

**Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Operational Activities Segment
Virtual meetings
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***Session 4a: Responding to needs and priorities
of countries serviced by multi-country offices
Friday, 22 May 2020, 10:00am – 11:30am***

Mr. Chair, Moderator, fellow Panelists, excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

1. Thank you, Ambassador Hart. I am honored to join this distinguished panel on the MCO review.
2. From the onset, may I say that the framing questions are excellent and really important, and I look forward to the responses from Mr Xu and the two Resident Coordinators. Not having their level of expertise, I will focus my presentation on SIDS' expectations from the UN development system (UNDS).
3. AOSIS supports a UNDS that is aligned to national priorities, and that delivers faster, better, on time and at scale.
4. The Multi-country Office Review (MCO) is of particular interest to SIDS because a majority of our members fall under an MCO and because of the urgency of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway.
5. SIDS are multilateralists at heart and need the United Nations to maneuver through global initiatives and trends. But in addition, by and large, we are heavily reliant on the UN development system in order to access funding for our development initiatives.
6. At the present moment, I think it is fair to say that our economies are under assault and in a state of emergency. With the shutdown of tourism, fisheries, agriculture, we have no economic lifeline. The COVID-19 Pandemic immediately started to undo what modest development gains we had, and it threatens to compound structural challenges with new, emerging challenges.
7. It is with this backdrop I wish to frame my remarks on how the UNDS can respond to the needs and priorities of SIDS under MCOs

Tailoring global responses to SIDS challenges

8. Global institutions are wholly unprepared to deal with systemic shocks. For 30 years SIDS have been underlining this, having served as the bellwether of collective vulnerability. And here we are now, with COVID-19.
9. AOSIS advocates that we should earnestly take ambitious action across the development, climate and ocean agendas to foster a world that applies the special case of SIDS as the benchmark for collective responses. That is a world with temperatures well below 1.5 °C, a world that protects the most vulnerable as a matter of priority, and a world that works through multilateral institutions for strengthened global governance that is inclusive, participatory and transparent. And in this world for which we advocate, where the collective is a sine qua non, the UN has an essential role and by extension so too does the UNDS.
10. First, the UN must be bold, it must be innovative. It must finally tailor a plan for SIDS. For instance, we have called for a SIDS window in all response funds. We have called for support to secure medical supplies and to secure our food supply chains. We have called for, nay, begged for, expanded fiscal space, debt relief, and immediate access to liquidity. It is time to act on these and other longstanding calls from SIDS and move to implement them.
11. Second, the MCO Offices can help in this regard. Through these offices the UN must deploy the resources to move to implementation. The UN must re-orient the thinking in its agencies to support countries in responding to COVID and at the same time jump start climate action, disaster risk management, further develop capacity and boost efforts for poverty alleviation and overall sustainable development.
12. Thirdly, we need persons serving in our countries, throughout the UNDS, that have proven skill sets and knowledge of SIDS to address the SIDS case. For this, the UN should draw on local and regional talent.
13. Fourthly, the UN and our partners must ensure sustainable and predictable funding of the MCOs and all SIDS, including the non-self-governing territories. If we start with only partial coverage for SIDS, we run the risk of stretching resources to the point of de minimis returns. How can we be sure that all SIDS will be treated equally and for the long term?

A Step Wise Inclusive Approach

14. We appreciate the findings and the close of the 2016 QCPR, but let us not become complacent. We may be at the end of one process; but for SIDS, we are just at the beginning of another in a very turbulent time.
15. As I close, I wish to reemphasize that we cannot miss a step in implementation. Every step, every degree, every small island and low lying coastal developing state matters. SIDS Matter, we cannot be discarded. I urge the UN, our fellow UN Member States and the

international community as a whole to support us especially now as we face a cascade of crises. And we look forward to the full endorsement of the General Assembly in this regard.

16. I thank you for your attention and I look forward to our engagement this morning.