



## 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 Matrix<sup>1</sup> (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).

Although **universal social protection** is key for sustainable development and enhancing resilience, recent ILO research ([ILO 2025](#)) shows that only 43.5 per cent of the population of SIDS currently have access to at least one social protection benefit, compared with a global average of 52.4 per cent.

**Comoros** (2022), **Suriname** (2024) and **São Tomé and Príncipe** (2024) ratified ILO Convention No. 102 – the flagship Convention on social security, while **Timor Leste** has developed a strategic roadmap for ratification, with ILO support. Similar work is ongoing in the **Cook Islands**, **Saint Lucia** and **Samoa**.

In 2024, social protection systems diagnostic assessments were completed in **Vanuatu**, **Solomon Islands**, **Kiribati**, and **Papua New Guinea**, providing a foundation for evidence-based policy reforms to fill coverage gaps and enhance sustainability. In **Timor-Leste**, the ILO supports implementation of the National Strategy for Social Protection (2021–2030), while in **Haiti**, it supports institutional reforms and governance mechanisms for old age, health, maternity and occupational accidents insurance (\$975,471). In **Jamaica** and **Belize**, the ILO supports the design of an unemployment insurance scheme and in **Barbados**, it has assisted the establishment of a social protection floor. In **São Tomé y Príncipe**, the ILO supported the development of a mandatory social insurance scheme for independent workers. Through the Resilient Caribbean initiative, the ILO together with WFP, UNICEF and UNESCO supports the expansion of social protection coverage to informal workers in **Grenada**, **British Virgin Islands**, **Anguilla** and **St. Kitts and Nevis**, strengthening unemployment benefits, and conducting labour market analysis to inform public employment services interventions.

In 2024, **Cabo Verde** became the first SIDS to formally join the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, building on years of sustained ILO support to increase and extend social security coverage.

In cooperation with Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the ILO has supported **Grenada**, **St. Lucia**, **Antigua and Barbuda**, **Jamaica**, **Belize**, and **Dominica** conduct harmonised labour force surveys for evidence-based policymaking. The ILO has supported **Mauritius** and will support **Jamaica** in 2025 in the development of their National Employment Policies, prioritizing youth, women, and informal workers to foster inclusive growth and enable adaptation to climate-induced disruptions in key sectors such as tourism and agriculture. In **Cuba** the ILO with UNDP supported the establishment and strengthening of the Labour and Social Observatory and the redesign of the Public Employment Service (\$301,411). In **Suriname**, the ILO supported the transformation of public employment services. The ILO also trained staff from the Ministry of Education on its approaches to skills needs anticipation and updating curricula in support of a better alignment of training with labour market needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> accountability framework developed to promote and monitor progress with implementation of ABAS



In **Cuba** (\$140,000) and **Jamaica**, the ILO supports the design of Green Jobs Policies, the creation of green employment and skill development for youth –particularly from climate-vulnerable groups and women. In **Jamaica**, the ILO also supported the development of the Green Jobs Assessment Model (GJAM), which measures the impact of climate measures on key development indicators such as GDP, employment, skills, income distribution and inequality, and gender inequality through green scenarios and projects the number of green jobs to be created under identified sectors.

In **Haiti** (2024-2027/\$3.9M) and **Suriname**, the ILO helps improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural enterprises through strengthened value chains and enhanced agricultural services.

Through the PBF, the ILO works with WFP to promote the socio-economic integration of young people and women in **Haiti**, by supporting inclusive agricultural cooperatives and community mechanisms to monitor socio-economic tensions and needs (2025-2027/ \$3M/ \$1.6M ILO). It also works with UNEP to increase the resilience of **Haitian youth** in rural and urban areas in the face of climatic hazards through a combination of economic inclusion, livelihood strengthening and community dialogue (2023-2025/ \$2M total/ \$577,800 ILO). Together with UNEP and WFP (2025-2030), the ILO also supports large-scale ecosystem restoration in **Haiti** through the piloting and implementation of payment for environmental services programmes (2025-2030/ \$5,4M total/ \$830,000 ILO).

The ILO's **Eastern Caribbean (UNTFHS) project** increases the awareness of farmers and fishers on financial coping mechanisms and increases the sustainability of small businesses in rural areas.

In **Belize**, the ILO participates in the SDG Joint Program on Resilience, focused on increasing access to social protection and supporting local economic development with vulnerable communities.

