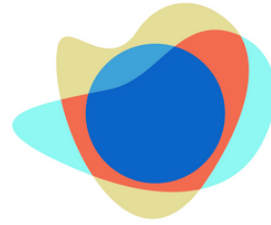




United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
2024

Regional Snapshot: Pacific Region

Global Online Stakeholder Consultation

The 4th International **Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)** will be held in Antigua and Barbuda from 27 - 30 May 2024. It will aim to assess the ability of small island developing States to achieve sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. The SIDS4 Conference will bring together leaders to agree on a new programme of action for SIDS with a focus on practical and impactful solutions and to forge new partnerships and cooperation at all levels.

To create space for stakeholders, especially those in SIDS countries, to contribute to the substantive preparations

for the SIDS4 Conference, UNDESA, in collaboration with UN OHRLLS, convened a **global online stakeholder consultation** between 13 June and 7 July 2023. Respondents were asked to identify key challenges, game-changing actions and policy recommendations as informal inputs to the preparatory process. Information about the consultation was broadly disseminated through mailing lists, UN official websites and social media.

This regional snapshot presents the main outcomes of the inputs received by organizations working in the **Pacific** region.



Participation in the Survey – Pacific Region*

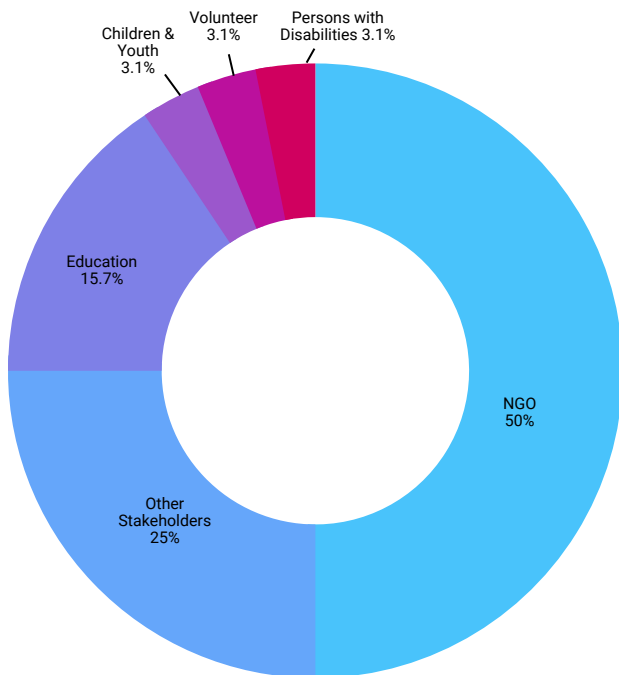
A total of **170 inputs** from interested stakeholders were received for the global online consultation. Among them, **32 inputs** were from stakeholders focusing solely on the Pacific region and 92 responses focused on all SIDS countries, including the Pacific region. With regards to the Pacific region, inputs were received from stakeholders contributing to sustainable development efforts in: **Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federal States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.**

Contributing stakeholders originated from all regions of the world, with the following distribution: Africa – 33.7%, Latin America and the Caribbean – 19.5%, Europe – 19.5%, Asia – 16%, North America – 7.1%, and Oceania – 4.1%.

All inputs are made publicly available [here](#).



Pacific Regional Map. Source: UN DESA



The majority of stakeholders targeting the Pacific region self-identified as representing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) – 50%. Other sectors contributing inputs included: Other stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development (Other Stakeholders) – 25%, Education & Academic Entities (Education) – 15.7%, Children & Youth – 3.1%, Volunteer Group (Volunteer) – 3.1% and Persons with Disabilities – 3.1%

*Pacific countries include: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federal States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



