

QUESTIONNAIRE

Follow-up to and implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS)

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. You are requested to report only on new or updated information. Information conveyed in previous surveys or Secretary-Generals' reports will not be considered.

PART A - FOSTERING RESILIENT PROSPERITY IN SIDS

1. Enhanced UN System Support for achieving Resilient Prosperity in SIDS (FOR the UN system)

Using the UN implementation Matrix¹ (attached) to guide feedback, briefly elaborate on any resilience building interventions or strategies (proactive or preventative) that were/are being implemented during the reporting period at national or regional levels aimed specifically at improving resilience in SIDS. Please include indications of resource allocations, if available (600 words).

FAO has strategically prioritized resilience-building interventions in SIDS and a central pillar of this effort is the **CCA–UNSDCF Analytical Support Mechanism**, deployed across the **English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and Cuba**. This initiative proactively integrates agrifood system resilience into national development planning. The agrifood system diagnostics, completed for Cuba and progressing in other Caribbean SIDS, have identified shared vulnerabilities across the region. These include declining agricultural productivity, a significant reliance on food imports coupled with logistical challenges, the increasing unaffordability of healthy diets, persistent water management issues, fragmented data systems, and vulnerability to the escalating impacts of climate-induced disasters. Based on these assessments, the mechanism prioritizes interventions including strategic efforts to boost local agrifood production, the widespread adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, initiatives to enhance trade competitiveness within the region, the modernization of data platforms for improved analysis and planning, and targeted strategies to address the often-overlooked hidden costs associated with unsustainable agrifood systems. Consultations with CARICOM, IICA, WFP and UNEP have further refined these priorities and ensured a coordinated and forward-looking approach to building robust resilience. The integration of these diagnostic findings and interventions into the upcoming UNSDCFs is aimed at embedding resilience across the spectrum of UN development efforts within the region.

Beyond this mechanism, FAO is implementing a diverse portfolio of targeted projects designed to enhance both environmental and socio-economic resilience in SIDS. The Joint Programme “**Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment**”, while global in scope, specifically targets Pacific SIDS such as **Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Tonga**. By focusing on the economic empowerment of rural women and promoting gender mainstreaming within agrifood systems, this initiative proactively builds economic resilience at the grassroots level, fostering diversified livelihoods and strengthening food security within communities. Similarly, the **Dimitra Clubs** approach, implemented in **Haiti**, represents a FAO social innovation that fosters inclusive community engagement and strengthens vital social capital.

The ‘**Gender-responsive Climate-smart Agriculture and Food Systems in the Caribbean**’ project, spanning **eight Caribbean countries**, proactively addresses the escalating impacts of climate change by promoting the adoption of climate-smart technologies and practices within the agricultural sector. Its explicit focus on gender and youth inclusion ensures a comprehensive and equitable approach to

¹ accountability framework developed to promote and monitor progress with implementation of ABAS

building resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, serving as a preventative strategy against future climate-related vulnerabilities. The “**Rural Women Empowerment and Environmental Sustainability Acceleration Programme**”, in the **Dominican Republic** and **Jamaica** with a broader regional scope, proactively builds governmental capacities to integrate gender-transformative approaches into policies aimed at the conservation and recovery of critical ecosystems, recognizing the intrinsic link between gender equality and overall environmental resilience.

The groundbreaking “**Fish Waste to Fashion**” project in **Cabo Verde** creatively transforms fish waste into valuable economic opportunities for women while simultaneously addressing pressing environmental concerns through waste reduction and innovative resource utilization. In **Palau**, a targeted project strategically links women's traditional agricultural practices with the burgeoning tourism sector, proactively enhancing economic empowerment and promoting sustainable cultural heritage. In **Barbados** another programme focuses on converting fish waste into high-quality animal feed, fostering a circular bioeconomy, generating income opportunities, and reducing environmental impact through efficient resource management.

Regional environmental collaborations, such as the SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship (involving **Comoros, Saint Lucia, and Vanuatu**) and the Forest Landscape Restoration initiatives in **Fiji** and **The Bahamas** (supported by IKI and GCF funding), represent proactive measures aimed at bolstering environmental resilience. These programmes focus on the restoration of degraded ecosystems and the implementation of sustainable forest management practices to enhance biodiversity, improve water security, and effectively mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change, thereby preventing future environmental degradation and strengthening natural buffers against various shocks. The “**Sustainable Food & Tourism Itineraries in the Pacific SIDS**” initiative proactively builds economic resilience by diversifying income sources for both farmers and tourism stakeholders through the promotion of sustainable practices and the celebration of local gastronomic heritage, fostering mutually beneficial synergies between these vital sectors.

