



QUESTIONNAIRE

Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the MSI, BPOA for the Sustainable Development of SIDS

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. In this regard, you are requested to report only on new or updated information. Information conveyed in previous surveys will not be considered. Previous surveys can be accessed at XXXX under reports.

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).

Mauritius adopted three core strategies, namely *Recovery, Revival and Resilience*¹ in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other external shocks including the impact of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia as well as the negative effects of climate change. This led to a growth of 4% in 2021 and 9.7% in 2022. Despite these strategies to enhance our resilience, the economy of Mauritius still remains vulnerable to exogenous shocks.

Supported by a number of post-COVID initiatives introduced across the socio-economic sectors, such as tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, the Mauritian economy is recovering. Amendments were also brought to the main labour legislation, the *Workers' Rights Act 2019* and its regulations in view of protecting jobs and promoting work flexibility.

Food Security

Being a Net Food importing country, Mauritius was severely impacted by disruptions in supply chains and protectionist measures implemented unilaterally by many countries, leading to the unavailability of essential food products and raw materials. Food security, water and waste are inter-related and highly specialised aspects of management for which many SIDS lack local technical support. Technical exchange of information and professional networking on the specifications and merits of different systems within countries needs to

¹ Budget Speech 2021-22

be promoted. A common need in these sectors in SIDS is to secure technical services and expert review to establish model sustainable systems suited to the needs of each country having special regard to the specificities of SIDS.

Mauritius, in an effort to ensure food security on the island, accelerated the implementation of the *Circular Economy*² strategy, by reviewing the production and consumption model in Mauritius. The aim is to decrease dependency of Mauritius on imports and address the three planetary crises, namely biodiversity loss, climate crisis and pollution.

A number of financial and technical assistance were also provided to Cooperative Societies to boost agro-processing capacities and embark into emerging sectors such as *Green Energy*,

Natural Farming and Waste Recycling.
Technology and Digitalisation

In order to reinforce international connectivity and accommodate digital solutions such as e-learning and e-health platforms that will provide prolonged services particularly during times of crisis, Mauritius is laying a fourth submarine cable³. Furthermore, mobile operators are fast deploying 5G networks across the island which is already fully covered with *Fiber-to-the-Home* and 3G/4G. These initiatives will ensure business continuity across sectors.

The introduction of high-speed internet connectivity will accelerate the digitalisation process of the education sector, thereby facilitating the implementation of existing measures introduced during COVID-19⁴.

A *Business Transformation Scheme* and a *Technology and Innovation Scheme* are also being implemented to encourage enterprises to adopt latest technology developments for more efficient and eco-friendly production lines.

Greening of the Economy

As part of the Green Mauritius strategy, an annual amount of MUR 2 billion is earmarked under the *National Environment and Climate Change Fund* (NEF) to support sectors such as flood management, coastal zone protection and disaster risk reduction measures.

Other initiatives include

- Development of GIS maps⁵ along vulnerable coastal areas for decision-making in crisis management.
- A full-fledged vulnerability assessment to be undertaken for the construction of a breakwater of some 1.2 km in the Port Louis Harbour⁶.

² Mauritius has developed a Roadmap and Action Plan on Circular Economy 2023 – 2033. The six sectors identified under the Roadmap and Action Plan for Circular Economy are: Agri-Food Systems; Construction sector; Consumer Goods; Mobility and Logistics; and Solid Waste Management.

³ The fourth submarine cable is expected to be operational by end 2023.

⁴ Existing measures in the education sector are Early Digital Learning Programme, digitalisation of textbooks, production of pedagogical videos, thus allowing remote learning.

⁵ The project, to the tune of Euro 1.1M, is being implemented with the technical assistance from AFD.

⁶ The project estimated at USD 325,000 is being financed from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and technical

- A vulnerability assessment⁷ is being undertaken with the assistance of SADC Regional programme to recommend on adaptation measures to enhance food security.
- Conservation and preservation projects including reforestation projects.

Mauritius also runs trainings and workshops⁸ to empower youths. An *Interpersonal Communication and Counselling Skills* programme was also conducted to provide emotional support to young people who had difficulties to cope with post-COVID crisis situations.

