



UN-OHRLS

Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS - Challenges and Opportunities

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I Introduction

1. The United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), through its advocacy mandate and through its efforts to enhance the coherence of SIDS issues in UN processes, convened a two day Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in New York on the ‘Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS - Challenges and Opportunities’. Experts in the field of urban development, including practitioners and academics, representing all three SIDS regions of the Atlantic-Indian Ocean-South China Seas (AIMS), the Caribbean, and the Pacific, attended the EGM. The EGM produced a number of specific recommendations aimed at various stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels.

2. In Resolution 66/207 and in line with the bi-decennial cycle (1976, 1996 and 2016), the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, or the Habitat III conference, to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanisation, to focus on the implementation of a New Urban Agenda, building on the Habitat Agenda of Istanbul in 1996. Habitat III will be convened in Quito, Ecuador, on 17-20 October 2016. The UN General Assembly decided that the objectives of the Conference are to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assess accomplishments to date, address poverty and identify and address new and emerging challenges.

II Background

3. The challenges regarding urbanisation faced by SIDS are particular and unique and for many are rooted in their geographic make-up and smallness, where land space is put at a premium. The “special case” for sustainable development in SIDS was recognised in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, and reaffirmed in Barbados in 1994 at the first UN Global Conference on SIDS and again in Mauritius in 2005 at the second SIDS Conference. During the Rio + 20 Conference in 2012, the “special case” was re-emphasized, and this formed the basis of the call for a Third International Conference on SIDS, to be held in Samoa in 2014. While SIDS development, economic growth, physical traits and opportunities vary across the group, in many instances, the definition of ‘urban’ itself, for many SIDS, needs to be viewed through a SIDS lens. This would allow both SIDS and their partners to begin to understand these unique challenges that SIDS face on urbanisation.

4. There is no doubt that urbanisation has contributed to economic growth in many countries worldwide, including SIDS. Through the growth of urban centres, urbanisation supports employment and organised economic activities in the trade and services sectors. Although for many SIDS, this may not be reflected in their GDP, as many of the economic activities in many SIDS are undertaken in the informal sector.

5. At the same time, for SIDS, the lack of opportunities for gainful employment needs to be acknowledged as it is often linked to broader inherent SIDS issues, including their dependency on a narrow resource base. SIDS specific responses, appropriate support and mechanisms should be considered while taking the issue of

urbanisation together with ensuring better opportunities for decent jobs to the youth, women and marginalized.

6. It has been reported that some 59% of the total population of SIDS already live in urban settlements. Due to their geographic size, the smallest among the SIDS are also the most urbanized. Other SIDS, including those whose make-ups are geographically archipelagic, tend to have lower populations in urban areas. Though the urbanisation rate in SIDS is about 1.4% compared to the global rate of 1.7%, the fastest urbanisation is taking place in the Pacific where it is at 4.3%, increasing to 16% if peri-urban areas are included.

7. For many SIDS where available land is already limited, the competing demands on land use is a challenge that can be exacerbated by urbanisation. Urban settlements in such context can hamper growth or the implementation of specific projects, including those concerning infrastructure that would in turn promote development. Therefore, innovative and targeted solutions should be sought in order to cater to their interests. For many SIDS where cultural and traditional norms are still practiced, including those that are linked to land use, unplanned urbanisation can also lead to social instability within society and between communities in urban settlements.

8. The onset of climate change impacts will further exacerbate these challenges. Many SIDS populations live within 1.5kms from the coast with a number of them having 100% of their population living no higher than 5 meters above the sea level in countries like, Maldives, Kiribati, and Tuvalu. Critical infrastructure in many SIDS are also oriented along coasts. The challenges posed by climate change, urbanisation, and others related to sustainable development of SIDS are interconnected.

9. These challenges call for a holistic approach to overcome them, given their interlinkages. Policy frameworks at all levels to address urbanisation in SIDS, from the global to the local and community levels, will need to adopt an integrated approach that cuts across sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, Agenda 2030, as well as the climate challenge. Such an approach is imperative for SIDS who often face resource constraints, including human capacity constraints, where holistic approaches not only make good sense but they will also contribute to lessen burdens placed on SIDS capacities, in terms of implementation and follow-up.

10. While recognition of the importance of managing urbanisation for improved development has increased in the last decade for many SIDS it is still flailing to be a significant political commitment for many of them. Understanding urbanisation itself by SIDS policy makers as well as their development partners will need to be further enhanced.

