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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**To Prepare an EU Position in view of the United Nations Third International  
Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

## Introduction

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a heterogeneous group of 38 countries in the African, Asian and American regions (see list in Annex 1), of which 36 are ACP countries. In spite of their differences and variations,<sup>1</sup> they share common features and needs, face common challenges and experience specific vulnerabilities across the economic, social and environmental dimensions. They are all greatly affected by climate change and confronted with rising sea levels, and face frequent natural and man-made disasters. They have a rich habitat, unique biodiversity, and an important cultural heritage with tourism potential. However, that also makes them highly dependent on coastal and marine resources and on vulnerable biodiversity resources, with several being dependent on the tourism industry. The conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystems services are thus crucial to them. Moreover, many countries are affected by food insecurity, lack of energy access, high deficits and levels of indebtedness, increasing social and security problems, limited freshwater resources, land degradation and waste management problems. Several of these countries are small, lack domestic markets and economies of scale, face geographic isolation and have limited institutional capacities.

The United Nations Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will take place in Samoa from 1 to 4 September 2014. Previous SIDS Conferences were held in Barbados (1994), where a Programme of Action was approved, and in Mauritius (2005), where the Mauritius Strategy and Declaration were approved. Moreover, 2014 has been proclaimed the International Year of the SIDS.

The objectives of the Third SIDS Conference are:

- Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy;
- Seek a renewed political commitment addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of those documents, including mobilisation of resources and assistance for the SIDS;
- Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS and ways/means to address them, including strengthening of collaborative partnerships between the SIDS and the international community;
- Identify priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

The modalities of the Conference were laid down by UNGA Resolutions adopted in November 2012 (Res. 67/207) and December 2013 (Res. 68/67). Res. 67/207 stated that the Conference would result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document. Res. 68/67 decided that the theme of the conference would be '*The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships*'. Preparatory committee meetings (PRECOMS) will take place in New York between February and June 2014. The first PRECOM (24-26 February 2014) will discuss further the objectives and the substantive themes of the Conference, as well as organisational and procedural

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<sup>1</sup> Not all SIDS are islands (Guyana, Guinea-Bissau, Belize), not all are small (Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Cuba), and some show a higher level of development (Singapore, Bahamas) and they range from poor Least Developed Countries to Low and Upper Middle Income Countries.

matters. The Conference's Zero Draft Outcome Document should be tabled after that meeting and not later than 14 March 2014. Agreement on the Outcome Document is expected at the second PRECOM meeting (21-25 June 2014). The Conference in Samoa will consist of a series of plenary meetings devoted to formal statements, in parallel with multi-stakeholder dialogues focusing on showcasing and announcement of partnerships, complemented by side events (briefings, seminars, workshops and panel discussions).

A SIDS preparatory process took place in 2013, involving national consultations, three regional meetings and one interregional meeting. At the interregional preparatory meeting, held in Barbados from 26 to 28 August 2013, a Ministerial Declaration (*Needhams Point Bridgetown Declaration*) was adopted, which underlined the main points arising from discussions at the regional meetings. A document adopted after that meeting, the Barbados Outcome Document, will provide input to the initial discussions in New York. Thematic meetings organised by the UN also contributed to the preparatory process.

Financial support amounting to EUR 300,000 for the organisation of the Conference has been given to the Government of Samoa through the EDF Technical Cooperation Facility. EU Member States have also provided financial support to the UN Trust Fund created for the SIDS Conference.

#### **Priority areas identified at previous SIDS conferences and preparatory meetings**

The outcome documents from previous SIDS conferences covered a wide range of areas taking account of a holistic approach to sustainable development while reflecting the outcome of previous Rio Conferences on Sustainable Development.

The 1994 Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) highlighted a large number of areas where action was deemed necessary to address SIDS' challenges and vulnerabilities: climate change and sea level rise; natural and environmental disasters; management of waste; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; energy resources; tourism resources; biodiversity resources; national institutions and administrative capacity; regional institutions and technical cooperation; transport and communication; science and technology; and human resource development. Following a review of that programme in 1999, six areas were prioritised as needing more urgent attention: climate change, natural and environmental disasters and climate variability, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources, tourism and energy.

The 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) underlined additional areas for action, notably: sustainable production and consumption, resilience, good governance, health, trade, the impact of graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, knowledge management and culture, while also giving attention to the SIDS' capacity for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A review of this strategy in 2009 pointed up other issues: strengthening data management capacities of SIDS for monitoring and evaluation purposes; enhancing strategic partnerships; assessing effectiveness of UN system support to SIDS; results-oriented approach and improved measures to effectively address SIDS' vulnerabilities; exploring the recognition of SIDS as a special category in the UN.

