

Draft inputs by OHRLLS to the SG Report on the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (in response to A/RES/71/225)

Pursuant to OHRLLS' mandates on advocacy for SIDS issues, mobilisation of resources for SIDS and its role in mainstreaming the SAMOA Pathway in the work of the UN system and enhancing coherence of SIDS issues, the following key activities are noted for the reporting period.

a. Partnerships for SIDS

As a follow-up to the SAMOA Pathway, OHRLLS has initiated a series of activities on private -sector promotion as well as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) models for SIDS. Over the reporting period, OHRLLS continued with the operationalization of the small island developing States global business network, an online platform and resource hub that aim at better connecting the national and regional SIDS private sectors, global businesses and other relevant stakeholders. This online platform has helped promote better exchange of best practices and lessons learned and peer-learning among SIDS-SIDS, on the one hand, and SIDS and the global community, on the other. The global business network has also strengthened collaboration among regional private sector organisations, namely the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation and the Caribbean Export Development Agency. Such collaboration has enabled the SIDS Global Business Network to better reflect and promote the private sector activities that are taking place on the ground. OHRLLS will continue to promote the SIDS global business network as a platform through which both global and SIDS private sectors can enter into partnerships that promote sustainable development in SIDS. The convening on an annual international private sector partnership forum is an activity OHRLLS envisages to institutionalize, as a tool to forge genuine and durable partnerships for sustainable development in SIDS.

Advocacy for SIDS

Over the reporting period, OHRLLS continued its advocacy in favour of SIDS. This advocacy was conducted through SIDS specific advocacy events and through the office's overall advocacy efforts and continued engagement and active participation in the various events organised by the UN system such as: the UN's Senior Management Group, UN Oceans, the Broadband Commission; and beyond including at events the Office participated and advocated on behalf of the groups of vulnerable countries.

OHRLLS presented at a meeting organised by Wilton Park from 7 – 9 November in the British Virgin Islands. The meeting entitled "Diversification and resilience: a blue, digital and green future for small islands and micro-states," brought together experts from the three SIDS regions as well as international organisations, business community, academia and civil society around focused discussions on building resilience and diversifying the blue, green and digital economies in this group of countries.

b. The implementation and support for SIDS

i. Urgent and concrete actions to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS and seeking solutions in a concerted manner

Upon the invitation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OHRLLS facilitated a dialogue between the AOSIS Bureau (together with a number of SIDS) and the IMF in October 2016 in Washington D.C. The dialogue was centred on the work the IMF in promoting resilience building in small states, particularly in the areas of natural disasters and climate change.

As a follow-up to the Washington Meeting, UN-OHRLLS together with IMF convened a briefing for AOSIS, at the United Nations Head Quarters (UNHQ). At this briefing, findings from a new report by the IMF titled “Small States resilience to natural disasters and climate change – The role for the IMF” were presented. The presentation also discussed funding instruments for natural disasters and climate financing. Key funding instruments provided by the fund are the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) and Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI). RCF provides rapid financial support in a single, up-front loan disbursement. Access is available to low-income countries eligible for concessional borrowing through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT). The facility carries a zero interest rate and features a grace period of 5½ years as well as a final maturity of 10 years. The fund is looking at increasing RCF and RFI access limits for members facing severe disasters to a disaster threshold of 20% of GDP rather than 30%, which has kept this financial safety net out of reach for smaller states. The briefing session also provided an opportunity to engage with an IMF high-level official on small states and SIDS issues, particularly through questions-and-answers session.

In November 2016, OHRLLS participated in a workshop by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convened in Vienna, Austria. The meeting gathered representatives from SIDS to discuss ways in which the IAEA can support SIDS to address multiple challenges sustainable development using nuclear technology. This was the initial meeting to develop an interregional technical cooperation project for SIDS, in areas including the marine environment, cancer, and nutrition and food security.

ii. Integration into national and regional policies and development framework and their impact at national and regional levels

iii. Integration into Partner’s cooperation frameworks, programmes and activities

OHRLLS is now a full-fledged actor of the World Bank-led Small States Forum (SSF). SSF has established itself as an important platform for advocating, sharing best practices, exploring new solutions, and fostering partnerships, all in support of a more coherent international response to the special development challenges of small states, most of which are SIDS. The office has contributed to SSF’s events held on the margins of the World Bank’s 2016 Fall Meetings and its 2017 Spring meetings. Further in the context of the SSF, OHRLLS has been included in the World Bank-led working group that is discussing the design of potential vulnerability metrics that could serve as allocation criteria for concessional financing. The proposed vulnerability metrics will be submitted for consideration by the World Bank’ Board and will inform IDA19 negotiations. OHRLLS’s joining the above working group

attests to the increasing credibility and visibility of the office and its growing recognition as the voice of the most vulnerable countries.

