

The Mauritius Strategy: A Programme of Action

The Mauritius Strategy : A Programme of Action centered on the specific needs of Small Island Developing States

It was in Barbados in 1994 that the first ever conference for the sustainable development of small island states was held, resulting in the UN sponsored “Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States”.

Ten years later, on 14 January 2005, in Port Louis, Mauritius, the second International Conference convened by the United Nations and attended by 129 Member States adopted by consensus the “Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States”, subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution A/RES/60/194.

The Mauritius Strategy is therefore the current United Nations sustainable development strategy for Small Island Developing States for the period 2005 to 2015. It is the only global strategy to address specifically and exclusively the problems of island states.

The Strategy, organised in twenty chapters, addresses all important elements covering the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States, as well as actions that should be taken in specific strategic sectors. The chapters may be grouped in 5 different clusters: natural resources and environmental threats; economic issues; social issues; governance; and issues relating to implementation. The full text of the Mauritius Strategy can be accessed at <http://www.sidsnet.org>

It is important to note that :

- The Mauritius Strategy is not the strategy of one island, Mauritius. It covers the problems, needs and the vision for all Small Island Developing States. Pacific SIDS leaders played an important and active role in the discussions and adoption of the Mauritius Strategy, which is therefore their programme of action.
- The Mauritius Strategy is not simply a programme put forward by island states themselves. It has been adopted by all members of the UN, including all donors. It is therefore a partnership and cooperation programme between SIDS and donors. It contains obligations for all parties.
- The Mauritius Strategy reaffirms the international status of island developing states as a specific group of states within the United Nations, a group with 43 votes, therefore a group with some weight in many debates in the General Assembly. There is consequently an evident international political aspect to the SIDS Programme of Action.
- The whole SIDS programme, and therefore the Mauritius Strategy, is an integral part of sustainable development strategies. The Mauritius Strategy serves as a guide and facilitates the formulation of national sustainable development strategies.

Blueprint for SIDS

“The programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States remains the blueprint for Small Island Developing States and the international community to address national and regional sustainable development (...) that takes into account the economic, social and environmental aspects that are the pillars of the holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development.” Preamble of the Mauritius Strategy.

The Global Alliance of SIDS

The Global Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS)

There would have been no Programme of Action if developing island states had not been able to work together as a group towards a common goal.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), started in 1991, is a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal countries that share similar development challenges and concerns about the environment, especially their vulnerability to the adverse effects of global climate change. It functions primarily as an ad hoc lobby and negotiating voice for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the United Nations system.

AOSIS has a membership of 43 States and observers, drawn from all oceans and regions of the world: Africa, Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, Pacific and South China Sea. Thirty-seven are members of the United Nations, close to 28 percent of developing countries, and 2 percent of the UN's total membership. Together, SIDS communities constitute some five percent of the global population.

Member States of AOSIS work together primarily through their New York diplomatic Missions to the United Nations. AOSIS functions on the basis of consultation and consensus. Major policy decisions are taken at ambassadorial-level plenary sessions. The Alliance does not have a formal charter. There is no regular budget, nor a secretariat. AOSIS operates out of the chairman's Mission to the United Nations.

Small Island Developing States must continue to work as a group, and collectively support the Mauritius Strategy – their own strategy for sustainable development.

The involvement of Pacific Small Island Developing States in AOSIS

Pacific Small Island Developing States played a major role in the establishment of AOSIS. Ambassador Robert Van Lierop of Vanuatu was the first chairman of the Alliance (1991-1994). Later, Ambassador Tuiloma Neroni Slade of Samoa became chairman (1997-2002). Ambassador Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu, after being acting chairman in 2005-2006, is currently the Vice Chairman of AOSIS. The continued commitment of Pacific SIDS to the process is therefore evident.

A large number of leaders of the Pacific SIDS attended the 2005 International Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Islands Developing States in Mauritius, along with their respective delegations, and took an active part in the discussions leading to the final adoption of the Strategy.

