



QUESTIONNAIRE INPUTS FROM UNEP

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Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the MSI, BPOA for the Sustainable Development of SIDS

Please note that strict word limits have been established for each question. The Secretariat is unable to consider any information beyond these established word limits. In this regard, you are requested to report only on new or updated information. Information conveyed in previous surveys will not be considered. Previous surveys can be accessed at XXXX under reports.

PART A

VULNERABILITY REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING IN SIDS

1. Enhanced Support for a resilient Post COVID 19 Recovery in SIDS

Vulnerability reduction and resilience building are critical issues that must be addressed by SIDS. Briefly elaborate on any resilience building interventions or strategies (proactive or preventative) that have been or are being implemented at national or regional levels that aim specifically at improving resilience in SIDS. Please include financial resources expended in this regard, if available **(750 words)**.

- **Climate Adaptation & Resiliency:** UNEP provides technical support to governments and helps them access finance to build climate resilience. With projects all over the world, UNEP promotes a wide range of solutions, including nature-based solutions, National Adaptation Plans, early warning climate services, climate-resilient livelihoods, and much more. In this vein, UNEP has implemented ten projects in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific SIDS addressing climate change adaptation, covering the water, land management, infrastructure and planning sectors. Total grant finance in the amount of 40M USD from Least Developed Countries Fund, Special Climate Change Fund and the Green Climate Fund. The SIDS receiving funding for project support include: Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Cuba; Africa: Comoros; Asia-Pacific: Bahrain, Timor Leste, Tuvalu, Maldives. For more information: see <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/climate-action/what-we-do/climate-adaptation>
- **UNEP Response to COVID-19: (Focal Point: Mushtaq Memon)** COVID-19 accentuated both the importance of, and the impact on the water, sanitation, and hygiene

sectors. To address COVID-19 waste and wastewater, UNEP organized a series of webinars, developed factsheets, and engaged stakeholders to set the solutions during the lockdowns. Thereafter, two reports, one on the plastic plight due the COVID-19, and another one on the water sector were developed. The COVID-19 and the Water Sector report offers a deep-dive assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the water sector based on a review and analysis of information and data available from secondary sources. (financial resources expended: USD 100k). The second report on the rise of disposable plastics use during COVID-19 compiles information on the outbreak of the COVID-19, and its impact on human health, economy, and the environment, with a specific focus on the plastics and plastic packaging sector. It also explores the plastic circularity principles and agenda to build back better a sound holistic waste management system that is resilient to the prolonged COVID-19 or other future shocks. (See attached).

2. Enhanced and Tailored Development Cooperation for SIDS

Improved, tailored development co-operation approaches, calibrated to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS are necessary if SIDS are to effectively recover from the COVID Pandemic. Briefly elaborate on any planned or ongoing strategies /approaches to improve and deliver on more tailored development support to SIDS. What are the expected results from these interventions in the targeted countries. Please include indications of resource allocations if available (850 words)

- **Wastewater Management:** In developing and lower-income countries like the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), wastewater management, access to freshwater resources, and the health of coral reefs are particularly challenging areas. Floods and droughts due to climate change have an impact on the quantities of water undergoing treatment, and in the case of floods, polluted water overflowing from treatment plans might be dispersed in the environment with repercussions for access to safe drinking water and fragile marine and coastal ecosystems such as corals. Absent healthy, intact coral reefs, island shorelines are more vulnerable to the impacts of storms and erosion as well as saltwater intrusion and consequent impacts to drinking water. In consideration of these challenges, SIDS require innovative approaches and tailoring of solutions that consider the complex combination of geographical and socioeconomic constraints of each individual island. Applying nature-based solutions to counter these challenges is a central part of UNEP's work. UNEP will continue to scale up efforts to promote a more sustainable blue economy, enhance infrastructure, address sources of pollution, and implement area-based management tools to protect and restore coral reefs. In addition, UNEP will continue its work with partners to support capacity building and awareness raising activities for wastewater surveillance for sound environmental and health management. To learn more about UNEP's Global Wastewater Initiative please see the [April 2023 newsletter](#), and stay tuned for the official launch in August 2023 at the World Water Week of: "From sick water to rich water: closing the loop for sustainable water management. A UNEP Rapid Response Assessment." This publication may be of interest to participants at the SIDS Conference as a sequel to the 2010 publication '[Sick water? The central role of wastewater management in sustainable development](#)'.