III Summary of Meeting

A Opening

11. In opening the meeting, Mr. Ahmed Sareer, Chair of AOSIS, welcomed all the participants and experts. He also welcomed the experts from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), representatives from UN Habitat, partners and invited guests of the EGM and thanked them for their cooperation. He also thanked the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) for convening the EGM and collaboration in convening the EGM.

12. He stated that urbanisation challenges faced within the SIDS were unique and needed to be addressed as such. He also recalled that shared goals internationally within the SIDS needed to be sustainable in order to achieve long term success.

13. This, he stated, underscored the significance of climate change goals as marked in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) pathway and it was against this backdrop that OHRLLS decided to organize this EGM. Noting the upcoming Habitat III conference and acknowledging the necessity of new national and international resources in order to accomplish the goal of sustainable island urbanisation, he stated that the report of this EGM will contribute to the preparatory process for Habitat III.

14. In his opening remarks, OHRLLS Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, Mr. Gyan Acharya, remarked that “SIDS face particular and unique urban challenges that for many, they are rooted in their geographic make-up and smallness, where land space is put at a premium. In many instances, the definition of ‘urban’ itself, for many SIDS, may need to be viewed through a SIDS lens. This will allow both SIDS and their partners to begin to understand these unique challenges that SIDS face on urbanisation”.

15. He underscored that SIDS have a leading case for sustainable urban development, due to their high rate of urbanisation and underscored the need for constant efforts to continue to be made in order for real change to be accomplished. He expressed the view that the global community must acknowledge SIDS’ particular and unique urbanisation challenges. Noting the Third International United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to be convened in Quito, Ecuador, on 14-17 October 2016, and noting further that urbanisation issues will likely feature at the conference, as it is now a key focus of SIDS, he stated that the report of this EGM will contribute to the preparatory process for SIDS 2016.

16. He stated that sustainable infrastructure is at the very core of the SAMOA Pathway’s mandate and its statutes. He remarked that the majority of the population in SIDS live in urban spaces, most of whom live in settlements along coastlines. Settlements adjacent to large oceanic water bodies would be particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels, he stated. He recalled that women and youth are in places of particular vulnerability. He added that there are additional barriers to growth and employment opportunities for these precarious populations, and that particular provisions should be made for them.

17. In her opening remarks, Ms. Yamina Djacta, Director of UN Habitat, welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with OHRLLS and invited experts in assembling the EGM. She highlighted the importance of the UN Habitat's mandate which sets out the goal to provide adequate and sustainable housing for all. She reaffirmed that their mandate was consistent with the concerns of SIDS concerns, including increasing land scarcity, new urbanisation and the domination of cities.

18. Ms. Djacta noted that the sustainable development of SIDS was not possible without sustainable urban development. She cited the lack of urban planning as a key obstacle to sustainable urbanisation in SIDS. She recommended the promotion of correct urban planning practices, mixed land use and the prioritisation of eradication of slum conditions.

B Panel 1: Overview: Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS:

19. Mr. Peter Kenilorea, Programme Officer of the UN-OHRLLS encouraged the experts to introduce themselves and their work. Presentations were made by Ms. Sarah Mecartney of Vanuatu, former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager; Ms. Aishath Abdulla, representative from the Maldives on behalf of the AIMS region; and Ms. Angelika Namdar, of the University of Suriname, Suriname.

20. Ms. Aishath Abdulla presented an overview of the challenges faced by the Maldives with respect to sustainable urban development. She outlined the challenges into categories: "SIDS in the AIMS Region", "Small Islands, Big Problems", "AIMS in Sustainable Development", "Missing Pieces", and "Opportunities for Sustainable Development". Challenges highlighted were the vulnerability of SIDS to climate change, the insurgence level of financial and technical support, lack of human resources, insufficient institutional capacity and the lack of a governance body for AIMS. Reactions to ameliorate such challenges included national policies and commitments made by some governing bodies, involvement of some AIMS countries in regional and international frameworks for sustainable development including Habitat I and II and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She highlighted the unique case of Singapore, who was the most successful in achieving sustainable urban development as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. She underscored the value of public participation, economy diversification, and advocacy at the international level.

