

High Level Panel
on
FAO and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
Capturing new opportunities and strengthening partnerships for concrete actions

Saturday 6 June 11.30–13.00
Green Room, FAO

Background

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have made big strides since the first Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the international SIDS Conferences of 1994, held in Barbados, and in 2005, in Mauritius. Nonetheless, sustainable development continues to present a special challenge for the SIDS, as acknowledged by the Rio+20 outcome document, and remains a key priority for SIDS. The need for strengthening local food production, improving the management and use of natural resources, improving nutrition and building resilience has been widely acknowledged.

Rising sea level, increasing air and sea surface temperatures, and changing rainfall patterns as well as the impact of natural disasters and the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems are adding additional pressures to the sustainable development of SIDS. For SIDS, overcoming climate change is more than a simple challenge - it is a question of survival. The second International Conference on Nutrition in 2014 highlighted that many countries also face the complex burden of malnutrition, ranging from undernourishment to obesity. To overcome the unique challenges faced by SIDS, the global community must seek renewed political and financial commitments for further implementation, should establish new and strengthen existing partnerships, and needs to agree on priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS, especially for the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Recent developments

Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives met in Apia in September 2014 at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, with the full participation of civil society and relevant stakeholders. FAO actively contributed to the preparatory process for this Conference. The outcome documents consistently acknowledged food security and nutrition as a priority area, and highlighted the importance of natural resources management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in order to achieve sustainable development. The preparatory activities also showcased some successful examples of FAO's work in addressing challenges of food security and natural resources management.

In the Caribbean region, FAO launched a project in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Jamaica to strengthen preparedness and resilience of farming and fishing communities to natural disasters by supporting the implementation of local disaster risk reduction plans in selected locations. The initiative aims at increasing resilience through the implementation of location-specific best practices and technologies. In the Pacific region, FAO is part of the food security and sustainable livelihoods program, leading to the development and adoption of a regional Framework for Action on Food Security in the Pacific. Also in the AIMS region, FAO has supported diverse national level activities, from strengthening governance frameworks and institutional capacity in the Seychelles and Mauritius to value chain development and employment opportunities in Cabo Verde and the Comoros.

Importantly, FAO has recently launched the Global Blue Growth Initiative (BGI). As a flagship programme of FAO, the BGI has received wide recognition and support by FAO Members at various international fora such as the Hague Action Summit on Food Security and Blue Growth (February 2014), the FAO Committee on Fisheries COFI 31 (June 2014), and the Samoa UN Conference on

SIDS (September 2014). The BGI aims at supporting more productive, responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sectors by improving the governance and management of the aquatic ecosystems, conservation of biodiversity and habitats, and empowering communities (in particular the vulnerable communities engaged in small-scale production) to act not only as resource users but also as resource stewards. The BGI is designed around 4 streams of work: (i) capture fisheries, (ii) sustainable aquaculture, (iii) livelihoods and food systems, and (iv) economic growth from ecosystem services. Several coastal States and SIDS have been at the forefront in promoting the Blue Growth concept as a new approach for balancing sustainable economic development and conservation of aquatic resources.

These are not isolated efforts; rather, all activities are embedded within the revised strategic framework that guides FAO action as defined by the Members towards the FAO mandate, namely improving food security, enhancing sustainability, reducing rural poverty, improving markets and building resilience.

The way forward

During the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), UN Member States formally adopted the outcome document of the Conference, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action - or SAMOA Pathway - in which countries recognize the need to support and invest in these nations so they can achieve sustainable development. The Samoa Pathway underscores that there is a need for a more integrated approach to the sustainable development of SIDS, with the support of the international community and all stakeholders. To support follow up activities to the SIDS conference, the SIDS Action Platform has been developed, which will be implemented through a partnerships platform, a partnerships framework, and a UN Implementation Matrix.

FAO gives special attention to the recommendations of the SIDS conference and contributes actively to the Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IACG) and has provided inputs to the implementation matrix and identified key areas for support. Indeed, FAO's Medium Term Plan (2014–17) and Programme of Work and Budget (2016–17) proposed a US\$6.1 million increase to the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), specifically to support SIDS efforts to adapt to climate change, and this was agreed and recommended by FAO Council in March 2015 to be met through voluntary contributions. A trust fund is already being set up to receive these funds and was presented to the Members.

FAO places particular emphasis on partnerships within and outside the UN system, joining forces with other agencies, regional organizations, Governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector to advance the outcomes of the SIDS conference. These partnerships correspond well with the central theme of the SIDS conference and the SAMOA Pathway.

The High Level Panel

The High Level Panel on the *Work of FAO with Small Island Developing States (SIDS)* will provide a platform to present and exchange views on possible approaches, options and actions that will promote food security and nutrition while also addressing climate change and environmental threats in SIDS. It will also discuss ways and means to move forward through improved policy, capacity building and effective and well-coordinated partnerships.

The event will provide opportunities for FAO to sharpen and further define the priorities to better respond to the needs of SIDS so as to bring together the technical capacity to ensure comprehensive support. This will strengthen the Organization's work with SIDS and deliver results to achieve sustainable development. Within this context, the objectives of the event are: (i) to highlight key areas of support and alignment of the priorities of Samoa Pathway with FAO's strategic objectives, and (ii) to discuss the way forward – working together in strong and effective partnerships.