- **Transition to a Sustainable Blue Economy:** Another priority action area for consideration in the Samoa Pathway is support to SIDS in the transition to a more sustainable blue economy. UNEP is developing a novel approach and capacity building resource to support Member States in transitioning to environmentally sustainable, resilient, and equitable blue economies. It provides a '*Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework*', which outlines core elements and enabling conditions to design and initiate steps toward sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economy that is tailored countries' unique settings and needs. Area-based planning and management tools form a critical component of implementation (e.g. ICZM, IWRM, MSP, Ridge-2-Reef and Source-2-Sea approaches). As part of this framework approach, UNEP, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat Blue Charter Programme, is developing a '*Rapid Readiness Assessment*' tool to better understand a country's existing legal framework, institutional mechanisms and political landscape in order to identify gaps and recommendations for priority actions, including resource needs. This new 'rapid readiness' approach has already been tested in two SIDS countries, Antigua & Barbuda and Trinidad & Tobago, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Blue Charter Program. Potentially, more SIDS countries might be interested in piloting the SBE Transition framework. The initial results are presented in two country studies: 1) [Trinidad & Tobago](#), 2) [Antigua & Barbuda](#).
- **By-Catch and Integrated Ecosystem Management (BIEM) Initiative/SPREP:** The BIEM initiative is led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) under the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP). It was developed to deliver more tailored development support to SIDS to help overcome Pacific development and environmental challenges including high population growth rate, increased urbanisation, vulnerability to environmental threats, and overreliance on relatively few sectors on which to base economic growth. The initiative is promoting sustainable utilisation of coastal and marine biodiversity by improving marine spatial planning, increasing climate change resilience, and enhancing conservation and management. So far, results have informed development of key documents such as the Fiji National Oceans Policy and Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy, and the Pacific regional Turtle Action Plan 2022-2026, among others.
- **Sargassum Crisis in the Caribbean/Cartagena Convention Secretariat:** The climate crisis in the Caribbean has led to an increase in sea temperatures, causing a proliferation of sargassum, a warm-water seaweed that thrives in nutrient-rich and warm water. This issue is pressing and warrants deeper, coordinated exploration, and prioritization in connection to increased nitrogen levels and warming ocean waters, creating significant impacts to the local economies of Caribbean SIDS dependent on beach tourism. In response, the Cartagena Convention Secretariat and Climate Tracker held an online meeting titled "*Blue Resilience: The Approaches to the Sargassum Crisis in the Caribbean*" that brought together a diverse range of experts to share knowledge, best practices, and innovative solutions for addressing the sargassum crisis in the Caribbean region. The meeting aimed to promote innovative solutions, foster dialogue, and

collaboration, and inspire action towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient Caribbean.

