

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE<sup>1</sup>**

### **High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

#### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

COVID-19 has once again exposed the vulnerabilities of SIDS, and as a result, has re-ignited their long-standing call for the use of vulnerability indices to facilitate their access to concessional resources. The economic fall-out suffered by these countries, has shown the urgent need for measures that better reflect the challenges faced by SIDS and that also enable the international community to find viable solutions to address these challenges. Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, which excludes the majority of SIDS from concessional development financing, is still considered by many donors and financial institutions as the most effective criterion for making eligibility decisions and financing allocations. The persistent use of GNI per capita (along with creditworthiness), as the primary criteria for determining access to concessional or grant resources captures neither who is most affected, nor who is least able to respond to exogenous shocks. New consensus needs to be built about what constitutes vulnerability, in order to encompass the multiplicity of inter-linking challenges which every State must now address.

In response to paragraph 8(a) of General Assembly Resolution 75/215, which called upon the Secretary-General *inter alia* to provide recommendations on the potential development, finalization and use of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for SIDS, the Secretariat conducted a series of consultations<sup>2</sup> during 2021, which examined the work of UN and Non UN System entities that were developing, had worked on or had developed a multidimensional vulnerability index or vulnerability measures for SIDS. Based on these consultations the Secretary-General presented a set of recommendations in his report A/76/211 confirming *inter alia* that:

- i. It is possible to develop an MVI, within a short time span, based on a set of key guiding principles
- ii. That an MVI has several possible uses including for access to concessional resources and
- iii. In order to build consensus, the development of the MVI should be a member State driven process, which should be finalized by a high-level expert panel, headed by two eminent persons, one of whom should be from a SIDS, both appointed by the President of the General Assembly (PGA), tasked with finalizing the index.

In response, General Assembly Resolution 76/203 calls upon the President of the General Assembly to appoint the co-chairs and members of the panel and to task them with carrying forward work to finalize the MVI by December 2022, with inputs from all countries.

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<sup>1</sup> These Terms of Reference are prepared by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat (UN-DESA and OHRLLS) in line with the mandate emanating from Resolution 76/203 and other relevant documents.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/small-island-developing-states/mvi>

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF WORK OF THE PANEL

The objective of the high-level panel is to *carry forward work to finalize an MVI* in accordance with the mandate stipulated in paragraph 8(a) of resolution 76/203 and the guidance as set out in paragraphs 70-89 of document A/76/211.

In pursuing its work autonomously, the panel is expected to review all relevant literature and ongoing work on a multidimensional vulnerability index<sup>3</sup> and building on existing and ongoing work, provide for the consideration of Member States, recommendations on:

- A clear and coherent Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index taking into account the principles highlighted in paragraphs 80-83 of A/76/211, including its framework structure, indicators, a precise methodology for weighting and aggregating the indicators, and precise definitions of the main concepts including vulnerability, exposure, shock and resilience. A clear typology of shocks may also be included that would allow for the consideration of multiple dimensions in a coherent manner. The final product should also highlight the structural challenges faced by developing countries. Due consideration must also be given to the potential MVI's acceptability and use within the UN system and beyond, in particular international financial institutions (IFI), multilateral development banks and Member States.
- Key components (and subcomponents) of the MVI and validate them.
- Appropriate indicators for the MVI paying particular attention to data availability. Selected indicators must allow for clear separation between structural and non-structural factors, as well as, between factors of exposure to the shocks and factors of (lack of) resilience. Due consideration must also be given to data availability and reliability across all developing countries in the selection of indicators.
- Make evidence-based recommendations, on the most appropriate governance arrangements for the MVI, including modalities for the publication of MVI results and procedures for reviewing and/or revising the MVI and its components.

## 3.0 PANEL COMPOSITION

The PGA will appoint **12** members to the panel, including two co-chairs. They will be drawn from the public sector, academia, civil society, and private sector, with due consideration to regional and gender balance. The panel will include members;

- With an understanding of the complex and interrelated aspects of vulnerability in their 3 dimensions, risk and resilience building;
- Who have a grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of current eligibility and performance-based allocation systems used by IFIs and/or the international financial architecture and the access challenges of SIDS;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/small-island-developing-states/mvi>

- With experience in designing and/or implementing policies in relevant domains in developing countries; and
- With intimate knowledge of the challenges faced by developing countries from different regions of the world and at different levels of economic and social development

*(Section 4 further outlines skills and competencies sought in the Panel).*

### **3.1 ROLE OF PANEL MEMBERS**

The panel members will serve in their respective capacities and will have three roles:

- **Analytical:** the panel members will contribute their knowledge, experiences, and ideas to the group. They should jointly present the panel’s analysis and recommendations.
- **Topic leadership:** the co-chairs may request some panel members to lead aspects of the panel’s work based on their expertise.
- **Engagement:** They should participate in events and conferences, consultations, meetings with officials and other stakeholders, and other engagements relevant to the panel’s work, in coordination with the co-chairs, as necessary.