FAO supported the **Dominican Republic, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea** through the Global Health Security Program, focusing on AMR, zoonotic diseases, and lab capacity to reduce public health threats through effective animal health systems, contributing to improved health security. The **Dominican Republic** also received support for Mediterranean fruit fly eradication.

FAO’s Emergency Management Centre aided plant and animal health emergency preparedness in **Cook Islands, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago**. Regional workshops in **Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Comoros, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago** bolstered emergency preparedness.

Assessments for porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome were conducted in **Trinidad and Tobago**, and for Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle in **the Marshall Islands**.

Data in Emergencies surveys were conducted in **Haiti**, and IPC/CH processes to facilitate critical food security activities advanced in **Cabo Verde, Dominican Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, and Timor-Leste**. Early warning systems were improved in the **Dominican Republic**, and cash transfers implemented in **Guinea-Bissau, Timor-Leste, and Haiti**. Hurricane recovery aided farmers and fishers to restore livelihoods in **Grenada, Jamaica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines**, while earthquake and landslide recovery was supported in **Papua New Guinea**.

Furthermore, FAO plays a crucial proactive role in supporting SIDS in accessing much-needed climate finance from key vertical funds such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, providing essential technical assistance in the development of robust country programs and investment frameworks. This engagement empowers SIDS to secure long-term funding for critical resilience-building projects. Additionally, FAO is actively providing technical assistance to help SIDS prepare comprehensive proposals for the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, a vital

proactive measure to ensure timely access to crucial resources for addressing the unavoidable and often devastating consequences of climate change.

2. Enhanced and Tailored Development Cooperation for SIDS (For Development Partners, IFIs and SIDS Governments)

Successful ABAS implementation will require improved, tailored development cooperation approaches and financial resources, calibrated to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS. It will also require that relevant national/regional plans programme and policies are implemented. Briefly elaborate on:

- i) 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 (600 words)

FAO, in partnership with **14 Pacific Island countries**, is implementing a tailored strategy to transform agrifood systems in the region. This initiative, born from the 2024 FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific and the **Pacific SIDS Solutions Forum**, involves country-level diagnostics, regional workshops, and consultations with UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators, PIF, SPC, SPREP, and the University of the South Pacific. This collaborative approach ensures the co-creation of investment priorities aligned with international, national, and regional strategies.

The identified priorities for enhanced support include: (1) strengthening enabling policies and institutions; (2) improving agricultural services and market linkages; (3) promoting nutrition and healthy diets; (4) fostering innovation and access to finance; (5) developing sustainable solutions for coastal areas; and (6) enhancing agrifood infrastructure and connectivity.

A key implementation mechanism is the **Agrifood Investment Platform**, which will provide specific investment direction, milestones, and expected outputs over three five-year cycles (2025-2040). This ensures systematic progress, accountability, and coordinated investments from multiple donors and IFIs. The Technical Assistance Facility will support national governments and regional organizations with targeted expertise, capacity building, and on-demand technical assistance. The first cycle (2025-2030) focuses on strengthening the policy and institutional base to absorb more public and private investments and implement key priority investments. Subsequent cycles will adapt based on lessons learned. The program operates at regional and country levels, with governments and regional organizations leading implementation, involving producer organizations, the private sector, research institutions, CSOs, and financial institutions.

Expected results in the **Pacific SIDS** include strengthened policies and institutions, improved agricultural services and market access, enhanced nutrition, increased innovation and finance access, sustainable coastal solutions, and better agrifood infrastructure, leading to more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems and improved livelihoods.

The **SIDS Flagship of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** is providing crucial support for the comprehensive assessment of blue economy strategies as a tailored entry point for fostering enhanced coordination across various sectors and promoting impactful on-the-ground restoration interventions, ultimately aiming for long-term sustainable development across the three participating SIDS.

In **The Bahamas**, FAO supports the project “**Preparation of Strategic Framework to Reduce Deforestation and Forest Degradation and enhance adaptive capacity**” (USD 0.9M until end of 2025). This tailored approach includes adapting the National Forest Inventory methodologies to address the specific challenges posed by the limited size of the national team responsible for forest-related activities and their understandable time constraints for intensive field data collection. The expected result is a strategic framework for reducing deforestation and enhancing adaptive capacity.

