

Non-paper

Enhancing coherence at the national, regional and global levels to support the effective implementation of SIDS sustainable development objectives

Introduction

This paper seeks to briefly touch on three key areas by providing snap shots of: (i) the situation with regard to existing national sustainable development institutions and strategies in SIDS, given the vital role that such mechanisms play in ensuring the effective implementation of sustainable development policies and objectives at the national level; (ii) the situation regarding regional and global mechanisms to support SIDS in their implementation of sustainable development objectives; and (iii) some suggestions on the way forward, that may enhance coherence in support of SIDS and the follow-up of the BPOA, the MSI and the future Samoa outcome.

Background

The Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI) both contained provisions that highlighted the importance of national institutions to ensure an integrated approach in pursuing sustainable development at the national level¹. The BPOA acknowledged that many SIDS had prepared environmental strategies and plans that integrate environment and development; they are seen as the first step in a process leading to the wide application of sustainable development principles². The BPOA noted, however, that for those plans to promote sustainable development, however, they must be utilized for national decision-making, including at all appropriate levels of government, in order that environment and development policy can be carefully integrated³.

The BPOA also acknowledged that the formal integration of economic and environmental considerations will necessitate a series of institutional adjustments within government administrations, accompanied by across-the-board strengthening of environmental administrative capacity. It stressed that this must happen at all levels of government, including at the local level. At the same time the BPOA also recognized that there are many forms of institutional adjustment highlighting that such activities be tailored to specific country needs⁴. The MSI saw SIDS, commit themselves, with the necessary support of the international community, to , inter alia, developing national sustainable development strategies, including nationally owned poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies and strategies; and developing and strengthening their legislative, administrative and institutional structures⁵.

The MSI+5 review process and outcome highlighted some shortcomings in the institutional support for small island developing States as well as other constraints to the full and effective

¹ Part X of the BPOA and Part XX of MSI

² BPOA, paragraph 49

³ Ibid

⁴ BPOA, paragraph 48

⁵ MSI, paragraph 92 (b),(c)

implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and the Barbados Programme of Action, and requested a report from the Secretary-General that puts forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy⁶. The requested Secretary-General's report has been published⁷. This report referred to submissions calling to establish and strengthen the coordinating mechanisms for small island developing States and a recommendation for enhanced national sustainable development strategies or their equivalents⁸.

SIDS National Institutions: A brief overview of the Current Situation⁹

Since the adoption of the Mauritius Strategy For the Further Implementation of the Sustainable Development of SIDS (MSI) SIDS have taken commendable measures at the national level to strengthen their national capacities and institutions that are tasked with coordinating and implementing sustainable development objectives.

It is clear from the individual country profiles that all SIDS incorporate the principles of sustainable development into their national development strategies with the vast majority having established National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) to guide their development objectives. Many of the strategies have long term visions and include goals, guiding principles or strategic areas. The long term elements, for the most part, focus on improving livelihoods through economic development while in some cases; strategies stipulate the preservation of culture and traditions. A broad overview of NSDS in SIDS sees a focus on common issues including: health, education, trade, economic growth, climate change, environmental management, human resources, civil society, energy, food security, disaster risk reduction and so forth.

While many SIDS face similar issues, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to formulating and implementing NSDS in SIDS. Given the uniqueness of national priorities and indeed capacity constraints, implementation of NSDS reflect the individual economic, social and environmental situations in each country. The differences are also reflected in some strategies being based on long-term goals while others focusing on short-term objectives.

Approaches on implementation of NSDS also see different strategies being pursued. For instance, the most common approach amongst SIDS is to require that all Ministries take heed of and act upon NSDS objectives as pertaining to there specific sectors. The more rare approach is to create a Ministry of Sustainable Development such as the case of St. Kitts and Nevis or in the case of Mauritius; a Ministry for Environment and Sustainable Development. For the most part, SIDS NSDS focus on

⁶ A/RES/65/2, Outcome document of the High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, paragraph 33

⁷ A/66/278

⁸ Ibid, paragraph 78

⁹ The information on the portion of the paper on the situation of SIDS national sustainable development institutions and strategies is gleaned, where available, from the SIDS submissions of their national assessments in preparation for Rio+20 and as such may not be up to date.

broad objectives, however a rare approach is the inclusion of time bound and highly specific targets to be achieved; such as the case of Maldives and Singapore.

Over time, there has been a shift towards more inclusive strategies which do not only focus on the environment – as has mostly been the case in the past - but also economic and social aspects of sustainable development. Nonetheless, there remains a considerable focus by SIDS on environmental management as the primary avenue through which to address sustainable development with the common approach addressing sustainable development under the mandates of ministries of environment.

Regional and Global SIDS support structures

Following the Mauritius International Meeting (MIM) in 2005 and the adoption of the MSI the UN General Assembly through resolution 59/311 mandated a follow-up of the MIM which involved regional follow-up meetings in the three SIDS regions¹⁰. The UN Secretary General's report A/61/277, which was issued following these regional follow-up meetings focused on the establishment of regional frameworks to support the implementation of the MSI at national and regional levels. It was reported that various SIDS regions have adopted follow-up frameworks that were very different from region to region.