### **3.2 ROLE OF PANEL CO-CHAIRS**

- **Panel leadership:** the co-chairs will lead the work of the panel as requested by the President of the General Assembly, including overseeing the timely delivery of outputs, chair plenary meetings and serve as the primary voice(s) to present the findings and recommendations of the panel. The co-chairs may designate panel members to lead aspects of the panel’s work based on their expertise.
- **Engagement:** throughout the term of the panel’s work, the co-chairs will represent the panel in engagements with stakeholders, including Member States, civil society, relevant private sector entities and international financial institutions, as relevant to the panel’s work.
- **Analytical:** the co-chairs will contribute their knowledge, experiences and ideas to the panel. They and panel members, should jointly present on the panel’s analysis and recommendations

Co-chairs and Panel members should, to the greatest extent possible, attend all meetings of the panel and the final report presentation.

### **3.3 DURATION OF PANEL, DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS**

The expected duration of the Panel will be for **11** months from 1 February to 31 December 2022.

The Panel will conduct its work in English, and all outputs must be delivered in English. The following are the Panel's deliverables:

- An interim report by 15 June 2022
- A final report no later than 31 December 2022.

### **3.4 PANEL SECRETARIAT**

The Secretariat for the Panel will be the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

The Secretariat will be responsible for producing and editing background papers and the panel's interim and final reports, supporting the panel's communications and outreach, coordinating the engagement of the Panel with all stakeholders, and organizing the panel's meetings and other events. UN entities and other agencies will be consulted to contribute to the work of the Secretariat, as required.

Those institutions who have contributed to the consultations on the development of an MVI i.e. the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank, UNDP and the UN Resident Coordinators in SIDS Network, will also be invited to contribute to work of the Secretariat as required.

### **3.5 PROCESS AND CONSULTATIONS**

The panel will function virtually but must be available for at least one (1) in person meeting. The Panel will establish its work programme and working methods at its first meeting.

As stakeholder buy-in and consultation is key to wide acceptance of the work of the Panel, the Panel will conduct inclusive and regular consultations with Member States and other interested and relevant stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> The panel will also conduct regular briefings with the General Assembly.

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<sup>4</sup> This could include, among others, the IACG-SIDS, the International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Regional development banks, World Bank Group, Commonwealth Secretariat, Regional SIDS organizations

## 4.0 SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF PANEL MEMBERS

### Required Qualifications, Skills and Expertise

- An advanced degree in the field of economics or econometrics, economic vulnerability, economic research and analysis, economic policy formulation, application of economic principles, international development or similar field related to the economic aspects of vulnerability

**OR** in the field of environment and natural resources management, geography, planning, natural sciences, engineering, environmental/natural resources economic, or areas relevant to work on environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction issues

**OR** in social sciences, sociology, demography, population, statistics, economics, public policy, other relevant social science or field related to social vulnerability

**OR** in public sector management, public administration and or public sector finance

- Extensive relevant experience (minimum of 12 years) including as a practitioner at a senior level in the specific area of expertise **OR** be considered an eminent person or pioneer in a particular area of study within academia, or private sector
- A proven track record as an expert at a senior level in the economic and/or social and/or environmental aspects of vulnerability, risk, or resilience building within the public, private or civil society sectors and with knowledge and broad understanding of the complex and interrelated aspects of other vulnerabilities **OR** senior official in public administration and/or public or private finance and extensive public financial management experience at senior or managerial level.
- Demonstrated experience at a senior or managerial level in the design and/or implementation of policies in relevant domains with a track record of innovative thinking and driving policy initiatives to achieve development results.
- Strong qualitative and quantitative skills, with demonstrated experience in the measurement of vulnerability in any of its dimensions (economic, social, environmental) and/or resilience and with a solid grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of vulnerability indicators

### Desirable Skills and Expertise (not required)

- Prior work experience and proven results in a developing country in more than one region would be an asset
- Demonstrated ability to effectively interact and communicate with diverse stakeholders, including community groups, government officials, regional, intergovernmental organisations, international financial institutions, multi-lateral development banks and the multi-lateral donor community.

- Knowledge of the challenges faced by developing countries from different regions of the world and at different levels of economic and social development, with particular regard to economic related aspects of vulnerability such as, inter alia; export dependence, economic diversification, debt vulnerability, strategic import dependence, isolation etc.
- Knowledge of the international financial architecture and the access challenges of developing countries, and in particular, SIDS would be an asset
- Ability to translate analytical work into policy advice and operational, actionable, recommendations and to work effectively across sectors.
- A track record of innovative thinking and driving policy initiatives to achieve development results.
- Strong analytical and integrative skills to tackle multidisciplinary issues and a proven ability to effectively lead programs with a strategic vision and strong operational focus.
- Good partnership experience, including involving multiple stakeholders – both public and private, internal and external – in building collaborative alliances for results.
- Ability to lead corporate level dialogue on a broad range of issues related to vulnerability, risk and resilience.
- Prior experience in the development and/or use of indices would be an asset.

## **5.0 SUBMISSION OF CANDIDATES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Interested Member States may submit through the respective Chairs of Regional Groups, names of potential candidates for consideration, along with a concise and detailed curriculum vitae, demonstrating their track record, and expertise as relevant to the work of the panel. Submissions may be sent no later than **14 January 2022**.

Submissions may be sent to [opga@un.org](mailto:opga@un.org), copied to Ms. Suzana Hrvatin ([hrvatin@un.org](mailto:hrvatin@un.org)) and Mr. Magnus Andresen ([magnus.andresen@un.org](mailto:magnus.andresen@un.org)).

For more information:

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