- **[GEF ISLANDS programme: \(Chemicals and Waste Management\)](#)**: UNEP is the lead agency of the GEF Islands Programme “Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States” (ISLANDS) and is supporting 33 island nations in the Atlantic, Caribbean, Indian and Pacific regions to improve chemicals and waste management. The programme is implemented by UNEP, UNDP, FAO, and IDB alongside partner executing agencies. ISLANDS will safely dispose of over 200,000 tonnes of hazardous products and 17,000 tonnes of toxic chemicals, including POPs. It will also lead to the avoidance of nearly 90 tonnes of mercury. Through co-finance activities it will avoid over 300,000 tonnes of marine litter - mostly plastics. The ISLANDS Programme has four main objectives: 1) Prevent future build-up of chemicals entering SIDS – by strengthening legislation and import regulations on products containing hazardous materials. 2) Safely manage and dispose of existing hazardous chemicals, products, and materials – by raising awareness of the pathways of contamination and building capacity among key stakeholders to sustainably manage hazardous chemicals and waste. 3) Manage products entering SIDS throughout their lifecycle – from import oversight to final safe disposal, and build local, national, and international public-private partnerships to facilitate this lifecycle approach. 4) Facilitate SIDS-SIDS learning and sharing of knowledge – by ensuring innovations and successes (or setbacks) in one SIDS can be picked up and inform activities in another. ISLANDS is supporting the Green Forum and six Communities of Practice to achieve this.
- **[GEF Blue Forest Project](#)**: UNEP is also providing support to SIDS by way of the [GEF Blue Forest Project](#)-- an initiative of the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#), funded by the [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#) and co-financed by project partners, and managed by [GRID-Arendal](#). The project aims to address the challenge of carbon accounting for coastal ecosystems by quantifying and translating those ecosystem services into transferable revenue streams, addressing key knowledge gaps, and providing experience and tools for greater, replicable global application.
- **[Global Fund for Coral Reefs \(GFCR\)](#)**: The GFCR supports efforts to incubate and accelerate revenue-generating interventions that can sustainably finance the mitigation and elimination of unsustainable direct and indirect local drivers of coral reef degradation. It delivers blended public and private finance to scale solutions designed to increase the protection of Earth’s most climate resilient coral reefs and deliver on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework ambitions. Four major outcomes envisioned: 1) Protection of priority coral reef sites and climate change-affected ‘refugia’, 2) Transformation of the livelihoods of coral reef-dependent communities, 3) Restoration of coral reefs through new technologies and adaptive approaches, and 4) Recovery and resilience of coral reef-dependent communities in the face of major shocks (such as natural disasters, economic downturn and health crises). With SIDS and LDCs on the front line of climate change impacts, GFCR emphasizes investments in 23 SIDS including supporting sustainable fisheries and mariculture, Marine Protected Areas, blue carbon

credits, sewage and wastewater treatment, waste and plastic collection and recycling facilities, sustainable agriculture, coastal ecotourism enterprises, and reef restoration. As co-chair to the GFCR Executive Board UNEP is bringing its technical expertise to design and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework that strengthens accountability and measures results of GFCR projects.

PART B

IDENTIFYING POLICY PRIORITIES IN SIDS FOR THE NEW AGENDA

The SAMOA Pathway contains a number of action areas which require policy formulation, programmes or projects to implemented at national, sub regional and/or regional levels. While SIDS have made a fair amount of progress with actioning these over the last decade, a number of gaps remain. As the international community prepares for the 4th International Conference on SIDS, what are the key priority policies, programmes and projects that are needed to further advance the SIDS development agenda and why? (750 words).

Some priority topics for consideration in the SIDS Development agenda include the following:

- **Sustainable Blue Economy Transition & Blue Financing:** As referred above, UNEP is developing a novel approach and capacity building tool to support Member States in transitioning to environmentally sustainable, resilient, and equitable blue economies. The ‘Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework’ outlines core elements and enabling conditions to design and initiate steps toward sustainable, resilient and equitable blue economy tailored to countries’ unique settings and needs. Coupled with the ‘Rapid Readiness Assessment’ tool being co-developed with the Commonwealth Secretariat SIDS program piloted in several SIDS, this transition framework could help address key challenges faced by SIDS. Considering that SIDS are also Large Ocean States (that is, with vast ocean jurisdictions) that are heavily dependent on their marine resources, it is critical to enhance financing for SDG 14 –currently one of the least funded of all the UN SDGs.
- **Deep Sea Mining/Green Energy Transition:** Addressing ways to support SIDS capacity in evaluating options around permitting of seabed mining is an important priority need for the next SIDS Conference. The deep seabed mining sector is at various stages of development in some small island developing States and least developed countries. Notable examples in this regard include the Cook Islands, Jamaica, Kiribati, Nauru, Singapore and Tonga which have sponsored exploration activities (by private sector entities) in the international seabed area. UNEP is currently undertaking an internal review of its position on Deep Sea Mining taking into consideration benefits to society for the green energy transition and risks to marine ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **Marine pollution:** Work with SIDS to identify innovative, scalable and possibly transformational financing mechanisms to address key sources of marine pollution.

Engaging a blended (blue) finance framework may be relevant to catalyse action and innovation. Enhance pollution surveillance practices, including for wastewater, to improve public health and secure sound environmental management. Establish early warning tools to identify land-based sources of pollution affecting the marine environment. Continue to raise the profile of plastic pollution and circular economy approach to management, supporting the development of national marine litter strategies, and mobilizing resources for supporting SIDS to tackle the pervasive marine litter problem.

- **Sustainable Nutrient and Wastewater Management:** Work with SIDS to identify methods for wastewater reuse, nutrient recovery from wastewater, nature-based solutions for wastewater treatment, and alternative and low-cost technologies (e.g. decentralized wastewater treatment systems such as DEWATS).
- **Ocean governance:** Work with SIDS to formulate and implement more robust ocean governance frameworks, including implementation of BBNJ Agreement under UNCLOS, that underpin sustainable ocean-based economies including building scientific, regulatory and institutional capacity.
- **Green Maritime Technology/Green Shipping:** Another urgent issue facing SIDS is the impact of shipping industry on waterways, ports and maritime infrastructure, not to mention climate change. Working under UNCLOS, UNEP, IMO and other agencies could work more closely with SIDS to facilitate the transition toward more “green maritime technology” practices including reducing port and shipping emissions (aiming for zero-emission), using cleaner fuels, green technology onboard, shifting to low-carbon economy and enhancing net-positive solutions for the environment. One example of a new country-driven initiative is the [Green Shipping Challenge](#) (announced by the USA and Norway at UNFCCC CoP27.)
- **SIDS Flagship Ecosystem Restoration Projects:** The SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship is designed to ensure strategic use of investments from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MDPF) to support restoration efforts in an integrated way, addressing the need for fundamental change in governance approaches to decouple economic growth from ecosystem degradation. Project components include integration of marine and coastal ecosystem restoration, conservation and sustainable blue finance into economic development and COVID-19 economic recovery through a connected ‘ridge to reef’ and seascape management approach to build back better and bluer. This project directly responds to the Samoa Pathway and contributes to the environment dimension of the 2030 Agenda. It will be implemented in 3 SIDS: Saint Lucia, Comoros, and Vanuatu. [Project components include: a: GBF Accelerator Partnership (CBD-UNEP-UNDP), b: SIDS Coalition for Nature (26 countries, Flagship partner), c: Restoration - Ocean Science Decade nexus, and d: Commonwealth Blue Charter program.]
- **SIDS Coalition for Nature:** Co-lead by the Governments of Cabo Verde, Samoa and Seychelles, the SIDS Coalition for Nature is a platform created for SIDS members to advocate as ONE for agreed common SIDS priorities and needs, including the needs for greater means to implement biodiversity objectives in SIDS. Supported by UNEP-

UNESCO-UNDESA-UNFCCC, the coalition was [launched](#) in the margins of the CBD CoP15 in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada. Its membership is currently at 14 and growing. The Coalition is an important organizing mechanism to unite SIDS members around critical biodiversity issues and implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets. An integral component of the SIDS Restoration Flagship, this coalition is already a partner to the SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship, and a modest budget has been allocated to support SIDS-SIDS peer learning by UNEP and DESA. More discussions on activating this coalition during SIDS Conference would be useful, in consideration of other critical issues highlighted above.