

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific****Seventieth session**

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Item 2(a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Island Developing Countries: preparations for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, Samoa, 2014****Summary of preparations for the Pacific for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States****Note by the secretariat\*\****Summary*

This present document summarizes preparations for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which will be held in Apia, Samoa, from 1 to 4 September 2014, with particular emphasis on preparations and priorities in the Pacific region for the Conference. The theme of the Conference is "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". Priorities for Pacific small island developing States in the lead-up to the Conference include economic management, addressing climate change, sustainable energy, oceans and seas, health and non-communicable diseases, and social development, including gender equality. Pacific small island developing States have also accorded strong priority to governance and means of implementation.

The Commission may wish to review the report and provide the secretariat with guidance on its recommendations and on any other matters concerning preparations for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

1. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, small island developing States have been considered a special case in sustainable development due to the inherent challenges they face in pursuing development and reducing poverty, including their small size, remoteness from major markets and population centres, limited resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks. Small island developing States are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and face a large range of impacts from climate change.<sup>1</sup> There are 51 small island developing States and territories: 20 in the Pacific region, 23 in the Caribbean region and 8 in the AIMS (Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South

\* E/ESCAP/70/L.1/Rev.1.

\*\* Kindly note that the delay in finalizing this paper is due to the rapid rate of change in deliberations on sustainable development goals, including those of the Open Working Group and Technical Support Team. As consideration of provisional agenda item 2(b) has been postponed, the secretariat has endeavored to ensure that this report remains as up to date as possible.

<sup>1</sup> See General Assembly resolution 67/207.

China Seas) region. Of the 62 members and associate members of ESCAP, 22 are small island developing States in the Pacific and AIMS regions. Issues of concern to small island developing States are therefore of great significance in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. Even among small island developing States, those in the Pacific face particular challenges in pursuing sustainable development given their extreme remoteness and diminutive size. Pacific small island developing States are also diverse, including more populous, resource-rich countries in Melanesia and remote atolls of Micronesia with expansive exclusive economic zones. In general, the Pacific subregion has struggled to maintain positive GDP growth rates in the recent past, except for resource-rich Papua New Guinea, which is experiencing a resource boom, and, to a lesser extent, the Solomon Islands. However, the limited progress of these countries as regards human development and the Millennium Development Goals demonstrates that GDP growth is necessary but not sufficient in order to achieve good development outcomes. Poverty and inequality are persistent or increasing in the Pacific and the need for stronger social inclusion is a priority. While low growth and limited progress towards sustainable development is partly a consequence of governance and policy constraints, it also underscores the inherent structural challenges faced by the Pacific islands, with consequent high transport, service delivery and production costs. However, the greatest concerns faced by the Pacific subregion are external threats to sustainable development. Foremost among those are global economic crises, waste and pollution, and the existential threat of the impacts of climate change, including increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters.

3. These challenges suggest a need for the development agenda beyond 2015, together with its targets and indicators, to be contextualized within the realities of small island developing States, as many indicators used to measure progress regarding Millennium Development Goals are difficult to apply or measure in the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Climate change, the greatest challenge for the Pacific region, is absent from the Millennium Development Goals, although oceans — some of the greatest assets for the Pacific and for the world at large — were only given marginal value. Indeed, the Pacific's "extensive oceanic and land-based natural and mineral resources are of considerable global significance, as is its spatial and political geography for other, mostly security, reasons."<sup>3</sup> Oceans are a major carbon sink and producer of oxygen; they are also a storehouse of valuable resources, particularly for the 3 billion people who rely on them for protein. This is the reason why the Pacific small island developing States are now sometimes referred to as "large ocean States".

4. The first international conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States was held in 1994 and resulted in the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (otherwise known as the "Barbados Programme of Action").<sup>4</sup> In 2005, a second international conference was held, which

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the "off-track" profile of the Pacific in relation to Millennium Development Goal 1, as reported in Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report* (Suva, Pacific Islands Forum, 2013), is due largely to the fact that the countries use self-defined national poverty levels with thresholds higher than the \$2 per day indicator.

