

SAMOA Pathway Review Highlights: Friday, 27 September 2019

The high-level meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway took place at UN Headquarters, New York. Two multistakeholder dialogues were held during the day, on: progress, gaps and challenges; and priorities, solutions and the way forward. A High-level Political Declaration was adopted during the closing plenary.

Opening Segment

Opening the meeting, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), said that despite contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, SIDS are often hit the hardest by the climate crisis.

Highlighting the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said SIDS are on the frontline of protecting and conserving the oceans. He underscored that helping SIDS to achieve the 2030 Agenda will yield tools, lessons, and examples for the entire world.

President Michael Higgins, Ireland, commended the moral leadership of SIDS and called for a "new prism" of ecology, economy, and social cohesion.

Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Fiji, called for countries to be classified on the basis of their vulnerability, instead of classifications such as middle-income countries (MICs) or least developed countries (LDCs). Noting the recent devastation by Hurricane Dorian, he said climate disasters require direct assistance for rebuilding.

Jason Momoa, actor, appealed to leaders to honor their commitment to the Paris Agreement, warning that humans are a "disease infecting the planet," and "entire islands are drowning into the sea due to emissions by first world countries."

Vinzealhar Ainjo Kwangin Nen, a youth representative from Papua New Guinea, reminded participants that "no man is an island." Warning that the Political Declaration, and efforts to implement the SAMOA Pathway, do not go far enough to address issues facing youth in SIDS, she quoted from her poem: "I know the

changes that can follow me tomorrow are far more promising than the ruins I stand on today."

In an impassioned address, Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Barbados, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), lamented the lack of progress in the 25 years since the Barbados Programme of Action recognized that SIDS need special recognition. Saying she could not "continue to come here, and continue as if life is normal," she reminded participants that the UN Charter commits countries to respect the right to life, and called for equity and "fair play."

Multistakeholder Roundtable 1: SAMOA Pathway Mid-term Review: Progress, Gaps and Challenges

The session started with a video address by the Prince of Wales, who described SIDS as the "global barometer." He drew attention to the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, and to the Sustainable Markets Council of public and private finance experts, which aims to develop a pipeline of bankable projects within the Commonwealth.

Moderator Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa, encouraged UN funds and agencies to integrate the SAMOA Pathway into their business and strategic plans, with dedicated funds earmarked for SIDS, and said the UN system should deliver as one.

Moderator Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, said Norway supports the eligibility of graduated countries for ODA when their economic bases have been destroyed by natural disasters; and SIDS must be granted better access to affordable financing.

President Danny Faure, Seychelles, noted the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian, called for SIDS to be eligible for ODA irrespective of GDP per capita, and highlighted that every dollar spent on resilience saves four dollars in recovery.

A "fireside chat" followed, moderated by Gaston Browne, Prime Minister, Antigua and Barbuda. He asked why SIDS should carry the burden of unsustainable growth by other countries, and called on the international community to hold big emitters accountable.

Tariq Ahmad, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and UN, UK, announced that the UK will host a meeting focused on access to finance by SIDS in 2020, in London.

Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), said SIDS are a top priority under the Sendai Framework for DRR, as they are most at risk.

Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank Group (WBG), reported progress on access to finance by SIDS, saying they receive USD 100 per capita on average, compared to USD 10 received by the average International Development Association beneficiary.

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes, Aruba, on behalf of the Caribbean islands that are countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, said SIDS face unique challenges, including small populations and landmasses, and vulnerability to external shocks.

Ahmad said the UK has provided GBP 360 million for climate resilient infrastructure in nine Caribbean countries.

Mizutori said the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) is scaling up the use of “Joint National Adaptation Plans” (JNAPs), linking DRR and adaptation strategies in SIDS, to ease implementation. She reported that indicators are being developed for the SAMOA Pathway, and UNISDR will provide training for reporting on the indicators.

Van Trotsenburg acknowledged that countries need “a lot more aid” and systematic, long-term support to build resilience. He informed participants about contingency finance options from the WBG in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, including catastrophic risk insurance, and the Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option for larger amounts.