Regularly, high level officials of Pacific SIDS intervene in official debates at the United Nations in New York to give support to the Mauritius Strategy. For example, during the 14th meeting of the Committee for Sustainable Development in New York (May 2006), the ambassadors from several Pacific SIDS made statements in support of the global strategy for the sustainable development of Small Islands Developing States. Mr David Adeang, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Finance and Economic Planning of Nauru stated “ We further endorse the call for more effective partnerships towards the implementation of efficient and sustainable developments in the SIDS. We now have a blueprint with the Mauritius Strategy that is very clear on the inter-linkages between energy and climate change, and the need for action on renewable energy. It is now time to take stock and re-affirm development partners commitments to the Mauritius Strategy.” (Statement made on 12 May 2006)

Natural Resources and Environmental Threats

The cluster of natural resources and environmental threats in the Mauritius Strategy

“Small Island Developing States believe they are already experiencing major adverse effects of climate change”. [Adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise](#) therefore remains a [major priority](#) for Small Island Developing States. Action to be taken by SIDS includes the development and implementation of national adaptation strategies and the facilitation of regional and interregional cooperation in this field.

The Mauritius Strategy states that “ Small Island Developing States are located among the most vulnerable regions in the world in relation to the [intensity and frequency of natural and environmental disasters](#) and their increasing impact, and face disproportionately high economic, social and environmental consequences”. It reaffirms the need for SIDS to improve their disaster management capacities and their willingness to strengthen the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. SIDS must develop partnerships to implement schemes and insurance that spread out risks, establish effective early warning systems, and strengthen their response capacity.

Since SIDS are [heavily dependent on their marine resources](#), the Mauritius Strategy acknowledges the need for full implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It recognises, however, that implementation continues to be impeded by financial constraints and a lack of capacity. It consequently draws a long list of specific actions to be undertaken by SIDS, with the support of international organisations, where appropriate. The Pacific Plan lists the same type of measures to be taken by Pacific SIDS.

With regard to fresh [water resources](#), the Mauritius Strategy emphasizes that “Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean and the Pacific regions have demonstrated their commitment to cooperation with each other through the Joint Programme of Action for Water and Climate”. However, further action, described in the Strategy, is required by Small Island Developing States, with the support of the international community, especially in the field of capacity building, to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Paragraph 38 of the Strategy states that “*pressures on [land resources](#) that existed 10 years ago have only been exacerbated by competing use, increased demands and land degradation.*” There is therefore a need to elaborate national strategies on sustainable land use, including issues of land tenure and management systems, and identify capacity building needs. Measures are listed concerning sustainable forest management, to reduce forest loss and forest degradation, a major concern for SIDS.

[Energy resources](#) must be developed, as energy dependence is a major source of economic vulnerability for many SIDS. There is need to develop and implement integrated energy programmes, including the promotion and use of renewable energy as well as appropriate advanced clean energy technologies.” A renewed effort is required by all for SIDS to achieve real and demonstrated progress in this area.

With regard to [biodiversity resources](#), SIDS are urged to build representative systems of terrestrial and marine protected areas, in order to ensure environmental sustainability. In particular, there is a call to advance the development of the Convention on the Biodiversity Programme of work on small island biodiversity.

Finally, the Mauritius Strategy also emphasises the important problem of [management of wastes](#) that SIDS face. It encourages SIDS to form regional partnerships to draw on best practices and develop innovative solutions to waste management. It states specifically that SIDS must work to strengthen the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste, “through the enhancement, where it applies, of the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region.”

The cluster of economic issues in the Mauritius Strategy

Trade globalisation and trade liberalisation are major issues for Small Island Developing States. Consequently, the Strategy analyses ways and means for SIDS to participate more fully in deliberations and decision making processes of the WTO, especially bearing in mind the forthcoming phasing out of preferential trade agreements previously in place. The international community is urged to address the specific limitations and vulnerabilities of SIDS, including balance of payments shortfalls arising from multilateral trade liberalisation, so that international trade brings some benefits to SIDS' economies.