It was clear that these regional frameworks were not uniform. They followed different modalities. The Caribbean region established, at the twenty-first session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC held in Port of Spain on 16 and 17 January 2006, a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean¹¹.

In the AIMS region, as reported in A/61/277 member States were still deliberating over options on how best to have the Indian Ocean Commission serve as the principal institution to support implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The principal challenge faced then was the difference in the composition of the Commission and the AIMS group. It has been agreed, however, that the Commission would provide technical services in support of AIMS implementation of the Mauritius Strategy on an interim basis, while consultation at the political level continues on the nature and scope of a more formal management agreement between the Commission and the AIMS group.¹²

In the Pacific region, A/61/277 reported that the sustainable development working group of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) had assumed overall responsibility for implementing the Mauritius Strategy in the Pacific region, working in close consultation with the permanent missions in New York of the Pacific Island Forum countries. In September 2005, the Pacific Island Forum summit meeting also adopted the Pacific Plan to give effect to the promotion of, inter alia, economic growth, sustainable development, strengthened regional cooperation and integration, good governance and security.

¹⁰ (a) Caribbean Regional Meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis, 5 to 7 October 2005; (b) Pacific Regional Meeting in Samoa, 17 to 19 October 2005; (c) Regional Meeting of the Small Island Developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS), held in Seychelles, from 26 to 28 October 2005.

¹¹ Paragraph 10 of A/61/277

¹² Ibid paragraph 11

At the global level UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' (UN-DESA) and the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) play the support roles for SIDS under separate mandates. Paragraph 102 of the MSI reaffirmed these mandates in stating that the United Nations Secretary-General is also requested to ensure that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, continues to provide substantive support and advisory services to small island developing States for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations Secretariat continues to mobilize international support and resources for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, in accordance with its mandate.

Paragraph 101 in the MSI requested the UN Secretary-General to (i) mobilize and coordinate the entities of the UN system to further mainstream SIDS and (ii) facilitate coordinated implementation of the follow-up of the BPoA at the regional, subregional and global levels¹³. The UN Secretary-General was also requested to report on the progress of the implementation of this mandate¹⁴. In response the Secretary-General published report A/60/401, his first post MSI report. This report informed that UNDESA inaugurated an inter-agency consultative group (IACG) following the adoption of resolution 59/311. And through ongoing consultation within the IACG and through rationalization of the operationalization programme DESA sought to ensure a more coordinated approach to the implementation of SIDS sustainable development issues within the UN system¹⁵.

Paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report A/56/645 serves as the mandate for OHRLLS. The report lists the key functions of OHRLLS as including, supporting, as appropriate, the coordinated follow-up of the implementation of the BPoA. OHRLLS therefore plays a key role in supporting the coordinated follow-up of the BPoA and MSI and has been a key member of the DESA Chaired IACG.

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be replacing the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) which served as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments related to small island developing States¹⁶. It is envisaged that the HLPF will continue as the primary intergovernmental body to follow-up and review progress in the implementation of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, including the BPoA, the MSI and the future outcome of SIDS 2014 Samoa. DESA will continue to provide Secretariat

¹³ Paragraph 101 of the MSI: The Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to fully mobilize and coordinate the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including at the level of the regional commissions, within their respective mandates, and to further mainstream small island developing States issues to facilitate coordinated implementation of the follow-up to the Programme of Action at the national, regional, subregional and global levels. The Secretary-General is requested to include information on progress in this regard in his annual report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Paragraph 14 A/60/401

¹⁶ Paragraph 100 of MSI

support for the HLPF in close cooperation with all relevant entities of the United Nations system, including OHRLLS. The UN Regional Commissions will also have a role in supporting the HLPF and preparations at the regional level.

Suggestions on Way Forward

There is a need for enhanced coherence at all levels to ensure smooth follow-up, and that appropriate support to SIDS in implementing the BPoA, the MSI and the future outcome of SIDS 2014, including by the UN system are better delivered.

At national level, while individual country specific situations should dictate the make-up of SIDS national sustainable development capacities and institutions, there should be space for SIDS to share best practices on national sustainable capacities and institutions that could be tailored to fit interested SIDS situations, as appropriate. In this context the development of modalities that may strengthen and support national implementation may be explored.

At the regional level, while regional frameworks, particularly those in the Caribbean and Pacific, took advantage of the regional institutional strengths that existed and still exist in these SIDS regions, there are certain disadvantages in having such varying sets of frameworks, particularly in the context of dedicated UN system follow-up. With the advent of the HLPF and the role of UN regional commissions in supporting regional preparations, any regional follow-up mechanisms post SIDS 2014 will need to see a prominent role being played by the regional commissions, in close cooperation with SIDS own existing regional institutions.

At the global level, particularly in the context of the UN system, while a host of UN entities have SIDS related/specific programmes, OHRLLS will look to strengthen its collaboration with DESA, including in improving coordination of the UN system entities on SIDS issues at the global level. OHRLLS acknowledges the need to ensure coherence between the national, regional and global processes and would welcome a role in better linking these processes and ensuring that SIDS national capacities and institutions are connected with ongoing global processes to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the BPoA, the MSI and the future SIDS 2014 Samoa outcome