Wever-Croes stressed the need for strong institutions to enable islands to recover sooner and better after disasters.

Prime Minister Charlot Sawai, Vanuatu, for the Pacific Islands Forum, called on Member States, the UN system, and development partners to meet the commitments in their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement; and on the Group of 20 (G-20) and G-7 countries to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and increase investment in SIDS.

Prime Minister Allen Chastanet, Saint Lucia, for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), emphasized the need for SIDS-specific responses and renewed commitment from development partners. He said the lack of accelerated, meaningful actions to implement agreed goals and fulfil agreed commitments and obligations threatens the very existence of SIDS.

Luis Alberto Castiglioni, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Paraguay, for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), supported strengthening and mobilizing additional funding for SIDS.

President David Manuel, Micronesia, remarked on the time spent on reporting on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and 2030 Agenda, and called for a SIDS-specific reporting template. He requested that the UN to make data and statistics for small populations available in a user-friendly way.

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Maldives, called on development partners to work with SIDS as equals, and to understand that returns on investment are not always immediate.

Acting President Barlen Vyapoory, Mauritius, said a lack of a regional mechanism hampers the development of regional initiatives for his SIDS region.

Vice President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Indonesia, said his country is developing platforms to further strategically engage with SIDS, noting the Indonesia South Pacific Forum in Jakarta in March 2019.

Prime Minister José Ulisses de Pina Correia e Silva, Cabo Verde, underlined the need to re-evaluate the SAMOA Pathway implementation measures, to sharpen the focus on capacity building and DRR mechanisms.

Jeremiah Manele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands, drew attention to the SIDS Partnership Toolbox, and a report from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) analyzing trends in partnerships with SIDS.

Peter Eriksson, Minister of International Development Cooperation, Sweden, said efforts to invest in clean energy and planting trees will not result in change, until countries stop the “flood” of oil, coal, and gas.

Marcelo Ebrard Casabón, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, said his government will continue to work with SIDS to improve adaptation and response capacities, and to support them in integrated risk management.

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, called for the obligations of the international community towards SIDS to be written in law; and for SIDS to be a recognized as a special category in all financial instruments.

Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Comoros, said his country is working to reduce precarious employment, improve access to basic social services, and promote disaster risk management strategies.

Faruk Kaymakçı, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey, stressed that capacity building and investment in science and technology should be increased.

Giorgio Alberto Franyuti Kelly, Medical Impact, stressed the need to reverse mangrove decline, support gender equality, and strengthen comprehensive approaches to health.

Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), expressed concern about rising debt levels, and the continued use of debt instruments in climate finance for SIDS. He supported debt swaps to address environmental and economic shocks.

Benito Wheatley, British Virgin Islands, said his country was not able to access official development assistance (ODA) even after a direct hit from a Category 5 hurricane, and is not eligible for accessing funds from the Global Environment Facility or Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Multistakeholder Roundtable 2: Priorities, Solutions, and the Way Forward

Moderator Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore, called for assistance for SIDS to “build back better” after disasters, through the development of early warning systems and improvements in data monitoring. He highlighted the Singapore Partnership on the SAMOA Pathway, which supports capacity building in SIDS.

Moderator Eugene Rhuggenaath, Prime Minister, Curaçao, stressed partnership as the most important element of the SAMOA Pathway and announced Curaçao’s commitment to join the UN Local2030 Islands Network.

In a keynote address, Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, called for concessional funding and special trade treatment for MICs in the Caribbean. Noting that Caribbean countries have debts of USD 52.6 billion, she proposed a “debt for climate adaptation swap” initiative to finance a resilience fund.

In a “fireside chat” focused on the next five years of the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, moderator Achim Steiner, Administrator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), said the UN system must provide continuous assistance to SIDS, not only when disaster hits.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, Kenya, said oceans have great potential in terms of economic growth, development, and employment.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness, Jamaica, warned that highly indebted countries face severe financial limitations for implementing the SDGs.