FAO led the development of the **Pacific action plan for mainstreaming biodiversity for food and agriculture 2024-2030** (USD 250,000). This plan aims to integrate biodiversity management across agricultural sectors through national policies and planning, with outputs including updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

In collaboration with SPC, FAO supports the **Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme** (USD 210,000) to strengthen both institutional and human capacities within the region to make well-informed and evidence-based decisions regarding pesticide registration, ultimately contributing to safer and more sustainable pesticide management practices across the Pacific SIDS.

São Tomé and Príncipe has adopted tailored development strategies focusing on sustainable agriculture (with FAO support), a quality universal health system, and an integrated social protection system. Resources are mobilized from the IMF's ECF and ODA (98% of investment budget). Expected results include a modernized agricultural sector, improved health outcomes, and wider access to social services.

- ii) any planned or ongoing national programmes to develop more resilient SIDS economies. What are the expected results from these interventions. Please include indications of resource allocations if available (600 words)

In **São Tomé and Príncipe**, the government, with UN support, is focusing on developing a quality health system for universal health coverage, improving education quality, establishing an integrated social protection system, and preventing violence. Significant progress has been made in strengthening the health system, improving data management, drug availability (stock-outs decreased by 25%), and disease prevention (HPV vaccination increased to 95%). Increased registration with the National Social Security Institute is broadening the contributory base. These efforts align with SDGs 1 and 10, strengthening safety nets for vulnerable groups. Resources are mobilized from the IMF's ECF and ODA (98% of the investment budget). Expected results include improved health outcomes, enhanced social protection, and reduced inequalities.

Furthermore, programmes focus on increasing productivity and marketing of local green and blue economy products and improving entrepreneurs' access to financial and non-financial services. Training in financial management, cooperative organization, and entrepreneurship aims to guarantee sustainable income growth. Distributing organic products in schools (reaching 6,603 children in 47 schools) improves nutrition and increases incomes for around 50 small farmers. The operationalization of the Trade Portal simplifies import-export procedures and increases institutional transparency, fostering economic growth.

Under the **Global Agriculture and Food Security Program Small Island Food and Water Security** project, FAO and IFAD are jointly implementing agriculture development projects in **Tuvalu, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia**. FAO is elaborating national agriculture investment plans with national governments in the **Pacific** (excluding Kiribati). These plans detail national agriculture investment needs, gaps, costs, and potential returns.

Priorities for Tuvalu include production enhancement, natural resource management and climate resilience, trade and marketing, access to finance, nutrition, and data and statistics. For the Marshall Islands, priorities are community infrastructure for enhanced productivity, improved nutrition, urban and school gardens, agroforestry management, enhanced inter-island agrifood transportation, digital solutions for agrifood systems, and capacity building for producers. For Micronesia, priorities include expanded crop production technologies, strengthened biosecurity, improved livestock production, promotion of horticulture value chains, and strengthened research and agriculture service providers. These plans, developed collaboratively with various UN agencies and national stakeholders, aim to identify key investment priorities and actions, along with available financing and gaps, and are expected to be approved by national governments by the close of 2025. The expected results are

increased agricultural productivity, enhanced food security, improved nutrition, and greater resilience to climate change impacts in these Pacific SIDS.

In **Timor-Leste**, FAO is developing a proposal for "**Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization for a productive and competitive rice value chain**," potentially funded by the FAO South-South Cooperation Programme (approximately USD 2M). The project aims to address bottlenecks hindering farmers' uptake of mechanization by improving spare parts availability, increasing skills of private actors (farmers, operators, mechanics, entrepreneurs), and enhancing the capacity of public institutions. The expected results include increased efficiency and productivity in the rice value chain, improved livelihoods for farmers, and strengthened institutional capacity in the agricultural sector.

PART B - COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE UN SYSTEM WIDE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES TO SIDS

Paragraph 36 of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) requests the UN Secretary-General:

“..... within his annual report to the General Assembly for the 80th Session on the implementation of the ABAS, to present proposals to ensure a coordinated, coherent and effective UN system wide capacity development approach to SIDS and to enhance the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ABAS, including a potential single SIDS dedicated entity at the UN Secretariat.”

At the global level, the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) oversees UN efforts for sustainable development in 162 countries and territories, guiding, supporting, tracking and overseeing the coordination of development operations. The UNSDG derives its mandate from the Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which serves as an important instrument for the monitoring and the assessment of UN development operations. The integrated nature of ABAS calls for a UN Development System that works in a coordinated and coherent manner while preserving each entity's mandate and role and leveraging each entity's expertise.