The Barbados Outcome Document acknowledged the SIDS' efforts in implementing the BPOA and the MSI, underlined the mainstreaming of sustainable development principles into SIDS' national development plans, policies and strategies, and highlighted SIDS leadership on addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity and promoting renewable energy. It noted some progress in achieving the MDGs, particularly on education, health, gender equality and environment, but stressed that such progress has been uneven and there are still significant shortcomings in a number of areas. It recognised that high rates of unemployment, particularly for women and youth, and migration of skilled labour and the resulting brain drain are factors that hinder progress in achieving sustainable development objectives.

Actions for further implementation of the BPOA and the MSI are still wide-ranging: climate change; management of chemicals and waste; social development (including gender equality, social protection and culture); health and communicable and non-communicable diseases; food security; oceans and seas; biodiversity; forests; sustainable energy; disaster risk reduction; sustainable consumption and production. Health and non-communicable diseases are stressed as major emerging challenges and systemic imbalances are emphasised in relation to trade, participation in the international financial system and debt sustainability. The document recognises the role of a green economy and information and communication technologies (ICT) as new drivers of sustainable development and also underlines financing, capacity building, technology transfer and data collection/management and partnerships as key enabling factors for achieving sustainable development.

With a view to producing a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document, preparations for the next SIDS Conference should aim to prioritise specific areas for further action, although the assessment of both progress and shortcomings might address a wider range of sectors and issues. The EU should support calls for such prioritisation, in particular during the first PRECOM that will discuss the objectives and the substantive themes. At the same time, the EU can demonstrate how it has been actively contributing to programmes and projects, how it has addressed the areas covered by the BPOA, the MSI and the Barbados Outcome Document, in readiness for addressing SIDS' main concerns and cross-cutting issues.

### **Relevance of the SIDS Conference to the EU**

The EU has an interest in playing a central role at the Third SIDS Conference, through active participation both at the Conference and during the preparatory meetings in New York.

Firstly, the EU is a main donor to several of the SIDS. The Conference gives an opportunity to underscore the level of EU support to these countries, show evidence of successful projects and programmes at national regional levels and confirm the EU's commitment to continue supporting the SIDS. The timing of the Conference is relevant in this respect. Indicative plans for the Multiannual Financial Framework and its external instruments will be in place in September 2014. The Conference can thus contribute to identifying more detailed actions.

Secondly, the theme of the Conference — focusing on partnerships — offers scope for demonstrating and strengthening existing partnerships with SIDS, individually or with groups of SIDS, and identifying

new and future partnerships with them, involving other actors (International Financial Institutions, private sector, NGOs, research organisations, etc.). There is also scope for enhanced cooperation in relation to several thematic areas building on existing cooperation between the EU and SIDS, including partnerships at regional or national level. Given the geographical position of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and the common characteristics and challenges that they share with the SIDS, cooperation between them should be pursued in the interests of all.

Thirdly, the Conference can provide a platform for promoting and advancing the EU's political cooperation with SIDS and establishing alliances with them in relation to key UN negotiations and initiatives. The date of the Conference is also very timely for that purpose. This is particularly relevant in the case of climate change, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity, as well as for drawing up the post-2015 development agenda. Such alliances are also important on other issues that are priorities for both the EU and SIDS.

Against this background, the EU's main strategic and tactical objectives for the Third SIDS Conference would be:

- Underscore current support from the EU and confirm the EU's commitment to continue supporting SIDS;
- Strengthen existing and develop future partnerships with SIDS and other partners;
- Promote and advance EU political cooperation with SIDS;
- Establish alliances with SIDS in relation to negotiations on major UN conferences and high-level meetings or initiatives.

#### **Underscore current support from the EU and confirm the EU's commitment to continue supporting the SIDS**

The EU is the main development cooperation donor in the Caribbean region and the second biggest donor, after Australia, to the Pacific region. The EU is also a main donor for the other SIDS. However, the EU and its Member States will together be the SIDS' main donor. The EU is also the main trade partner for the majority of SIDS (the second largest, after the US as regards the Caribbean region).

For the period 2007-2012 an amount of over EUR3 100 million has been disbursed to SIDS, comprising: EUR1 969 million through the DCI/EDF geographic/bilateral programmes; EUR 676 million through the thematic programmes (food, security, environment, human social development, sugar and banana programmes, migration, non-state actors), the Food Facility and support through the Global Climate Change Alliance (of which one third benefits SIDS); EUR 76 million under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Instrument for Stability; and EUR 226 million through humanitarian aid. To that can be added the sum of EUR 280 million from the Caribbean and Pacific regional indicative programmes 2007-2013 (EUR 114 million for the Pacific and EUR 165 million for the Caribbean) benefiting SIDS in both regions. This would raise the total amount benefiting SIDS countries during the period 2007-2013 to around EUR 3 500 million.