20. The Caribbean representative, Ms. Angelika Namdar, addressing the issue of urbanisation in the Caribbean region, noted that the critical issues are ones of limited space, environmental degradation and pollution, economic fragility, institutional and technological capacity, an outdated and weak legal frame, and social concerns such as high rates of unemployment, urban crime and insecurity and inadequate provision and access to services.

She advocated for the creation of a Caribbean urban agenda. She called for a regional programme which would promote the improvement of urban sustainability, urban liveability and flexibility, urban government standards, public understanding of urban planning while overcoming urban poverty and creating a global network.

21. Ms. Sarah Mecartney, representative from Vanuatu and expert on urban planning, climate change resilience and public policy, called for the recognition of

urbanisation as a productive sector. She mentioned that though Pacific SIDS were becoming increasingly urban, most legislature on urban space is not compatible with urbanisation in SIDS. In SIDS, ‘urban’ takes on a different meaning, she suggested. Urbanisation takes place mainly on the physical peripheries of islands, and accessibility to land and housing remains challenging. The demand and supply for services and infrastructure must be aligned, and environmental sustainability as well as institutional capacity and coordination must be made priorities. Further, she advocated for human resources over financial resources, which could then facilitate strategic planning. She reiterated Namdar’s point regarding the colonial heritage of the legal framework, noting that it was not adapted to the actual circumstances of urbanisation in the Pacific SIDS.

She congratulated SIDS in the Pacific for prioritising affordability and inclusivity of housing, policy and legal frameworks, urban reform, political awareness and commitment.

She also named the Pacific Urban Forum as a strategic tool of upgrading informal settlements and facilitating access to safe and affordable housing for all with the provision of basic infrastructure. She recalled the need for urban resilience to climate change and job creation in SIDS in the Pacific.

22. During the ensuing interactive discussions moderated by the Mr. Peter Kenilorea, Programme Officer of the UN-OHRLLS, experts highlighted the potential value that young people contribute to sustainable urban development. Calls were made to actively educate this segment of the population as well as other members of civil society on civil responsibility regarding urban development. Several experts mentioned that there was no ‘one size fits all’ solution to urbanisation. Though many of the challenges and circumstances of SIDS were similar, building codes, legislation, and land use needed to be customised to each SIDS. Reiterated, too, was the need for SIDS governments to regard urbanisation as a top priority, by dedicating a ministry or section of government to sustainable urbanisation; and to commit to research. Experts agreed that long term integrated planning must also be of special interest.

C Panel II: Towards A More Holistic Approach for Urbanisation in SIDS

23. Presentations were made during the session by Ms. K. Baguant Moonshiram, Expert on Human Geography and Urban/Rural Sociology at the University of Mauritius, Mauritius; Ambassador Dessima Williams, Diplomat and Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations, Grenada; and Ms. Sarah Mecartney of Vanuatu, former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager. The panel was moderated by H.E. Ambassador Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the United Nations.

24. In his opening statement, H.E. Ambassador Odo Tevi reminded that policy makers and on the ground implementers as well as the wider population may need to be in constant consultations to ensure that urbanization is in line with other development, social, environment and economic considerations. He further recalled that at the global level, the recent adoption of the Sendai framework, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, the Paris Agreement all have an impact on SIDS urbanization. As such, he added, the implementation of these global agreements and

frameworks at the regional and national levels will need to take into the wide array of issues that will have implications for the sustainable urban development in SIDS. He posed questions on what kinds of consultation mechanisms are already in place on the ground, how these mechanisms can be adopted to include other process and their respective actors and stakeholders, what capacity needs in SIDS are which will strengthen these mechanisms or develop them where they do not exist. He then opened the floor to presentations by the invited experts.

25. Ms. Baguant-Moonshiram presented on the risks of urbanisation in the context of Mauritius. She informed that modern planning frameworks are still influenced by British and French legislature and expressed the view that the current legal framework needed revision. The current systems of enforcement and monitoring, coordination, fragmentation of legislation, resource allocation as well as its top-down approach should be revised, she advised. The holistic approach suggested by this expert would include capacity building for local authorities, harmonising legislation and the central body for urbanisation, public-awareness raising, collaboration among major stakeholders, public-private partnership and a bottom-up approach in which civil society the community should be consulted.

The topic of land scarcity was highlighted during her presentation and during the discussion which followed. City crowding, she said, cannot be stopped, but urban planning must take a holistic approach in order to be sustainable.