SIDS agree to design and implement sustainable production and consumption strategies at national and regional levels, including the promotion of agricultural competitiveness through long term development of efficient agricultural systems.

Transport and communications are areas of partnerships with the international community, which the Strategy deals with in depth. The enhancement of ICT development, including knowledge management, tele medicine, distance learning as well as access to appropriate technology to develop transport infrastructure in order to meet international requirements and minimize environmental impacts are key elements of the Mauritius Strategy.

The international community, as well as local investors, are encouraged in the Strategy to invest in sustainable tourism development, as this sector is an important contributor to economic growth in SIDS.

Energy dependence is recognised as a major source of vulnerability for most SIDS. The Strategy recommends that urgent action be taken to promote access to energy efficient technology and to renewable energy.

Finally, given the importance of science and technology in building resilience in Small Island Developing States, the Strategy defines actions to be undertaken, with the necessary support of the international community to target investments in science and technology in a way that is appropriate. SIDS should continue to strengthen science and technological collaboration through North/South and South/South Cooperation; and should aim to establish a SIDS dedicated technology transfer and development facility.

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Social Issues

The cluster of social issues

Health is a key determinant of sustainable development. The Strategy is directed at addressing the major types of diseases that affect most SIDS. The health component indicates measures to be taken to prevent and combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria through such measures as enhancing accessibility to drugs at affordable prices, developing effective prevention programmes in immunisation and reproductive health.

SIDS are urged to tackle present challenges in education, by improving access to and the quality of education for all. This involves ensuring gender equality with emphasis on reducing illiteracy and calls for strengthening teacher training and curriculum development.

The Strategy makes a special case for the development of cultural industries, in areas such as music, art, theatre and films. It emphasizes the need to improve the institutional capacity for the marketing of cultural projects and the protection of intellectual property.

The cluster of governance and political issues

The Strategy reasserts that good governance is essential for sustainable development. There is need of a national enabling environment based on sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions and adequate infrastructure. Policies should be in place to promote an enabling environment for investment and technology and the development of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises and the promotion of public/private partnerships.

The Strategy, however, recognises that good governance at the international level and support from the international community is needed for SIDS to succeed in their efforts towards sustainable development. In particular, the international community should provide support for macro economic reform, increasing market access for developing countries and a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem.

Access to and the provision of financial resources by the international community, as well as support to develop human and institutional capacities of SIDS are key elements of the Mauritius Strategy, with regard to commitments taken by all international partners. Many specific areas of assistance are described in the Strategy, including the establishment and strengthening of centres of excellence for training and applied research within existing national and regional institutions.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

The Mauritius Strategy identifies climate change and sea-level rise as one of the most important threats to the sustainable development of SIDS (Para 16, chapter 1): “The long term effect of climate change may threaten the very existence of some SIDS.(...). Adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise remains a major priority for SIDS.”

Two years after the Strategy was adopted, the report of Working Group 2 of the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Small Islands, released in mid 2007, confirms the gravity of the situation. Two Pacific Islands experts(P. Lefale and G. Sem) were among the lead authors of the IPCC Report, with a third expert (T. Nakalevu) being a contributing author. The executive summary of the report states that sea level is expected to exacerbate disaster risks, including inundations, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards; global warming of the sea will increase the intensity and frequency of hurricanes and similar hydro meteorological events; increases in extreme events are virtually certain to affect forests on tropical islands. Flooding and drought will affect agricultural production (from the IPCC report, Working Group II, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2007).

Climate change and sea level rise will therefore exacerbate the already preoccupying exposure of SIDS to natural and environmental disasters. Consequently, the fight against the negative impacts of climate change passes through the adoption of vigorous disaster risk reduction measures. One week after the Mauritius Conference, an International Conference on Natural Disasters Reduction organised in January 2005 by the UN was held in Kobe, Japan. Its outcome, known as the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA), is now the overall strategy of all UN member states for Disaster Risk Reduction. HFA, as it is now called, fully takes into account the Mauritius Strategy and strengthens its recommended approach to disaster reduction, recognising the close interaction between climate change and exposure to natural disasters. It adds to it by asking all United Nations member states to set up National

Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction, which should include representatives of all stakeholders in a country. It also introduces the concept of acceptable risk: people have to learn to live with risk by adopting risk reduction measures, given the probable increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters caused in part by climate change.