A large proportion of EU support is being provided through budget support, notably for programmes on poverty reduction, economic recovery and reform, support to stabilisation and debt reduction,

showing the relevance of budget support in SIDS. Other projects and programmes address a variety of areas, such as: the impacts of natural disasters, including humanitarian aid and disaster risk management and reduction, social development, education, health, water and waste, energy (notably promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency), climate change and biodiversity, fisheries, private sector development, covering competitiveness and trade, food security, forests, transport infrastructure, protection of culture heritage, justice and security, and human resource development. Several projects/programmes focus specifically on capacity building, strengthening governance and supporting civil society to address SIDS' weaknesses on capacity development and administrative capacity.

Several programmes and projects implemented at regional and national levels and addressing SIDS' challenges have proved successful and had a relevant impact.

For example, at regional level, the implementation of the MSI is the main objective of a project for SIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, while other projects promote the sustainable management of coastal zones of the Indian Ocean. Other projects in the Caribbean region support sustainable development in progressing towards the MDGs, the establishment of a Caribbean Biological Corridor (Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba), the Institutional Support and Capacity Building for Disaster Management, the contribution to the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility and the Caribbean Regional Weather Radar System, the activity of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, the development of renewable energy, the cooperation in the areas of trade and environment (Haiti and Dominican Republic), as well as the creation of non-state actor advisory panels. In the Pacific region, there is a project that supports the management of oceanic and coastal fisheries in the Pacific Islands, contributing to cooperation between SIDS and OCTs, while another project focuses more specifically on the sustainable use of highly migratory marine resources in the Pacific region, such as tuna. Another regional project covering Western Pacific countries (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) promotes the generation and adaptation of improved agricultural technologies to mitigate climate change-imposed risks to food production. Finally, in the field of disaster risk reduction, it should be highlighted that several projects are financed under the Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Facility and the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programme.

At national level, major budget support programmes on poverty reduction or economic reforms in Cape Verde, Mauritius and Seychelles have had a relevant impact on the sustainable development of these countries. Another budget support programme in Guyana is focused on climate change through reforestation and forest preservation to mitigate its effect on the sea and biodiversity. Climate change is also addressed in the support given to climate change adaptation in Jamaica and Belize, developing national administration capacities to deal with climate change in Haiti and the work of the Climate Change Trust Fund in Maldives.<sup>2</sup> Other successful projects in Haiti focus on water sanitation and the capacity of Haitian authorities to deal with disaster risk reduction. Renewable energy is stimulated by projects concerning geothermal power in Dominica and alternative energy sources in rural and peri-urban communities in Timor Leste and Belize. Two successful projects in

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<sup>2</sup> The Caribbean Investment Facility (CIF) includes a Climate Change Window to support the implementation of projects helping partner countries to tackle climate change through mitigation and/or adaptation measure

Cuba address the modernisation of local agriculture (PLAMA) and the sustainability of food production (BASAL). Transport, water and sanitation are the focal points of successful projects in San Tome and waste management in Fiji, while support is provided to eco-tourism and economic diversification in Barbados, transport accessibility in Solomon Islands and in Timor Leste, biodiversity, local development and culture conservation in Guinea Bissau.

It is expected that the EU will remain an important donor to the SIDS during the next programming period (2014-2020) of the EDF, DCI and other funds.<sup>3</sup> While the Agenda for Change calls for the EU to target its resources where they are most needed to address poverty reduction (only 11 SIDS are LDCs) almost all of the SIDS countries are African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and these countries will continue to be eligible to benefit from regional and thematic programmes. Moreover, the EU is not just taking account of GDP (or income levels) when deciding on resource allocation, but looking to other factors, such as vulnerability, which is of particular concern to SIDS.<sup>4</sup> The EU will also be looking to other instruments such as blending of funds, and has launched specific regional mechanisms (e.g. the recent Caribbean and Pacific Investment Facilities, added to the pre-existing Latin American one) and works closely with International Financial Institutions, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank and EU Member States national development agencies for this purpose. The event that the UN plans to organise with the private sector and IFIs on 30-31 August 2014 in Samoa could be an appropriate occasion for promoting the blending approach.

Budget support continues to be an important means of assisting SIDS. The 2011 Budget Support Communication made special reference to SIDS and to the challenges facing them, including structural vulnerability, climate change and other environmental shocks. The Budget Support Guidelines issued in September 2012 pay particular attention to specific SIDS characteristics, including the size of the population, the dominance of one or more sectors, the need for capacity development and the usually limited size of the administration. The Guidelines provide for the design of budget support programmes to be adapted to these characteristics, e.g. by giving preference to Sector Reform Contracts, and by recommending greater reliance on multilateral and regional donors.