In **Mauritius** and **Seychelles**, within the UN SDG Fund joint Programme “Building Resilience & Ending Vulnerabilities in SIDS”, the ILO enhanced women and youth’s employability and economic empowerment by building their capacities to access opportunities in the emerging Blue and Green Economy sectors. In **Comoros** (\$400,000), the ILO is implementing a two-year programme strengthening the resilience and socio-economic inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly women and persons with disabilities. The ILO also helps address informality, promotes sustainable rural development, supports entrepreneurship and advances social inclusion In **São Tomé y Príncipe**.

In 2024, the ILO signed a MoU with the **Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)** to enhance the coordination and coherence of decent work activities in the region through joint planning, data sharing, and harmonised policy and programme implementation.

In **Asia Pacific**, the ILO works with partners to support SIDS countries transition from informality and agroforestry skills for employment and resilience (**Timor Leste**), promote decent work and employment for just transition (**Maldives, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste**), strengthen resilience through digital transformation (**Micronesia, Kiribati**), support rural entrepreneurship, investment and trade in **Papua New Guinea** (\$17.6 M in 2024 – the largest in the ILO SIDS portfolio), as well as **regional/multi-country initiatives** to promote safe and fair labour migration and improve livelihoods and resilience via economic diversification and digital transformation.

## **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?

**Insufficient mainstreaming of the SIDS Agenda** in shared (e.g. UNSDCF) and entity specific country-level plans. Insufficient involvement of Ministries of Labour and social partners in planning processes.

**Coordination gaps:** despite enhanced joint planning, fragmented mandates and overlapping programmatic priorities continue to lead to duplication of efforts, gaps in service delivery and inefficient use of limited resources.

**Stretch on national capacities:** weak institutional capacities limits SIDS' ability to absorb technical assistance, manage programmes or utilise available development financing fully, especially if there is duplication.

**Limited financial resources and fragmented funding:** constrained budgets and over-reliance on short-term voluntary funding hinder long-term strategic planning.

**Limited technical and operational capacity:** resource and operational constraints limiting some entities' (like the ILO) in-country presence hamper their ability to provide continuous and technical support to SIDS.

**Specific regulatory frameworks** require context-specific, tailored approaches within the agreed, global ABAS framework.

**Gaps in SIDS-specific disaggregated data** render assessment of progress and adaptation of interventions to the unique contexts of SIDS challenging.

**Effective integration of intersectional and human rights-based approaches:** Addressing the root causes of vulnerability requires the cross-cutting integration of human rights, gender equality, youth, and sustainability. Achieving this consistently across all UN system programs necessitates strong institutional capacities, shared methodologies, and ongoing training and awareness raising.

**Deteriorating security situation and political instability** in some contexts, such as Haiti.

- 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, **just under 47% of ILO expenditures in SIDS** were allocated to joint programmes. Projected expenditure in 2025 allocated to Joint Programmes will be shared as soon as available.

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

**Early engagement of national stakeholders** from the early stages of UNSDCF design processes, including key ministries, Ministries of Labor and social partners, enhances national ownership and programmatic coherence.

**CCAs, Joint Workplans and joint reporting have proven to be critical tools** in African SIDs in particular, to establish a collective understanding of development priorities and challenges and serve as a foundation for coherent, targeted joint programming. The use of joint analysis to assess decent work deficits specifically, drawing on national data platforms to inform evidence-based planning, has been a



notable success. The integration of decent work indicators within joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks has strengthened the ability to track progress on labour-related outcomes. More generally, UNINFO has increased transparency, enabled real-time monitoring and promoted data-driven decision-making.

**Promoting and facilitating inter-agency synergies through joint programmes:** successful examples of collaboration between the ILO and entities such as UNEP, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP in SIDS demonstrate that the UN can align diverse mandates around shared objectives, based on comparative advantage.

*Challenges:*

**Insufficient mainstreaming of and follow-up on SIDS commitments and actions in UNSDCF's Vulnerability assessments, critical in the SIDS context, are not systematically incorporated into planning documents,** leading to missed opportunities for risk-informed programming. Use of real-time data for adaptive management remains limited, reducing the system's agility in responding to evolving challenges.

**Uneven capacities and in-country presence among agencies** limits the equitable and efficient implementation of joint programming.

**Limited institutional capacity and staff turnover in relevant ministries,** resulting in lengthy approvals of projects by relevant national authorities and delaying the timely execution of joint initiatives.

