UN-OHRLLS Submission on the Objectives and Substantive Theme of the Conference in advance of the First Meeting of the PrepCom

UN-OHRLLS has a specific mandate to advocate for SIDS and mobilise support for the implementation of SIDS sustainable development objectives. In this submission, UN-OHRLLS is highlighting to particular issues. The first issue on mobilising a broad alliance of stakeholders in support of sustainable development in SIDS recalls that the theme of the conference and the focus on partnerships is not a recent phenomenon but that SIDS have acknowledged right from the very first conference on SIDS that their sustainable development aspirations cannot be realized without partnerships. UN-OHRLLS in support of this acknowledgement and in light of the call made at Rio+20 for a broad alliance to support sustainable development is organising, with the host government of Samoa, a private sector partnership forum that will be convened on 30 and 31 August, 2014, in Apia, Samoa. Secondly, the need to strengthen the international support for SIDS remains. Given their recognised capacity constraints, particularly at the national level, the need for improved coherence both within the national, regional and global levels and a strengthening of the linkages between these levels remains paramount. UN-OHRLLS looks forward to playing its part in the strengthening institutional support to SIDS.

I. Mobilising a Broad Alliance of Stakeholders in Support of Sustainable Development in SIDS

The theme of the Third International Conference on SIDS: The Sustainable development of SIDS through durable and genuine partnership; and the ideas and concepts that the theme conjures is not a new phenomenon. SIDS have themselves acknowledged that on their own, their sustainable development aspirations, including those set globally under the auspices of the United Nations, will not be realised. They recognise that their sustainable development is hinged upon genuine cooperation and partnerships, at all levels. Twenty years ago the Declaration of Barbados, adopted at the First Global Conference in SIDS, contained seven mentions of the words partner or partners.

In his opening address to the conference the then Prime Minister of Barbados and President of the Global Conference, H.E Mr. L. Erskine Sandiford, stated:

.When all is said and done, our best hope for achieving sustainable development is through the creation of partnerships [...] at the national level [...] [and those] extend[ing] beyond national boundaries to include regional as well as international partnerships.

Furthermore, at the Global Conference, a high-level segment, open to participation at the head of State or Government or ministerial level, was convened over two days. This segment was devoted to discussions on the theme "Forging partnerships for sustainable development".

More recently, at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, the international community acknowledged the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels integrating economic,
social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The Rio+20 outcome also underscored that sustainable development requires concrete and urgent action highlighting that it can only be achieved with a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and private sector, all working together to secure the future we want for present and future generations. The broad alliance mentioned in the Rio+20 outcome is a *sine qua non* if SIDS are to reach their sustainable development aspirations. The need to mobilise this broad alliance of stakeholders in support of sustainable development in SIDS should be a central consideration during the PrepComs as well as at the conference in Samoa itself.

Nine of the SIDS are also LDCs. This accounts for about a fifth of the LDCs being SIDS as well. The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA) also took into account the specific geographical constraints of small islands LDCs and as such the importance of the implementation of the IPOA for these SIDS LDCs should also be supported alongside the SIDS specific programmes of action. This naturally leads to a need for enhancing synergies and linkages, where relevant and appropriate, between the UN’s Global Action Plans on SIDS and LDCs.

## II. Strengthening Institutional Support for SIDS

### Need for Coherence at all Levels to Enhance support for Implementation of the Outcome of the Third International Conference on SIDS

**National Level**

The Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI) both contained provisions that highlighted the importance of national institutions to ensure an integrated approach in pursuing sustainable development at the national level. The BPOA acknowledged that many SIDS had prepared environmental strategies and plans that integrate environment and development; they are seen as the first step in a process leading to the wide application of sustainable development principles. The BPOA noted, however, that for those plans to promote sustainable development, however, they must be utilized for national decision-making, including at all appropriate levels of government, in order that environment and development policy can be carefully integrated.

The BPOA also acknowledged that the formal integration of economic and environmental considerations will necessitate a series of institutional adjustments within government

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1. Part X of the BPOA and Part XX of MSI
2. BPOA, paragraph 49
3. Ibid
administrations, accompanied by across-the-board strengthening of environmental administrative capacity. It stressed that this must happen at all levels of government, including at the local level. At the same time the BPOA also recognized that there are many forms of institutional adjustment highlighting that such activities be tailored to specific country needs⁴. The MSI saw SIDS, commit themselves, with the necessary support of the international community, to, inter alia, developing national sustainable development strategies, including nationally owned poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies and strategies; and developing and strengthening their legislative, administrative and institutional structures⁵.

