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UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MAURITIUS STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS) 2008-2009

(AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2009)

SUMMARY

The Director-General hereby informs the Executive Board of the status of implementation by UNESCO of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, which will undergo its five-year United Nations-wide review this year. UNESCO is contributing actively to the review process and maintains regular contact with the SIDS unit at UNDESA in order that UNESCO action for SIDS remains fully coordinated with that of the wider United Nations system. The Intersectoral Platform on Mauritius Strategy follow-up for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, under the authority of ADG/SC and involving all five programme sectors in headquarters and in the field, provides the framework for UNESCO's consolidated contribution.

This document reports on main developments and highlights results obtained by the SIDS Platform over the 2008-2009 biennium.

I. INTRODUCTION

The recent earthquake in Haiti demonstrated to devastating effect the vulnerability of many small island developing states (SIDS). In line with the objectives of the **Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS**, UNESCO's engagement with its small island member states seeks to reduce vulnerabilities – whether relating to disasters, climate change, or other challenges – by building upon and reinforcing the resilience and strength that characterizes island societies.

Framework for UNESCO action on sustainable development in SIDS

The high priority assigned to SIDS is clearly reflected in the Organization's **Medium-Term Strategy** for the period 2008 to 2013.

The **five-year United Nations-wide review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of SIDS** will take place this year, culminating in a high-level review to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2010. UNESCO is contributing actively to the review process and maintains regular contact with the SIDS unit at UNDESA in order that UNESCO action for SIDS remains fully coordinated with that of the wider United Nations system.

Providing the framework for UNESCO's consolidated contribution, the **Intersectoral Platform on Mauritius Strategy follow-up for the Sustainable Development of SIDS** (SIDS Platform) pursues an integrated approach to sustainable island living and development, emphasizing interregional linkages and cooperation. The SIDS Platform is led by the Natural Sciences Sector in collaboration with the Education, Social and Human Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information sectors, in both Headquarters and field offices. Reflecting the priority status assigned to SIDS, the SIDS Platform is now recognized as a coordinating platform, which facilitates its interaction with other platforms focusing on specific themes, such as for example climate change and education for sustainable development (ESD).

In September 2009 on the occasion of the 182nd session of the Executive Board, UNESCO published ***Islands in a Sea of Change*** in English and French, a booklet highlighting key activities of the SIDS Platform during the 2008-2009 biennium. Organized according to the eight Mauritius Strategy chapters towards which UNESCO's activities are targeted and focused, the booklet demonstrated the increasingly intersectoral approach being taken to addressing the challenges facing its SIDS member states. A Spanish-language edition of the booklet has just been produced and will be published shortly.

UNESCO maintains a **dedicated SIDS website** that presents UNESCO action for SIDS on the basis of the Mauritius Strategy chapters at www.unesco.org/en/sids (available in English).

Several UNESCO programmes have recently established **distinct SIDS subprogrammes**, providing an enhanced focus and more targeted delivery of activities to SIDS member states. Such programmes include a dedicated SIDS World Heritage programme as well as a dedicated SIDS portal on the Intangible Cultural Heritage programme website.

Expected results 2008-2009

During the 2008-2009 biennium, the SIDS Platform operated with the following expected results:

- Interlinked environmental and sociocultural change in SIDS documented and policy frameworks, modalities and tools for sustainable island living identified, shared and applied within and across SIDS regions;

- Sustainable development issues integrated into educational programmes in SIDS ensuring awareness and a better understanding of the issues at stake;
- Local and indigenous knowledge recognized and reinforced in SIDS education and environmental management, including as a response to climate change;
- Knowledge base for assessing water resources, especially in SIDS, enhanced;
- Integrated heritage policies developed for SIDS, representation of heritage from SIDS on the World Heritage List improved, capacities for sustainable conservation and effective management of properties enhanced and intangible cultural heritage safeguarding plans developed;
- Information literacy and knowledge of sustainable development challenges and practices enhanced;
- Participatory mechanisms and community networks strengthened, with particular emphasis on youth participation.

Strategies for implementation

Maintaining informal contact between contributors across the Organization, the SIDS Platform functions through face-to-face meetings organized at UNESCO Headquarters with frequent field office participation through teleconference facilities, as well as through regular email communication. All programme sectors have actively contributed to the results obtained during the 2008-2009 biennium. Results obtained include both fully intersectoral activities as well as activities confined to specific major programmes.

The formulation of expected results that encourage and stimulate intersectoral work is important. During the 2008-2009 biennium, contributors to the SIDS Platform were able to design and structure the Platform's Expected Results for 2010-2011 in a more intersectoral manner. In this way, the Platform has been able to formulate more focused and strategic improvement expected results for the current biennium.

Field offices are essential for the implementation of UNESCO's programmes in SIDS. While the geographical spread of SIDS and the offices serving them is enormous, effective engagement of all SIDS field offices in the regular meetings of the SIDS Platform is a considerable challenge. Field offices contribute actively to SIDS Platform reporting, confirming their key role in ensuring visibility and effective on-the-ground delivery of UNESCO's programmes.

The SIDS Platform manager meets regularly with the **SIDS Committee of Representatives to UNESCO**, in order to continuously improve and strengthen the flow of information between SIDS member states and the UNESCO Secretariat.

