Eighth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
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Special Event Concept Note on Disaster Risk Reduction in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): *Unlocking the support to advance implementation of the DRR elements of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)*

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Background and Rationale

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are among the most disaster-prone countries in the world. They face a disaster mortality rate more than double the global average, and disaster costs that are among the highest in the world relative to the size of their economies. To reduce disaster losses and achieve resilient prosperity, it is essential that every Small Island Developing State prioritizes and is supported to make DRR central to their sustainable development. Disaster risk reduction must be integrated across development policies and actions, so that all decisions and investments are risk informed. Reducing disaster risk is, therefore, an urgent priority for SIDS, and has most recently been reaffirmed as a key priority in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

Despite some of the inherent vulnerabilities faced by SIDS, this grouping of countries has also led the way in terms of resilience and environmental protection. SIDS were some of the first countries globally to raise the alarm on climate change due to their observations and levels of exposure. They have continued to pioneer approaches globally in applying integrated approaches to disaster and climate action, strong regional coordination mechanisms and application of local and traditional knowledge in resilience building efforts.

While such innovations are encouraging, the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) confirmed that SIDS are not on track to meet DRR and resilience targets by 2030. In fact, in several areas, progress toward meeting the Sendai Framework targets and the broader goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is regressing. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) further underscored the need for urgent action on comprehensive disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and fostering long-term sustainable growth in SIDS.

As such this session will focus on how to best address the critical challenges faced by SIDS in the face of climate change and latent multiple hazards leading to disasters. It will explore how to scale up disaster risk reduction action and investment in SIDS, across the priority areas of ABAS with a focus on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR) in economic resilience, water, food and energy security, as well as environmental protection. The session will also explore the role of science, technology, and innovation in advancing resilience and the need for increased financing and collaboration with the private sector and civil society.

Overview of global progress made

While there has been progress in SIDS to advance DRR, a lot more remains to be done in the remaining five years of the Sendai Framework. The cumulative reporting in the Sendai Framework Monitor indicates that SIDS experience disaster mortality rates more than double the global average. Furthermore, disasters in SIDS affect a larger share of the population: on average, 18% of the total population is affected after each disaster in SIDS, compared to 6% in non-SIDS countries.[1] The economic toll of disasters is also more pronounced in SIDS. On average they experience 2.1 % of GDP loss due to disasters, whereas other countries face an average of 0.3 % of GDP.[2] In fact, over the past fifty years, SIDS have lost $153 billion due to weather, climate, and water-related hazards. SIDS' capacity to implement effective DRR initiatives varies, with a major gap in multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS). Only 39% of SIDS have an operational MHEWS, well below global targets.

Across all priority areas of the Sendai Framework, SIDS continue to face significant challenges and require increased support and investment. In terms of understanding disaster risk (Priority 1), SIDS still struggle with substantial data gaps, particularly in rural and remote areas despite their well-documented multidimensional vulnerabilities. The lack of technology and technical capacity to enhance data collection and disaster loss analytics remains a major obstacle, limiting their ability to assess and mitigate risks effectively. Looking at strengthening disaster risk governance (Priority 2), some SIDS have been global pioneers in integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into unified laws and policies. However, the implementation of these frameworks has been slow due to the siloed approach to project development, fragmented funding streams, and governance structures that hinder coordinated action. Many SIDS also lack comprehensive legal frameworks for disaster risk management, further limiting their ability to develop a holistic response to hazards. Additionally, the absence of decentralized governance mechanisms, combined with limited local capacity and resources, weakens efforts to translate

[1] https://www.fao.org/3/I8656EN/i8656en.pdf
[2] Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Gaps, challenges and constraints in means of implementing the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction | UNDRR

national policies into local action. These challenges prevent SIDS from fully addressing the range of hazards they face and from adopting an integrated, proactive approach to disaster resilience.