1. Coherent and effective UN system support to SIDS (For UN System Responses, 750 words)

- i. What challenges are encountered by UN agencies, to deliver a ‘whole-of-system response’ in addressing the needs, risks and vulnerabilities and to provide development programmes that address the underlying drivers of needs in SIDS?

One significant hurdle is the **severe budget cuts** experienced across various UN agencies, coupled with a **critical shortage of dedicated human resources** at both regional and national levels specifically focused on SIDS. These resource limitations directly constrain the capacity of individual agencies, and the UN system as a whole, to mount a comprehensive and coordinated response capable of tackling the deep-rooted causes of vulnerability. In this context, flexible mechanisms like FAO's CCA–UNSDCF Analytical Support Mechanism, which offers demand-driven technical assistance within the existing UN programming framework, have proven invaluable in integrating evidence-based diagnostics into development programming despite these resource constraints. Such adaptability and responsiveness are crucial for fostering more coherent, system-wide support for SIDS resilience and for effectively mobilizing necessary resources.

The inherent **diversity of UN agencies**, each operating with distinct mandates, varying capacities, and differing operational approaches, further complicates the pursuit of a fully unified response, particularly when compounded by the **geographical dispersion of SIDS**. The differing priorities and organizational structures across agencies can often lead to information silos, impeding seamless collaboration and the sharing of critical knowledge.

Furthermore, **implementing partners within SIDS** frequently encounter their own set of constraints, including **limited human resources**, **competing demands** on their time and capacity, the often-complex **UN reporting requirements**, and the challenges associated with **short project cycles and the timing of engagement**. These factors can significantly impact their ability to fully engage with and effectively manage UN-supported development initiatives.

A particularly significant challenge appears to be the **extremely limited capacity within small national units and institutions** to effectively absorb external support and actively engage in support activities, including co-designing interventions. The protracted timelines for engaging key national focal points, sometimes exceeding six months, exemplify this constraint. The small populations of SIDS also contribute to a struggle for both national agencies and the UN to **recruit and retain capable candidates**, facing high competition for skilled professionals. This low capacity and limited time availability can also result in a lower level of understanding of project approaches and the feasibility of adapting project activities and deliverables during implementation.

Experiences from the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration highlight the challenge of **inefficient collaboration across different sectors** (Environment, Fisheries, Tourism, Agriculture, and Forestry), with programmes often being implemented in silos. Systemic and institutional capacity needs remain significant for planning environmental management interventions with long-term impact. The **absence of sustainable funding mechanisms** for environmental conservation and restoration efforts, coupled with a **lack of a robust monitoring framework**, hinders the capture and sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

To enhance overall collaboration and effectiveness, focusing on **capacity building**, **simplifying processes**, fostering **long-term partnerships**, encouraging **early involvement of partners**, and establishing **realistic timelines** are essential. These measures can help ensure that partners can dedicate the necessary time and resources to effectively address the multifaceted challenges faced by SIDS.

Fragmented Programming remains a significant obstacle. Despite existing coordination mechanisms, programming often remains siloed across agencies due to differing mandates, planning cycles, and funding sources, limiting the potential for integrated, multi-sectoral responses crucial for addressing the complex realities of SIDS.

Limited Field Presence and Capacity Constraints within UN agencies themselves also pose a challenge. Many agencies have a limited or no permanent presence in some or several SIDS, hindering sustained engagement and effective coordination. This is exacerbated by national institutional capacity constraints, making it difficult to co-develop and implement comprehensive programmes that address root causes.

Inflexible and Siloed Funding mechanisms further impede a whole-of-system response. Financing is often earmarked for specific agency-led projects, restricting opportunities for joint programming and hindering the ability to mobilize system-wide interventions through pooled or flexible funding.

The **lack of disaggregated data and shared analysis** also presents a considerable challenge. Gaps in data availability, particularly in disaggregated, real-time, and risk-informed data, make it difficult to develop the shared situational analyses necessary for joint planning and effective targeting of vulnerabilities.

Finally, **overburdened coordination structures** add to the complexity. While Resident Coordinators and UNCTs strive for coherence, they are often stretched in regions like the Pacific, where the UN agency presence is limited, and capacities to convene and align stakeholders are constrained.

- ii. What percentage of your entity's programming expenditures on development activities in SIDS in 2024 were allocated to joint programmes? What percentage will be allocated in 2025?

In 2024 in **the Pacific**, a total of five UN Joint Programmes were implemented, with a combined budget of USD 1,805,855.04. Out of this total, USD 660,772.71 was spent during 2024. This amount represents approximately 7% of FAO SAP overall programming expenditures on development activities in Pacific SIDS for the year.

