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 (729 words)

1. Enhanced UN System Support for achieving Resilient Prosperity in SIDS (for the UN system) (730 words)

Using the UN implementation Matrix[1] (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).

A. Economic resilience:
- IslandWatch **curriculum review** support for ESD and STEM education initiated (Seychelles). **Creole literacy app** launched (Cabo Verde). **AI Policy Roadmap** developed for the Caribbean.
- 2000 youth supported in the promotion of **cultural and creative industries** through Transcultura, while several youth benefited from the **"**Global Youth Grant scheme" (Caribbean)**.**

Budget: $7,400,000

B. Climate change adaptation
- Resources mobilised for **hydro-climatic hazards**, **freshwater systems and nature-based solutions** resilience building in AIS and Caribbean SIDS. Capacity built in **higher education on climate risk assessment** and adaptive water-resource planning (Dominican Republic).
- 8 ha **mangroves restored** through action-training, combining science and ILK (Cuba). 20 Caribbean SIDS supported in integrating **culture into DRR and Climate Adaptation.**

Budget: $230,000

C. Biodiversity action
- **Biodiversity restoration**, data innovation, and mainstreaming of **ILK** facilitated through reforestation and agroforestry training and in the development of National Ecosystem Assessments (Caribbean).
- Citizen science for **biodiversity monitoring** launched (Seychelles, Mauritius).

Budget: $115,000

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[1] Accountability framework developed to promote and monitor progress with implementation of ABAS

D. Ocean conservation
- Resources mobilised for **Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)** training (Caribbean, Pacific).
- **eDNA surveillance model** on bioinformatics for early detection of invasive species applied and integrated into global alert systems (Fiji).
- Partnerships and resources mobilised to establish **marine and biodiversity sciences Centres of Excellence** in lusophone SIDS (Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe).
- Mainstreaming of **Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)** in **oceans** advanced in through training and development of framework and guidelines for MSP (Tokelau, Fiji).

 Budget: $365,000

E. DRR
- AI-supported **school infrastructure risk assessments** undertaken in 800 schools (Cuba, Dominican). Selected schools retrofitting initiated with UNOPS (Haiti).
- **18+ media institutions** equipped for **emergency broadcasting**, enhancing crisis preparedness, jointly with UNDRR (Caribbean).
- Community-based DRR strategies developed for **living heritage and intangible cultural practices**, including heritage inventories and policy advice on integrating culture in post-disaster needs assessments (Bahamas, Tonga, Vanuatu, Belize, Fiji).
- **Cultural and Natural Heritage** f**ire risk management tool** introduced (Jamaica, Barbados).
- **Underwater archaeological sites** identified, and risk reduction strategies elaborated (Dominican Republic).
- 6 additional SIDS are **Tsunami Ready.**
- Citizen-led *mapathon*: 150 participants mapped 5,500 buildings, enhancing **spatial data for DRR** and emergency planning (Dominican Republic).
- **Countering climate disinformation** through media and information literacy strategies disseminated in the Pacific during Brisbane Conference.
- **Rapid Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) Methodology** developed based on Hurricane Beryl learnings in Grenada, Jamaica and St. Vincent & Grenadines.
- **Climate change and multi-hazard case studies** developed for 7 SIDS (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Trinidad & Tobago)
- **Community Radio for Disaster Resilience** trainings conducted for Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, and Sint Maarten.

Budget: $4,36,253

F. Safe and healthy societies
- Review **national youth policy** supported through intergenerational dialogue and training on holistic youth development and civic engagement (British Virgin Islands).
- **Peacebuilding and conflict resolution** education in secondary school reached 1000+ students (Saint Lucia).
- Multiple support provided on **anti-doping in Sport (**Kiribati, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Timor-Leste).
- Advocacy undertaken for **disability inclusion in sports** with the participation of seven SIDS at high-level conference during the Paris Olympics.

Budget: $115,000

G. Data collection, analysis and use
- **IslandWatch Initiative** for ecosystems' citizen monitoring launched (Seychelles, Mauritius).
- **Youth researchers trained** in developing entrepreneurship and gender equality policy briefs (Bahamas).
- Global **study on Gen-Z civic and political actions** launched with experts from SIDS.
- 10 Caribbean SIDS supported in applying **AI ethics** tools in national AI policies.

