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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EU common position for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Apia, Samoa, 1-4 September 2014) - Council Conclusions

At its meeting on 19 May 2014, the Council (Foreign Affairs/Development) adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

**EU common position for the
Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
(Apia, Samoa, 1-4 September 2014)**

- Council Conclusions -

The 3rd International SIDS Conference

1. The EU and its Member States (hereafter the EU) welcome the convening of the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Apia, Samoa, in September 2014 and the overarching theme of the Conference of "Sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". The EU also welcomes the designation of 2014 as the International Year of the SIDS, providing a key opportunity to mainstream SIDS perspectives on the international agenda. The EU looks forward to an open and inclusive Conference, ensuring the effective participation of civil society, the private sector and all other relevant stakeholders, as well as to a concise, focused, forward-looking, and action-oriented political outcome.
2. The EU is fully aware of and remains concerned about the numerous challenges and threats posed to the viability and sustainable development of the SIDS. The EU has actively promoted core SIDS issues in different international fora, supporting actions to help address vital challenges, and will continue to do so. The EU acknowledges that most SIDS have made significant efforts in the past years and have achieved considerable, albeit uneven, progress in some areas. While SIDS are diverse and there are important differences between the individual countries, they share many common economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities. Therefore, the EU supports the development of tools for measuring these vulnerabilities, such as a vulnerability index, and would support its piloting in addition to GDP and other criteria.

3. The EU collectively remains a leading donor to SIDS and a very important trade partner and is committed to continuing to support the efforts of SIDS at national and regional level, through both direct bilateral aid and multilateral aid programmes. The EU continues to support the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) utilising different cooperation instruments. The EU will continue to support SIDS, as the relationship between the EU and SIDS evolves, moving from a traditional donor/recipient relationship or trade-based relations, towards a more comprehensive relationship between equal partners, as defined in recent regional partnership strategies, such as those established with the Pacific islands and with the Caribbean region¹.
4. The EU and its Member States are already main partners of successful partnerships with and between SIDS, as well as with other donors and relevant stakeholders. The EU wishes to strengthen existing innovative and successful partnerships, such as the Global Islands Partnerships (GLISPA), and participate in the establishment of new ones, including through cooperation between SIDS and other islands, notably with the EU's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), with which they share some common characteristics. The EU stresses that any partnership should be driven by the SIDS themselves, involve all relevant stakeholders and be based on SIDS ownership, trust and mutual respect, transparency and mutual accountability. It is also essential that partnerships consider the local cultural context and set measurable objectives that lead to tangible results . Partnerships are also an effective mechanism for promoting aid effectiveness, building on the principles of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The EU also sees opportunities in Public-Private Partnerships, South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation, including for sharing information and experiences and for promoting capacity development. The EU welcomes the multi-stakeholder dialogues on partnerships, which are planned for the Conference.

¹ EU Relations with Pacific Islands – A Strategy for Strengthened Partnership (2006); Towards a Renewed EU – Pacific Development Partnership (2012); Joint EU-Caribbean Partnership Strategy (2012).

Priority themes for the SIDS Conference

5. The Conference takes place at a crucial time, as several other international processes that clearly relate to SIDS vulnerabilities and resilience are ongoing. The SIDS Conference should enable progress and facilitate the efforts of SIDS to integrate their perspectives in these international processes, without duplicating or pre-empting current international negotiations. The Conference should focus on the following areas:
6. On climate change, one of the major challenges that SIDS face, the EU and SIDS share common objectives and should pursue existing cooperation during the upcoming negotiations. SIDS are confronted with rising sea level, changing weather patterns and other long-term effects of climate change, which make global efforts for climate change adaptation and mitigation a question of survival. The EU backs ecosystem-based adaptation to strengthen sustainable management practices aimed at reducing vulnerability to climate impacts as well as the integration of such practices into global, regional, national and local climate change strategies and action plans. The EU supports an ambitious new legally binding international agreement applicable to all Parties to combat climate change to be adopted in 2015, in Paris, within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that addresses both adaptation and mitigation. The EU also remains committed to advancing global efforts under the UNFCCC to close the gap in the pre-2020 level of mitigation ambition. The EU also supports the implementation of the Warsaw International Mechanism for supporting efforts to address loss and damage associated with the impacts of climate change. The EU is looking forward to working together with SIDS partners to enable high-level engagement at the UN Secretary General's Leaders' Summit in September 2014 in New York and at the 2014 UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Lima, in view of the Paris Conference in December 2015.

7. Oceans and seas, along with marine and coastal resources, form an essential component of the economy and cultural identity of the SIDS that needs to be preserved. The EU and SIDS will continue working together to strengthen ocean governance rules and their implementation. This is done through the fulfilment of existing international commitments, as well as through the development of a new United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) implementing agreement on conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The EU also supports the further development of the concepts of the "blue economy" and of ecosystem-based management of human activities affecting oceans, as well as the sustainable management of water resources, which are important issues to many SIDS.
8. SIDS are dramatically affected by natural and other disasters leading to loss of lives and livelihoods and significant economic and environmental costs. The EU supports a renewed international framework for disaster risk reduction (the Post-Hyogo Framework for Action) which can help SIDS to better integrate risk management and resilience into their policies and strategies, and address the challenge of increasing risks in the future, as well as to meet the needs for early warning systems, risk awareness and disaster risk prevention management, increased preparedness and post-disaster recovery.
9. Many SIDS are also endowed with rich but vulnerable biodiversity and ecosystems. The EU supports related work under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol, noting that the preservation of the unique and irreplaceable biodiversity of many SIDS is essential for their resilience to climate change and disaster risks as well as their livelihoods.