<sup>3</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Pacific Plan Review 2013: Report to Pacific Leaders* (Suva, 2013), p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations

adopted the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.<sup>5</sup> The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (Samoa Conference) will take place in Samoa in September 2014. The Samoa Conference was called for at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.<sup>6</sup> The overarching theme of the Samoa Conference is “The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships”. As established by the General Assembly in March 2013, the Conference should:<sup>7</sup>

(a) Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, building on, inter alia, existing reports and relevant processes;

(b) Seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to address effectively the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, inter alia, through mobilization of resources and assistance for small island developing States;

(c) Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of small island developing States and ways and means to address them, including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships between small island developing States and the international community;

(d) Identify priorities for the sustainable development of small island developing States for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

5. A preparatory process was established by the General Assembly,<sup>8</sup> which involved preparatory meetings in each of the three regions of small island developing States, and an interregional meeting, with assistance from the United Nations system, including the regional commissions. Accordingly, ESCAP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a Pacific small island developing States preparatory meeting in Fiji in July 2013, in which priorities for the Pacific region were developed. The sustainable development priorities of the Pacific small island developing States have been identified through reviews of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals. The secretariat has played a key role in this process, by, amongst other things, conducting Pacific national and regional assessments, by convening the preparatory meeting in Fiji in July 2013 and in assisting with ongoing preparations for the Samoa Conference. The Pacific small island developing States’ priorities are being incorporated into the ongoing drafting of the outcomes of the Samoa Conference and are presented here as an emerging consensus rather than the final decisions.

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publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>6</sup> See General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution 67/207, para. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 9 and 11.

6. The interregional meeting involving small island developing States from the three small island developing States regions was held in Barbados in August 2013.<sup>9</sup> The outcome document of this meeting forms the basis for preparing the draft outcome document of the Samoa Conference, which was initially negotiated at the first preparatory meeting in New York in February 2014 by all United Nations member States. A second preparatory meeting will be held in June 2014 to conclude negotiations. The zero draft of the Samoa Conference outcome document<sup>10</sup> included the following priorities for Pacific small island developing States:

(a) **Sustainable economic development:** to build the resilience of small island developing States' societies and economies with a focus on investment in education and training of their people and job creation, sound macroeconomic policies, effective economic management, fiscal predictability, investment and regulatory certainty, and sustainable debt;

(b) **Climate change:** to address both mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change<sup>11</sup> and particularly the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts,<sup>12</sup> and to support small island developing States in implementing their Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions and in meeting their adaptation needs;

(c) **Sustainable energy:** to recognize the potential of renewable energy resources and the value of the framework provided by the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative,<sup>13</sup> with its three objectives of securing access to modern energy services, increasing energy efficiency and scaling up the use of renewable energy in energy systems;

(d) **Oceans and seas:** to recognize their intrinsic importance in sustainable development and their critical role in poverty eradication, food security, livelihoods and carbon sequestration, as well as in the identities and cultures of small island developing States. Fisheries, coastal tourism, and exploitation of seabed resources and sources of renewable energy are acknowledged as the building blocks of an ocean-based economy in small island developing States;

(e) **Health and non-communicable diseases:** to recognize that the burden and threat of non-communicable diseases constitute major challenges for small island developing States in the 21st century;

(f) **Social development, including gender equality and women's empowerment:** to recognize the transformative and multiplier effect these have on development activities. Local traditional knowledge and culture and sport are enablers for sustainable development. Peaceful societies need to be promoted.

7. The proposed means of implementation include: (a) genuine and durable partnerships, which are owned and driven by small island developing States and built on mutual trust, equality, respect, accountability and

<sup>9</sup> "Summary of the Interregional Preparatory Meeting for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 26-28 August 2013", *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, vol. 8, No. 52 (31 August 2013). Available from [www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb0852e.pdf](http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb0852e.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> [www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537](http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

<sup>12</sup> See FCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1.

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution 65/151 on the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, 20 December 2010.

transparency; (b) financing and, in particular, the facilitation of access to concessionary sources; (c) development of alternative measurements for assessing the progress made in sustainable development that go beyond GDP and take into account the special circumstances, vulnerabilities and limited resilience of small island developing States; (d) trade, recognizing the special circumstances of small island developing States when negotiating trade agreements and arrangements; (e) capacity-building, in particular the importance of investing in education and health to develop the adaptive human capacity and human resources of small island developing States, as well as strengthening institutional capacity; (f) technology transfer, in particular technologies that are both environmentally sound and adapted to the particular circumstances of small island developing States; (g) data collection and management in support of the data revolution and the efforts of small island developing States to implement national sustainable development strategies and programmes, including through improvements in statistics and data; and (h) monitoring and accountability to vigorously pursue commitments made at the Samoa Conference and to translate them into action.