Health

In addition to being impacted by Non-Communicable Diseases, Mauritius is also vulnerable to emerging and re-emerging vector borne and communicable diseases such as COVID-19 and Hepatitis C, especially with a flourishing tourism industry. Thus, to strengthen disease surveillance, Mauritius is developing its first multi-year *National Action plan for Health Security* (NAPHS) 2023-2025 and implementing *electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response* (eIDSR). Moreover, Flu Clinics, rapid testing services and laboratory services are being consolidated.

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)

Driven by socio-economic progress, Mauritius has established a welfare state since independence in 1968. Education is free for all, health services are accessible to every individual and pensions are provided to the elderly and the most vulnerable segment of the population.

Unfortunately, external challenges, such as COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of the war between Russia and Ukraine and the negative impact of climate change have exacerbated existing inherent vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including Mauritius.

Despite these challenges, Mauritius adopted national strategies to ensure a swift recovery post-COVID. These policies are expected to consolidate further our commitment to build an inclusive society, while *leaving no one behind*.

Tailored development cooperation approaches/programmes presently in place are inadequate as they do not cater for the needs of SIDS. The international community must

assistance from the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN).

⁷ The programme is estimated at USD 47,000.

⁸ Training programmes pertain to entrepreneurship, self-development and farming.

actively support SIDS by pressing for international action on SIDS vulnerabilities, supporting increased resilience and prosperity, and working together on challenges and making the most of shared opportunities.

Health

COVID-19 has reiterated the importance of *infection prevention and control*. With the support of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), a container-based laboratory system is being set up to help expand current diagnostic facilities. Practical trainings and tailored approaches are being developed on vector-control related to *Anopheles Stephensis* and *malaria*. In addition, Mauritius plans to roll out the current IDSR programme to the whole of the country.

As part of the post-COVID strategy, Mauritius has a number of projects in the pipeline in view of promoting awareness, including surveillance and monitoring of the AMR. These measures are crucial especially if Mauritius wants to continue to attract tourists and be recognised as a safe destination.

To address the vulnerability of the island economy to the impacts of climate change, Mauritius is proposing policies and measures under the *Nationally Determined Contributions* (NDC). These include implementing policies and surveillance measures to mainstream climate change adaptation in the health sector, construction of new public health infrastructures such as a new Haemodialysis Unit and operationalisation of a new cancer hospital. Mauritius is also developing an integrated strategy and policy to foster adoption of integrated *Pest and Disease Management* (IPDM) practices.

Improving Capacity

There is a need to develop a proper pipeline of projects taking into consideration specificities of upper middle-income SIDS to access climate finance with clear indicators.

In order to bridge the technical and financial gaps to implement climate change projects, Mauritius has agreed to be one of the pioneer countries⁹ to trial a new approach on climate finance¹⁰, whereby a *National Strategic Adviser* will be deployed to Mauritius to work on priority issues. In 2023, Mauritius has *inter alia* joined the *Initiative for Climate Action Transparency* (ICAT)¹¹ and requested support to enhance national institutional capacity to improve data collection and management from the *Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency - Global Support Programme* (CBIT-GSP)¹².

Digitalization

The outbreak of the COVID-19 has given new impetus to digitalisation. In this regard, Mauritius has embarked on a digital transformation of the island economy in view of

⁹ Fiji, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Uganda

¹⁰ The new approach is known as the Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance and is set out by the United Kingdom.

¹¹ The ICAT provides countries with tailored support and practical tools and methodologies to build robust transparency frameworks needed for effective climate action.

¹² CBIT-GSP is a global support project for capacity building on transparency and is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The CBIT-GSP is a five-year long project, running from 2022 to 2026. It supports developing countries to enable them to comply with the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement reporting requirements.

promoting emerging technologies. The *Mauritius Emerging Technologies Council* has been set up to advise on adoption and development of an appropriate ecosystem in the field of emerging technologies that would be conducive for Mauritius to face economic challenges as a SIDS. An ICT Blueprint is also being formulated to build digital skills and further the digital economy agenda.

In the education sector, Mauritius is developing a central repository of teaching and learning resources. An *Open Educational Resources* (OER) will also be implemented.

