

## THINK PIECE 1<sup>1</sup>

### **The importance of coherent national, regional and international policies in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway**

The international community has repeatedly affirmed support for SIDS in meeting their manifold challenges relating to sustainable development. The Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda now provide frameworks within which international cooperation and assistance to SIDS can be operationalized across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This integrated and holistic approach to sustainable development will be advantageous for SIDS as it presents a major opportunity for these countries to address lagging economic performance and make the transition to balanced, holistic, people-centred and inclusive sustainable development, while at the same time heightening global awareness of the vulnerabilities of this group of countries.

The challenges facing SIDS straddle the social, economic and environmental dimensions. They reflect structural imbalances; climate, environmental and other vulnerabilities; and broadly uncompetitive terms of engagement with the global economy. Coherent and integrated development policies and plans supported by sound data and regular monitoring at the national, regional and international levels will be critical in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While SIDS have generally made some strides in important areas of their development priorities, progress has been uneven and in some areas there have been reversals. SIDS can especially benefit from those SDGs that serve to strengthen economic performance, promote inclusive and transparent governance, support gender equality and sustainable development, and promote beneficial engagement with the global economy.

The 2030 agenda and SAMOA pathway will require prudent strategies, tailored to the local, national, and regional context. Efforts should focus equally on setting up the right policies and on mobilising adequate financing, as these are mutually dependent. A clear and results-oriented policy environment is an indispensable prerequisite for financing to have real impact. Financing should also actively contribute to leveraging and incentivising other means of implementation, e.g. through enabling policies, capacity building, trade, innovation and private investments.

#### *Developing Coherent National, Regional and International Policies*

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Note: This paper may not be exhaustive or exclusive in illustrating concepts or cases related to the topics. For any question or comment, please contact [kwok@un.org](mailto:kwok@un.org) or [thomasa@un.org](mailto:thomasa@un.org)

Several SIDS have commenced processes at both national and regional levels toward the development of coherent and integrated policies to implement the SDGs.

### *National level*

At the national level Belize, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Papua New Guinea, Madagascar, Maldives, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Trinidad and Tobago have developed national development plans or sustainable development strategies or roadmaps which incorporate the SDGs. It is important to understand the interlinkages among the SDGs so that policies can build on synergies and avoid unintended impacts on other SDGs areas. The amplifying effect of climate change on the challenges associated with both poverty eradication and sustainable development requires the active integration of climate change issues at all levels. The same applies to risk related to disasters.

SIDS are expected to integrate the SDGs as well as the SAMOS Pathway, the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Climate Change agreement and other international agreements in their policies and plans. It is important to identify the commonalities between these agendas so as to facilitate their inclusion in national frameworks. Many of the targets under the SDGs match closely some of the nationally determined contributions on climate change. This will make implementation and follow up easier at the national level.

### *Regional level*

At the regional level the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) Strategic Plan, 2015-2019, identifies areas for priority action that are closely aligned to the SDGs. These include: macroeconomic stabilization; youth development, entrepreneurship and innovation; human capital development; mainstreaming diversity; reduction in environmental vulnerabilities; diversification and development of energy resources; ICT access, and strengthened governance. Similar regional plans have also been developed in the Pacific and AIMS regions. The Framework for Pacific Regionalism has as its main objectives sustainable development that combines economic social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably; Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable; Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all. In the AIMS region the Africa's Agenda 2063 will play a pivotal role in shaping the development trajectory of those countries.

All these regional development strategies are of value independently, and are fully consistent with the 2030 Development Agenda and the Samoa Pathway. The added value of such frameworks is that they are based on data and evidence which improves the ability of national

governments, regional organizations, and the international community to assess and evaluate progress and take corrective action, while also strengthening accountability.

### *International cooperation*

While national ownership is paramount, international cooperation and assistance must play a vital role in the SDG frameworks. In this regard the international development policy architecture must also be supportive of SIDS sustainable development. Establishing an enabling international environment to facilitate external financial flows and investment, as an engine of development, should be accorded the highest priority to diversify the economic base of these countries and enhance competition.

Access to external financing that will not aggravate the debt burden of heavily indebted SIDS is of utmost importance. Caribbean SIDS are not well positioned to access grant and concessional development resources, given the current criteria for allocation of development financing. Some Pacific SIDS such as Samoa, that have recently graduated from LDC status are also in a similar position.