10. Energy dependency, notably on fossil-fuels-based sources, is a major source of economic vulnerability and therefore a key concern for many SIDS. The EU recognises that many SIDS have insufficient access to renewable energy technologies, which provide significant benefits. SIDS will continue to benefit from EU support for the implementation of the UNSG initiative on Sustainable Energy for All, notably the promotion of access to sustainable and renewable energy and energy efficiency, which also contributes to low carbon development and climate-resilient sustainable development. In this context, the EU supports regional efforts and welcomes the creation of networks of regional renewable energy and energy efficiency centres, including those in the Pacific, Caribbean and Africa regions.
11. Food and nutrition insecurity affects many SIDS. Enhancing their agricultural productive capacity in a sustainable manner and improving nutrition will be a key challenge. The UN International Conference on Nutrition in November 2014 will be an occasion for the EU and SIDS together with other partners to examine challenges and identify opportunities concerning the interlinkages between food systems, health and nutrition. In this context, the EU could facilitate a special event addressing core SIDS issues.
12. The 3rd SIDS Conference can provide an important contribution to the preparation of the post-2015 agenda. The EU and SIDS have both expressed the need to reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development, through an approach which embraces the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – in a more balanced and integrated manner, promotes peace and security, a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, and democratic, responsive and accountable institutions. The Conference is an opportunity to foster such an approach and reflect how the specific needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations of SIDS could be taken into account in the development of the new framework. The EU and SIDS can work in partnership during the negotiations to support the definition and implementation of an ambitious, inclusive and universal post-2015 development agenda that should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The EU welcomes the statement in the Declaration from the EU-Africa Summit in Brussels in April 2014 on working together to make this Conference a success.

13. The EU acknowledges that there are many other issues that pose key challenges for the sustainable development of the SIDS, such as health and non-communicable diseases, sustainable tourism, sustainable transport, education, migration and "brain drain", unemployment, decent work and social protection, inclusive and sustainable industrial development, reducing the transfer costs of remittances, access to fresh water, sustainable forest, land degradation sound management of chemicals and waste management. Social development and cohesion, gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, democracy and good governance are likewise of great importance. All these issues deserve adequate attention at the Conference.
14. The specific circumstances of SIDS underscore the linkage between vulnerability, fragility and poverty, amongst others, caused by the combination of natural and other disasters and weak state institutions. The EU recognises that peace- and state-building in the SIDS should be given adequate international attention, and supports a holistic and integrated country-led and owned approach to SIDS' development, in order to build resilient and peaceful societies. In particular, this could be achieved by bringing together political dialogue, development cooperation and humanitarian work in a more comprehensive and coherent manner. Attention should be given to rule of law, generating employment and livelihoods, managing revenues and building capacity for accountable and fair service delivery, with a focus on investments in prevention, risk mitigation and preparedness, not only responding to crises. Security and the fight against violence and organised crime are key issues to be taken into account. There is a need to strengthen international cooperation considering the special vulnerabilities of SIDS in this regard.

Follow-up and next steps

15. The EU calls for a successful follow-up to the Conference, and effective implementation of its outcome. Monitoring and data collection are particularly essential in order to create a consistent follow-up, based upon principles of mutual accountability and transparency. The EU will support efforts of SIDS to strengthen their own capacity for data collection, monitoring progress and evaluating development impact.

16. The EU recalls that every country has the primary responsibility for its own development. To implement the Conference's outcome, all means, including financing (domestic and international, public and private) will have to be mobilised and used strategically. This requires giving attention to domestic revenue mobilisation, tackling illicit financial flows while promoting convergence with internationally agreed financial standards on financial services, as well as debt stress, and building capacity both institutionally and in terms of human resources, as well as promoting innovative sources of financing, including regional blending mechanisms². Creating an enabling environment in SIDS as well as ensuring the full SIDS ownership of the Conference outcome is key. Finally, the EU will continue to promote Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), to ensure that development objectives pertaining to SIDS are taken into account across all policy areas.
17. Looking ahead, the EU is keen to ensure that the partnership with SIDS evolves into enriched and enhanced political and economic cooperation, including on global challenges, where the EU's knowledge and experience with regard to regional integration and cooperation processes can also be shared. In taking forward the objectives and outcomes of the Conference, the EU also welcomes closer dialogue with SIDS and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), including in bilateral and multilateral fora, building on existing regional strategies for cooperation and focusing, in particular on issues of common interest.
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² Such as the Pacific Investment Facility (PIF) and the Caribbean Investment Facility (CIF).