Involvement of the International Community

The Mauritius Strategy is not simply a programme put forward by island states themselves. It has been adopted by all members of the UN, including all donors. It is therefore a partnership and cooperation programme between SIDS, donors and the UN system, and contains obligations for all parties.

Chapter 20 of the Mauritius Strategy contains a very long list of obligations for donors, as well as for UN System organisations. It is important to be familiar with the commitments that the donors have taken in the Mauritius Strategy. They relate to a) access to and provision of financial resources; b) science and development and transfer of technology; c) capacity development and d) national and international governance, including trade and finance issues.

Commitment of the international Community

Access to and the provision of financial resources

87. The international community reaffirms its commitment to support the sustainable development of small island developing States through the provision of financial resources, inter alia, access to existing funds and financial mechanisms, such as operational programmes of GEF, and underlines the crucial involvement of the donor community, including the international financial institutions and regional development banks. <http://www.sidsnet.org>

What support is available for the implementation of the MS?

The Mauritius Strategy is the SIDS's own strategy and it is the responsibility of SIDS to find resources to implement it. However, as pointed out in point 8 above, the international community has recognised the structural difficulties affecting SIDS and has consequently identified the need for technical and financial assistance from donor nations and the UN System.

It is up to each SIDS to choose its international donor partners. There are traditional links in the Pacific between specific donors and specific countries.

With regard to the UN, it is clearly stated in paragraph 100 of the Strategy that the Commission on Sustainable Development will continue to be the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow up to the commitments related to SIDS. At the regional level, UNESCAP has the lead role in monitoring and providing support for monitoring, including by devising the necessary tools and indicators for that purpose. Each organisation of the UN System may also provide specific assistance within its mandate. Technical and scientific organisations such as the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and UNESCO are already active in the region, especially on issues related to natural hazards.

Linkages - Mauritius Strategy, MDGs and Pacific Plan

The Mauritius Strategy is not a stand alone framework and it was adopted on the understanding that it would complement other existing frameworks such as the MDGs and the Pacific Plan.

The MDGs, as we know, cover specific development issues that spread the world over and generally affect all countries, including SIDS. The Mauritius Declaration, adopted by consensus on 14 January 2005 as a short preface to the Mauritius Strategy, unequivocally states that all signatories to the Strategy :“ Reaffirm (their) commitment to support the efforts of Small Island Developing States for their sustainable development through the further full and effective implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals”.

The Pacific Plan, for its part, is a global strategy that addresses specific issues relating to a specific region of the world, with characteristics that are different from other regions of the world. This Plan, however, recognises that the Mauritius Strategy is the current blueprint for all Pacific Small Island Developing States, because it focuses on specific island problems, which are also addressed in almost similar terms in the Pacific Plan itself. At the last meeting of the Pacific Forum, held in Tonga on 16 October 2007, Pacific Leaders adopted a declaration in which it is stated :“The Pacific Plan reflects the region’s priorities which are in line with and support the implementation of international frameworks such as the Barbados programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of implementation. As such, the Pacific Plan provides a solid platform for regional cooperation, guiding collective positions through the CSD and other international forums that advocate the “special case” of SIDS.”

There is therefore coherence and compatibility between these three frameworks: a small island in the Pacific must take care of its own problems as an island (the Mauritius Strategy), as a part of the Pacific Region (the Pacific Plan), and as a country affected by issues that are relevant the world over for all countries large or small, whether they are located on a continent or are small islands (the MDGs).

