

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## PART A

### VULNERABILITY REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING IN SIDS

#### 1. Enhanced Support for a resilient post COVID 19 Recovery in SIDS

***Vulnerability reduction and resilience building are critical issues that must be addressed by SIDS. Briefly elaborate on any resilience building interventions or strategies (proactive or preventative) that have been or are being implemented at national or regional levels that aim specifically at improving resilience in SIDS. Please include financial resources expended in this regard, if available (750 words).***

Being itself a small island state, Malta is fully cognizant of the particular challenges and vulnerabilities inherent to small island developing states (SIDS) and strives to provide the most relevant assistance possible to assist in overcoming the challenges created by their particular characteristics, including, *inter alia*, dependence on a limited number of economic sectors, geographical isolation, limited natural resources overdependence on tourism and high exposure to the negative impacts of climate change. Malta continued to provide, and extended, this assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During 2020 and 2021, Malta co-chaired the UN Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS, whose main objective is to promote the formation and consolidation of relevant partnerships to assist SIDS in achieving the objectives of the SAMOA Pathway and the fulfilment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. One of the highlights of its work during the two-year period, characterized by the ravages and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, was the series of webinars focusing on both the health aspects of the pandemic itself as well as other SIDS-specific priority subjects, such as water management, renewable energy sources, climate action, the blue economy and tourism.

This work was undertaken by the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade together with the Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence which was established in Malta in 2017, and which acts as the operational arm of the Ministry towards the implementation of its policy objectives and strategies.

Elected as member of the UN Security Council for 2023-2024, Malta has and is advocating and promoting the interests of SIDS during its two-year term, and in particular during its Presidency of the Council. Indeed, during its first Presidency in February 2023, one of the first signature events organized by Malta was a high-level open debate on 'Sea-Level Rise: Implications for International Peace and Security', with the target audience being SIDS. The debate was chaired by the Hon. Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta.

## 2. Enhanced and Tailored Development Cooperation for SIDS

***Improved, tailored development co-operation approaches, calibrated to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS are necessary if SIDS are to effectively recover from the COVID Pandemic. Briefly elaborate on 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. (850 words)***

Malta has continued to enhance and strengthen its work to promote the interests of SIDS and to strengthen its relations with them at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. This is also reflected formally through the inclusion in Malta's Foreign Policy Strategy launched in February 2022 of the SIDS-specific aim to "Promote and advocate for the interest of small states and Small Island Developing States in international fora". This followed the appointment in 2021 of Malta's first-ever Ambassador-at-large for Islands and Small States.

Malta has striven to provide tailored and targeted assistance to SIDS in boosting their capacity to face and address their short-term and long-term challenges. With regard to the direct needs relating to COVID-19 pandemic, during 2022 Malta provided 20,000 vaccines and 25,000 rapid-test kits to Antigua & Barbuda, as well as another 3,500 vaccines to St Kitts & Nevis.

Malta has also sought to facilitate SIDS' meaningful participation and capacity thereof in international fora and mechanisms. In December 2021 Malta donated €20,000 to the UN Trust Fund in order to support developing states, in particular SIDS, in the preparation of their submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. In May 2022, Malta made a voluntary contribution of €3,000 to facilitate the participation of representatives of SIDS to the First Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons scheduled for June 2022. In November 2022, Malta contributed €10,000 for the participation of SIDS in negotiations on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in New York, as well as another €10,000 in favour of SIDS' attendance of meetings of the United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

For the fulfilment of its medium and long-term capacity-building objectives, Malta has focused its assistance to SIDS particularly on the award of scholarships to nationals of SIDS which are eligible for Official Development Assistance. This through the cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, and the University of Malta's Islands and Small States Institute. Scholarships at Master and PhD levels are awarded through this cooperation. Recipients of these scholarships to date have been nationals from Fiji, Mauritius, Belize, Grenada and Niue.

Malta's initiatives for tailored cooperation for SIDS has also focused on the essential area of climate change. In particular, at the November 2021 Conference of the Parties (COP26), Malta announced its 'Island for Islands' initiative to support SIDS in meeting the challenges created by climate change through a mechanism of best-practice and information sharing. Within the framework of this initiative, technical cooperation was established between Malta and Antigua & Barbuda on water management aimed at strengthening technical cooperation between both countries on improving water management through capacity-building programmes, contributing

to optimising adaptation to climate change, in terms of increasing the resilience of municipal water supply through promotion of water use efficiency.