Looking ahead, an estimated USD 238,190 is projected to be spent in 2025 under these UNJPs, which is also expected to account for around 7% of total programming expenditures for the year.

- iii. What are the lessons learned, challenges and best practices of the UNSCDF (including multi-country frameworks) and their respective Country Implementation Plans (CIPs) in promoting joint programming?

Early lessons from UNSCFs and CIPs highlight the critical importance of cost-effectiveness and quality in successful joint programming, emphasizing the need for UN system partnerships to prioritize high-quality, responsive support to SIDS while diligently minimizing overhead costs. Best practices observed include collaborative efforts such as FAO's synergy with WFP in the Eastern Caribbean and UNEP in Jamaica, where their complementary technical expertise was effectively combined to enhance agrifood systems analyses within the Common Country Analysis processes. However, challenges persist, notably in aligning the often-differing agency procedures and operational timelines. Multi-country UNSCFs, exemplified by the framework in the Eastern Caribbean, present significant opportunities for achieving economies of scale without sacrificing essential national specificity, yet they necessitate robust and effective coordination mechanisms to prevent potential fragmentation and ensure coherence.

Key best practices that have facilitated more coherent and collaborative programming include a clear and consistent alignment of UN activities with explicitly stated national priorities, the active and meaningful engagement of strong government counterparts throughout the process, and the effective utilization of joint planning tools, such as the Common Country Analysis, to foster a shared understanding and strategic direction.

Despite these successes, several challenges continue to impede the full implementation of joint approaches, particularly within complex multi-country settings. These include the persistent issue of limited flexible or pooled funding mechanisms that can support cross-agency collaboration, the inherent constraints posed by siloed agency mandates that often prioritize individual agency objectives over collective impact, and the significant capacity constraints observed at both the UN and national levels within SIDS, which can hinder the development and execution of truly joint programmes.

Crucial lessons learned emphasize that early and inclusive planning processes, the establishment of streamlined and efficient governance structures for joint initiatives, and consistent and transparent communication among all participating UN entities are fundamental to fostering effective joint programming. Multi-country frameworks have demonstrated the benefits of strong regional coordination and shared analytical work in establishing a common understanding of regional challenges and opportunities. However, they also underscore the necessity of adopting tailored approaches at the national level to adequately reflect the diverse national contexts and specific needs of individual SIDS, particularly within the geographically dispersed Pacific SIDS region. Furthermore, the active and participatory involvement of local communities, and the careful adaptation of global best practices to the specific local context, are vital for ensuring the relevance and sustainability of joint programmes. Addressing challenges such as limited institutional capacity and ensuring reduced financial sustainability through robust resource mobilization strategies and strengthened partnerships remain critical areas of focus for enhancing the effectiveness of joint programming in SIDS.

- iv. What improvements would you recommend to enhance the UN's system-wide approach to capacity development in SIDS?

Capacity development initiatives must be fundamentally demand-driven, ensuring accountability and fostering long-term sustainability. The success of FAO's CCA–UNSDCF Analytical Support Mechanism, which combines in-house expertise with operational flexibility to deliver tailored capacity support, provides a valuable model. Future enhancements could involve strategically leveraging artificial intelligence tools to conduct basic diagnostics and establish readily accessible data platforms, thereby helping to address the significant data gaps prevalent in Caribbean SIDS. Furthermore, capacity development strategies should more effectively integrate South-South and Triangular Cooperation, utilizing existing regional structures such as the OECS Commission to standardize beneficial practices, including procurement and data management systems like Calypseo, across multiple countries. It is crucial for UN agencies to avoid overly rigid, supply-driven approaches, ensuring that responsiveness to clearly articulated national priorities and genuine local ownership are central tenets of all SIDS capacity development strategies.

The **establishment of joint UN taskforces**, where a clear alignment of comparative advantages and mandates exists among participating agencies, would significantly assist SIDS in requesting targeted support and building more integrated and holistic approaches to their development challenges. Exploring opportunities for joint, online course development, complemented by in-person training sessions when necessary, could also prove beneficial, particularly in efforts to reduce the often-prohibitive costs associated with extensive travel. Moreover, a concerted effort should be made to develop capacity on a large scale among civil society organizations within SIDS, recognizing their crucial role in sustainable development.