Besides development cooperation, 16 SIDS participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme, benefiting from an amount of around EUR9 million with projects in the areas of IST and ICT networks and partnerships, e-Science, biodiversity, oceans, climate change, health, and natural disasters. The EU has already supported a network for science, technology and innovation cooperation between EU and Pacific partners, including partners from several SIDS (PACENET now renewed with PACE-NET Plus) and covering SIDS priority areas. Moreover, under BEST-2012 the PACIOCEA project carrying out a South Pacific Ocean Ecosystem Analysis should also be highlighted.

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<sup>3</sup> At least 20% of the European Union budget for 2014-2020 will be spent on climate-related projects and policies, following the European Parliament's approval in November 2013 of the 2014-2020 EU budget (Multi-annual Financial Framework, MFF). This is on top of climate finance from individual EU Member States. This budget marks a major step forward in supporting SIDS partner countries in their climate-resilient, low carbon development.

<sup>4</sup> SIDS suffer from an inherent vulnerability to natural and man-made external shocks to which the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement makes special mention. An EU-financed pilot project implemented by UN DESA is testing a methodology/tool for monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the BPOA and MSI aiming to develop a vulnerability-resilience profiling index.

The EU also provides support to SIDS through Sustainable Fisheries Agreements<sup>5</sup> which are intended to allow EU vessels to fish for surplus stocks in the partner country's exclusive economic zone, in a legally regulated environment. Promoting sustainable fisheries development in the partner countries, by strengthening their administrative and scientific capacity, is achieved through a focus on sustainable fisheries management, monitoring, control and surveillance. In 2013 the total amount of support to SIDS was about EUR 7 million.

### **Strengthen existing and develop future partnerships with the SIDS countries and other partners**

While '*genuine and durable partnerships*' is the central theme of the SIDS Conference, these have not been strictly defined, although it is recognised that partnerships are a critical mechanism for advancing the development of SIDS. A background document presented by Samoa has pointed out a few elements of such partnerships: go beyond a pure donor-recipient relationship; anchored to national ownership, based upon mutual trust, equity, respect and accountability, engagement of civil society, private sector, NGOs and other relevant actors; delivered through predictable commitments based on mutual accountability. Discussions during the SIDS regional meetings have endorsed this approach and provided examples of successful experiences in each region in implementing partnerships with other partners. The understanding is that these partnerships can take different forms, involving development partners as well as civil society, private sector and other major groups, in the context of North-South, South-South or just SIDS-SIDS cooperation, involving all SIDS, whether Least Developed or Middle Income countries.

Examples of successful partnerships highlighted in SIDS meetings include: the *Global Island Partnerships (GLISPA)* promoting action for island conservation and sustainable livelihoods, the *Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge* promoting innovative regional approaches to climate change adaptation, the *Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI)*, the *Caribbean Biological Corridor*, the *Micronesian Challenge*, the *University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS)*, the *SIDS-DOCK Renewable Energy Programme*, the *Petrocaribe* and the *Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Development*, the *Pacific Water Partnership on Sustainable Water Management*, the *Regional Centre* for creating capacities for assessing risks and vulnerabilities in the Caribbean region, and the *Barbados Sustainable Energy for All* process.

The EU is part of or has promoted initiatives at regional level involving SIDS that integrate effectively into the partnership approach. For instance, the EU already supports *GLISPA* and the *Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge*. In the same region the EU is involved in supporting a partnership for establishing *regional maritime security* aiming to fight piracy, and a *Fisheries Partnership Agreement* has been concluded between the EU and Seychelles providing a relevant policy framework for sustainable fisheries in the region. In the Caribbean region, the EU supports the establishment of the *Caribbean Biological Corridor* and promotes further partnerships involving the authorities of Haiti, Dominican Republic and Cuba. There is also the *EU-Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency*, the *Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre*, the *Caribbean Policy Research Institute* and the *UE-IDB partnership on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency*. In the Pacific region the EU-

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<sup>5</sup> These agreements focus on resource conservation and environmental sustainability, ensuring that all EU vessels are subject to the same rules of control and transparency. In return, the EU pays the partner countries a financial contribution composed of two distinct parts: access rights to the EEZ and sectoral financial support.



*NZ Energy Access Partnership for the Pacific*, launched in 2013, should be highlighted as a concrete outcome of the Pacific Energy Summit and benefiting the SIDS in the Pacific. Moreover, the *Climate Change Trust Fund in Maldives*, the *PALMA and BASAL projects* in Cuba and support to the Papua New Guinea Forest Authority to implement a continuous and multi-purpose *National Forest Inventory* are also considered as successful examples of partnership with other donors and governments. The networks on science, technology and innovation, notably *PACENET* and *PACE-NET Plus* supported by the 7<sup>th</sup> EU research programme, can also be considered as examples of successful partnerships with SIDS.