The global financing available for SIDS to take the necessary steps on disaster risk and climate action is woefully inadequate, falling short of the scale required to address both existing and emerging disaster risks. This means that priority area three of Sendai Framework, investing in disaster risk reduction is well off track for SIDS. Accessing climate financing remains a huge obstacle for SIDS due to the complex processes and stringent eligibility criteria. Additionally, the composition of available financing is heavily skewed toward disaster response, with minimal investment in pre-emptive resilience building measures. This imbalance leaves SIDS vulnerable to recurrent disasters, as long-term risk reduction efforts remain underfunded. Furthermore, risk considerations have often not been adequately integrated into development and financial decision-making, leading to maladaptation and the creation of new risks. When it comes to enhancing preparedness and building back better (Priority 4), SIDS continue to lag in multi-hazard early warning system coverage, limiting their ability to anticipate disasters. Post-disaster recovery is also a persistent challenge, as limited access to financing keeps many SIDS in a perpetual recovery cycle, missing opportunities to build back stronger and more resilient communities.

Current thinking on course correction towards 2027 and 2030

For SIDS to successfully pursue a risk-informed development trajectory, it is crucial to establish the necessary enabling environment. Without addressing key underlying challenges, SIDS will continue to face difficulties in integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) into their broader development agenda. To effectively reduce disaster risk and support the long-term development of SIDS, it is essential to move beyond traditional metrics like income per capita and better account for their unique vulnerabilities. The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), adopted last year, marks a significant step forward. It captures structural vulnerabilities, including disaster risk, and enables more targeted and effective support, particularly in financing. By integrating MVI into policy frameworks and funding mechanisms, SIDS can access resources that better reflect their realities, strengthening resilience on the path to 2027 and 2030. The ABAS also offers innovative approaches to risk informed development in SIDS. It has outlined the need to scale up support across the following enabling actions for effective disaster resilience in SIDS:

1. **Economic Resilience**: Economic resilience is the bedrock for broader resilience efforts and the foundational capacity of SIDS to withstand and recover from disasters. SIDS must be supported to promote blue and green economies,

support MSMEs, and integrating circular economy practices to enhance economic resilience

2. **Water, Food, Energy and Infrastructure Security**: Implementing integrated strategies for sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation, and infrastructure that are resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change.
3. **Environmental Protection and Climate Action**: Modernizing solid waste management, addressing marine pollution, developing loss and damage response plans to ensure a healthier environment.
4. **Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction:** Enhancing disaster resilience through financial and technical support, multi-hazard risk governance, and infrastructure development for post-disaster recovery.
5. **Science, Technology, and Innovation:** Leveraging geospatial data and digital technologies to enhance disaster preparedness and resilience.

This session will provide an opportunity for peer exchange on challenges, good practice and innovations on how to advance the enabling actions for DRR in Small Islands Developing States.

Key Objectives

1. To explore strategies for enhancing economic resilience, water, food and energy security, and environmental protection
2. To highlight the role of traditional knowledge, science, technology, and innovation in advancing resilience
3. To call for increased financing and collaboration with the private sector and civil society to support SIDS

Expected Outcomes

1. A shared commitment to decisive action that embeds DRR into development actions
2. Identification of strategies for enhancing economic resilience, water, food and energy security, and environmental protection, including through highlighting success cases
3. A recognition of the role played by traditional and indigenous knowledge and how it complements science, technology, and innovation in advancing resilience in SIDS
4. A call to action for increased financing and collaboration with the private sector and civil society to support SIDS.

Guiding Questions for speakers

1. What are the most significant challenges faced by SIDS in building resilience to climate change and disasters, and how can these challenges be addressed through integrated disaster risk reduction strategies?
2. How can economic resilience, water and food security, and environmental protection be strengthened in SIDS, and what role can governments, private sector, and civil society play in supporting these efforts?
3. What innovative approaches, technologies, or tools can be leveraged to enhance disaster risk reduction and resilience in SIDS, and how can these be scaled up and replicated across different contexts?
4. How can mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development actions be achieved in SIDS, and what policy, legislative, and institutional changes are needed to support this process?
5. What financing mechanisms and partnerships can be established to support the implementation of integrated disaster risk reduction strategies in SIDS, and how can the international community provide effective support to these efforts?

Reference documents

1. Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). , outcome document of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/n2409990.pdf

2. UNDRR offer of Support for the implementation of the ABAS https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/sendai-framework-action/small-island-developing-states

3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR); *Alliance of Small Islands States 'Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Gaps, challenges and constraints in means of implementing the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction* www.undrr.org/publication/small-island-developing-states-sids-gaps-challenges-and-constraints-means-implementing