

Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

National Report SAMOA

I. Background

One of the key outcomes of the 2012 Rio+ 20 summit apart from the sustainable development goals was the the adoption of modalities at the 67th General Assembly for the convening in 2014 of a third international conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will be held from 1 to 4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. It will focus the world's attention on a group of countries that remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. The Conference will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- a. assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation;
- b. seek a renewed political commitment by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for further implementation;
- c. identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS and means of addressing them; and
- d. identify priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS to be considered in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution called for “a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented political document.” The small island developing States have also expressed their desire to highlight successful partnerships and areas of innovation. The preparations for this important Conference are currently underway now, starting with a robust, SIDS-directed, multi-stakeholder national preparatory process which will feed into regional meetings in July of 2013, followed by an inter-regional preparatory meeting scheduled for late August.

2. Introduction:

The national process focuses on consultations for the purpose of stimulating discussions among all stakeholders to garner inputs and ideas for a shared vision to the 'future we want'.

The UN SG report on accelerating progress towards the MDGs and the issues for advancing the post 2015 development agenda state “that the post 2015 development framework is likely to have the best development impact if it emerges from an inclusive, open and transparent process with multiple stakeholder participation”

In 2010, when Samoa was advised of its pending graduation out of LDC status in 2014, it then began a process of consultations with development partners as well as national stakeholders as to its approach towards a smooth transition strategy. The consultations agreed that a smooth transition strategy for Samoa take the following lines of action so that graduation will not have that adverse an impact:

- Continue to maintain and sustain macroeconomic stability

- Ensure policy coherence in the new Strategy for the Development of Samoa (2012-2015)
- Address institutional capacity constraints
- Improve aid management within the Paris, Accra and Busan Partnerships for development Cooperation
- Create an enabling environment for foreign direct investment and private sector development
- Maintain credibility in seeking assistance through recognition of SIDS status
- Mainstream climate change into the national development process

In 2011, the national development strategy SDS (2008-2012) was reviewed, and findings made available to and contributed to the discussions in the development of the current SDS (2012-2016). The final product was a result of country wide consultations involving focus groups, faith based organisations, private sector, civil society, parliamentarians and general public.

Reports on the progress of the implementation of the MDGs was widely consulted on at country level and at regional level out of which a Pacific regional MDG report is published annually. The updated reviews and reports prepared and implemented at sector level resulted in an accelerated program for the achievement of the MDGs that is integrated into the current national development strategy. The implementation of the MDG 8 for a Global partnership is a process that Samoa actively participates in not just in terms of activities at country level but also at the regional level and connecting to the global processes through its representation of the Pacific on the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Consultations at country level as well as at regional level including that for an appropriate Regional Framework have reconfirmed our priorities with regards climate change/disaster risk reduction issues and others that are common to the Pacific countries and would be best addressed through regional integration and cooperation.

Samoa also held consultations on its position in relation to Rio plus 20 and reconfirmed the innovative approach reflected in the current national development strategy whereby the three pillars of sustainable development have been integrated.

Samoa continues to consolidate its sector planning/programming approach to address its development agenda – this process is predicated on regular stakeholder consultations across the 15 sectors of the economy. This process provides from time to time what the priority needs are in each sector, strategies to achieve objectives, financing modalities and key indicators of sector performance. Much less acceptable to Samoa are consultative processes that are initiated by development partners after decisions have been made about design and implementation modality of activities that they wish to fund.

In April 2013, five focus group consultations involving 300 invited participants representing civil society, private sector, youth, parliamentarians and government officials took place to confirm that the Government is fully encompassing the principles of inclusiveness and human rights particularly with regards people with disability, children and gender equality.

Overall, in the lead up to the 3rd SIDS Conference including the national/regional preparatory processes, the consultative processes long preceded the decision made at Rio for the 3rd Conference. The outcomes of these consultations converge on those priorities already identified and reflected in the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (2012-2016).

3. Where We Are:

In order to move forward it is important to look back and assess the progress to date in the implementation of the National Development Plan/Strategy, Barbados Plan of Actions (BPOA) and Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI), Rio plus 20, and achievement of the MDGs.

The following summarises some of the key points identified in a review of recent progress reports produced by the Government (extracts from these reports are attached as Annex 1).

3.1 Progress and Gaps limiting implementation of BPOA, MSI and MDG Achievement

While significant progress is reported in the review processes that have taken place under the BPOA, MSI and MDGs, there were a number of issues restricting progress and these included:

- Impact of the global food, oil and financial crises and natural disasters (tsunami and cyclones) have resulted in a growing number of people living below the basic needs poverty line which suggests a need to adjust economic policies to be more pro-poor as well as consider appropriate social protection measures
- A detailed analysis of the 2008 HIES results points to increasing proportion of the population living below the basic needs poverty line
- While progress was achieved in health and education service delivery along with significant investments in infrastructure there remain concerns over the quality of such services

Progress has been made in strengthening national institutional frameworks and coordination between/among sectors

