Guidance Note for Supporting National Preparations for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

I. Introduction

The United Conference for Sustainable Development (UNCSD, known as Rio+20) called for, “the convening in 2014 of a third international conference on small island developing States, recognizing the importance of coordinated, balanced and integrated actions to address the sustainable development challenges facing small island developing States, and we invite the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session to determine the modalities of the conference”.¹

The modality resolution (A/C.2/67/L.40) in paragraph 5 decides that the Conference should:

a) assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the BPOA and the MSI building on, inter alia, existing reports and relevant processes;

b) seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to effectively address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the BPOA and MSI, 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 SIDS 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 SIDS for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

The modality resolution also “decides that the Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document” (paragraph 10). It further "Decides to convene in 2013 a regional preparatory meeting in each of the three regions of small island developing States, as well as an inter-regional preparatory meeting for all small island developing States, to identify and develop input for the Conference, while maximizing coherence and complementarity with respect to other preparatory work” (paragraph 9).

¹ Paragraph 180 of The Future We Want.
The effectiveness of the 3rd International Conference on SIDS will depend first and foremost on national level preparations that will feed into the regional preparations, followed by the inter-regional and finally the global process. The modality resolution therefore, "Further decides that the national, regional, interregional and substantive preparations should be carried out in a most effective, well-structured and broad participatory manner and that, for this purpose, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, within their respective mandates and available resources, should provide the necessary support to the Conference and its preparatory process”.

The main objective of the national preparations is to support SIDS prepare for and contribute effectively to the 3rd International Conference, in addressing the general objectives outlined in paragraph 5 of A/C.2/67/L.40 as mentioned above. In addition, the process will help SIDS better prepared to engage in the outcomes of Conference in ways that are meaningful to their own sustainable development context, needs and experiences and that result in tangible actions on the ground.

Against this backdrop, this Guidance Note provides the necessary details for the SIDS and the UN Country Teams to engage their country partners and major groups in national preparation processes, centered on multi-stakeholder dialogue, stock tacking of what has happened to date, and identifying the priorities for future action that could also be addressed by the conference.

II. Guiding principles

Ownership and Participation

Ownership is a fundamental principle for the national preparations and in this regard, the SIDS will lead and co-ordinate this country owned processes which will provide platforms for multi stakeholder engagement, in order to bring in all voices at the national level. The UN system will support the country leadership through the Resident Coordinator system and the UN Country Teams through provision of technical advice, financial support, to strengthen the capacity of SIDS throughout the exercise.

The process shall build on previous preparatory processes and outcomes, in particular the 5-year high level review of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI+5) in 2010, MDGs, and the UNCSD/Rio+20 in 2012 as well as other related national development strategies and periodic reviews of progress in implementation of national, regional and international commitments on development.

Context

The preparation for the SIDS Conference should also be viewed in the overall context of and linked to other relevant processes such as post-2015 development agenda, national development plans and reviews within each country.
The national preparatory process should take into account the overall timeline for the regional preparatory process which will happen in June-July 2013, which will then feed into the inter-regional meeting around end August-beginning September 2013, followed by the global process to be launched in January 2014. The national consultations are expected to be completed in good time before the respective regional meetings given that the outcomes of all national preparatory processes within a region will be synthesized for background discussion paper for the respective regional meetings.

**Partnerships**

Leaders of SIDS have stated clearly the aim to make partnerships a cornerstone of the 2014 SIDS Conference, calling for the “strengthening of collaborative partnerships between SIDS and the international community” as one of the important ways and means to address new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS. Towards this end, the Conference could serve as a platform to strengthen existing partnerships and voluntary commitments, as well as act as a launch pad of new initiatives, all with the common objective of advancing the implementation of the MSI/BPoA. The national process is encouraged to identify national goals and objectives where governments have made commitments and to highlight where successful partnerships have been established to support these commitments. The process should also highlight areas for strengthening or launching new partnerships, and how partnerships could serve as a better implementation and engagement mechanism to support policies and programmes.