UNDESA has launched a SIDS partnership platform through the SIDS Conference website, acting as a registry of relevant partnerships that focuses on: climate change and energy, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism, natural disaster resilience, health and communicable diseases. Some SIDS are exploring the possibility of developing a *SIDS Partnerships Support Framework*, to be launched at the Conference, that would be more than a simple registry of partnerships and commitments expressing a SIDS common wish to see partnerships focusing more on long-term institution building. Active participation by the EU in these schemes would be desirable in order to show the EU's involvement in partnerships being developed with SIDS. The most relevant partnerships can be presented during the Conference's multistakeholder dialogues. Moreover, a side event is planned by the European Commission to present the research network *PACE-NET Plus*. The Conference can also provide an opportunity to underscore the importance of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and its actions at country level, as ten of the approximately 40 countries involved in the current monitoring process of the GPEDC are SIDS.

### **Promote and advance our political cooperation with SIDS**

The EU seeks relationships with the SIDS built on strategic political cooperation between equal partners. The current level of cooperation between the EU and the SIDS demonstrates that the traditional development relationship has already been enriched by other forms of cooperation. It is necessary to ensure that the EU-SIDS partnership evolves into a more comprehensive relationship, which includes enhanced and closer political and economic cooperation and cooperation on global challenges. While it is clear that both the SIDS and the EU have numerous partnerships and alliances with other countries, strong EU-SIDS political cooperation has obvious advantages for both parties, including the special relations with OCTs.

Besides the bilateral political cooperation/dialogue with each SIDS country, more general political cooperation with SIDS is based on regional agreements and regional partnerships established with specific groups of countries. Almost all of the SIDS are part of the Cotonou Agreement, which includes specific mechanisms for political dialogue and cooperation. Regional political dialogues also take regularly place with the CARIFORUM group (CARICOM countries plus the Dominican Republic). Particular strategies were established in relation to the Pacific Islands in 2006<sup>6</sup> and for development issues in 2012,<sup>7</sup> as well as with the Caribbean region in 2012.<sup>8</sup> These aimed, inter alia, to deepen policy and political dialogue and enhance the political dimension of the EU's partnerships with these

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<sup>6</sup> EU Relations with Pacific Islands – A Strategy for Strengthened Partnership.

<sup>7</sup> Towards a renewed EU-Pacific development Partnership.

<sup>8</sup> Joint EU-Caribbean Partnership Strategy.

regions. Moreover, the Nuku'alofa Declaration was signed in 2007 between the EU and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) for enhancing the EU-PIF political dialogue, and other dialogues are taking place under the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement.

These regional strategies aim to promote regional integration and cooperation and identify objectives and priority joint actions. Several areas for enhanced joint cooperation are common to both regions and would relate to SIDS' common challenges and vulnerabilities, such as climate change, energy, biodiversity, innovation, science and technology, education, sustainable management of marine resources, human rights, security, rule of law, and good governance.

Elements of enhanced political cooperation already exist in these regional strategies, adding to the traditional development cooperation and trade pillars. Both stress the importance of coordinating positions, join forces, and jointly undertake specific initiatives and actions in regional and multilateral fora and on global issues. The development of joint regional positions within the UN system, including giving support to each other's initiatives, is expressly mentioned in the Caribbean strategy,<sup>9</sup> while the Pacific strategy focuses on improved coordination on climate change at the UN, including the promotion of common positions on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

There is no formal or informal mechanism of political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and SIDS as a whole, although common positions have been adopted in climate change negotiations, notably with the AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States), a political coalition of SIDS that defends their interests in the UN. The preparation for the SIDS Conference and the conference itself offers an opportunity to reflect on the feasibility and utility of having EU-SIDS/AOSIS informal regular consultation and dialogue on topics of common interest and other issues of major concern to SIDS. From the EU point of view it could also include CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) aspects.

Moreover, the EU's global interest in supporting regional integration processes can contribute to more awareness and cooperation amongst the SIDS and with specific regions which are relevant to the SIDS. The EU will continue to offer support to regional integration, and can contribute actively by sharing its knowledge and experience in this regard.

### **Establish alliances with the SIDS in relation to negotiations on major UN conferences and high-level meetings and initiatives**

The SIDS Conference in 2014 and the role that this event and SIDS/AOSIS can play in future UN negotiations give the EU good reason to consider duly the potential for alliances with SIDS/AOSIS in relation to major UN conferences and high-level meetings. The EU and the SIDS would represent a bloc of 66 countries, more than one third of the UN membership.

On climate change, AOSIS has been an important EU ally in recent negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 2011 in Durban, the EU was able to push for the final deal thanks to the alliance built with progressive countries including the AOSIS together with other LDCs and the Latin American countries, and EU positions were also supported by AOSIS at the

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<sup>9</sup> The regional strategy with the Caribbean region stresses the importance of aligning positions between the EU and the Caribbean countries, representing 42 countries, almost one quarter of the UN membership.