- **Open access freshwater digital data platform** developed with standardized offline data collection, integrating citizen-generated data with global datasets for environmental monitoring.

Budget: $65,000

H. Science, tech, innovation
- 600 youth and 200 TVET teachers trained in digital teaching, marketing, cybersecurity, and entrepreneurship. 700 persons (youth organisations, educators, journalists) trained on **Media and information literacy** (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, T&T).
- **STI research and innovation mapping (Go-SPIN)** published for support of national policy implementation (Jamaica).
- 1000+ youth trained in robotics (Mauritius), STEM, environment and climate education (Seychelles) through digital and AI tools.
- 83 youth trained in storytelling of their entrepreneurial journey (Bahamas).

Budget: $245,000

I. Productive Populations
- **ESD and green education** advanced (all 39 SIDS and Tokelau). 11 SIDS using UNESCO-designated sites as sustainability learning hubs. 286 schools in 5 SIDS meet new green standards.
- Open-source **Creole-Portuguese literacy app** for children aged 3-8, reached 10,000 parents, promoting early learning in mother tongue (Cabo Verde).

Budget: $200,000

J. Partnerships
- **Centres of Excellence (CoE)** initiative for marine science and biodiversity in Lusophone SIDS mobilised multiple academic institutions from Germany, Spain and Portugal.
- Partnerships with non-governmental (**Curious Learning**, Cabo Verde), and private sector (**Aleph and Cisco**, Grenada) advanced education through digital modalities.
- **Greening Education Partnership** convenes UN, countries and schools to advance environmental and climate education in all SIDS.
- **Peer learning** is central to several UNESCO initiatives (IslandWatch, CoE, Waste reduction, high-level Water Resilience dialogue, etc).

IV. More effective UN in support of SIDS
- Engagement in IATF-ABAS and IACG-SIDS.
- Contribution to preparatory process of **SIDS4** ((inter-)regional consultations, Interactive Dialogues 1, 4, 5).**13 side events** organised with SIDS.
- Staff for SIDS reinforcement at headquarters and field offices.
- Collaboration with UNDESA, UNOPS and UNDRR.

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 polices 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)
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)

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, <u>750</u> 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? (180)

- Need for greater interagency coordination and adequate understanding of each AFP's mandate and added value.
- Addressing underlying drivers of needs would require an in-depth analysis and understanding of the situation and priorities in each country, and subsequent sequencing and coordination of support to address those in a synergetic way in a UN-as-one approach.
- Lack of resources to ensure presence in all SIDS results in limited capacity to engage. and limited visibility, undermining UNESCO's efforts to engage consistently with stakeholders. It also increases the reliance on support of other UN agencies on the ground who may not have the necessary level of technical expertise in UNESCO specific areas of competence.
- Limited absorption capacity, limited local expertise in UNESCO domains, and limited institutional and human resources in SIDS hamper implementation and delivery of UNESCO programmes and ownership in SIDS.
- Fragmentation of UN articulation system with countries results in poor coordination of national focal points with specialised line ministries. This hampers uptake of UNESCO-specific mandate concerns at country level in UN driven processes.
- Strong earmarking of voluntary contributions to UNESCO severely constrains mobilisation of bilateral resources for SIDS, despite SIDS being a Priority Group of the organisation.
- Limited national and international visibility and outreach of UNESCO's programmes also hinders visibility and recognition of the organisation's pivotal role in support of SIDS.

    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?

UNESCO has limited engagement in joint programmes, particularly in the AIS region. In the Caribbean, UNESCO participated in the elaboration of six joint programmes, and while UNESCO's contribution is mostly in staff time, UNESCO has not been engaged in implementing all six joint programmes. In addition, in the Caribbean, UNESCO participated in all four Results Groups of the current UNSDCF, thus contributing to the implementation of joint workplans.

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?

The lessons learnt from UNESCO engagement in the UNSCDF exercise in SIDS countries as a non-resident agency is that it has improved the understanding of UNESCO's added value by the RCO. While this helped intensify the articulation between the RCO and the UNESCO Regional Offices, it has not yet led to increased joint programming.