26. Ms. Dessima Williams began by calling for ‘radical thinking’, in which urbanisation is approached from the rural sector as opposed to the urban sector. She gave a profile of the challenges faced by the urbanisation policy makers of Grenada, some of which included the unbalanced approach to development in the spectrum of geography and politics, and stressed the rural sector’s fall in production and reduction of social coherence. She stated that further challenges included sustained structural development, unemployment and particularly the impacts of climate change. The rate of urbanisation in Grenada now includes sea urbanisation, she informed. Due to the country’s rise in overall poverty (despite a reduction in indigent poverty), she said, some citizens have begun to construct settlements on the sea. The new submarine sculpture park and an increase in boat-dwelling tourists have also contributed to the new phenomenon of marine urbanisation in Grenada. She highlighted that there was a push away from the rural and push into the capital due to there the greater availability of tertiary institutions, employment opportunities, physical development and better access to entertainment. As a result, the population density in the capital is much higher than any other area in the country.

She also focused on the need for a definitive management of urbanisation and for a review of policy, as well as practical and political measures. She advocated for a ‘people-centred approach’, in which civil society is consulted in decision-making processes regarding urbanisation.

26. Ms Sarah Mecartney, speaking on the approach to urbanisation in Vanuatu, reiterated that women, youth and marginalised people were typically consulted in decision-making processes concerning urban planning, but such consultations were insufficient. She mentioned that the extent of urbanisation on islands in the Vanuatu archipelago differed greatly. She further expressed that more linkages among rural

and urban islands were necessary to attempt to bridge such developmental gaps. She expressed the view that the push towards urbanisation needs to not only focus on the demands on infrastructure and water resources but disaster and risk management. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that the population in a given area was compatible with the available disaster resources. She remarked that urban development policy and legislation inadequacies were a challenge for Mauritius as well as Vanuatu.

27. During the ensuing interactive discussions, experts highlighted the value that sustainable urbanisation contributes in supporting SIDS' economies and livelihoods and the importance of SIDS-SIDS cooperation on matters on sustainability and urbanisation in particular. Experts agreed that in expressing the best interests of SIDS at Habitat III, the particularities of sustainable islands as opposed to cities or regions should be emphasised. The question of what makes the needs of SIDS distinctive from those of other parts of the world was repeatedly raised. The sentiment was expressed that diversity of opportunity in both rural and urban spaces in SIDS needed to be encouraged as to facilitate dispersion among the population and ease infrastructural pressure from highly dense urban areas.

D Panel III: Urbanisation Challenges and Opportunities in SIDS

28. In this session, presentations were made by Ms. K. Baguant Moonshiram, Expert on Human Geography and Urban/Rural Sociology at the University of Mauritius, Mauritius; Ambassador Dessima Williams, Diplomat and Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations, Grenada; Ms. Sarah Mecartney of Vanuatu, former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager; Ms. Aishath Abdulla, representative from the Maldives on behalf of the AIMS region; and Ms. Angelika Namdar, of the University of Suriname, Suriname. The panel was moderated by H.E Ambassador Courtney Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations.

29. H.E Ambassador Courtney Rattray began by welcoming the experts and thanked the OHRLLS for convening the EGM. He related anecdotes of urbanisation challenges and opportunities in the Caribbean and in SIDS worldwide and expressed appreciation for this outlet in order to prepare for the upcoming Habitat III Conference. He recognised the challenges of urbanisation in SIDS and referred to the SAMOA Pathway's outcome document which contains various references to urbanization in the context of sustainable transport, water and sanitation, energy, livelihoods and human settlements and resilient cities as fundamental to sustainable urban development of SIDS. He encouraged experts to focus their discussion on concrete ideas and recommendations to address challenges and options towards building a holistic and comprehensive framework for sustainable urbanization. He further requested the focus of the intervention be on an objective which contributed towards the final recommendations to be adopted from the EGM which took place the following day (Tuesday, June 14, 2016).

30. Ms. K. Baguant Moonshiram, spoke on the effects of climate change in that country which have recently led to the occurrence of abnormal natural events. She noted that flash floods, drought and rainfall period change were a direct result of

climate change. Urban climate change intervention with international conjuncture would be necessary to ensure sustainability and resistance in SIDS. Ms. Baguant Moonshiram also highlighted the role of urban planning in urbanisation. She suggested that policy and legislature should be redefined to create awareness, sensitisation amongst political figures, as well as civil society. She added that the main opportunities for Mauritius were in the 'Blue Economy', and that SIDS must not abandon the understanding that to achieve sustainable development they would have to pursue development of the sea as well as the land. She raised the concrete example of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Mauritius, which has an area of over two million kilometres squared, while the landmass is only approximately two thousand kilometres squared. She highlighted the benefits that the optimum utilisation of the Mauritian EEZ could bring for the economy of Mauritius if developed correctly.

