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

## IV. COVID-19 and small island developing States

57. A raging global pandemic, sparing no country or region and projected to inflict the worst recession since the Great Depression, COVID-19 has plunged the world into an acute health and economic crisis, the severity of which has not been seen in nearly a century. The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries. It has reconfirmed that the systems on which we depend, for food, trade, health, climate, inter alia, are not only increasingly interdependent, but increasingly fragile. This section contains a discussion of COVID-19 and small island developing States.

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<sup>46</sup> See General Assembly resolution 74/3.

## Health

58. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, small island developing States were already confronting unique challenges in preventing, detecting, and responding to infectious diseases. Small island developing States generally lack health-care infrastructure and technologies, are limited in their health workforce capacities, and their public health spending, as a percentage of overall government expenditure, is typically low. Small island developing States have relatively poorer health capabilities, with an average index score of 28.9 out of 100, well below the global average of 40.2.<sup>47</sup> A high prevalence of pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity, make populations in such States particularly susceptible to COVID-19. Most small island developing States do not have COVID-19 testing or advanced health-care facilities or systems to care for those with severe illness, especially those needing ventilators. Nonetheless, the health impact of the pandemic in small island developing States has been heterogenous, ranging from relatively severe, to smaller contained outbreaks, to virus free. Swift action by many governments of small island development States in limiting cross-border movement and imposing strict physical distances measures is to be commended, having yielded, for some, positive results in containing the spread of the virus. As at 17 July 2020, the total case of COVID-19 infections and deaths in small island developing States, stood at:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of infections</i>	<i>Number of deaths</i>
<b>Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea</b>		
Bahrain	34 078	111
Cabo Verde	1 780	19
Comoros	321	7
Guinea-Bissau	1 902	26
Maldives	2 801	14
Mauritius	343	10
Sao Tome and Principe	416	12
Seychelles	100	0
Singapore	46 630	27
<b>Caribbean</b>		
Antigua and Barbuda	74	3
Bahamas	113	11
Barbados	103	7
Belize	37	2
Cuba	2 432	87
Dominica	18	0
Dominican Republic	46 305	910
Grenada	23	0
Guyana	300	17
Haiti	6 727	141
Jamaica	759	10
Saint Kitts and Nevis	17	0
Saint Lucia	22	0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	35	0

<sup>47</sup> See [www.ghsindex.org/data-stories/small-island-nations-need-special-support-and-resources/](http://www.ghsindex.org/data-stories/small-island-nations-need-special-support-and-resources/).



<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of infections</i>	<i>Number of deaths</i>
Suriname	780	18
Trinidad and Tobago	133	8
<b>Pacific</b>		
Federated States of Micronesia	0	0
Fiji	26	0
Kiribati	0	0
Marshall Islands	0	0
Nauru	0	0
Palau	0	0
Papua New Guinea	11	0
Samoa	0	0
Solomon Islands	0	0
Timor-Leste	24	0
Tonga	0	0
Tuvalu	0	0
Vanuatu	0	0

*Source:* World Health Organization situation report No. 177, 15 July 2020.

### **Tourism**

59. International arrivals declined 97 per cent in April 2020, reflecting travel restrictions in 100 per cent of all destinations worldwide. This represents a loss of 180 million international arrivals as compared with the same period in 2019, translating to \$195 billion in lost international tourism receipts (export revenues).<sup>48</sup> On average, tourism accounts for almost 30 per cent of GDP of most small island developing States. This share is over 50 per cent for Grenada, the Maldives, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Seychelles<sup>49</sup>. Tourism is also a major employer in small island developing States with direct and indirect multiplier effects through hotels, resorts, restaurants, transport, retail and agriculture, inter alia. Women are more likely to be entrepreneurs in tourism than in other sectors of the economy.<sup>50</sup> The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that the relative contribution of travel and tourism, as a percentage of total employment, is 90.7 per cent in Antigua and Barbuda, 78.1 per cent in Saint Lucia and 59.6 per cent in the Maldives.<sup>51</sup> Tourism receipts are estimated to account for up to 20–30 per cent of economic activity in Samoa and Tonga and a prime source of employment and foreign exchange for countries such as Fiji and Palau.<sup>52</sup> In small island developing States, national and regional airlines, which are the essential conduit for tourism to these far-flung islands, are also facing significant damage from prolonged loss of revenue. Revenue losses, reduced operations and global travel restrictions could mean diminished tourism even after the virus recedes.

<sup>48</sup> See UNWTO Tourism Barometer – June 2020 update: [www.unwto.org/market-intelligence](http://www.unwto.org/market-intelligence).

<sup>49</sup> See <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2341>.

<sup>50</sup> See <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2370>.

<sup>51</sup> See World Travel and Tourism Council, “Global economic impact and trends 2020” (May 2020).

