The 68th UN General Assembly Second Committee held a special event on November 1st, 2013, on “Strengthening resilience of SIDS within the Context of Sustainable Development” chaired by the Committee Chairman, H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo and moderated by H.E. Janine Coye-Felson, Special Advisor to the President of the 68th UNGA. The event was intended to highlight the special case of SIDS in the context of sustainable development through country case studies, financial and policy analysis and examples of concrete actions being undertaken as well as further implementation and partnership initiatives needed. Mr. Wu Hongbo, Secretary General for the Third International Conference on SIDS joined the other two speakers in highlighting that the sustainable development aspirations of SIDS will only be achieved through concrete actions at the national and international levels that address their varied challenges.

‘Maurice Ile Durable’
Mr. Osman Mahomed, the Executive Chairman of the Commission on Maurice Ile Durable under the Prime Minister’s Office of Mauritius, opened the panel presentation. Maurice Ile Durable (MID), launched in 2008, was developed through a series of multi-stakeholder consultations at the national level. From its inception the government has employed a strong communication strategy to encourage the public. The results of the consultations were formulated into policies and projects. The MID focuses on five main areas, known as the ’5E’s’: Environment, Energy, Economy/employment, Education and Equity. An MID Fund has been set up where the government is now levying the polluting industries and pumping the funds received into the green industry. At the heart of the MID is waste reduction along with other targets in the 5E’s area. The policy, strategy and action plan formulated through the multi-stakeholder consultations, will be executed through 4 main programmes, namely: Green Economy; Ocean Economy; Cleaner, Greener and Pollution Free Mauritius; and Energy. The MID aims to achieve 35% Renewable energy by 2025; increase green jobs to 10% by 2020; achieve 100% MID literacy by 2020; meet the sustainability targets of the MDGs; reduce the ecological footprint enough to be in the upper quartile of performance of similar income nations, by 2020; improve the position of the Republic of Mauritius in the World Poverty Index and improve current status in the GINI coefficient of income inequality.

Climate Change Challenges and Options for SIDS

H.E. Makurita Baaro, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kiribati to the United Nations, delivered a powerful message based on the climate change challenge faced by Kiribati and how the country is responding. Both through her presentation and video, Ambassador
Baaro demonstrated how climate change is the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific, and one of the greatest challenges for the entire world. For her people, it is a critical issue for survival. She stressed her country’s continuous call to their development partners to assist in efforts to deal with the impacts of climate change and sea level rise now being experienced, and in efforts to prepare for an uncertain future. She shared her strong view that “Business as usual” cannot be the way forward and that a paradigm shift is required. She said, “Starting from within our nations and moving out to regional and international processes, including the UN and its agencies, and partnerships, there is a strong need to do some more thinking outside the box, focusing on innovative, integrated, tangible, targeted and implementable action on the ground that can have a positive impact on those who we are here to represent…OUR PEOPLE.”

Means of Implementation Towards the Strengthening of SIDS Resilience

Mr. Peter Allum, Assistant Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), presented results of fiscal studies done in small States, which includes some that are included on the Small Island States list. Results showed that small States' GDP is growing at a slower rate than that of large States. One possible explanation of this he indicated is that the larger States may have undertaken massive macroeconomic transformations in the 1990s and are better placed in trade markets. Small States have a relatively sluggish growth and are more volatile and vulnerable in the face of natural disasters due to the lack of fiscal buffers. This makes them even more susceptible to fall into a recession. In comparing Caribbean and Pacific small states, it was found that while the pacific states have been growing steadily from 1990’s with moderate debt; Caribbean States have experienced significant economic slowdown with debt at least three times their GDP. The IMF is encouraging small States to make investments to mitigate risk, and MR. Allum asserted that the IMF would ensure that adequate financing and allowances would be made to support these investments. Safety nets are needed to protect small States from external and internal financial shocks – be it insurance; contingency provisions in budgets or borrowing to finance recovery. Mr. Allum suggested that the IMF could provide advice on how to design and finance these safety nets, such as returning debt to conservative levels, and leaving room to increase borrowing levels when needed after a shocks or disasters. For SIDS, technical assistance centres in Fiji and Barbados contribute to the delivery of assistance based on unique needs.

Successful on-going SIDS-SIDS-Tripartite Partnership: The University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS)

The Rector of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), Dr. Jose Regidor Garcia, shared UPLGC initiative among seven universities including his own. The other universities are; the University of West Indies, South Pacific, Mauritius, Seychelles, Virgin Islands and Malta, and together they have develop a joint Master’s programme in Sustainable Development for Small Island States.

The initiative implemented by DESA with funding from the Government of Spain, is a concrete partnership among higher educational institutions mostly based in SIDS that has developed a joint virtual e-learning platform. Hosted by the University of South Pacific, the platform features on-line curricula offered by member universities based on their respective fields of expertise to benefit all registered students in any of these universities. UCSIS has an agreement for

Ms. Makurita Baaro, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Kiribati to the UN, made a moving statement on the plight of her Island as they grapple against extinction propelled by climate change impacts.

Mr. Peter Allum, Assistant Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), presented results of fiscal studies done in small States, included members of Small Island Developing States.

Dr. Jorge Regidor Garcia, Rector, Universidad de la Palmas de Gran Canaria; Member of the Board of Trustees of the University Consortium of Small Island States
SIDS Featured at Tourism EGM

At an expert group meeting on “Sustainable Tourism: Ecotourism, Poverty Reduction and Environmental Protection” held on 28-29 October in New York, Ms. Sonja Hunter, CEO of the Ministry of Tourism of Samoa, was a featured panelist who shared Samoa’s challenges and opportunities in developing sustainable tourism. Samoa’s tourism sector has been growing at a steady pace over the past few years and concrete steps have been taken over the last 5 years to boost its sustainable tourism product, including the development and adoption of specific legislations and policy plan to promote sustainable tourism. Samoa’s Sustainable Tourism is governed by four objectives: economic, environmental, tourism and social and cultural objectives, all of which contribute to the goals to be achieved to maintain a sustainable tourism sector. Key performance indicators have informed that tourism has been performing well in Samoa; however there have been some challenges, both Mother Nature and financing. Samoa was hit by an earthquake in 2009 and a cyclone in 2012 which caused great damage to the tourism industry. Cessation of LAX flights due to ash cloud from the Christchurch earthquake also had negative impacts on the tourism sector. Despite the challenges that SIDS in general and Samoa in particular continues to grapple with, such as their vulnerability to climate change impact and challenges of finding sustainable energy sources, among others, Ms. Hunter noted that opportunities are abundant and Samoa intends to continue its efforts in the right direction.

Joint Masters in Science in Sustainable Development Under University Consortium for Small Island States (UCSIS)

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C. ELECTIVES

- Project management
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Advanced research methods
- Energy and Sustainable Development
- Environmental Law; Treaties and agreements

D. RESEARCH:

- Research Seminar 1: Research methods and design
- Research Seminar 2: for programmes & projects.
- Dissertation (2 semesters in duration), or Internships

The courses are offered by different member universities, based on their areas of expertise. The IT platform required to host the joint programme and all the course material, as well as the degree management software are located at the University of the South Pacific. Each member university has upgraded server capacity and bandwidth to be able to support the delivery of the degree. The University of West Indies serves as the secretariat for UCSIS and provides secretariat support for this project.

Partnerships Platform for SIDS

DESA has developed a Partnerships Platform on the dedicated conference website (www.sids2014.org) promoting and facilitating relevant Partnerships for the UN Conference on Small Island developing States (SIDS).