Industrialisation

Climate change, COVID-19 and the international ramifications of Russia/Ukraine conflict on Mauritius, like other SIDS, has pushed us to adopt initiatives for a greener, cleaner and safer Mauritius. In this regard, Mauritius is encouraging industries to adopt green practices, through installation of solar photovoltaic systems, thus promoting adoption of renewable energy. Mauritius is also looking at obtaining funding under the GEF to '*Accelerating the greening of the manufacturing sector for a sustainable Mauritius*'.

Furthermore, Mauritius launched an Industrial Policy and Strategic Plan 2020-2025 for a more competitive and sustainable manufacturing sector, by upgrading value chains, broadening market access and adopting green technologies.

(782 words)

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)

Mauritius, an upper middle-income country as per the classification of the World Bank, has been on a transformative journey. Driven by technology and innovation, Mauritius aspires to transition to the league of high-income economies, with higher levels of growth, equality and shared prosperity.

Mauritius is committed to strengthening economic resilience against external shocks, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth, while *leaving no one behind*. However, extreme weather conditions, such as flash floods, droughts, cyclones, sea level rise amongst others, pose existential threat to SIDS. Indeed, there is physical evidence that coastal erosion around the island has increased significantly, directly negatively impacting the tourism industry and the daily livelihoods of the fisheries community. The island is at risk of permanent and irreversible loss of terrestrial, marine, and coastal biodiversity.

Mauritius is no longer eligible to concessionary financing and has limited access to grants and other funding opportunities. Also, the triple crises, notably COVID-19, ongoing war in Ukraine and climate change have exacerbated capacities and placed additional burden on

national budgets, undermining sustainable development and deepening the finance divide between countries.

The international community should adopt policies that will help Mauritius and other SIDS to address their inherent vulnerabilities and further advance the SIDS development agenda. This includes the following:

Special and Differential Treatment for SIDS

To ensure quick post-COVID recovery, it is essential that SIDS are fully integrated in the Global Value Chain (GVC), especially as Mauritius is highly dependent on imports. Relevant international institutions, including international shipping lines, should collaborate to ensure regular shipping activities in SIDS under fair and equitable conditions, particularly following the shocks related to the pandemic and the implications of the war in Ukraine, resulting in the disruption of supply chains and drove freight rates to record levels.

Furthermore, in view of developing the Mauritian fisheries sector sustainably, it is essential that disciplines on overcapacity and overfishing be effectively negotiated and agreed upon in the WTO agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Also, this should incorporate appropriate and effective Special and Differential Treatment provisions for SIDS.

Improving Access to Finance

Access to partnership and concessional finance, including public and private green climate/green finance is still limited in a SIDS like Mauritius with upper middle status. This can be explained by the many flaws in the present system of world ranking in assessing global ranking for SIDS in relation to their development needs and economic and environmental vulnerability

It is clear that the international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the IMF and the World Bank, are not able to cater the required financing needs of countries, including SIDS, to achieve the SDGs and combat climate change. Thus, to ease access to financial means to SIDS, the conditionality could be softened.

The UN Secretary-General calls the international community to take urgent steps to relieve the burden on developing and emerging economies, as well as introduce structural reforms of the international financial architecture by inter alia revamping the role and use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which were issued to the detriment of SIDS, and scaling up of development and climate financing, by changing their business model and transforming their approach to risk, to leverage private finance at reasonable cost to developing countries.

These reforms and access to additional funding will help Mauritius to reduce public sector debt obligations which though on a declining trend, remains high at 70.3% of GDP as at end June 2023.

Capacity Building

Mauritius faces major technical capacity challenges throughout the project cycle, from conception to implementation. This is exacerbated due to data limitations, making it more difficult to attract appropriate investments and compete for access to climate and green financing opportunities.

Hence, provision of appropriate technical support, technology transfer and capacity building, including handholding assistance in the execution of projects undertaken by SIDS should be provided across sectors, ranging from socio-economic to environmental and digital issues as well as gender mainstreaming. In this regard, global modalities safeguarding the intellectual property relating to the technologies should be reviewed to help Mauritius and other SIDS better access them. These include appropriate ICT enablers that ensure resilient and inclusive connectivity and digital solutions and manpower.

In addition to reduce cost and optimizing on available resources, it is proposed to have a SIDS Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) resource centre and develop a collaborative platform with the WHO for a joint vision for health.

(722 words)