8. The preparatory process for the Samoa Conference outcome document has also contributed to the development of small island developing States' priorities for the development agenda beyond 2015. These reflect an emerging consensus between the interests of small island developing States and those of other developing and least developed countries. The priorities for the development agenda beyond 2015 for Pacific small island developing States include the following:

(a) Creating a people-centred approach that focuses on eradicating poverty, engendering social equity and achieving environmental sustainability;

(b) Building resilience among small island developing States;

(c) Implementing fully the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the outcome document of the Samoa Conference;

(d) Making oceans a thematic priority, including the possibility of a stand-alone sustainable development goal on oceans and seas, with targets for a healthy marine environment and fish stocks, and realization of the other economic benefits of sustainable development of marine resources;

(e) Addressing climate change as a cross-cutting issue, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities;

(f) Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, including the right of women and girls to violence-free lives, and the inclusion of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue across all goals;

(g) Making health issues more prominent and addressing the emerging health crisis represented by non-communicable diseases;

(h) Accelerating progress towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production;

(i) Recognizing the need for food and water security, as well as that of economic and social development being balanced with conservation of ecosystems and preservation of biodiversity;

(j) Creating a "New Global Partnership" that harnesses the full potential of partnerships between Governments at all levels, businesses, civil society, and a wide range of other stakeholders, while complementing traditional approaches, such as official development assistance;

(k) Establishing a robust global monitoring system that strengthens accountability at all levels, ensures adequate and timely analysis of implementation, and includes, where appropriate, clear targets and indicators that are relevant and meaningful to small island developing States.

9. The United Nations, including the ESCAP secretariat, is expected to play an important role in the implementation of the outcome of the Samoa Conference and the development agenda beyond 2015. That includes building the societal and economic resilience of Pacific small island developing States — through country teams in collaboration with intergovernmental regional organizations — so as to enhance national capacities and institutions through a coherent approach. This is in line with the 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.<sup>14</sup> It is also consistent with the Secretary-General's joint statements with Pacific leaders, which routinely highlight the need to work with and through Pacific regional organizations in support of country implementation.

10. Given its multidisciplinary approach and role in the Pacific, the secretariat can contribute to improving statistics and data in the Pacific and help develop alternative development pathways and measures through a number of United Nations integrative frameworks, such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and social tools for integration. The secretariat is well placed to mainstream this work in the context of support for the implementation of national sustainable development strategies and programmes, as highlighted by the small island developing States.

11. Small island developing States suffer from a lack of capacity to develop and implement policies. Urgent support is needed to build national capacity, for example in the area of cost-benefit analysis to support informed and participatory decision-making in sustainable development. Small island developing States have consistently maintained that all partnerships and cooperation frameworks should include both capacity-building and institution-building. Institution-building encourages the use of country systems and promotes the retention of knowledge in all its forms, including traditional knowledge, within a country. In the area of trade, small island developing States need further technical assistance to address their limited capacity to implement trade commitments and to develop trade policy, to help build productive capacity and to address supply side constraints.

12. Small island developing States have called on the United Nations system, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to strengthen their coordination and support for small island developing States that are considering or have already begun to adopt elements of a national green economy model. Small island developing States are also calling for an assessment of whether the current mandates and operational functioning of United Nations entities are sufficient to provide the support required for small island developing States; they are also requesting that the United Nations Secretariat enhance the human and financial resources currently available to work on issues of concern to small island developing States. In relation to the work of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, small island developing States are calling for issues of particular relevance to them to be mainstreamed and taken fully into account across the work of the United Nations development system and for them to be included in the agendas of both the Forum and the Economic and Social Council, with appropriate linkages to national and regional implementation mechanisms.

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<sup>14</sup> See General Assembly resolution 67/226.

ESCAP members States are urged to give their support to small island developing States at the Samoa Conference in September.

13. Small island developing States in the Asia-Pacific region are an important part of ESCAP; both developed and developing members have provided much support and assistance to small island developing member and associate member States. The Samoa Conference provides an opportunity for the international community, including ESCAP member States, to renew their political commitment to address effectively the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States. Small island developing States need practical and pragmatic assistance to work towards sustainable development, including through mobilization of resources. The Samoa Conference will serve as a forum to showcase successful partnerships with small island developing States and also to launch innovative and concrete partnerships to advance the sustainable development of small island developing States. That includes North-South, South-South, triangular and, in particular, small island developing States-small island developing States cooperation. ESCAP members and regional organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations may want to use this opportunity to showcase cooperation partnerships with small island developing States.

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