Anthia Williams, Bloomberg Philanthropies, described the Global Fishing Watch platform to stop overfishing, which enables people and governments to monitor where fishing is occurring.

In response to a question on transformative partnerships, Holness said the Climate Finance and Carbon Pricing track of the UN Secretary-General’s UN Climate Action Summit, led by Jamaica and France, resulted in tangible pledges to the GCF.

Kenyatta highlighted a public-private partnership supporting sustainable mangrove management by women in Kenya, and stressed that the private sector can play a critical role in the “growth opportunity” presented by the 2030 Agenda.

Steiner, in closing, described the blue and digital economies as “accelerators” that can be used to help SIDS to advance, and announced an additional USD 1 million that will be provided by UNDP for emergency support to the Bahamas.

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, State of Palestine, for the G-77/China, said survival for many SIDS – a third of the Group’s membership – demands urgent and amplified action on climate change.

Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda, Uganda, for the African States, said environmental hazards in SIDS trigger public health impacts, in addition to economic and social impacts.

Julian King, European Commission, highlighted the Commission’s support to SIDS for climate-smart food security, waste management, sustainable energy, private sector development, and sustaining fisheries.

Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, Holy See, proposed a people-centered approach that goes beyond economic measures and extends to justice.

Deputy Prime Minister Mark Browne, Cook Islands, called for “nothing less than full and immediate replenishment of the GCF” to support infrastructure strengthening and resilience building.

Ohoud Al Roumi, Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing, United Arab Emirates, supported: scaling up renewables partnerships; enhancing responses to extreme weather events through forecast-based financing; and revisiting the current aid eligibility criteria, which disincentivize assistance to higher-income SIDS.

Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary, said Hungary can offer skills and know-how on water management and water damage mitigation, and highlighted the 2019 Budapest Water Summit’s focus on preventing water crises.

Aupito William Sio, Minister for Pacific Peoples, New Zealand, called for urgent and ambitious action against climate change, the abolishment of policies that are detrimental to oceans, and modifications to the concessional finance eligibility rules for SIDS.

Teodoro Ribera, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile, said that, with over 4,000 kilometers of coastlines and 3,000 islands, Chile shares similar concerns with SIDS; and is particularly focused on adaptation as the host of the 25th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2019.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, India, described steps his country is taking as it works alongside SIDS, including a proposed Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, announced during the UN Climate Action Summit.

Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia, expressed his country’s willingness to explore development cooperation with SIDS, including on good governance and rule of law.

Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Timor-Leste, called for allocating additional resources to SIDS, and a centralized body for data collection and statistical analysis relating to the SAMOA Pathway.

Qu Dongyu, Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), highlighted FAO’s Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition, a response to the SAMOA Pathway, and efforts to support policy processes in SIDS to improve food security and nutrition outcomes.

Patrick Paul Welsh, University of Dublin, for civil society organizations, called for links between SIDS and the International Network for Government Science Advice, to advance the “science-technology-policy-practice” interface.

Sharon Ikeazor, Minister of Environment, Nigeria, encouraged governments to integrate the SAMOA Pathway into their policies and environmental frameworks. She urged the pooling of resources, and integration through regional frameworks.

Ben Mellouk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Morocco, offered to exchange experiences and knowledge with SIDS on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism.

Quite Djata, Secretary of State of Environment, Guinea-Bissau, called for a clear database on environmental indicators, and stressed the urgent need for national plans to deal with disaster risks.

Mohammed Nazrul Islam, Director General, Foreign Ministry, Bangladesh, noted that many SIDS are also LDCs, and said the World Trade Organization can contribute to the realization of the SAMOA Pathway.

Lois Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the UN, urged urgent and ambitious climate action to safeguard the 1.5°C global warming limit, and underscored the critical role of ODA in the sustainable development of many SIDS.

Nuno Mathias, Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN, called for the sustainable use and conservation of oceans, which he said are socio-economically and culturally important to SIDS.

Lorenzo Morini, Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, said Italy committed USD 50 million to support Pacific SIDS in 2019.