Strengthening coordination and coherence across all UN entities is paramount to delivering integrated, multi-sectoral support that is directly aligned with the national development priorities of SIDS. Increased investment in long-term, locally driven capacity development initiatives, encompassing institutional strengthening, human capital development, and robust data systems, is also essential for sustainable progress. Tailoring approaches to the unique context of SIDS, with a deep understanding of their inherent size, geographical remoteness, and significant vulnerability to external shocks, is crucial for relevance and effectiveness. Finally, ensuring more flexible and predictable funding mechanisms for capacity development initiatives, particularly those promoting joint programming and South-South cooperation, will be vital for enabling meaningful and lasting impact.

- v. How can the UN better partner with regional development stakeholders e.g. CARICOM Secretariat, SPC, PIF, SPREP etc to improve programme delivery, improve coherence and avoid duplication

To enhance the UN's partnership with regional development stakeholders a more **robust and integrated approach** is essential for improving programme delivery, fostering greater coherence, and effectively avoiding duplication of efforts. Strengthening these partnerships necessitates **early and continuous engagement** with regional organizations throughout the entire programme cycle, encompassing the critical design, active implementation, and rigorous monitoring phases. Implementing joint work planning initiatives, collaboratively sharing diagnostic tools and valuable data platforms, and ensuring mutual recognition and application of existing regional policy frameworks would significantly contribute to aligning efforts and substantially reducing instances of duplication. Furthermore, **fostering stronger regional ownership** of development initiatives and strategically **embedding UN support within established regional strategies**—such as the CARICOM 25 by 30 initiative—can demonstrably improve the overall impact of programmes, cultivate valuable synergies across sectors and initiatives, and ultimately maximize the efficient utilization of often-limited resources across the diverse SIDS regions.

Concrete actions to achieve this enhanced partnership include engaging early and consistently in joint planning and priority-setting processes to ensure a fundamental alignment of UN programmes with

overarching regional strategies and to proactively avoid potential duplication of activities. Strengthening formal coordination mechanisms through the establishment of regular and productive dialogue platforms and the development of shared results frameworks would also significantly improve coherence and mutual accountability. Actively leveraging the unique knowledge, extensive networks, and considerable convening power of regional organizations can effectively help to localize and scale up UN initiatives, ensuring greater relevance and reach within SIDS. Moreover, directly supporting the capacity-building efforts of regional institutions will empower them to take a leading role in coordinating and driving implementation efforts. Finally, promoting joint monitoring and reporting mechanisms will enhance transparency, accountability among all partners, and facilitate shared learning to continuously improve programme effectiveness and impact.

For Governments

- vi. How would you assess the current level of coordination among UN agencies in supporting capacity development for SIDS at the national, regional and global levels? What challenges do you believe hinder effective coordination among UN entities in providing support to SIDS? What mechanisms would you suggest to improve the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of UN support for SIDS? (600 words)

2. Interagency Mechanisms for improved coherence

Under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) provides broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for the UN system in the areas under the responsibility of Executive Heads. Focus is placed on inter-agency priorities and initiatives while ensuring that the independent mandates of organizations are maintained. One particular focus of the CEB is system-wide coordination and policy coherence in the programme areas. The CEB has to date created three inter-agency mechanisms to increase coherence across the United Nations system in addressing urgent development challenges. These are UN-Water, UN-Oceans and UN-Energy.

- vii. As there is no single entity in the United Nations system that has sole responsibility for SIDS, do you see value creating a UN-SIDS to serve as the primary agent for promoting system-wide collaboration on SIDS issues, and to promote coherence in the UN system's multi-disciplinary response to SIDS? (500 words)

While the establishment of a dedicated UN-SIDS entity to serve as the primary agent for promoting system-wide collaboration on SIDS issues and enhancing coherence in the UN's multi-disciplinary response warrants careful consideration, the immediate creation of a new, standalone agency may not be the most efficient or resource-effective strategy at this juncture. The existing inter-agency mechanisms were specifically established to facilitate collaboration and ensure coherence on the multifaceted development challenges confronting SIDS within the well-defined mandates of each participating UN entity. Introducing new organizational structures could inadvertently risk duplicating existing efforts, potentially leading to further fragmentation within the UN system and diverting valuable resources that could potentially be deployed more effectively through existing channels. Rather than embarking on the creation of additional bureaucratic layers, a more pragmatic and potentially impactful approach might involve strategically strengthening the capacity of existing UN agencies and their established inter-agency mechanisms to address the unique priorities of SIDS in a more direct and targeted manner. This could include the appointment of dedicated SIDS focal points within key agencies and the development of specifically tailored initiatives designed to address the distinct vulnerabilities and development pathways of these island nations.