31. Ms. Sarah Mecartney of Vanuatu, former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager, stressed the importance of looking for opportunities as opposed to challenges, emphasising the accomplishments of SIDS in the realm of sustainable urban development. She recognised the capacity of the private sector to provide resources for sustainability and urbanisation. She promoted the continuation of the current level of advocating and educating the public in SIDS about the importance and necessity of sustainable urban development.

32. Ms. Aishath Abdulla, representative from the Maldives, recalled that urbanisation cannot be forced, but should be guided. She also highlighted the importance of urban planning to produce urban spaces which were simultaneously liveable and sustainable. He highlighted opportunities including the existence of urban infrastructure, but advocated for improvement of transportation in order to facilitate the transport of resources as best as possible. She stated that the organisation of two hundred islands was difficult but would be achievable with a 'macro' view of the country's economic and infrastructural circumstances.

33. Ms. Angelika Namdar, of Suriname, representative of the Caribbean, highlighted challenges such as the lack of awareness regarding urban planning among the public and project developers; the lack of political will to improve urban planning; and the need to facilitate capacity building amongst those responsible for planning urban areas. She called for the broadening of the economic base in SIDS. She gave the concrete example of the reliance on tourism which could be severely affected by worldwide economic downturn which would discourage potential tourists from travelling. She called for the introduction or the enhancement of industries to 'fall back on' as opposed to relying on one or a few sectors.

34. Ms. Dessima Williams of Grenada underscored the need to enhance efforts to develop growth while facilitating the wellbeing of poor people, youth and women. She stated that a major challenge was growth that occurred with exclusion and inequity. The informal sector in Grenada (which consisted in large part of poor and/or uneducated adult women) who were a particularly vulnerable population and who may not be properly aided by the state, coupled with a narrow resource base and increased infrastructural vulnerability were listed as some of the challenges to sustainable urbanisation that Grenada faces. The principal challenge, she said, was the disarticulated nature of urban planning leading to a 'level of chaos which passes for development'. She recognised the potential of a large pool of skilled rural youth who

intend to develop rural areas (via, for example, agriculture industries or blue economies). She also advocated for the strengthening of a mixed economy which could take shape through agricultural production and especially urban investment. An example of such was the establishment of geotourism in rural areas. She further promoted the enhancement of visibility in movements by SIDS towards sustainable urbanisation.

35. In the discussions that ensued which were moderated by Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, the view was expressed that many of the challenged mentioned were not specific to one country, but were universal to SIDS. As such, the necessity of collaboration as a cohesive unit was necessary to be heard by the global community. Common circumstances and concerns included land scarcity; inefficient legislation; a high growth rate in urban spaces; the need for political will to be enhanced and political commitment to be brought to fruition; ensuring that traditions and culture were maintained and respected during the process of urbanisation; promoting the urban planning sector as a priority through legislation and enforcement; and the urgency of reacting to climate change. The meeting discussed the importance of reacting sooner rather than later in order to best react to the rapid rate of urbanisation in SIDS.

E Panel IV: Partnerships for SIDS in Sustainable Urban Development

36. In this session, presentations were made by Ms. Ana Moreno, Chief of Communications and Advocacy for UN-Habitat and Coordinator of the Habitat III Secretariat, SIDS IACG Members, and SIDS Development Partners. The discussion saw responses and questions from all experts and invited guests, including representatives from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), SIDS DOCK, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), the Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on SIDS as well as representatives from the embassies of Kiribati, Sweden and Italy. Mr. Jagdish Koonjuk, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations acted as moderator of the panel.

37. Mr. Koonjuk welcomed the attendees to the EGM and thanked the OHRLLS for convening the meeting. He began by acknowledging the importance of partnership between SIDS and development partners, including in the UN system. He recalled that partnerships with their development partners are one of the keys to taking full advantage of available opportunities and standing up to those challenges, some of which are unique to SIDS or are SIDS specific in nature. He recognised that SIDS' their susceptibility to exogenous shocks, both economic, as well as environmental, including their vulnerability natural hazards, including the negative impacts of climate change, dictates that their path to sustainable development is one which is premised on partnerships. He encouraged a 'free flowing' discussion amongst UN entities who are members of the SIDS interagency consultative groups, representatives from SIDS development partners at bilateral and multilateral levels and internal UN coordination and collaboration mechanisms.