iv. National sustainable development strategies and programmes

c. Linkages to the other key global processes

i. Strengthening Links between the SAMOA Pathway and other Key Global Processes

OHRLLS undertook a Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016. The scope of the meeting was to review the implementation of the IPoA by the least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues. Currently, nine out of the 38 SIDS are categorized as least developed countries and to date, three small island developing states; namely: Cabo Verde, Maldives and Samoa have graduated from the LDC category. Among issues of discussion relevant to SIDS, it was pointed out that a country can never graduate from being a small island developing State, as exemplified by the cases of Vanuatu, Samoa and Kiribati, for which graduation was postponed. Even though countries met the graduation criteria, vulnerability remained a key challenge. On the topic of climate change, it was proposed that funds be allocated based on the vulnerability of countries to climate change. The need for an index of vulnerability to climate change was also highlighted, since objective criteria were needed for the allocation of funds based on the degree of vulnerability.

Ahead of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016, UN-OHRLLS, through its advocacy mandate and through its efforts to enhance the coherence of SIDS issues in UN processes convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the 'Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS: Challenges and Opportunities' in New York in June 2016. The EGM gathered experts from all three SIDS regions to formulate key recommendations from SIDS perspectives that could contribute to the outcome of Habitat III Conference. In the margins of the Conference, the Alliance of Small States, UN-DESA and OHRLLS organised a high-level on Urban resilience and Sustainable urban development in Small Island Developing States to address the diversity of urban issues faced by SIDS and to provide guidance on the best ways SIDS can enhance their resilience and sustainability of their human settlements. It has been reported The population of SIDS is approximately 65 million out of which 38 million (59%) live in urban areas, and trend of urbanization is increasing with the fastest rate in urbanization is found in the Pacific region at 4.3% compared with a global average of 1.3%.

ii. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Linkages were made to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the High-level Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

As part of the United Nations efforts to mainstream SIDS priorities in the implementation of the SDGs, OHRLLS participated in several events convened in the margins in the first High Level Political Forum held since the adoption of the SDGs in July 2016.

In a SIDS Lunch Roundtable organised by the Permanent Mission of Maldives and UNDESA, OHRLLS highlighted the challenges of advocacy in a crowded development space which looked at how to effectively communicate SIDS issues and priorities from an advocacy and outreach perspective, which is one of the core mandates of OHRLLS. OHRLLS also participated in Expert Group Meeting organised in the margins of the HLPF, reiterating that policy frameworks at all levels from the global to the local and community levels, will need to adopt an integrated approach that cuts across sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, Agenda 2030, as well as the climate challenge.

iii. Other Key Global Processes

Ahead of the UN Ocean Conference, during the high level segment of the 70th session of the GA in September 2016, the OHRLLS partnered with Parley for the Oceans and the government of the Republic of Maldives and Grenada to host a high-level luncheon to call for action to address plastic pollution and set a tone for unity ahead of the upcoming Ocean Conference on SDG 14 in June. OHRLLS is currently reaching out to all SIDS to give its voice towards acknowledging the initiative also known as the Parley A.I.R Strategy which stands for Avoid, Intercept, Redesign that is already been implemented in some SIDS to tackle ocean plastic pollution.

Institutional support for small island developing States

In accordance with the recommendations put forward in the Report by the Joint Inspection Unit, OHRLLS and DESA have increased the level of coordination and cooperation over the past year. A number of joint activities were coordinated by the two Offices with the aim of improving the support of the UN system to small island developing states. OHRLLS provided substantive support to the organization of the Bahamas symposium, organised by the Government of Bahamas and DESA under the theme “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway in Small Island Developing States – SIDS: Equipping Public Institutions and Mobilizing Partnerships”. OHRLLS also participated in the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) to support Small island developing States in preparing for the Ocean Conference on SDG 14 which was held in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea in March 2017. Furthermore, OHRLLS and DESA continued to alternate the chairing of the meetings of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for small island developing states, and promote it as a mechanism for strengthening cooperation and coordination for SIDS related activities within the United Nations system and beyond.

Within its functions to provide a supporting role together with DESA to the Steering Committee established for the Small Island Developing States Partnership (SIDS) Framework, OHRLLS supported two Ambassadorial level meetings (June 2016) and (April 2017) as well as the annual Global Multi-stakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue held in the margins of the 71st session of the General Assembly in September 2016. Convened as a High-level Breakfast Event, the event focused on the launch of new partnerships devoted to SIDS, and the announcement of new commitments from existing SIDS partnerships