Malta has also pursued its tailored and targeted cooperation with SIDS on the bilateral level. In May 2022, the Health Ministries of Malta and Cuba formally entered into a framework of cooperation in the field of Medical Science and Health Care.

Finally, Malta has been and remains actively involved in the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index for SIDS, by virtue of the fact that the high-level panel of experts which is working on this index includes an eminent Maltese economist.

## **PART B**

### **IDENTIFYING POLICY PRIORITIES IN SIDS FOR THE NEW AGENDA**

***The SAMOA Pathway contains a number of action areas which require policy formulation, programmes or projects to implemented at national, sub regional and/or regional levels. While SIDS have made a fair amount of progress with actioning these over the last decade, a number of gaps remain. As the international community prepares for the 4th International Conference on SIDS, what are the key priority policies, programmes and projects that are needed to further advance the SIDS development agenda and why? (750 words)***

According to Briguglio, Cordina et al<sup>1</sup>., economic vulnerability is defined as the “exposure of an economy to exogenous shocks, arising out of economic openness.”<sup>2</sup> In this sense, SIDS face a unique set of challenges alongside a lack of access to financing and the existential threat posed by the unpredictability of climate patterns. Additionally, one must take into account the devastating economic effects that COVID19 brought about, in SIDS. The UNWTO estimates that 30% of the GDP in SIDS is made up of tourism-related income<sup>3</sup>. Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine also further compounded such difficulties alongside disruptions in shipping (which often represents the only viable lifeline for the importation of good) and supply chain issues.

SIDS are often exposed to a “maximum exposure shock” in at least one of either food, energy and financial dimensions.<sup>4</sup> The *Report to the SG on the Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway*<sup>5</sup> estimates that 68% of SIDS have been hit by these shocks since in the case of SIDS, double as much needs to be paid for such items, when compared to bigger countries.

With respect to the SAMOA Pathway implementation, Malta agrees that the SAMOA Pathway monitoring and evaluation framework provides a more tangible approach to how reporting

---

<sup>1</sup> Briguglio L., Cordina G. Farrugia N. and Vella S., *Economic Vulnerability and Resilience: Concepts and Measurements*, UNU-WIDER Research Paper No 2008/55.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> UNTWO

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* cit. p.22

<sup>5</sup> Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/218, July 2022

progress on the 109 indicators is carried out. This approach alongside the matrix for thematic areas and action clusters is already providing a clearer picture on the progress achieved as well as the gaps in place.

In terms of lacunae, it is very evident that a two-pronged strategy (or approach) is needed, in the response by the international community towards the plight of SIDS. In this regard, Malta reiterates the importance of cooperation and dialogue to be increasingly responsive to the needs being expressed by SIDS, by creating opportunities whereby SIDS-specific themes are discussed with SIDS. One such occasion such as the High-Level Panel on Sea Level Rise held in February 2023, during Malta's Presidency of the UN Security Council.

On the other hand, Malta reiterates its firm belief that the key in achieving sustainable development and the SAMOA Pathway objectives is by means of capacity-building and developing of skills, through the crafting of partnerships. Malta's initiatives kickstarted by the Malta-based Small States Centre of Excellence and furthered by other initiatives such as the [SIDS Scholarship Programme](#) are testament to this belief. In the spirit of Partnerships, Malta's co-chairing during 2021-2022 alongside Antigua and Barbuda, of the UN Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS, and the Programme of Action undertaken, was very much focused on the crafting of partnerships on a thematic and technical level, to solve complex issues such as those faced by SIDS. Indeed Malta's best-practice and information-sharing *Island for Islands* initiative announced at COP26 has been geared at supporting SIDS in a meaningful way in contrasting the negative impacts of climate change.

In terms of thematic areas, themes such as food security, water resource management, climate resilience and climate adaptation as well as disaster risk reduction are all relevant topics for SIDS. However, underpinning all these thematic areas, are some horizontal considerations such as the gaps in data or the bettering of existing data, to be able to manage effectively and provide a more targeted response. In multiple cases, insufficient data was often unavailable to monitor several key SAMOA Pathway indicators. For this reason, improving the existing information infrastructure and upskilling human capacity are necessary to pinpoint and design effective solutions for the future of SIDS. Data is a necessity which needs to be prioritized, in a horizontal fashion.

Malta also firmly believes in the work being undertaken by High-Level Panel on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for SIDS. The MVI will add credence to the well-evidenced economic vulnerability index which may be showing an incomplete picture as to the challenges of SIDS, as well as to the limited support it offers SIDS in terms of financing for development. Particularly in the context of climate finance, this tool is often insufficient and thus policies are needed in this regard, to address such shortcomings.