Internationally agreed development goals

The internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, provide the overarching framework for global poverty eradication and development support. Small island developing States' national development plans and strategies, including national sustainable development strategies, should include poverty reduction strategies, as appropriate, and measures to address their vulnerabilities and to build resilience, in order to contribute to the achievement of these internationally agreed goals and to be a key underpinning of donor and United Nations system support for small island developing States.

Mauritius Strategy: Implementation

The Mauritius Strategy: implications for the implementation of national development plans and NSDS

Many national development plans or national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) already include elements of the Mauritius Strategy, but often without a specific reference to the Strategy. Specific references to the Mauritius Strategy – to the SIDS strategy for sustainable development - in development plans would facilitate the monitoring of and reporting on the Mauritius Strategy.

The whole SIDS programme, and therefore the Mauritius Strategy, is imbedded in sustainable development issues since the Rio de Janeiro conference (1992). All policy elements of the Mauritius Strategy are therefore consistent with the key issues in the NSDS of Pacific SIDS. Integrating the MS dimension in national development strategies does not pose any major problem: guidelines for ensuring this integration are provided by the secretariat of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, which can also provide the necessary assistance.

As the Mauritius Strategy is closely imbedded in sustainable development and closely related to the MDGs and the Pacific Plan, it is possible to use existing capacities and synergies among different government services to include the Mauritius Strategy in national and sectoral development plans and to take the necessary measures of monitoring and reporting, including centralisation of necessary information.

Ideally, a focal point in Government should be officially designated. The “Practical Approach” card in this pack provides some approach for inclusion of the MS in the country’s planning and budgeting process. This is one possible approach; there are many others, especially for the larger or resource-rich SIDS.

Practical approach

How to practically work out the integration of the MS in national plans and monitor its implementation.

Practical approach to integrate the Mauritius Strategy in SIDS national plans and monitor its implementation

Often, the most difficult part of implementation of a global framework is to insert meaningful indicators of its main objectives in national development plans.

There are many different ways to do this, taking into account the institutional and administrative capacity of the country concerned. One possible approach is outlined hereunder:

- 1. Take into consideration existing capacities in government, and identify existing indicators, especially for the MDGs and the Pacific Plan, that may be used to implement the Mauritius Strategy. This is particularly true with regard to sectoral objectives (population, health, pro poor policies, etc)*
- 2. Designate a focal point (if this has not already been done) for insertion, collection and interpretation of data (as has been recommended by UNESCAP). This ensures consistency and comprehensiveness in reporting. The focal point should have clear terms of reference. The percentage of time to be devoted to the collection and interpretation of Mauritius Strategy data by the focal point should also be indicated.*
- 3. Adopt an incremental approach to ensure the integration of the Mauritius Strategy into development plans and in the budgetary process. This means that, rather than trying to reach a “central” agreement on integration of all aspects of MS, “bilateral” discussions can be held by the focal point with each ministry or agency to review how each of them is implementing the MS, what else they could possibly do, and what kind of indicators or data they can provide (particularly if these have already been used in the context of the Pacific Plan or the MDGs).*
- 4. Set up “bilateral talks” with the Ministry of Finance. If officials of this Ministry can be convinced that their Ministry is also required to monitor the implementation of the Strategy, they are likely to agree to insert some tasks relating to the reporting and the production of indicators in the budget itself.*

- 5. Make sure that the focal point is well prepared when negotiating with other ministries. It is very important to have in hand a rough proposal concerning possible targets and indicators per sector, already laid down in some sort of format. Although this proposal may seem simplistic, its role is essential to ensure that, at the outset, different ministries have a rough idea of what they are expected to contribute. In particular, there is need to emphasize that sectoral ministries are not being requested to perform new and time consuming activities but rather to use existing information that may need to be presented in a different format.*
- 6. Utilize, whenever possible, indicators developed by other SIDS so far and customize, where appropriate.*
- 7. Keep in mind the importance of the process. Focus on the importance of the process when trying to integrate the Mauritius Strategy and other frameworks into development plans and budgets. Ensure that counterparts understand this.*