There is a need for enhanced coherence at all levels to ensure smooth follow-up, and that appropriate support to SIDS in implementing the BPoA, the MSI and the future outcome of SIDS 2014, including by the UN system are better delivered.

At national level, while individual country specific situations should dictate the make-up of SIDS national sustainable development capacities and institutions, there should be space for SIDS to share best practices on national sustainable capacities and institutions that could be tailored to fit interested SIDS situations, as appropriate. In this context the development of modalities based on best practices and success stories which may strengthen and support national sustainable implementation should be explored further.

**Regional Level**

The UN Secretary General’s report A/61/277, which was issued following these regional follow-up meetings focused on the establishment of regional frameworks to support the implementation of the MSI at national and regional levels. It was reported that that various SIDS regions have adopted follow-up frameworks that were very different from region to region.

It was clear that these regional frameworks were not uniform. They followed different modalities. The Caribbean region established, at the twenty-first session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC held in Port of Spain on 16 and 17 January 2006, a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean⁶.

In the AIMS region, as reported in A/61/277, member States were still deliberating over options on how best to have the Indian Ocean Commission serve as the principal institution to support implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The principal challenge faced then was the difference in the composition of the Commission and the AIMS group. It has been agreed, however, that the Commission would provide technical services in support of AIMS implementation of the Mauritius Strategy on an interim basis, while consultation at the

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⁴ BPOA, paragraph 48
⁵ MSI, paragraph 92 (b),(c)
⁶ Paragraph 10 of A/61/277
political level continues on the nature and scope of a more formal management agreement between the Commission and the AIMS group.\textsuperscript{7}

In the Pacific region, A/61/277 reported that the sustainable development working group of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) had assumed overall responsibility for implementing the Mauritius Strategy in the Pacific region, working in close consultation with the permanent missions in New York of the Pacific Island Forum countries. In September 2005, the Pacific Island Forum summit meeting also adopted the Pacific Plan to give effect to the promotion of, inter alia, economic growth, sustainable development, strengthened regional cooperation and integration, good governance and security.

At the regional level, while regional frameworks, particularly those in the Caribbean and Pacific, took advantage of the regional institutional strengths that existed and still exist in these SIDS regions, there are certain disadvantages in having such varying sets of frameworks, particularly in the context of dedicated UN system follow-up. With the advent of the HLPF and the role of UN regional commissions in supporting regional preparations, any regional follow-up mechanisms post SIDS 2014 will need to see a prominent role being played by the regional commissions, in close cooperation with SIDS own existing regional institutions.

Global Level

At the global level UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ (UN-DESA) and the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) play the support roles for SIDS under separate mandates. Paragraph 102 of the MSI reaffirmed these mandates in stating that the United Nations Secretary-General is also requested to ensure that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, continues to provide substantive support and advisory services to small island developing States for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations Secretariat continues to mobilize international support and resources for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, in accordance with its mandate.

Paragraph 101 in the MSI requested the UN Secretary-General to (i) mobilize and coordinate the entities of the UN system to further mainstream SIDS and (ii) facilitate coordinated implementation of the follow-up of the BPoA at the regional, subregional and global levels\textsuperscript{8}.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid paragraph 11
\textsuperscript{8} Paragraph 101 of the MSI: The Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to fully mobilize and coordinate the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including at the level of the regional commissions, within their respective mandates, and to further mainstream small island developing States issues to facilitate coordinated implementation of the follow-up to the Programme of Action at the
The UN Secretary-General was also requested to report on the progress of the implementation of this mandate\(^9\). In response the Secretary-General’s published report A/60/401, his first post MSI report. This report informed that UNDESA inaugurated an inter-agency consultative group (IACG) following the adoption of resolution 59/311. And through ongoing consultation within the IACG and through rationalization of the operationalization programme DESA sought to ensure a more coordinated approach to the implementation of SIDS sustainable development issues within the UN system\(^10\).

Paragraph 17 of Secretary-General report A/56/645 serves as the mandate for OHRLLS. The report lists the key functions of OHRLLS as including, supporting, as appropriate, the coordinated follow-up of the implementation of the BPoA. OHRLLS therefore plays a key role in supporting the coordinated follow-up of the BPoA and MSI and has been a key member of the DESA Chaired IACG.

OHRLLS will look to strengthen its collaboration with DESA, including in supporting DESA in improving coordination of the UN system entities on SIDS issues at the global level. OHRLLS acknowledges the need to ensure coherence between the national, regional and global processes and would welcome a role in enhancing better linkages of these processes and that SIDS national capacities and institutions are connected with ongoing global processes to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the BPoA, the MSI and the future SIDS 2014 Samoa outcome.

\(^9\) ibid

\(^10\) Paragraph 14 A/60/401