38. Ms. Aishath Abdulla, representative from the Maldives, informed the meeting that that country was less than prepared for disaster management. She remarked that

citizens who lost their homes in the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami had only recently been relocated to permanent homes. She also informed that permanent homes were constructed with the collaboration of international humanitarian bodies. She stated that efforts are being made to write a national framework which would help displaced peoples.

39. Ms Sarah Mecartney, expert from the Republic of Vanuatu, mentioned the potential use of banks as an information reserve. Such information included migration patterns, which proved useful in measuring emigration as a reaction to flash floods in that country a number of years ago. The Grenadian representative agreed that the private sector could be a helpful collaborator in supporting urbanisation in a sustainable fashion. It was further suggested that public-private partnerships could be instrumental in building capacity in sustainable urbanisation.

40. Experts agreed that SIDS' small size, remoteness, and lack of access to other countries posed special challenges to SIDS in comparison with countries on the mainland, especially regarding disaster management, and as such should aim to form close bonds within the SIDS global network. Such coordination would be in conjunction with the Rio +20 Conference on Sustainable Development. The question on how to successfully advocate for external partnership in achieving the SIDS goals of urbanisation was then posed. The representative from Kiribati called for SIDS universities and research centres to collaborate and innovate inter-regionally to reach a shared goal. The experts agreed that SIDS should take advantage of any and all opportunities for inter-regional, intra-regional and international partnership.

41. Experts discussed the topic of waste disposal and management. One expert informed that most islands do not have sustainable ways of disposing electronic waste. A representative of SIDS DOCK-Swedish Energy Agency Cooperation (SEA Pilot Program) raised the possibility of modifying current waste management systems to facilitate the conversion of waste into energy in collaboration with SIDS DOCK. A UNEP representative suggested that the integration of waste management using environmentally sound technologies should be prioritised, especially at the city level. Experts mentioned current efforts by young people from SIDS regions to manage human waste. One concrete example of such was Parley for the Oceans, a group which aims to recycle plastics to create wearable fashion designs. The importance of the creativity of SIDS youth to take an entrepreneurship approach to human waste management was highlighted. It was suggested that the UN-OHRLLS be including in facilitating such efforts.

F Panel V: Way Forward – Outcome and Recommendations

42. The second day of the meeting began with discussions by most of the experts present at the previous day's meeting: Ms. K. Baguant Moonshiram, Expert on Human Geography and Urban/Rural Sociology at the University of Mauritius, Mauritius; Ambassador Dessima Williams, Diplomat and Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations, Grenada; Ms. Sarah Mecartney of Vanuatu, former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager; Ms. Aishath Abdulla, representative from the Maldives on behalf of the AIMS region; and Ms. Angelika Namdar, of the University of Suriname, Suriname. The discussions began by reviewing the previous

day's meeting. It was agreed that both commonalities and divergences existed amongst the SIDS, regardless of region.

43. Ms. Williams reminded experts that though the challenges facing SIDS were many, leaders in SIDS should not be disempowered. She reiterated that the creation of SIDS as a category was strategic and that SIDS remain a 'special case' for development. She urged attendees to continue to work with the designation. The experts presented a number of recommendations which, they hoped, be useful to the SIDS regional preparatory meetings towards a successful Habitat III.

44. Ms. Williams asserted that the question of what makes urbanisation in SIDS special needs to be addressed. She underscored the importance of posing such a question. In the context of climate change, experts agreed that options and resources in SIDS tend to be fewer than those for people living on the mainland. In SIDS, inefficient land arrangements and high rates of urbanisation in concentrated places place pressure on the resources on urban areas in a case where resources are already scarce. According to the ambassador, examples of environmental challenges unique to SIDS include ocean urbanisation, coastal expansion, urban islands and the creation of new islands as urban spaces as well as the reclamation of land in islands. Ambassador Williams stressed that in order to continue the special treatment of SIDS, international political commitments to SIDS must be ensured to facilitate SIDS' resilience to urbanisation and climate change. The view was expressed that the political will among AOSIS members should also be strengthened. The meeting also discussed that sustainable urbanisation should be included in Part One of the SAMOA pathway, in order to concretise the commitment of the international community to support communities on their path to sustainable urbanisation.