Doha (2012) and Warsaw (2013) Conferences. In Warsaw, agreement was reached on preparing for an International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, a strong request from the SIDS. The EU is keen on further engaging and contributing to the work of the Executive Committee of the Mechanism, in particular that it will add value and help developing countries, notably SIDS, in their efforts to fight loss and damage associated with climate change.

Collective efforts in Warsaw also delivered a positive outcome on process and substance and these collective efforts will have to be stepped up in order to deliver more pre-2020 ambition (which AOSIS has been pushing both before and during Warsaw, in close cooperation with the EU), as well as an ambitious new international agreement in 2015 that will address both adaptation and mitigation. All countries were invited to prepare their mitigation commitments in 2014 and present those commitments in the form of 'intended contributions' in early 2015. AOSIS members are key players in this regard: to help overcome the 'firewall' between so-called developed and developing countries, push for legally binding commitments to be adopted in 2015, and ensure that a critical mass of key players comes forward well in advance of December 2015. Particularly, the SIDS Conference will provide an additional platform for discussions in this regard to support, facilitate and complement negotiations under the UNFCCC. In addition to ongoing efforts to define an adaptation objective in the 2015 agreement that will highlight the EU's preference for a qualitative goal in the context of sustainable development, the EU will continue to support the implementation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework and the efforts of developing countries to become more resilient to a changing climate.

EU alliances with AOSIS can also play an essential role in view of the initiative of the UNSG to organise a climate change high-level event in the margins of the UNGA General Debate in September 2014. It is also important to build on the current close partnership with the Pacific region, demonstrated by the adoption of the '*Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership*' during the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in 2013, committing Pacific Island countries to curtailing their own greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in order to put moral pressure on the big polluters. Moreover, the CARIFORUM-EU Declaration on climate change and energy committed both parties to work together to enhance cooperation in international negotiations under these topics. Finally, it is to be noted that the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) also serves as a platform for dialogue and cooperation for the SIDS.

The SIDS Conference should also contribute to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Japan, 14-18 March 2015) that is expected to adopt a post-2015 international framework for disaster risk reduction (post Hyogo Framework), which will certainly be of great relevance to SIDS. The latter have experienced some of the largest disaster losses (6 of the 10 countries with the highest proportion of annual average losses provoked by disasters are SIDS). Moreover, out of the 35 countries with relatively high mortality from multiple hazards, 10 are SIDS, which is amplified by SIDS' small size and exposure to global environmental challenges. Therefore, SIDS need to place risk management and resilience at the centre of their policies and strategies. The preparatory committee meetings of the Disaster Risk Reduction Conference will take place in July and November 2014, thus after the preparatory committee of the SIDS Conference and both just prior to and after the SIDS Conference.

The EU is actively involved in the preparation of this Conference. The European Commission plans to adopt in spring 2014 a Communication setting out its position for the future Hyogo Framework Agreement and building on the achievements of a range of EU policies including disaster risk management, environmental protection, internal security, climate change adaptation, research and innovation, as well as the new resilience agenda integrated into both EU development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Given the importance for SIDS of the new international disaster risk reduction framework, the SIDS Conference provides an opportunity to build alliances for an ambitious revision of the Hyogo Framework, building on its successes and addressing implementation gaps and emerging challenges that will pose increasing risks in the future. There are also significant opportunities for the EU and SIDS to work together to ensure consistency between this process and the other relevant discussions at international level for defining the new climate change agreement and the post-2015 development agenda.

EU Council Conclusions of June 2013 emphasised that the needs and development aspirations of countries in special situations such as the SIDS should be fully reflected in the post-2015 framework. SIDS take the view that the post-2015 development agenda should include SIDS-specific issues given their unique and persistent structural vulnerabilities. The Co-Chairs Summary of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Open Working Group (OWG) Sixth Session made it clear that it is vital for SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda to take into account the particular needs of countries in special situations. SIDS' aims in relation to the post-2015 development agenda as stated in the Barbados Outcome Document, notably *'that it places sustainable development at its core', 'that it is people-centred, that it focuses on eradicating poverty, engendering equality and achieving environmental sustainability'*, address objectives that are central to the EU.

There is thus scope for building alliances with SIDS in relation to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, in particular as the SIDS Conference will take place just prior to the launch of the formal negotiations for drawing up such agenda. The UNSG report *'A Life of Dignity for All'* included the SIDS Conference as part of the preparatory process for the post-2015 development agenda. Moreover, future meetings of the SDG OWG and the Intergovernmental Sustainable Development Financing Experts Committee will take place in parallel with the SIDS Conference. PRECOMs and the report of the UNSG summarising the work of the SDG OWG and the Financing Experts Committee are expected to be released prior to the SIDS Conference, thus offering input for discussions on this theme at the Conference.