In the recent past, the practice by international financial institutions of derisking i.e. the termination or restriction of business relationships to avert risk related to *inter alia* money laundering to certain businesses or regions, has affected SIDS notably in Caribbean region. International “correspondent” banks have either ceased to offer their services or have restricted the type of services offered to a number of domestic “respondent” banks in the region in the last four years.

The loss of relationships with international banks means that local banks would no longer be able to conduct international transactions on behalf of their customers. It may also become more difficult for countries to import goods including essential basic goods.

Beyond this, it should be avoided that derisking strategies have a negative side effect on the economies of highly indebted middle income SIDS. Some of those countries have been experiencing persistently low economic growth which impacts on their ability to effectively implement the SDGs. The global community may reflect on how best to promote an environment that supports the realization of the SDGs while also achieving the objectives of de-risking.

SIDS have expressed that they are committed to exercising the fiscal discipline, underpinned as appropriate, by benchmarks, fiscal responsibility laws and domestic consensus.

### *Coordination and Reinforcing Implementation*

The international community, operating in partnership with SIDS will need to bring a new transformative spirit of solidarity and cooperation. National ownership and leadership will be

key, reinforced by cooperation at all levels and with all stakeholders. Effective coordination at the national regional and international levels will support SIDS to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner so as to avoid working in siloes and making trade-offs between different objectives.

Partnership could play a major role in supporting the sustainable development goals of SIDS through engaging more effective and inclusive forms of multi-stakeholder partnerships, operating at all levels and involving the private sector and civil society, including social partners, academia, foundations, knowledge institutions and public authorities. The success of the agenda requires policy coherence at all levels (national, regional and international) to ensure that government policies support poverty reduction and sustainable development. Improved market access and aid for trade could also play a crucial role in this respect. In this regard the international community should conduct their macroeconomic and trade policies in a way that would facilitate opportunities of SIDS to promote economic growth, reduce the existing income gaps, reduce the levels of poverty and achieve their development aspirations.

#### *UN system support*

The UN System is taking the lead in supporting partnership, policy coherence and coordination at the regional and international level through the UN Multi Country Sustainable Development Frameworks (MSDF). These Frameworks define how the Agencies, Funds, and Programmes of the UN will pool their comparative advantages within a single strategic framework that aligns with and supports the overarching strategic goals of the SIDS regions. These frameworks provide a platform for countries to access the global expertise and experience of the UN System at both the country and sub-regional levels.

The UN MSDF will increase the coherence of the work of the UNS in support of Member States' development. It will also allow for a sharper focus on common priorities, enhance regional initiatives and collaboration, and enable knowledge sharing and cross-collaboration within the region. From a cost perspective, it offers better strategic positioning to leverage resources within a regional resource mobilization framework.

**Moving Forward:** A well-integrated and coherent policy planning and implementation of interventions will require a solid framework of statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability. This will require intensified efforts to address the deficiencies that exist in SIDS. While there has been some improvement in statistics in SIDS, monitoring and the development of evidence-based policies continue to be impaired by data challenges.

Monitoring and report will be key in accessing progress In this regard indicators should be also considered early as possible to establish baselines to better define future targets.<sup>2</sup>

## Guiding Questions

### Breakout Group 1:

1. How far have SIDS gone in incorporating SDGs and targets in their national plans and policies?
2. Have they also incorporated the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, Sendai Framework and Climate Change Agreement? What capacities are needed in the public sector, private enterprises and civil society organisations to incorporate those agendas into policies and plans?
3. What kind of mechanisms have worked to allow the development and implementation of integrated policies and plans?
4. How can policy making incorporate risks related to climate, disasters and economic and other shocks?
5. Which kind of leadership is needed in order to put in place coordinated, integrated and risk-informed policies and plans and build the necessary capacity?

### Breakout Group 2:

1. What are the main areas where lack of policy coherence negatively impacts on the situation of SDIS?
2. What has worked nationally and internationally to improve policy coherence?
3. What can SIDS Government do to minimize the impacts of derisking?

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<sup>2</sup> Pintér, L. Measuring progress towards sustainable development goals. IISD Working Paper