- Over the last couple of decades there have been a range of institutional strengthening programmes implemented across the public sector to improve efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery; as well, a realignment of ministry responsibilities was designed to strengthen sector coordination.
- A three year medium term fiscal framework has been developed under a Public Finance Management Reform Plan, with all aid funding now on budget
- Sector plans have been completed for all but 2 of the 14 sectors – and all sectors are implementing sector programs which are mainly donor funded initially but are designed for eventual government take over.
- The impact of the 2009 tsunami provided the opportunity for a review of not only the early warning systems (including public awareness) but also the response mechanisms and robustness of the institutional measures. The 2012 cyclone was the opportunity to gauge how well the institutions adapted the lessons learnt from the 2009 tsunami.
- To minimize the impact of climate change on vulnerable villages and coastal areas, as well as infrastructural assets of the government, MNREM, MWTI and Land Transport Authority collaborated in the implementation of integrated mechanisms such as coastal protection construction or riverside protection infrastructure that are complemented by replanting programs

- Unit title legislation in 2009 helped facilitate financing packages of some large tourist facilities now operational or in progress. A program on the use of customary owned lands for development purposes has set up its institutional framework and started operations

1. Integration of sustainable development principles mainstreamed into national development planning

- Increased emphasis of sector wide approaches seek to ensure the integration of sustainable development principles
- Marine and terrestrial reserves have been established and coastal management systems implemented with the full participation of the communities they serve
- There has been a gradual shift towards a green growth policy

3.2 Challenges

- The 2012-2016 SDS notes that raising the quality of life for all in all sectors of the economy remains the most significant challenge
- The agriculture sector as a whole and agricultural export earnings in particular, have generally been weak
- Increasing gender based violence and limited participation of women in parliament
- High levels of NCDs and related health issues – as well as cost issues
- Low student school retention rates particularly at secondary level
- A lack of competitiveness in export trade due to supply side constraints, non-tariff barriers in the form of quarantine and conformance and a lack of awareness of market requirements
- The land tenure system can be a challenge to investors
- Limited statistics analytical capacity to inform use of survey results, datasets and census results restricts effective measurement of MDG targets and indicators

3.3 Role of Partnerships

- Samoa has an effective aid management/development partner arrangements, which are considered by many to be the most developed in the Pacific.
- The Government has established consultative arrangements with the private sector, civil society and parliamentarians which help to ensure participation of the broader community in discussions on the national development strategy.
- The Government has established a multi-donor civil society facility to support community identified priorities as well as a private sector support facility
- UNDP support for parliamentary strengthening is expected to enhance government accountability
- The development and implementation of Samoa's Aid Policy in 2010 has gone a long way in meeting commitments for mutual as well as domestic accountability
- The participation of the Government in the Forum Compact process in particular the peer review process both as a peer reviewer and being peer reviewed is a classic example of south south cooperation in the Pacific region. Samoa has been able to host other Pacific nationals work attachments within its government institutions for knowledge and experience sharing

- Government continues to work with its development partners to bring about co-financing of major infrastructure – it is considering the possibility of moving towards public private partnerships.
- Government also continues to work with other governments of the region in regional partnerships such as those for fisheries/oceanic resources and disaster risk facilities; however this relationship can only be strengthened when the regional framework (Pacific Plan) is more clearly defined and the processes involved clearly articulated

3.4 Current Priorities of the Government

- Strengthening institutional and regulatory standards for macroeconomic growth and stability;
- Ensuring continued fiscal discipline and sound financial management;
- Generating private sector led investment and employment opportunities;
- Increasing agriculture contribution to development, in particular opportunities in niche markets;
- Improving access to technical and vocational training opportunities;
- Improving quality of education, and strengthening health promotion and primordial prevention;
- Integrating environmental sustainability, climatic resilience and disaster risk reduction at all levels of development.

3.5 Potential measures to address the challenges highlighted

A review of the report findings suggests the need to strengthen measures to promote sustainable development recognizing the importance of addressing the interrelated pillars of inclusive economic development; environmental sustainable development; and inclusive social development. These measures could include:

- An increased emphasis on pro-poor economic policies and programmes to address inequality and targeting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community; including through implementation of social safety nets and specifically targeted social and economic programmes
- Because MDG monitoring at the aggregate level can disguise inequality at sub-national levels or for certain groups in the population there is a need for more comprehensive analysis and design of measures to address the root causes. This is also important to identify why there is a slowing in progress for some MDGs
- Targeted programmes to address NCDs, student school retention at certain levels and gender based violence as broad community and social development issues and not narrowly defined as health or education issues
- Working with the Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders including in the informal sector to implement youth employment programmes that build skills and promote financial literacy to address growing unemployment or underemployment in the population

- Increase the focus on expanding agricultural and fisheries opportunities to increase export trade and food security
- Respond to climate change and increased natural disasters through a fully integrated sector wide approach which sees climate change as a development variable impacting on all segments of the community and across all dimensions of the economy.
- Taking a transformational approach to address the issues of gender equality through consideration of the structural factors at the roots of these inequalities and deriving actions and initiatives to bring about lasting improvements
- Ensuring that there is a well resourced implementation plan for the national development strategy given that this constitutes an elaboration of a smooth national transition strategy for Samoa as it graduates out of LDC status. Consultations with its key development partners have taken place on ways by which they would support the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy within established partnership arrangements and the creation of potentially new ones.