45. Ms. Abdulla suggested scaling up interconnectivity intra-regionally with the goal of facilitating inter-island communication and transport, which, in turn, would relieve infrastructural pressure from concentrated urban areas. She underscored the value of sustainable transportation, especially in the case of emergencies and disasters. Ms. Namdar suggested supporting inter-regional academic collaboration among universities which included the sharing of research findings as well as inter-regional exchanges between students or faculty. Such a task, she added, would require intergovernmental implementation and continued and reliable financial support.

46. Ms. Namdar highlighted the importance of public awareness regarding the potential of efficient use of resources in connection with urbanisation, especially human resources. It was noted that awareness of the impact of sustainable development among all stakeholders including the public sector was critically important so as to spread better understanding of the meaningfulness of urbanisation.

47. The meeting also discussed the importance of the redistribution of wealth for all national beneficiaries, including and especially regarding marginalised communities across the country. It was noted that capacity building should also be extended to the public sector, especially among political figures and decision makers.

48. The view was expressed that across SIDS regions there was a need for governmental ministries which specifically address urbanisation, especially in regards

to coastal area urbanisation. It was recommended that there needed to be clarification and more coordination among governmental bodies surrounding urban planning and development, and in the case of multi-party governance, more collaboration within differing parties.

49. The meeting called for recommendations across three main spheres: capacity building, financing, and continued coherence of the international system. The meeting also discussed that at the national level, the redistribution of wealth and financing needs to be prioritised. At the intra-regional level, exchanges among Pacific islands needed to be prioritised. It was expressed that SIDS in the AIMS region were fragmented. According to the Maldives representative, no regional unifying body other than the Indian Ocean Commission exists. In the Caribbean region, it was expressed that there are many regional bodies prioritising urban planning including the Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Association of Caribbean Economists (ACE-AEC) and the Caribbean Planners Association (CPA).

50. It was agreed that the recommendations (see attached annex) from the meeting can make a contribution to the preparatory meetings, and that delegations and all stakeholders should be able to have access to the recommendations during their deliberations.

G Panel VI: Interactive Sessions with AOSIS Representatives

51. On the afternoon of 14 June, the experts met with members of AOSIS and development partners to brief them on the potential salient outcomes of the EGM which will inform the official recommendations of the EGM. The meeting was chaired by the Lead Negotiator on Sustainable Development of AOSIS, Ms. Midhfa Naeem. Statements from the UN-OHRLLS highlighted the close cooperation and partnership of these UN entities to jointly convene the meeting. The experts made presentations on some of the recommendations they will be making which they expressed hope could provide a useful input to the SIDS regional preparatory meetings towards a successful Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador. The experts also took a number of questions from member states who attended the briefing. The representatives from the OHRLLS summarised the discussions highlighting the importance of oceans and marine science research and technology for SIDS. He appreciated the work of the EGM over the two days and expressed the hope that the recommendations from the meeting would make a useful and meaningful contribution to the regional preparatory meetings and the process leading up to Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador.

52. Ms. Naeem underscored the main themes of the review of negotiations, entitled, 'Building the New Urban Agenda'. Main themes included: resilience to disasters and climate change, the relationship between land and ocean, and capacity building to facilitate planning, policies and data. She then opened the floor to suggestions by the experts.

53. Ambassador Williams mentioned that there was a desire amongst the experts to change the rhetoric from 'settlements' to 'communities'. It was agreed upon that

‘communities’ as opposed to ‘settlements’ connoted a more ‘people-centred approach’. She added that gender equity should be made a priority; in which both all genders of citizens in SIDS should have equal access to resources in urban areas. She also pushed for the recognition of youth as a potential human resource.

The response of the chair was that such considerations should already have been included in the text.

54. The representative from Vanuatu congratulated certain communities’ resilience to upcoming disruptive events on densely populated communities but expressed concern on how such communities would cope if the current rate of urbanisation continues.

55. A representative from AOSIS mentioned that housing is linked to the rise in informal settlements in SIDS. She suggested that experts and policy makers have a regional perspective on the growing existence of informal settlements. It was further suggested that the gender dimension of housing be considered in the AOSIS document. One speaker reminded that women without fixed residence have particular needs, especially if they have children.