However, the potential value of a new UN-SIDS entity with a clearly defined coordinating role, particularly one that strategically avoids expanding into core areas of technical expertise that typically require decades to cultivate, should not be entirely dismissed. For instance, such a coordinating agency could establish small, strategically located offices and host personnel seconded from various UN agencies, fostering closer inter-agency collaboration at the operational level.

The Pacific SIDS, in particular, face a unique and complex constellation of interconnected vulnerabilities, including the existential threat of climate change, significant geographic isolation that hinders connectivity and increases costs, substantial economic dependence on often volatile external markets, limited institutional capacity to address multifaceted challenges, and a high degree of exposure to devastating natural disasters. Despite the international community's repeated recognition of these profound challenges through key frameworks such as the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, efforts across the diverse UN system often remain fragmented, inconsistently implemented across regions, and lack the necessary level of comprehensive integration. In this specific context, the establishment of a dedicated UN-SIDS entity could indeed represent a transformative step towards achieving significantly greater coordination, enhanced coherence in strategic planning and programme delivery, and strengthened accountability in the UN system's overall engagement with SIDS.

While numerous UN agencies address specific aspects of the SIDS development agenda, these crucial efforts are frequently siloed due to the distinct mandates that govern each agency's operations, separate funding streams that often restrict collaborative initiatives, and differing operational priorities that can hinder a unified approach. This fragmentation has unfortunately led to instances of duplicated efforts across the UN system, inconsistent levels of support provided to SIDS across different geographical regions and missed opportunities for creating valuable synergies through integrated programming. A dedicated UN-SIDS entity could effectively fill this critical gap by acting as a central and authoritative coordinating mechanism that fosters a genuinely system-wide and multi-disciplinary approach, meticulously tailored to the unique development trajectories and specific needs of all SIDS.

Furthermore, a dedicated UN-SIDS entity could evolve into a vital knowledge hub, actively collecting and disseminating best practices in SIDS development, facilitating crucial South-South cooperation among SIDS themselves to foster peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of innovative solutions, and strategically supporting innovation in critical areas such as climate resilience strategies, the sustainable development of the blue economy, the expansion of digital connectivity to overcome remoteness, and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices. Such an entity could also serve as a powerful advocate for the greater participation of SIDS in key global decision-making forums, ensuring that their unique voices are not only heard within the international community but are also effectively translated into concrete and impactful action on the ground.

Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs Plus (ECESA Plus)

Coordination of UN System actions for the implementation of politically agreed documents e.g. ABAS takes place through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social (ECESA Plus). Its over fifty members have developed a matrix for the follow up to ABAS, focusing on mandates specifically directed at the United Nations system as well as on areas where the UN system is already engaged through its programmatic work. The UN Implementation Matrix, which is being continuously updated, serves as an accountability framework and as a working tool to promote and monitor progress. ECESA Plus meets regularly to *inter alia* SIDS related matters and is convened by the Under Secretary General of DESA.

- viii How can ECESA Plus be used to more effectively harness UN agency contributions and to amplify systemic synergies?)

ECESA Plus can significantly enhance the harnessing of UN agency contributions and amplify systemic synergies by prioritizing information sharing and the undertaking of joint needs assessments. This proactive approach is crucial in preventing duplication of efforts across agencies and effectively identifying complementary areas of expertise that can be leveraged for greater impact, particularly within the unique context of Pacific SIDS. A key area for amplified synergy lies in strengthening the intrinsic linkages between sustainable tourism and agrifood systems through well-designed joint initiatives. For instance, ECESA Plus can actively support programmes that prioritize local sourcing of agricultural and fisheries products for the tourism sector. This strategic alignment would create a

consistent demand for sustainably produced goods, thereby diversifying SIDS economies, enhancing local food security, and fostering a more resilient economic base. Collaborative projects could specifically focus on the development of agritourism ventures, the promotion of local culinary heritage to attract tourists and support local producers, and the establishment of resilient local food systems that mutually benefit both the agriculture and tourism sectors. By actively facilitating inter-agency collaboration on such integrated and mutually reinforcing approaches, ECESA Plus can effectively amplify the systemic synergies between these two vital sectors for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Furthermore, while the UN Implementation Matrix provides a valuable foundation for coordinated action, its full potential can be unlocked through more effective integration into the routine workplans of UN agencies. ECESA Plus can play a pivotal role in this by establishing a clear requirement for UN agencies to align their SIDS-related activities with the Matrix in a structured and transparent manner. To further enhance its utility, transforming the Matrix into a dynamic, digitized, and interactive dashboard would significantly improve accessibility for all stakeholders, enable real-time updates on progress, facilitate seamless data sharing across agencies, and allow for comprehensive tracking of key deliverables, responsible parties, and associated timelines. Crucially, linking the Matrix directly to resource mapping would help to connect planned actions with identified funding sources or, conversely, highlight critical funding gaps, thereby promoting more strategic and efficient resource allocation across the UN system and actively reducing the potential for duplication of efforts.