The above measures all constitute work in progress and drive programs that are being implemented by the government and its partners.

3.6 **Lessons Learned**

- The most important theme that emerges is the need for poverty reduction based on a sustainable and equitable development agenda. The urgency of an appropriate post 2015 agenda is emphasized in the Asia-Pacific region, which despite having experienced rapid economic growth, still accounts for two thirds of the poor. There is thus the need for integrating and balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development; maintaining inclusive development at the core of the framework as well as attention to gender and other equality issues
- The post 2015 agenda is to remain growth focussed but with targeted support for issues that warrant special attention as well as prioritising the right to development for developing countries
- Effective development cooperation must be reform driven, government led and owned and inclusive
- Monitoring and an accountability framework are essential however; we are more for an arrangement that involves a shared vision, embody a sharing of obligations and responsibilities and consider commitments attractive enough to all partners to want to be part of it. Overall it should encompass principles of sustainable development and effective development cooperation. Monitoring should focus on post 2015 development agenda as a whole, the renewed global partnership that underpins agenda, and all partnerships at regional and country level.
- The Global monitoring framework for a renewed partnership has developed a set of targets and indicators that are proposed for use by countries and institutions that wish to use them in order to monitor commitments made at Busan; they are voluntary and contextualised as well as place greater emphasis on ensuring cooperation efforts have a catalytic effect on development.

- A renewed partnership must also support accountability in terms of implementation of commitments made in international fora and thus emphasizes behavioural change in development cooperation efforts expected to achieve results as in defined in country development strategies.
- While considerable progress has been made in structural reforms more remains to be done in areas of macroeconomic importance if we are to improve competitiveness and growth performance. The government will continue to work with its development partners to implement and review a matrix of joint policy actions to guide these reform efforts.
- Government is to consider a firm pathway towards green growth. While economic growth is a key factor in poverty reduction, it is imperative that consumer expenditure preferences be encouraged towards goods and services that do not entail environmental destruction in their production.
- Every opportunity be explored to enhance resilience to our many vulnerabilities as a small island developing state
- To improve public service delivery there is a need for both –a *holistic, top-down approach to improving government performance* which addresses the underlying whole of government performance coordination and management framework, and a *bottom-up service diagnostic* which provides the evidence on which factors within the governance and performance management framework are contributing to service delivery failure and require improvement.
- Given that the Pacific region is one of intensified south south cooperation, and one where most of the SIDS rely on aid for the implementation of their development frameworks, it is important that a regional framework be defined and a revised process for prioritisation be in place and that countries are clear about what is best addressed at country level versus regional coverage
- Subsequently the emergence of sub groupings in the region is important because they can provide the requisite support for the regional framework. Sub groupings can also result in better targeting of assistance as the idea of ‘one size fits all’ for the Pacific will not work
- It to complement is important to build on existing strengths of the Samoan people and culture. Traditional knowledge accumulated over many years of adaptation to life on small islands continue to determine much of the economic activities in the region. There is a need to explore opportunities to complement traditional economies in order to improve cash economies and provide new livelihoods without supplanting them.

3.7 Remaining gaps

- Samoa continues to face the challenges of rising inequality- how to better target vulnerable groups, ensuring socioeconomic policies are pro poor and making the development process more inclusive and sustainable
- Finding optimal resource package as well as least cost options to finance a prioritised program of infrastructural developments

- Meeting a low carbon target by 2020 – selecting and implementing appropriate, efficient renewable energy options in order to minimise the costs of fossil fuels
- Improved environmental sustainability and disaster resilience through Green Growth
- Addressing MDG targets for which Samoa is off target through a continuing program for the accelerated achievement of the MDGs
- Sustainable youth employment promotion and enterprise creation
- Exploring opportunities for further labour mobility outside of trade arrangements
- Improved social protection schemes
- Building resilience to multiple shocks which are becoming a new normal for the Pacific and for Samoa and a process which requires systems thinking, applying new and sophisticated decision making tools and overcoming inherent limitations in addressing risks and uncertainties.
- Meeting the challenge of rapidly increasing levels of non communicable diseases which will have major impacts on the health system, community mortality and morbidity and the economy of Samoa.

3.8 Areas where collaboration has worked or not worked between:

1. Pacific Small Island Development States (SIDS)

The Global Partnership Effective Development Cooperation focuses on gathering evidence through an agreed monitoring framework which is considered an important way to support high level political accountability at global level as well as at regional level – this is important for Pacific countries as we continue to work on a regional framework which among other things serves to connect the regional to not only national but also global processes.

It has never been a difficult task to define a Pacific position on global issues and to rally support from among the member countries. It is also a normal that when countries participate at international meetings, they would not only speak for their countries but also for the region. Similarly they would look to their regional organisations to provide technical

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