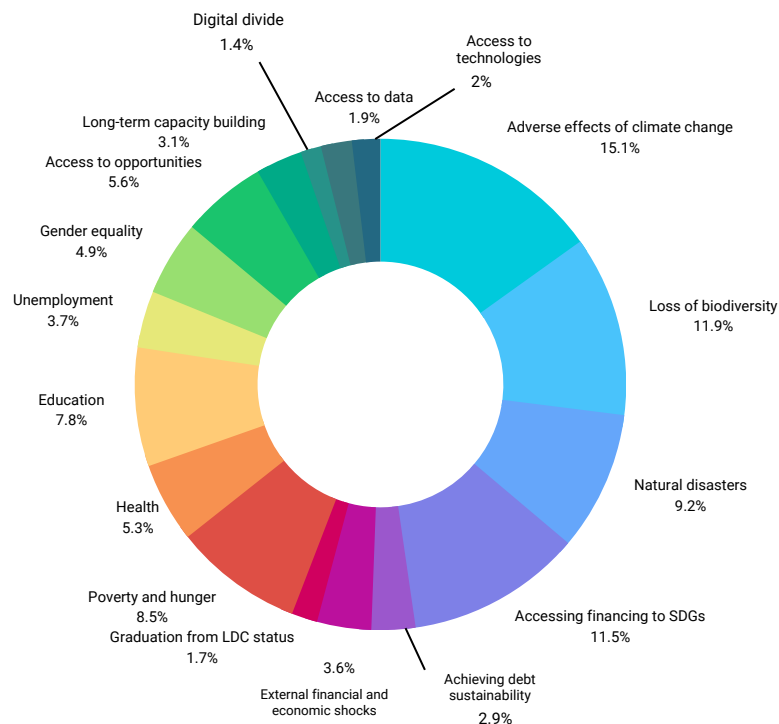
The online stakeholder consultation was held through an open online [form](#) which included five substantive questions:

Question 1	Identifying key challenges that SIDS face in achieving their sustainable development priorities
Question 2	Sharing policy recommendations to support SIDS in overcoming these challenges and to accelerate progress towards achieving their sustainable development priorities
Question 3	Example of a game-changing action that is making an impact towards helping SIDS implement their sustainable development priorities
Question 4	Main message to world leaders and other stakeholders meeting at SIDS4
Question 5	Potential actions that could be taken to facilitate more meaningful, diverse and effective stakeholder engagement during SIDS4

Key challenges for SIDS - Pacific region

Stakeholders working only in the **Pacific region** were requested to identify the primary challenges that SIDS encounter in their pursuit of sustainable development priorities. Stakeholders identified the **adverse effects of climate change** (15.1%), **loss of biodiversity** (11.9%) and **accessing financing to SDGs** (11.5%) as priority challenges for the Pacific region.

Other challenges highlighted include **natural disasters** (9.2%), **poverty and hunger** (8.5%), **education** (7.8%) and **access to opportunities** (5.6%). The chart presented below represents the major themes identified by stakeholders.



Policy Recommendations – Pacific Region

Respondents working in the Pacific region and all SIDS countries identified a set of policy recommendations that can be leveraged to help SIDS achieve their sustainable development priorities. **Climate change** and related issues ranging from **protecting the ocean and ecosystems to resilience to natural disasters** were among the top priorities alongside policies focused on **empowering young people, digitalization and energy**.

On **climate change** respondents highlighted mitigation, preparedness and adaptation measures alongside the need to strengthen SIDS' resilience to natural disasters. They called on SIDS to **put in place comprehensive climate risk assessment measures** to better understand their vulnerabilities, exposure and potential impacts. This would enable the **development of robust early warning systems and preparedness measures** to anticipate and respond to climate-related hazards such as storms, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and other approaching hazards. Equally important are establishing effective communication channels and conducting public awareness campaigns.

Stakeholders also underscored the importance of policy frameworks that bring together disaster risk reduction, resilience and climate change adaptation and mitigation. One component of this would be **ensuring that climate change considerations and resilience are integrated into all sectors of development planning**, ranging from infrastructure, agriculture and tourism to urban planning. Building resilient critical infrastructures such as roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and utilities will be crucial. Another aspect would be **enhancing the capacity of government agencies responsible for resilience and climate change measures**.