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

To enhance the UN's system-wide approach to capacity development in SIDS, we recommend establishing UN multi-country offices in the AIS region, mirroring the recent regional collaboration structure envisioned by SIDS AIS governments.
In addition, the UN system in Cuba could tap into Government cooperation with CARICOM to expand collaboration with this and other regional mechanisms.

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

UNESCO engages regularly regional SIDS entities for its advocacy and information sharing. However, this has not yet led to improved coordination and reduced duplications.

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. As there is no single entity in the United Nations system that has sole responsibility for SIDS, do you see value creating an 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 creating a dedicated UN-SIDS entity may appear to be a logical step toward enhancing coherence and visibility for SIDS issues, such an endeavour could inadvertently divert the already limited resources from substantive programming, especially in the context of current shifts in ODA, and the UN 80 initiative that aims to make the UN system more effective.
It may be more impactful and more appropriate to strengthen the existing architecture, particularly by enhancing the SIDS focus within the OHRLLS and the coordination role of the UNDFESA SIDS Unit. This would help reinforce system-wide collaboration without undermining the mandates and comparative advantages of specialized agencies that already support SIDS.
Existing inter-agency mechanisms, such as the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on SIDS and the clusters that emerged around the SIDS-4 preparatory process, have demonstrated that they can bring together UN agencies around shared objectives and facilitate multidisciplinary support for SIDS. Ensuring that such inter-agency platforms become continuous rather than ad-hoc would allow for a more strategic, coherent, and sustained approach to addressing SIDS-specific challenges.

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.

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

UNESCO has not engaged in this mechanism.

3. HLPF

viii.   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)

The SIDS session of the HLPF should be institutionalized as a recurring, structured platform for policy dialogue and accountability and conclude with actionable recommendations feeding into the HLPF Political Declaration.

To this end, the HLPF could have a dedicated agenda item (e.g. every two years) on the status of ABAS implementation. This regularity would balance operational feasibility and the need for systematic follow-up, allowing Member States and UN entities to report progress, identify gaps, and spotlight successful interventions aligned with the ABAS and the 2030 Agenda.

The ABAS M&E Framework would serve as the backbone of such a structured review mechanism.

To ensure an inclusive and effective SIDS session, the structure should involve: (i) regional updates from SIDS; (ii) interagency reporting coordinated through ECESA Plus; (iii) policy recommendations; and (iv) contributions from youth, civil society, and regional bodies. This approach would elevate ABAS from a stand-alone framework to an integrated driver of SDG implementation in SIDS.

MISSING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX
Referring to the adopted ABAS, UNESCO would like to propose the addition of the folowings into the implementation matrix. These areas are captured in ABAS but missing from the current implementation matrix.

Paragraph (iv) e. Reducing disaster risks, including by building protective infrastructure and enhancing resilience of freshwater and other water systems, and using the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster to increase resilience, and developing systems for managing evacuations and the distribution of basic relief support. Agreed ad ref
→ *No entry addresses freshwater system resilience.*
Paragraph III.E.(a)(iv)(f) Nature-Based Solutions in DRR: *"Promoting the use of nature-based solutions in disaster risk reduction, adaptation and resilience-building."*

→ *While nature-based solutions appear under **oceans and biodiversity**, they are **not linked to DRR** in the implementation matrix.*
Paragraph III.E.(a)(iv)(g): DRR in Education "Integrating disaster risk reduction into formal and informal education and training systems at all levels."

→ *No education-related DRR integration is cited in the matrix's education or DRR sections.*
Paragraph III.E.(a)(iv)(h): Community-Based DRR "Enhancing community-based disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures, particularly for vulnerable groups including women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly."

→ *The implementation matrix focuses on institutional financing and infrastructure but omits community-based and vulnerability-focused DRR efforts.*

Paragraph III.I.(a)(i) "Increasing access to justice and the protection of human rights for all, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and people in vulnerable situations, including by strengthening national human rights institutions and promoting inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making."

→ *No mention of justice systems, human rights institutions, or participation mechanisms.*

Paragraph 9. III.J.(a)(v) *"Building trust and social cohesion by promoting inclusive policies and strengthening the social contract."*

→ *No reference to social cohesion or inclusive governance policies.*