



A L L I A N C E O F S M A L L I S L A N D S T A T E S

AOSIS Response on the MVI

It is a fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire world, and it is also a fact that the impact is the greatest on Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) more so than any other grouping of developing countries. SIDS unique structural challenges and multidimensional vulnerabilities are more than ever exposed and intensifying as the pandemic continues to devastate developing countries.

Tackling these vulnerabilities continues to be a significant challenge for our small states. A large number of SIDS are classified as middle-income countries and therefore are ineligible to access concessionary financing and now even COVID relief measures. Our unique vulnerability is not captured through the use of gross national income or gross domestic product per capita as a measurement and therefore places us with other groups of countries that do not have our unique vulnerabilities and the categorization of countries in special circumstances.

Given the complexity of our vulnerability and the unlikelihood that our unique challenges will change after the pandemic ends and the likelihood that multiple environment, social and economic shocks will continue to affect our countries, there is a need for a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) that accurately captures our particular vulnerabilities.

It is because of these factors why the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) wishes to share some perspectives regarding the ongoing work on the recommendations to be provided to the Secretary General on the need for an MVI for SIDS as mandated in paragraph 8 of resolution A/RES/75/215.

It is the view of AOSIS that a MVI should encompass a set of indicators that are relevant to the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS and goes beyond indicators that measures gross national income or gross domestic product per capita.

AOSIS continues to advocate that in our pursuit to achieve sustainable development, that our sustainability is not linked only to our vulnerability to the environment, but also social and economic vulnerabilities. It is therefore fundamental for SIDS that the three dimensions of sustainable development underpin the basis for a multidimensional vulnerability index.

The three dimensions of sustainable development, environmental, social and economic are harmonious, each dimensions provides context in regard to our vulnerability, and we therefore recognize that the vulnerability of SIDS may look different with individual dimension and recognizing that there are differences within SIDS subregions. Generic indicators (e.g. GNI or GDP per capita) therefore are unlikely to accurately reflect the unique circumstances and vulnerabilities of some SIDS. Notwithstanding this, the three dimensions of sustainable





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development are important to SIDS and are widely featured within the SAMOA Pathway and are also the basis for the sustainable development goals.

Therefore, AOSIS is of the view that the development of a MVI should be as inclusive of the three dimensions of sustainable development as possible. Specific parameters could be incorporated under each dimension that more precisely illuminate the challenges and vulnerability of SIDS. These parameters could be seen as globally applicable also. Examples could include economic and geographic size and constraints, insularity and remoteness, proneness to natural disaster and disaster risks, environmental fragility and climate change, openness and external economic dependency, demographic/fragmentation, transnational organized crimes and technology and innovations.

The MVI should be as universal as possible so that comparisons can be made across all SIDS and amongst all other developing countries if necessary. The MVI should not only highlight the special case of SIDS and our unique vulnerability, but it should be able to be used to compare SIDS vulnerability to any other developing country. The MVI should provide a comprehensive accounting upon which one can assess development level and need and thus the ability to draw comparisons between developed and least developed countries if needed.

Our countries remain a special case for sustainable development, and this has been endorsed by the General Assembly. We continue to face combined challenges arising from our geographical size and constraints, geographical remoteness, the small scale and high trade dependency of our economies, high costs and the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. We have not achieved sustained high levels of economic growth, owing in part to our vulnerabilities to the ongoing negative impacts of environmental challenges and external economic and financial shocks.

With the recognition of the previous paragraph outlining SIDS vulnerability, resilience and resilience building could be considered within the framework of an MVI. Vulnerability represents the overarching challenge to sustainable development; resilience represents the extent to which vulnerability is mitigated or lessened. It is the Group's view also that the MVI should account for both exogenous and endogenous factors which impact levels of vulnerability.

AOSIS is of the view that careful consideration should be given to the range or number of indices to be included. There are risks in having a broad range of indices, as too many indices might make the MVI unmanageable and complicated. There are some indices that are particularly important to the Group, these includes debt, biodiversity, disaster risk, remoteness, geographical constraints, climate change, economic vulnerability, poverty, food security, health systems, and pandemic response and recovery. While the group provided these as examples, there might be others that are worth further reflection within the context of SIDS and the order of listing is not an indication or endorsement of priority. The Group may come forward with further pronouncements on the indices.





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These could be also viewed in line with the Group’s view of potential parameters under each dimension.

In addition, it is also important to ensure that there are credible sources from which data can be sourced to populate the indices subsequently. To this end, national and official sources of data should be prioritised ahead of third-party sources.

While there are a range of users for the MVI, and given the use of GNI as a measurement, AOSIS is of the view that the MVI could be used alongside that of the GNI/GDP/HAI measurements if the MVI cannot be used as a standalone index which would naturally be the Group’s preference. Considering this view, the MVI will be helpful for decision making around advocacy, monitoring, and evaluating, evidenced-based decision making, issues related to debt and access to concessional financing. The use of the MVI should be targeted and therefore we recognize the importance of its use by the international financial intuitions, development partners and the UN system. Other entities and the private sector could follow the directives of the IFIs, development partners and the UN system in the use of the MVI as the basic metric for assessing development assistance of SIDS.

AOSIS is of the view that decisions regarding how the MVI should be finalized and the institution or entity where the MVI will be “housed” is premature at this particular time. Focus should be given to the recommendations that will be presented to the Secretary General regarding the need for an MVI for SIDS.