Multi-level cooperation will be key to addressing the risks posed by climate change and disasters. Respondents highlighted that all measures should directly **involve local communities** to ensure that they can adapt disaster and climate change policies to their needs and develop community-based early warning systems and local response mechanisms. They also noted that SIDS governments should **collaborate with regional and international organizations** to share knowledge, experiences, technical assistance and financial resources.

Financing for climate change and disaster risk reduction emerged as a priority. On one hand, respondents called for the **effective mobilization of existing international financing mechanisms** such as the Loss & Damage Fund established at COP27. They also suggested **establishing dedicated funding mechanisms** for climate-resilient projects in SIDS that could focus on key priority areas such as climate-smart agriculture, sustainable utilization of marine resources and renewable energy projects.

Given the **high debt burden** of many SIDS, the pressure of debt payments becomes even more acute after disasters. Respondents thus proposed **redirecting the payments for foreign debt to biodiversity conservation and environmental conservation**. Another option would be to use disaster insurance which could cover affected countries' debt payments so they could continue to provide basic services and focus on rebuilding. A global fund could be established to pool risks and make disaster insurance more affordable.

Focusing on the potential fallout from climate change and how it will affect SIDS, respondents suggested that island countries should be assisted to **record and archive as much as possible of their cultural heritage, language and the characteristics of their national territory**. As the adverse effects of climate change might lead to higher number of refugees, existing laws should be adapted to recognize climate refugees as a legal status.

Key to any sustainable development policy in SIDS is the **protection of the Ocean**. To promote sustainable Ocean management, SIDS leaders could develop **integrated Ocean governance frameworks and mechanisms** that foster collaboration between all necessary government agencies, stakeholders and local communities. This would ensure coordinated management of marine resources, marine spatial planning, and effective enforcement of regulations.

Strengthened marine protected areas (MPAs) could promote the resilience of marine ecosystems, protect critical habitats and ensure the sustainability of fish stocks. MPAs should be designed in consultation with **local communities**, taking into account **traditional knowledge** and sustainable resource use practices.

SIDS should also focus on protecting Ocean ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs and on **preventing Ocean pollution**, including through the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

Fostering sustainable fishing practices was another suggestion, which could include implementing science-based quotas, implementing effective monitoring and control measures to tackle unregulated fishing, promoting responsible fishing methods and supporting small-scale and artisanal fishers, benefiting both the environment and local communities.

Similarly, stakeholders highlighted the potential of ecotourism to generate income for local economies without compromising the health of SIDS' ecosystems. **Investing in ecotourism infrastructures** in SIDS could include a focus on nature reserves, protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries, while sustainable tourism practices can minimize the negative environmental impact of tourism and ensure it does not interrupt ecosystems.

Respondents also noted the importance of **investments and capacity building to foster the transition to renewable energy**. Governments can support this transition by implementing policies that encourage private investment so that SIDS can harness their unique geographical location to focus on solar, wind and geothermal sources of energy.

Technology transfer and digitalization are core elements of SIDS' achievement of their sustainable development practices. Some respondents suggested fostering a technology-enabled capacity-building initiative specifically targeted at SIDS to narrow the digital divide. This could include **promoting a multi-stakeholder partnership** that is focused on investing in digital infrastructure, fostering digital skills training and education, promoting the transfer of relevant technology, facilitating market access, developing capacity in the realm of intellectual property rights and supporting the development of digital services relevant to SIDS.

Technology transfer should be focused specifically on the needs of SIDS. Assistance could thus be provided in areas such as marine research and establishing a marine

database, monitoring and surveillance systems and sustainable aquaculture practices. This could also help with building a knowledge and information base for **informed decision-making in relation to blue carbon** and its potential uses and environmental impacts and integration of governance and management of climate change, biodiversity and oceans issues in SIDS.