56. The potential utilisation of local and traditional knowledge was also discussed. Experts suggested that traditional ways of adapting to vulnerability should be consulted.

57. A representative mentioned the need for including green space in urban areas. They suggested that such inclusion, or exclusion, of green space could have a direct and significant impact on the health and overall wellbeing of the urban community.

58. Experts further reminded that SIDS may have definitions for global issues which differ from that of other states. The view was expressed that this consideration must be underscored and accounted for. It was suggested that using the most appropriate terminology in AOSIS documents would facilitate funding and technical assistance from potential global SIDS partners. Lead Negotiator on Sustainable Development of AOSIS, Ms. Midhfa Naeem, agreed but further acknowledged that adequately communicate the difficulties of the physical challenges of SIDS to those who may not have visited those countries may be a challenge.

59. Experts agreed that civil society consultations were of utmost importance before initiating development in urban areas in SIDS. Political will and intra-ministerial agreement and coordination is also key to the

60. In closing, Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg , UN-OHRLS Chief, thanked the experts for sharing their expertise as well as their firsthand experiences which will support and add value to the future negotiations on the outcome of Habitat III.

The Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS - Challenges and Opportunities

EXPERT GROUP MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of the preparations for the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador, the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on: The Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS - Challenges and Opportunities, *having met* at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 13-14 June, 2016, under the auspices of the UN-OHRLLS, recommended that:

1. Sustainable Urban Development in SIDS, due to SIDS special case and their inherent characteristics, including small land masses and populations, narrow natural resources base, lack of housing facilities, limited financial resources, indebtedness, isolation, disproportionately dense coastal population, large ocean spaces, environmental vulnerability and high exposure to the adverse impacts of climate change, should be approached in a more holistic and integrated manner that recognizes the inter-linkages between broader sustainable development objectives, climate challenge, disaster risk reduction, and the SIDS specific concepts urban island and ocean urbanization;
2. To better understand and address sustainable urban development in SIDS, there is a need for increased awareness in all sections of the population, as well as increased resilience, active and continuous political support, both by SIDS and their development partners, at the local, national, regional and global levels. Such awareness will bring to light the specific challenges and opportunities in sustainable urban development in SIDS and its impact on SIDS economy, social cohesion, and environment dimensions;
3. There is a need for long-term, forward-looking, equitable and inclusive capacity building in SIDS at the national, sub-national and regional levels, on the multiple facets involved in sustainable urban development. Such capacity building will involve the technical and operational aspects including urban planning, data collection, as well as the normative aspect, including policy formulation, institutional strengthening, the development of frameworks and enactment of legislation. The support of SIDS development partners, including UN-HABITAT and other relevant UN system entities will remain crucial;
4. A framework to promote SIDS intra and inter-regional linkages that support the sharing of lessons learned and best practices among SIDS on the issue of sustainable urban development could be established. This framework would contribute to efficiency increases in a dedicated fund and financing, capacity

building, awareness promotion and holistic approaches in the area of sustainable urban development in SIDS;

5. Adequate international attention and dedicated financial resources should be allocated to SIDS to support their efforts to build capacity in sustainable urban development. Such dedicated financial resources would contribute to strengthen SIDS capacities, including through training, education at the local, national and regional levels, as well as through the exchange of knowledge and human resources,. It would strengthen SIDS-SIDS cooperation in the field of academia, training and analysis, offering of scholarship awards, policy and legislation development, as well as the development of SIDS intra and inter-regional linkages on sustainable urban development in SIDS.

List of Experts

Ms. Aishath Abdulla, Maldives
Ms. Angelika Namdar, University of Suriname, Institute for Graduate Studies and Research, University of Suriname, Suriname
Ms. Sarah Mecartney, Independent Consultant and Former UN-Habitat Pacific Programme Manager, Vanuatu
Ms. K. Baguant Moonshiram, University of Mauritius, Mauritius
Ambassador Dessima Williams, Diplomat and Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations, Grenada
Ms. Ana Moreno, Chief of Communications and Advocacy, UN-Habitat

Moderators

Mr. Peter Kenilorea, UN-OHRLLS
H.E. Ambassador Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Vanuatu to the United Nations
H.E Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Jamaica to the United Nations
H.E Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul, Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Mauritius to the United Nations
Ambassador Dessima Williams, Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations
Ms. Midhfa Naeem, AOSIS Lead Negotiator on Sustainable Development