

Small Island Developing States Symposium

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Symposium, hosted by the Government of the Bahamas and supported by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, was held on 21-23 February 2017.

The Symposium was opened by The Right Honourable Perry G. Christie, Prime Minister of The Bahamas, and Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. It was well attended by ministers and high-level officials from 40 over SIDS and other countries. A total of about 250 international and local participants contributed to the overarching focus of the Symposium - “equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships”, with five thematic sessions surrounding topics of integrated implementation, institutions, mobilizing ICTS, monitoring and reviewing, and partnerships. The Symposium was conducted through dialogues and interactions among governments and various stakeholders from the civil society, private sector, international and regional organizations and close to 20 UN entities, through a mix of breakout discussions, show-and-tells, flash presentations, and plenary round-tables.

The Symposium showed that many SIDS are rapidly moving ahead with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway. Participants shared insights on how they have adapted the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to their national situation and priorities and incorporated them in their development plans and policies. It was found that developing and implementing integrated policies for realizing the SDGs is a difficult exercise. Various kinds of institutional arrangements can support this process and improve coordination. But realizing the SDGs is ultimately about changing mindsets. Sensitizing and training public servants was also found to be very important. The symposium also recommended that UN Member States commit to including the SDGs in education curriculums at all levels.

Implementing the SDGs requires a whole-of-society effort and some SIDS reported on how they have been engaging civil society and the private sector in implementing the SDGs -- some of them through new institutional processes.

At the same time, a message was that, while SIDS face similar situations and vulnerabilities, they are not identical and there is thus no one size fits all approach to implementing the SDGs.

The meeting also reaffirmed the importance of implementing the agreements on climate change, disaster risk reduction and other issues.. Implementing the SDGs, SAMOA and other agreements can be a heavy process and SIDS participants therefore underscored that they need international and regional support. Access to concessional financial resources should be improved notably after disasters. Harnessing ICT and other technology for implementing the SDGs was also found

critical. Participants reaffirmed the importance of partnerships for realizing the SDGs and some organizations and participants offered to support SIDS.

The meeting stressed the need to continuously review progress in implementing the SDGs. Statistical offices, ministries, parliaments, supreme audit institutions and civil society all have a role. It was felt that there is need for a major effort to boost SIDS statistical capacities, both regarding official statistics and big data.

The informal communiqué emanating from the symposium will inform the meetings of the UN oceans conference, high-level political forum on sustainable development, United Nations General Assembly, ECOSOC and UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

More information: https://publicadministration.un.org/bahamas_symposium