<sup>52</sup> See [www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/05/27/na-05272020-pacific-islands-threatened-by-covid-19](http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/05/27/na-05272020-pacific-islands-threatened-by-covid-19).

## Remittance

60. Historically, small island developing States receive much larger remittance inflows relative to the size of their economies than any other country group. From 2006 to 2013, remittances represented, on average, 7.5 per cent of GDP in small island developing States compared with 5.8 per cent in all other developing countries. Over the last decade it has not been uncommon among small island developing States for remittances to account for more than 20 per cent of GDP and for as many as 90 per cent of households to receive remittances from abroad.<sup>53</sup> Two small island developing States were listed among the top five countries receiving the highest remittances as a share of GDP in 2019: Tonga (37.6 per cent of GDP) and Haiti (37.1 per cent).<sup>54</sup> The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic will be magnified in small island developing States by the loss of remittances. The World Bank estimates that remittances to low and middle-income countries will fall by 19.7 per cent to \$445 billion, representing the loss of a crucial financing lifeline for many vulnerable households.<sup>55</sup> Migrant workers are among the hardest hit groups, facing large-scale job losses and travel restrictions.<sup>56</sup> A reduction in remittance flows could increase poverty and reduce households' access to much-needed health services.

## Food security, commodities and trade

61. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 50 per cent of small island developing States import more than 80 per cent of their food.<sup>57</sup> This dependency makes them vulnerable to disruptions in international trade and global supply chains. The World Trade Organization expects world trade to fall by between 13 per cent and 32 per cent in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts normal economic activities.<sup>58</sup> COVID-19 is also causing widespread declines in global commodity prices. A total of 57 per cent of all small island developing States are commodity-dependent, that is to say, commodities account for more than 60 per cent of their total merchandise exports, in value terms.<sup>59</sup> This dependence varies among small island developing States; some are dependent on agriculture (Belize and Maldives), minerals, ores and metals (Guyana and Jamaica) or fuels (Saint Lucia and Timor-Leste).<sup>60</sup> Falling export revenues and deteriorating exchange rates are constraining the ability of small island developing States to service their debt and increasing levels of debt distress.<sup>61</sup>

## Debt

62. Addressing sovereign debt distress has been a long-standing challenge for many small island developing States; COVID-19 has made it worse. Without aggressive

<sup>53</sup> See UNDP & UN-Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, "Financing for development and small island developing States: a snapshot and ways forward", discussion paper (June 2015).

<sup>54</sup> See <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/remittances>.

<sup>55</sup> See World Bank, "COVID-19 crisis through a migration lens", Migration and development brief No. 32 (April 2020).

<sup>56</sup> See [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_744832.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_744832.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> See [www.fao.org/3/ca8994en/CA8994EN.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca8994en/CA8994EN.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> See [www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/pres20\\_e/pr855\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres20_e/pr855_e.htm).

<sup>59</sup> See <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2086>.

<sup>60</sup> See *State of Commodity Dependence Report 2019* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.D.8 and corrigendum).

<sup>61</sup> See DESA policy brief 2020 No. 60, available at [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-des-policy-brief-60-commodity-exporters-face-mounting-economic-challenges-as-pandemic-spreads/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-des-policy-brief-60-commodity-exporters-face-mounting-economic-challenges-as-pandemic-spreads/).

policy action, the COVID-19 pandemic could turn into a protracted debt crisis for many developing countries, including small island developing States, and set back sustainable development. Partial debt service suspensions were offered to 76 low-income developing countries eligible to join the World Bank International Development Association, which includes all the least developed countries and 13 small island developing States. The International Monetary Fund also offered further debt service relief to 25 of the poorest countries.<sup>62</sup> For some, the action taken to date will not suffice to avoid defaults. In his policy brief “Debt and COVID-19: a global response in solidarity”,<sup>63</sup> the Secretary-General recommended a three-pronged approach to address the issue, summarized as follows: (a) a complete standstill on all debt service (bilateral, multilateral and commercial) for all developing countries that request it; (b) additional debt relief for highly indebted developing countries, to avoid defaults; and (c) progress in the international financial architecture, through fairer and more effective mechanisms for debt crisis resolution and responsible borrowing and lending.

## V. Conclusion

63. In the light of the present and ongoing global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and its socioeconomic impacts, in particular on the most vulnerable, strengthening the long-standing cooperation and support provided by the international community in assisting small island developing States to make progress in addressing their vulnerabilities and supporting their collective sustainable development efforts, is even more critical and genuinely necessary now, than at any other juncture in the history of our interdependent multilateral journey.

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<sup>62</sup> See [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-72-covid-19-and-sovereign-debt/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-72-covid-19-and-sovereign-debt/).

<sup>63</sup> See [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/un\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_debt\\_relief\\_and\\_covid\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/un_policy_brief_on_debt_relief_and_covid_april_2020.pdf).