The timing of the SIDS Conference is also appropriate for outreach and gathering alliances in the run-up to the 12<sup>th</sup> CoP of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in October 2014 in Korea and the 1<sup>st</sup> MoP of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS). Many islands have unique and irreplaceable ecosystems, often comprising many endemic plant and animal species and their habitats which are key to the livelihood, economy, well-being and cultural identity of their inhabitants. Elements of ecosystem-based adaptation for integrating resilience to climate change and disaster risks contribute to the Aichi Target 10, which is due in 2015 and is highly relevant to the islands. The SIDS Conference provides an ideal forum for highlighting the work carried out in the context of the CBD programme on Island Biodiversity, including the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA).

In addition, Island Biodiversity will be the theme of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May 2014 and the International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change in Small Island States will take place in October 2014 in Guadeloupe, co-organised by the European Commission, Guadeloupe, CBD, the IUCN and other partners. This conference should highlight the potential for synergistic partnerships between SIDS and the OCTs, raising awareness of the importance of the OCTs and their cooperation with SIDS for the achievement of international and EU biodiversity targets as well as their high vulnerability to climate change and adaptation needs.

With respect to oceans and fisheries, SIDS generally are in favour of sustainable exploitation of oceans' resources and adherence to the legal framework established by UNCLOS, and are therefore natural allies of the EU in that context. However, on fisheries, the Pacific SIDS push for what they call '*islandisation of resources*' by which they imply that they should have a higher share in fisheries for highly migratory and straddling fish stocks in their regions. Although the SIDS mostly follow the G77 line in relevant UN forums, there is good cooperation between the EU and the SIDS as evidenced by the recent work undertaken jointly for both the Sustainable Fisheries and the Oceans and Law of the Sea Resolutions with regard to Ocean Acidification.

The SIDS seem to be fully supportive of the need for a new UNCLOS implementing agreement in the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ WG). The SIDS Conference can offer an opportunity for mobilising SIDS countries to encourage them to take a higher political profile with a view to launching the negotiations for an UNCLOS implementing agreement on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. It is also to be noted that SIDS are actively promoting the need for a specific Oceans SDG in the context of the discussions in preparation of the post-2015 development agenda at the UN and that several SIDS have been discussing and promoting the term "blue economy". The SIDS Conference can also provide a platform to enhance current constructive discussions about the conservation and management of whales in the context of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), building on current initiatives for the conservation of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and their habitats in the Pacific Islands region. It should be highlighted that the Joint EU-Caribbean Strategy, recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development and support frameworks aimed at protecting its fragile ecosystems and unique bio-diversity.

Other issues that pose key challenges for the sustainable development of the SIDS, such as water and waste management, sustainable forest management, sustainable energy, food security and nutrition, employment and decent work, social protection, green economy, sustainable consumption and production, gender equality, culture (including protection of culture heritage) crime and security and financial-fiscal frameworks, should also deserve to be given adequate attention during the Conference in view of related discussions at UN level or their relevance to regional initiatives.

It is recognised that SIDS lack capacity for adequate waste and hazardous materials management as well as a comprehensive approach to water management including access to safe drinking water, although current efforts in the Pacific region through the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) contribute to that by helping countries in the region to fulfil obligations under the Multilateral Environment Agreements. Moreover, the promotion of sustainable forest

management remains a long-term objective for the EU, which has been working with a number of countries to improve forest governance through projects and bilateral agreements, notably through the FLEGT initiative. The SIDS Conference could thus provide an opportunity for the promotion of FLEGT, as only one SIDS (Guyana) is currently participating in FLEGT negotiations.

SIDS can also be very useful EU partners for implementing global initiatives on sustainable energy, such the UNSG initiative Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL). High dependency on imported fossil fuels, inefficiency and high costs of their energy sectors, lack of access to sustainable energy services and the related impact on climate change, make them very supportive of efforts promoting sustainable and renewable energy. The EU has been a key partner in this context, through projects and regional initiatives with the Pacific countries and in the Caribbean region. The partnership with the Pacific countries on sustainable energy launched at the Pacific Energy Summit jointly co-hosted in 2013 by the EU and New Zealand is worthy of note, while in the Caribbean, sustainable energy and energy efficiency is a relevant priority of EU cooperation with several countries. Sustainable energy will certainly be a key sector addressed during the SIDS Conference, fostering the development of new partnerships. The EU can use this opportunity to underscore its role in the implementation of the SE4ALL, demonstrating the example of the partnership with the Pacific and Caribbean countries, and build alliances for the promotion of sustainable energy sources and renewable energy.

On sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security, a challenge for many SIDS is to enhance their agricultural productive capacity in the coming years. This will have positive spin-off effects not only in terms of jobs and growth but also in terms of stemming migratory flows. High-level events such as the UN International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in November 2014 will be key to bringing the EU and SIDS together to look into challenges and opportunities for improving nutrition presented by changes in the global economy and in food systems and by advances in science and technology. Many SIDS will need to become more resilient and adopt targeted climate-smart agricultural practices given the (negative) impacts of climate change and extreme natural disasters. The post-2015 agenda will also be relevant to SIDS as regards the future positioning of sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security in the post-MDG context.

Social development is highlighted in the Barbados Outcome Document as crucial to ensuring results for sustainable development both now and in the future. It calls for measures to enhance social protection and inclusion, to improve well-being and guarantee opportunities for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. It includes a commitment to people-centered and focused approach to poverty eradication, which should ensure access to social services including education, health, food, water and sanitation and access to productive resources, including credit, land, training, technology, knowledge and information. It also highlighted the need for improved access to and increased investment in formal and non-formal education, training and skills development for all to address high rates of unemployment (particularly in women and youth), migration of labour and brain drain.

SIDS consider a green economy to be an important tool for enhancing policy-making and achieving sustainable development, and call on all countries to promote sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, which is seen as an essential requirement for sustainable development. They can thus be important EU allies in promoting a green economy and SCP in UN discussions, notably within the G77.

The Barbados Outcome Document also recognises that insufficient account is taken of issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which is a major priority for the EU. This is a subject on which alliances can be built with the SIDS for promoting it at the UN as an essential cross-cutting issue for sustainable development, bearing in mind that problems are often raised by other countries during negotiations within the UN and other fora. In the same context, the EU can underline the importance of the SIDS' culture, often related to indigenous people's heritage, which is another key factor underscored by SIDS countries and which is addressed in several projects financed by the EU as having a direct link with tolerance building between communities, social inclusion and cohesion. This topic also ties in with the UNGA Special Session on Indigenous People in September 2014 as well as a planned UNGA high-level meeting on culture and sustainable development.

In addition, while the peace and security of SIDS are affected more and more by organised crime, including drugs, human trafficking, piracy, illicit trade in small arms and terrorism, the EU has been giving increased attention to support for programmes in the justice and security sector, notably at regional level and in close cooperation with UN agencies (e.g. UNODC). Crime and security is already a EU priority area in the case of the Caribbean region, including enhanced cooperation that can also involve Central America, and a successful area for partnerships in the Indian Ocean. This is thus another subject that provides scope for building alliances and for stepping up cooperation and partnership among several partners and actors. There is also scope for further cooperation in the field of financial-tax regulations and avoidance, off-shore financing and "fiscal havens" which very often affect the economies and reputations of the Caribbean and Pacific SIDS.

Finally, SIDS attach great significance to trade aspects, stressing their vulnerability and disadvantage with regard to traditional markets. They underscore the importance of an effective trade policy and the role that trade-related assistance can play in strengthening their capacity to participate in the multilateral trading system, as well as partnerships undertaken in this respect by UNCTAD and the ITC. While highlighting the fact that trade-related assistance remains available to all developing countries, including those that have graduated from bilateral aid through EU regional programmes, the EU can underline the role the Economic Partnership Agreements can play (e.g. those concluded with CARIFORUM and Papua new Guinea) and the part that developing countries, including SIDS, should play in making trade work for inclusive growth and sustainable development, notably through sound domestic policies and taking account of the UN negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

## **Conclusion**

The EU recognises that the SIDS face specific vulnerabilities and many challenges but can also find solutions for implementing sustainable development and is ready to listen to their concerns. However, if the political outcome document is to be focused and forward-looking, prioritisation of actions will be necessary to eventually make implementation more targeted and needs-specific.

The EU and its Member States will be ready to actively contribute to strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones with the SIDS, together with other donors, and to involve

other actors and stakeholders, including the OCTs that can act as regional hubs or centres of excellence in their respective regions.

The SIDS Conference offers an opportunity to turn the EU-SIDS partnership into a more comprehensive relationship, with closer political and economic cooperation on global challenges. It provides a platform for building alliances in relation to upcoming UN conferences and negotiations on areas of common interest such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity and sustainable energy, as well as for drawing up the post-2015 development agenda. Informal consultations could take place with the SIDS in this respect, contributing to common EU-SIDS positions at the Conference.



## **ANNEX - List of SIDS countries**

### **AIMS Region (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea)**

- Cape Verde
- Comoros
- Guinea Bissau
- Maldives
- Mauritius
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Seychelles
- Singapore

### **Caribbean Region**

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago

### **Pacific Region**

- Cook Islands
- Fiji
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Micronesia, Federated States of
- Nauru
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Timor-Leste
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu