

**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

Partnership for Action on SIDS

The Partnership for Action outlined in this document was launched at the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in Antigua and Barbuda on 27 May 2024.

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JT03545242

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1. Following technical and political dialogues held in 2022,¹ members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members formed a pioneering joint task force to explore areas for collaboration in support of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Throughout 2023 and early 2024, the task force of six AOSIS member countries and six DAC members – recognising that it could not cover all issues of relevance to SIDS – focused on identifying opportunities within the mandates of both AOSIS and the DAC and for which there are no other avenues/pathways better suited to address them.
2. The task force identified the five priority action areas outlined in the Partnership for Action (hereafter “the Partnership”) set out in the Annex. The full membership of both constituencies – AOSIS and DAC – were consulted throughout the development of these proposals and look forward to collaborating to deliver this Partnership, which was launched at the Fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4)², in May 2024. The Partnership for Action will work to support delivery of the UN’s next 10-year programme of action for SIDS, agreed at SIDS4³.
3. The aim of the present document is to share the ambitions, modalities, and actions of the Partnership, as developed by the Task Force, in consultation with AOSIS members and DAC members. The actions contained herein are not binding and only implicate those countries who choose to engage in the Partnership.
4. The Annex below represents the full text of the Partnership document.
5. In collaboration with other OECD directorates, the Secretariat has produced a concise, non-exhaustive mapping of SIDS-related work currently being conducted across the OECD [DCD/DAC/RD(2024)6]. That mapping is intended to serve as a guide for other potential future collaboration between the OECD and SIDS.

¹ See DCD/DAC(2022)44 and paragraph 3 of DCD/DAC/M(2022)12/FINAL

² See <https://sids4.gov.ag/>

³ See <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/n2409990.pdf>

Annex: Partnership for Action – between AOSIS Member countries and DAC members

May 2024, St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda

1. We, ministers and representatives from AOSIS Member States and OECD Development Assistance Committee members, meeting at the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), in May 2024, have launched the Partnership for Action (hereafter, the “Partnership”) presented herein, to support the delivery of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

Ambition of the Partnership

2. SIDS are recognised as a ‘special case for sustainable development’ and are global leaders in action to tackle climate change and support the delivery of their sustainable development agenda together with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the frontline of climate change, SIDS represent around one-quarter of developing states, steward one-third of the global ocean, and protect unique but fragile biodiversity. SIDS face extreme vulnerabilities to social, economic, geological, environmental, and climate shocks, which undermine their resilience and their delivery of the SDGs. Their compelling characteristics, including their small size, geographic remoteness, highly dispersed populations, the limited scale and undiversified, concentrated nature of their economies, high trade dependence, food and water insecurity, and exposure to disasters and the long-term effects of climate change, merit tailored solutions to deliver effective development.

3. Through this Partnership, we intend to deepen collaborative partnerships between development partners and developing countries, working together to deliver solutions to SIDS’ challenges. We support SIDS’ meaningful engagement in international processes, including OECD processes, that have an impact on their future, in the spirit of genuine partnership for sustainable development.

Partnership Modalities

4. In line with the present Partnership, we intend to synchronise our efforts with the lifespan of the new 10-year framework developed in the context of the United Nations (UN). A mid-term review is scheduled to take place concurrently for both the Partnership and the UN’s new 10-year SIDS framework at the end of the 2020s, which coincides with the development of a successor to the 2030 Agenda. We may therefore consider, at the mid-term review, to reflect on any adjustments necessary to align with the new UN global framework.

5. It is understood that we conceptually support all actions of this Partnership, but the extent of engagement in our individual implementation of this Partnership and its actions will vary in line with the specific situation of each partner. With a view to maximise the impact of the Partnership and reduce the fragmentation of interventions in support of SIDS, providers of development co-operation will adhere to effectiveness tenets to harmonise any country or regional programme in SIDS, under country ownership and leadership, and taking full account of the relevant actions in the priority areas in this document.

6. We recognise that the support of the OECD and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in implementing this Partnership is subject to the inclusion and prioritisation of its actions in the OECD’s Programme of Work and Budget.

7. We invite the OECD to seek collaborations across all of its policy communities to capitalise on the OECD’s multi-disciplinary expertise and develop synergies for greater impact, in particular linked to the work of the sustainable ocean economies (e.g., on environmental issues, jobs and skills in the blue economy, sustainable fisheries, tourism).

8. We recognise that effective implementation of the Partnership entails regular follow-up and monitoring. To maximise impact, such monitoring should seek to ensure linkages and information sharing, as appropriate, with the United Nations Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships⁴. Bearing this in mind, following the SIDS4 Conference, we invite AOSIS and the OECD to collaborate in determining how best to monitor progress.

Priority Areas for Joint Action

9. We define the five interconnected action areas below as the priorities for this Partnership, while recognising that our collaboration need not be limited to these current priorities, as bilateral development co-operation programmes in SIDS go beyond these areas.

10. We encourage future collaboration between the DAC and AOSIS to consider new areas for collaboration, taking into consideration existing work within the OECD to enhance synergies and avoid duplication. In this regard, we call on the DAC to facilitate, where appropriate, the participation of SIDS in DAC discussions.

Priority 1. Support SIDS to strengthen data and statistics capacity

11. Effective availability and use of fit-for-purpose data are crucial for sustainable development, evidence-based policy formulation, and building resilience in SIDS. SIDS lag behind other country groupings in the development of statistical capacities and in the design and implementation of strategic plans that would help build that capacity. Statistical capacity development – a virtuous circle that enables better programming, effectiveness, and outcomes across all other thematic areas – will require the mobilisation of more resources for statistics; the leveraging of digital technologies; engaging a broad range of actors (civil society organisations, academia, private, sector, etc.) in a whole-of-system approach (including regional solutions); and improvements in data governance, access to data, and analysis capacity. To this end:

- 1.1. *Together, we intend to collaborate to improve national and regional statistical systems, including Ocean Satellite Accounts, through the design, update, and financing of national and regional strategies for the development of statistics (NSDSs and RSDSs).*
- 1.2. *We intend to explore support, for example through the provision of technical advice and data, for the development of the SIDS Global Data Hub within the SIDS Centre for Excellence to be launched at SIDS4 and to partner with PARIS21, the UN Statistical Commission, and Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP), as appropriate, in the strengthening of data and statistics capacity in SIDS.*
- 1.3. *Providers of development co-operation intend to support access to data about SIDS and SIDS' efforts to produce, analyse, and govern data for national planning and policy making, tailored to the specific context in SIDS' national statistical systems, as well as progress measurement towards national (e.g., climate and biodiversity goals) and international (e.g., SDGs) objectives.*

⁴ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/partnershipframework#:~:text=The%20Steering%20Committee%20is%20open,the%20sustainable%20development%20in%20SIDS>

Priority 2. Explore ways to catalyse technical assistance

12. The long-term sound and sustainable management of development outcomes in SIDS is often hindered by their limited human and institutional capacity to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate development initiatives. We recognise that context-specific capacity support – technical assistance, training programmes, technology transfer (e.g., of innovative equipment and software/tools for analysis and modelling) on voluntary and mutually agreed terms – is essential to empower SIDS in their efforts to mobilise/absorb finance, meaningfully engage communities in decision-making, and build systems to ensure the sound management of resources. Co-ordination between co-operation providers and governments in their partner countries also warrants improvement to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of technical assistance initiatives in SIDS. To this end:

- 2.1. *Individual AOSIS Members, supported by development co-operation providers, intend to develop a holistic and clear inventory of capacity gaps focused on the priorities of participating SIDS. The process will be guided by clear co-ordination from the national government to capture the most pressing needs among various sectors of government, and will take into consideration relevant insights and actions resulting from the OECD Secretariat study on improving the quality of capacity strengthening support to SIDS⁵, including:*
 - *any specific parameters on the approach or context that need to be incorporated*
 - *where appropriate how to engage appropriate actors (CSOs, private sector, etc.)*
 - *taking a more adaptive and whole-of-system approach*
 - *how to establish genuine partnerships with SIDS*
- 2.2. *We seek to implement the exchange of technical assistance experience and knowledge that informs better practices and decision-making at regional levels, through for example:*
 - *encouraging existing multilateral and regional organisations to make greater use of peer learning approaches*
 - *facilitating triangular co-operation programmes, including establishment of enabling conditions and governing models and further analysis and dissemination of good practices*
 - *training programmes, and follow-on advisory services of shared experiences, embedded within SIDS regions*
 - *establishment and leveraging of digital technologies to connect specialists across SIDS*
- 2.3. *We intend to collaborate to implement improved development effectiveness including consideration of the Principles for Improved Development Impact in SIDS (hereafter “SIDS Principles”), and to this end invite the OECD to support this work through:*
 - *the development of practical guidance on how to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate the results of sustainable capacity strengthening support tailored to SIDS’ needs and contexts, (including a focus on Phase 0 and exiting sustainably in programme design), informed by the OECD study on improving the quality of capacity strengthening support*
 - *a toolkit on how to practically implement the SIDS Principles, including real-life case examples*
 - *implementation of the practical guidance*

⁵ Kaur, M. and T. Tennant (2024), “Improving public sector capacity-strengthening support for small island developing states”, *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 69, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/aec0effa-en>.

Priority 3. Support SIDS' capacity to access and absorb official finance

13. We recognise that many SIDS face relatively higher barriers in accessing and absorbing official finance, including low capacity, onerous requirements, and eligibility constraints. Additionally, narrow economies, low capacity, high disaster risk, and poor or insufficient credit ratings limit SIDS' access to commercial finance. While approximately two-thirds of SIDS are currently classified as lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries, many remain highly vulnerable to external shocks exacerbated by climate change and struggle to mobilise official finance to manage compounding crises. At the point of transition to the high-income category, Official Development Assistance (ODA) represents more than one-third on average of external finance for SIDS versus 2% for their income-level peers⁶. Furthermore, with considerable debt loads, SIDS may struggle to invest in the capacity and infrastructure needed for long-term, resilient, and sustainable development. In our efforts to address SIDS' capacity to access and absorb official finance:

- 3.1. *Those engaged in relevant global funds plan to promote solutions to improve access to funds, which take SIDS' uniquely small scale and capacity constraints into account, and take steps to minimise transaction costs, including through programmatic approaches and scaling up existing programmes instead of creating new ones, where appropriate.*
- 3.2. *We invite the OECD, under the guidance of the DAC in consultation with ODA-recipient SIDS, to develop country-specific guidance on transition finance, including feasible and reasonable ways to improve domestic revenue collection, such as broadening the tax system through National Blue Funds, and share information on external financing availabilities.*
- 3.3. *We invite the DAC to continue to look at flexibility within existing ODA eligibility and graduation rules, bearing in mind the challenges SIDS face in coping with sustainable development and multidimensional vulnerabilities; and call on the OECD to support these discussions by conducting research on how best to accompany and prepare SIDS for graduation from ODA and conducting country-specific studies.*

Priority 4. Consider how the UN MVI could be used in new programming

14. In recognition of the serious obstacle to sustainable development that structural vulnerability and lack of resilience represent, we welcome the UN-led process to develop a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) which “has the potential to better guide country development and donor assistance policies, aid in the diagnosis of development challenges and in the identification of nations in need of heightened international assistance before a crisis hits.”⁷ The MVI can also serve as a practical tool for public policy planning and accountability. We recognise that a holistic assessment of SIDS vulnerability and resilience is important to enable development effectiveness. To this end:

- 4.1. *We intend to continue to engage with the further development of the UN MVI, including by commissioning further research and considering its potential applications, incorporating findings from research on development effectiveness efforts, leveraging OECD data to fill in potential gaps in MVI measurement, and engaging with pilots (e.g., by the Caribbean Development Bank).*

⁶ OECD (2024) “External financing to Small Island Developing States (SIDS): where we stand”: [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD\(2024\)5/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2024)5/en/pdf)

⁷ MVI final report (February 2024): https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/Final_MVI_report.pdf

- 4.2. *We intend to engage, as appropriate, in ongoing discussions on vulnerability that are occurring in the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and promote further consideration of vulnerability during these discussions.*
- 4.3. *Providers of development co-operation will work to support SIDS to conduct self-assessments through the Vulnerability-Resilience Country Profiles (VRCP) process, when requested and where feasible.*
- 4.4. *We call on the OECD to conduct research and analyses on how SIDS' ODA eligibility would be affected by the findings of the UN MVI final report and first prototype; possible lessons for how consideration of vulnerability could be integrated into ODA eligibility and graduation within the existing rules and without prejudice to decisions regarding the ODA directive.*

Priority 5. Increase support for the development and implementation of sustainable ocean economies

15. For SIDS, who possess vast ocean resources, a sustainable ocean economy presents concrete opportunities for combatting climate change and its impacts (e.g., through blue carbon), diversifying the economy and generating employment opportunities, reducing dependency on energy imports, and supporting livelihoods and food security. This underscores the vital importance of a healthy ocean for sustainable and resilient development in SIDS. Tapping into this potential of the ocean requires enhancing the sustainability as well as the value-add of traditional ocean economy sectors that are the backbone of many SIDS' economies (e.g., marine tourism, fishing, shipping), while exploring new and sustainable economic opportunities from emerging ocean economy sectors (e.g., clean off-shore energy, marine biotechnologies, a new range of 'blue foods'). In this context, we recognise that development co-operation and partnerships have a key role to play to help SIDS access and generate the data, evidence, policy advice, and funding necessary to localise opportunities from the ocean economy and implement integrated ocean management strategies and plans. To this end:

- 5.1. *We intend to scale up, as appropriate, the Blue Recovery Hubs⁸, to foster recovery and resilience in SIDS, through a holistic appraisal of the country's ocean economy, the development of a roadmap for the mobilisation of finance, and the organisation of a roundtable to support implementation of consensus solutions.*
- 5.2. *We encourage the DAC to engage and actively consult with SIDS in the development of the OECD Guidance for Development Co-operation in Support of a Sustainable Ocean Economy.*
- 5.3. *Providers of development co-operation / DAC members will, as appropriate and upon request, support dedicated country-level evidence and work, such as through the OECD Sustainable Ocean Economy Country Diagnostics⁹, to guide SIDS in the development and implementation of their ocean strategies and plans.*

⁸ More details on the Blue Recovery Hubs initiative, including on the pilots in Fiji and Samoa, available here: <https://www.bluehubs.org/>

⁹ See for example: Sustainable Ocean Economy Country Diagnostics of Cabo Verde | <https://www.oecd.org/countries/caboverde/sustainable-ocean-country-diagnostics-cabo-verde.pdf>