**III. Expected Outcome**

Depending on country needs and situation, the process should result in either national reports and/or national briefs to support country participation in regional, inter-regional and global level preparatory meetings. The report or briefs will outline areas of consensus as well as differences of views on, but not limited to:

a) progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the BPOA and MSI building on, inter alia, existing reports and relevant processes;

b) practical and pragmatic actions needed for the further implementation of the BPOA and MSI;

c) new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of the country and ways and means to address them, including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships between SIDS and the international community; challenges and opportunities for strengthening integration, inclusion, implementation and coherence in national planning;

d) priorities for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.
In preparing the outputs, it is important to keep in mind the context outlined by the modality resolution, which “decides that the Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document” (paragraph 10).

IV. Suggested Approach for National Preparation

Subject to country context, the national preparations can take an approach where the process consists of three and inter-linked phases, building on a multi-stakeholder approach that can be tailored to meet the needs, interests, experiences and level of ambition of individual SIDS in terms of advocacy, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, reporting and participation. The suggested three phases are:

(i) Preparation of background document(s) as basis for multi-stakeholder consultation.

This phase will include a stocktake of previous national reports and documents from the MSI+5 and Rio+20 preparatory processes and update compilation of national policies, strategies and action plans. In countries, where other preparatory work has commenced, including the post-2015 development agenda consultation and other Rio+20 follow-up activities, this preparation of background documents as baseline could help bring the different activities together. The guiding questions outlined below will assist the national experts/consultants in collecting the information for the background documents.

(ii) Multi-stakeholder consultations.

These consultations can take different forms including focus group meetings, working groups and national dialogues, amongst other things.

(iii) A national synthesis report, and/or national briefs, which may be used in regional and global preparatory processes.

V. Content and Guiding Questions

Both the background document and multi-stakeholder consultations can address the four-pronged objectives of the 2014 Conference as outlined in paragraph 5 of the modality resolution, based on, but not limited to, the following questions:

- Building on progress reports already prepared for the MSI+5 and Rio+20, what is the progress made to date and gaps limiting implementation of the BPoA and MSI, that the country wishes to highlight through the SIDS conference preparatory process?
- What progress has been made since 1992 to strengthen the national institutional framework in terms of coordination between sectors and the integration of the 3 pillar of sustainable development? How well are sustainable development principles integrated and mainstreamed in national development planning?
- What new and emerging challenges are likely to affect the prospects for sustainable development in the coming decade? Do the new and emerging challenges pose a
fundamental risk to the prospects of economic growth and development in your country? What new and emerging challenges should the SIDS Conference in 2014 enact upon?

- What kind of new and/or additional practical and pragmatic actions are needed to address identified gaps in implementation?

- What is the level of awareness at the country level of MDGs, SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda? What would be your country priorities in elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda?

- How could such identified challenges and opportunities be addressed through collaborative partnerships with the international community? What kind of partnerships have worked or not worked and why? What changes are needed, if any, in how partnerships are forged in the future, in order to strengthen in the way that help address SIDS address the identified challenges and opportunities?

- What are the accountability mechanisms used to monitor performance? What can be done to strengthen national data and information systems, national account systems, national indicators for development, and frameworks for monitoring and evaluation?

VI. Multi-stakeholder consultations

The multi-stakeholder consultations will discuss and move towards consensus on national issues relating to the objectives of the 2014 Conference, strengthening integrated approaches, and to identify partnerships, commitments, initiatives and programmes. This process should lead to the expected outcome outlined in section III above.

VII. UN Country Team Support

The Office of the Resident Coordinator will co-ordinate with the UN Country Teams to identify and liaise with the national focal points to solicit views and assess interest in possible UN support for the national preparatory process. The support that will be provided will be tailored to the specific needs of the countries and in accordance with the mandates of the agencies.