Empowering youth emerged as another priority issue. This will require fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through business incubators, financing for young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship training. It should include enhancing **access to life-long quality education and skills development programs** that align with the needs of the global job market, with a particular focus on STEM fields. At the same time, stakeholders called on SIDS leaders to provide youth education and employment programs tailored to the Blue Economy.

Furthermore, stakeholders called on governments to **actively involve youth in decision-making processes at all levels**, including through youth councils, advisory committees, supporting youth-led initiatives and by creating opportunities for engaging youth in conservation actions through volunteering programs, academic exchanges and environmental communication campaigns through street art, visual art and social media.

Leaving no one behind, a key principle of the SDGs, also appeared in the responses to the survey. Stakeholders called for a **renewed focus on poverty eradication and tackling hunger and malnutrition** through social protection systems, safety measures and access to universal healthcare. Similarly, there should be a strong focus on **fostering gender equality and women's empowerment** and on addressing systemic discrimination through legal frameworks, affirmative action and initiatives that promote inclusivity and diversity.

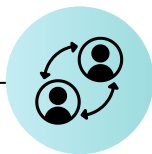
Finally, stakeholders working in the Pacific region highlighted the importance of **using the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to build back stronger** with more resilient systems and by tackling inequality, fostering digital and green transformations and strengthening international cooperation.



This word cloud represents stakeholder responses from the Pacific region on policy recommendations to support SIDS in overcoming challenges and achieving their sustainable development priorities.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities at SIDS4

Respondents operating across SIDS regions outlined multiple ideas and ways in which stakeholders could be meaningfully engaged at the SIDS4 Conference:



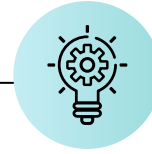
Diverse stakeholder engagement

- Including all groups, especially women, youth and indigenous peoples
- Equal representation of women
- Dedicated stakeholder spaces for informal networking, knowledge-sharing and collaboration
- Future exchange programs between stakeholders across all SIDS regions



Involving those who cannot attend

- Virtual participation for those unable to travel
- Engaging island media channels



New ways of engaging stakeholders

- Innovation challenges
- Involving youth through mini conferences, Hackathons, essay competitions or a podcast
- A SIDS investment forum
- Capacity-building workshops and training programs before and after the Conference



Messages to World Leaders

Stakeholders shared messages to world leaders which included priorities on how to strengthen the ability of SIDS to achieve their sustainable development priorities and to renew the political commitment of the international community to support them in this undertaking. The highlighted quotes below are examples of the received submissions. All inputs are made publicly available [here](#).

"Continue to provide a limelight to programs and initiatives that are successfully implemented and improve prioritization of projects by accelerating local and regional workshops by interacting with on the ground populations." – Assemble Teams and AI For Rural

"Going to the rural communities to connect directly through community-based groups can be a huge changer for rural communities." – Guadalcanal Provincial Youth Council (S.I) Solomon Islands

"Promoting the potential development of the blue economy by enhancing partnerships" – Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL), Timor-Leste

"The ocean is where all life begins. And the Ocean determines all factors of life on land and subsequently how all life in future will be" – Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Columban Mission, Fiji



Photo by Gilmore Tana from Getty Images



Photo by UWPhotoog from Getty Images

The present summary seeks to synthesize the inputs submitted by a broad range of stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). Linked sites are not under the control of the United Nations, and the United Nations is not responsible for the content of any linked site or any link contained in a linked site. The inclusion of a link or reference does not imply the endorsement of the linked site by the United Nations. The United Nations reserved the right to review submissions and delete any input at any given time if any content/input is perceived as not aligned with the United Nations Charter and/or the principles of the SIDS4 Conference.

For more information about the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States please visit: sdgs.un.org/smallislands.