Patricia Scotland, Secretary General, Commonwealth Secretariat, described the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub to help countries address technical capacity gaps and mobilize climate finance; and the Commonwealth Disaster Risk Finance portal, a repository of information for disaster-prone countries to better manage the financial impact of natural disasters.

Closing Segment

Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General, UN High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, drew attention to a roadmap created by her office to bring SIDS to the decision-making table and amplify their voices, and efforts to ensure that UN entities integrate priorities of SIDS in their strategic plans.

Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, UN DESA, said the international community must commit to accelerating action. He emphasized the need to address transition challenges and explore innovative sources of private sector finance for SIDS.

The High-level Political Declaration of the Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway was adopted by acclamation, and will be submitted to the plenary of the UNGA for its formal adoption.

In a final intervention, Nicaragua pointed to the lack of finance for loss and damage despite the growing frequency of “hundred-year events,” and the need to elevate loss and damage in the UNFCCC process.

The meeting closed at 6:00 pm.

Summary of the High-level Political Declaration

The Declaration outlines progress, gaps, and challenges in implementing the SAMOA Pathway, before turning to calls for action. In the preamble, the Declaration notes with concern the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

It recognizes that progress has been made in social inclusion and efforts by SIDS to improve transportation connectivity, achieve gender equality, and promote peaceful, prosperous, inclusive societies and safe communities.

Among gaps and challenges, the Declaration lists: poverty, unemployment, inequality, and exclusion; communicable and non-communicable diseases; access to the multilateral trading system; access to affordable financing for sustainable development; obstacles to the flow of, and access to, remittances; and transition challenges faced by SIDS that have graduated, or are about to graduate, from LDC status.

The Declaration urges actions, including:

- targeted measures to eradicate poverty, and the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures;
- scaling up investments for economic growth and diversification;
- institutions to learn from one another's efforts to address countries' diverse circumstances, to better manage transitions and graduation;

- support for strengthening national institutional capacities to access finance in SIDS;
- fostering enabling environments to overcome obstacles in accessing remittances, and to facilitate and attract foreign direct investment;
- strengthening capacity of SIDS to effectively participate in the multilateral trading system;
- strengthening cooperation, capacity, and investment in disaster risk management, and examining the disaster-related funding environment with a view to the possible development of a targeted voluntary disaster fund, mechanism, or financial instrument to assist SIDS in managing disaster risk and recovery; and
- support to SIDS to mitigate and adapt to climate change through diverse approaches, including by exploring debt swap initiatives.

The Declaration calls upon relevant entities to take corresponding actions, including, *inter alia*:

- UNCTAD to continue to support SIDS to enhance capacity for trade expansion and competitiveness;
- relevant UN development system entities, as well as international and regional development banks, to continue to support SIDS to address water and sanitation challenges by strengthening existing technical assistance initiatives;
- the UN Committee for Development Policy to duly consider the vulnerability of SIDS in monitoring the progress of SIDS that have graduated from LDC status;
- relevant institutions, funds, and facilities to review their financing instruments to maximize accessibility, effectiveness, transparency, quality, and impact; and
- the UN Secretary-General to identify the SAMOA Pathway priority areas not covered by the SDGs or the Sendai Framework for DRR and, if any are identified, to develop targets and indicators for those areas.

In the Corridors

Frustration at the slow pace of progress in addressing the concerns of SIDS, despite exponentially rising threats, was bluntly evident in the room on Friday. Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados was eloquent in expressing her dissatisfaction at the slow progress since the Barbados Programme of Action recognized the special circumstances of SIDS 25 years ago. “How many times must we spend taxpayers' money to come here and hear the same thing over and over?” she asked. The development cooperation minister from Sweden attempted an answer: until countries stop the “flood” of coal, gas, and oil, he said. And therein lies the paradox: addressing the concerns of SIDS without stemming a major cause of exacerbated vulnerability is unlikely to be more than a band-aid.

Mottley said she was recently asked what will happen to the coal miners of the world if coal production is ceased. Do we condemn the miners? “We don't condemn them,” she replied. “We prepare them for another purpose. The duty of a leader is to transition and prepare their population.”