To make tangible progress in key ABAS priority areas such as building climate resilience, fostering the blue economy, advancing digital transformation, and strengthening disaster preparedness, ECESA Plus should establish time-bound, cross-agency task teams with clearly defined objectives and deliverables. These teams would serve as crucial platforms for fostering technical-level collaboration among experts from different UN agencies, complementing higher-level policy discussions and ensuring that practical, on-the-ground implementation is effectively coordinated. These task teams should also be mandated to regularly report back to ECESA Plus with comprehensive progress updates, valuable lessons learned from their collaborative work, and concrete recommendations for future action.

ECESA Plus should also actively strengthen its links with the Resident Coordinator system and Multi-Country Offices by establishing formal and consistent feedback loops that accurately reflect the realities of implementation at the country level and help to identify any existing gaps in agency-level efforts. This bidirectional flow of information would ensure that agency-level strategies and initiatives developed at headquarters are closely connected to the coordination efforts in the field and are genuinely responsive to specific local contexts. Moreover, this enhanced feedback mechanism would also facilitate the replication of successful inter-agency collaboration models observed in one region to other SIDS regions facing similar challenges.

Finally, ECESA Plus should be strategically leveraged to mobilize and effectively coordinate financing for SIDS by launching a joint resource mobilization mechanism specifically designed to support cross-agency initiatives that are demonstrably aligned with the ABAS framework. This would include actively promoting the increased use of pooled funding mechanisms and strongly encouraging the development of joint funding proposals among UN agencies, particularly when addressing complex, multi-sectoral challenges that require integrated solutions, such as the critical climate-health nexus and the sustainable governance of ocean resources.

3. HLPF

- ix. How should the HLPF SIDS session be structured to effectively monitor progress to scale up implementation of the SDGs while at the same time driving implementation of ABAS? What role should the monitoring and evaluation framework of ABAS play in this? (250 words)

To ensure the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) SIDS session effectively monitors progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while simultaneously driving the implementation of the

Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), its structure should be carefully designed to function as both a robust review platform and a catalyst for concrete action. The ABAS monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework should serve as the bedrock for reporting and in-depth analysis, ensuring that the monitoring process is genuinely SIDS-owned and firmly rooted in reliable data. Progress against ABAS priorities should be consistently contextualized within the broader framework of SDG achievement, clearly demonstrating the interconnectedness of these agendas. Furthermore, the outcomes of the monitoring process should be directly and explicitly linked to actionable policy recommendations and clearly articulated funding needs to facilitate targeted support.

To achieve this, the HLPF SIDS session should commence with a comprehensive and synthesized regional overview of progress, firmly anchored in the ABAS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which itself should be systematically aligned with established global SDG indicators. This strategic alignment would not only enable coherent and streamlined reporting, thereby reducing the often-significant reporting burdens on SIDS, but also empower these nations to track the implementation of both ABAS and the SDGs in a truly integrated and mutually reinforcing manner.

The session should then incorporate interactive and engaging panels specifically showcasing regional progress made and persistent challenges encountered, actively featuring valuable contributions from governments, key regional bodies, civil society organizations, and youth representatives to ensure a multi-stakeholder perspective. A dedicated segment focused on solution-sharing, highlighting innovative approaches and successful interventions in critical areas such as enhancing climate resilience, fostering sustainable blue economies, and accelerating digital transition, would be invaluable in promoting the replication and wider scale-up of effective strategies across SIDS regions.

The ABAS M&E Framework should play a central and pivotal role throughout the HLPF SIDS session. It should function not only as a robust tracking tool for monitoring progress against ABAS commitments but also as a complementary and mutually supportive mechanism to the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) undertaken by SIDS. The specific indicators and the high-quality data generated by the ABAS M&E framework should directly feed into the SDG reporting processes, ensuring greater policy coherence at both national and international levels, improving the targeting and allocation of crucial resources, and strengthening overall accountability for the commitments made under both the ABAS and the overarching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in SIDS. This integrated approach will elevate the visibility of SIDS-specific priorities within the global development discourse, enhance coherence across various efforts, and ultimately drive more impactful and sustained follow-through on commitments.