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

**More systematic mainstreaming of SIDS' commitments and expectations in UNSDCF's,** including in results frameworks and joint workplans, with regular joint UN/government follow-up.

**Aligning programming with national policy frameworks,** as in Cuba, where the ILO used the Labour and Social Observatory to generate data and inputs for multisectoral public policies, thereby enhancing the relevance of its interventions.

**Reinforce coordination at the country and regional levels,** better leveraging Resident Coordinators Offices to align efforts with ABAS and reduce duplication.

**Establish dedicated SIDS focal points within UNCTs and regional commissions** to ensure that SIDS' unique challenges are consistently considered in policy discussions and programming and to facilitate cross-country knowledge exchange.

**Develop and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework** featuring strategic indicators and disaggregated data tailored to SIDS, aligned with national development plans and the SDGs to improve tracking, policy formulation and identification of capacity gaps.

**Strengthen Inter-agency task forces or working groups** with clear and enhanced mandates, shared accountability frameworks and sufficient resources so they can more effectively harmonise programming, reduce duplication and improve coordination across sectors.

**Make sure the SIDS Centre of Excellence operates fully as a global hub for knowledge sharing and technical support,** leveraging partnerships with regional organisations, academic institutions, and the private sector.

**Ensure financing strategies reflect the specific vulnerabilities of SIDS and utilise the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index** to inform access to concessional financing and long-term assistance.

**Focus capacity-building efforts on institutional strengthening, public sector training and integration into national planning,** making sure social partners, civil society, young people, women and marginalised groups are included.

**Encourage and support South-South Cooperation** to promote lessons learned and good practices regarding capacity development on SIDS.



**Increasing in-country presence in SIDS** to allow for more continuous and effective technical support, and to facilitate coordination with UN partners.

- 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

**Develop regional platforms for technical exchange and best practices** (e.g. shared monitoring and evaluation systems, regional capacity-building hubs, data and knowledge platforms and regular multi-stakeholder dialogue) especially on green jobs, social protection, formalization, and climate change adaptation.

**Incorporate regional stakeholders in the design and review of UNSDCF's and joint programming** to improve alignment with regional development strategies, minimize duplication and enhance the coherence of interventions across countries.

**Establish regional pooled funding mechanisms and/or integrated financing frameworks** to help mobilize and coordinate limited resources towards achieving common strategic priorities and work with regional stakeholders to **advocate for flexible and innovative financing models tailored to SIDS**.

## **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.

- vi. 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)

The ILO does not see added value in establishing such a mechanism, as this would risk unnecessary duplication of existing inter-agency structures and undermine the principles of coherence and cost-effectiveness that underpin UN development system reform.

The current coordination framework for SIDS is well established within the UN system. ECESA Plus, convened by DESA, is explicitly mandated to coordinate UN system follow-up to politically agreed outcomes such as the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). This mechanism comprises over fifty entities and operates with a system-wide Implementation Matrix, which functions as an accountability framework and tracking tool for UN engagement in SIDS. Regular ECESA Plus meetings ensure strategic alignment and facilitate a coherent response across the UN system. Moreover, OHRLLS holds the designated responsibility for coordinating system-wide support to SIDS. OHRLLS works closely with DESA and relevant UN agencies to foster coherence through inter-agency mechanisms. It also acts as the focal point for UN-SIDS relations, ensuring that the concerns of SIDS are elevated within broader UN policy and programmatic platforms. OHRLLS' mandate and existing partnerships enable it to leverage institutional knowledge, maintain continuity, and avoid fragmentation in the system's response.

The establishment of a new UN-SIDS entity would introduce institutional overlap with both ECESA Plus and OHRLLS and risk fragmenting the already scarce technical and financial resources available within the UN system. It could also blur existing lines of accountability and result in the proliferation of mandates, contrary to the spirit of the QCPR and UN80, which emphasizes streamlined



coordination, joint programming, and strengthened inter-agency collaboration. The creation of additional structures without a clear added value could dilute system-wide focus and divert attention from implementation to institutional restructuring.

Instead, the convening power of existing mechanisms should be reinforced, ensuring consistent participation from all relevant UN entities, and linking their outputs more directly to Resident Coordinator-led processes and regional UN Development Coordination Offices. Strengthening these channels, including through better integration with UNSDCFs in SIDS, will deliver the coherence and alignment sought by ABAS without the need for a new dedicated UN-SIDS entity.