Highlights and reflections on activities 2008-2009

In the following, examples of activities undertaken in the context of the SIDS Platform during 2008-2009 are discussed, listed in order of the seven expected results. Not all activities are mentioned – the range and breadth of UNESCO's contributions to SIDS are too numerous to all be included here. The table on the Platform's achievements (available online) provides a more comprehensive listing of activities than space will allow for here.

- o **Interlinked environmental and sociocultural change in SIDS documented and policy frameworks, modalities and tools for sustainable island living identified, shared and applied within and across SIDS regions**

Under this expected result, key activities included the intersectoral (SC/ED) **Sandwatch** initiative (www.sandwatch.org). Sandwatch provides a framework for children, youth and adults in schools and local communities to work together to critically evaluate the problems and conflicts facing their coastal environments, with particular emphasis on climate change adaptation. Actively supported by several UNESCO field offices world-wide and a key project for the Associated Schools Project Network, Sandwatch is active in more than 40 countries world-wide – 20 of which are SIDS. With support from the Government of Denmark through a Funds-in-Trust agreement, UNESCO and the Sandwatch Foundation implement a series of activities aimed at strengthening and developing use of Sandwatch as a resource for climate change education. Project activities include the development of a new edition of the Sandwatch manual – the main resource for participation in Sandwatch activities published by UNESCO in English, French and Spanish – incorporating material relating to observation of and adaptation to climate change. Also under development is a Sandwatch-climate change web-based database that will allow Sandwatch teams to upload their observations and data, thereby allowing them to contribute to a global monitoring network based on local observations. Sandwatch has been integrated into the formal school curriculum in the Cook Islands, while interest in such integration has been expressed by Grenada. It is expected that additional countries will seek the integration of the programme into the national curriculum in the coming years.

A second major activity responding to this result was the **International Training Seminar on Caribbean Biosphere Reserves**, co-organized in 2009 by MAB-Jamaica, the Jamaican National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO, with financial support from the Government of Spain. The seminar focused on island and coastal biosphere reserves, and was both timely and important for Jamaica, which is currently nominating its first biosphere reserve. The seminar also promoted the creation of networking structures for biosphere reserves in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is hoped that the activity will pave the way for the creation of further biosphere reserves in Caribbean countries.

In the Indian Ocean region, UNESCO organized a 17-day training course on **Fish Disease Diagnosis** at UNESCO MIRCEN in India, targeting research staff from the Marine Research Centre in the Maldives. The training produced a field guide and laboratory manual on management of fish disease in the Maldives, and was reported in the 2009 Annual Report of the Maldives United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Country Team to the United Nations Secretary-General.

In the **Pacific**, the Asia-Pacific Migration Research Network, with the support of the UNESCO Apia Office and the University of the South Pacific, hosted the Pacific's first **workshop on climate change-related migration** in May 2009. The workshop identified several key areas for further research and policy development. The discussion centred on basic questions such as why people move – or alternatively, why they stay – as well as on how they access land in a new place, how they are received, and the social implications of migration on Pacific island societies.

- o **Sustainable development issues integrated into educational programmes in SIDS ensuring awareness and a better understanding of the issues at stake**

Relating to this expected result, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) offers an opportunity for UNESCO and its partners to advance progress made in human resource development, education and training to ensure results in meeting current and future needs of small islands. In the context of small islands, ESD can be seen as a framework through which to work jointly combining existing programmes and networks with newer ideas, and facilitating opportunities for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary and intersectoral dialogue around sustainability in their contexts. The **UNESCO World Conference on**

Education for Sustainable Development held from 31 March to 2 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany provided a platform for dialogue and advocacy on ESD. A number of the Conference participants came from SIDS, including the Ministers of Education of the Maldives and of Vanuatu, as well as workshop co-organizers and ESD Good Practice projects presenters in the Conference Exhibition.

UNESCO's Dar es Salaam Office of **technical advice for national science, technology and innovation systems** for enhanced economic growth in the Seychelles. It was noted that the small numbers of trained personnel and inadequate funds pose challenges to the full development of science systems on the islands even where they are much needed for example in the fisheries industries or tourism. Such constraints are shared by many other SIDS.

UNESCO continued its engagement, through the SC and ED sectors, with the **University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS)**, a UNESCO UNITWIN network. With technical support by from SC and ED, UNDESA and the UNESCO Kingston Office organized an inception workshop for the UNDESA project "Capacity Development through Education for Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States" in Kingston, Jamaica, from 9 to 12 December 2009. Funded by the Government of Spain's MDG fund, the project will – with the technical advice of UNESCO – assist UCSIS in developing a global SIDS university degree programme on sustainable development in SIDS.

Also in the Caribbean, a **Teachers' Guide for Education for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean** was published in English and Spanish. Manuscripts were prepared by six experts from the Caribbean in consultation with teachers, articulating ESD in action. The UNESCO Office in Kingston undertook wide dissemination of the resource to all Member and Associate Member States in the Cluster, and the resource was made available electronically.

The UNESCO Apia Office developed an **intersectoral approach to ESD** for the Pacific with strong links to strengthening curriculum relevance in SIDS, increasing cultural content, local/indigenous knowledge and use of Pacific languages and understanding of key environmental issues such as climate change. Mapping of national ESD activities was completed in Niue, RMI and Kiribati and is under way in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji, and research on curriculum relevance was completed in Fiji, Niue, RMI and Tonga. First materials for the revised "Our Pacific Heritage" ESD resource kit were developed and tested. The first units for production include Kuk Early Agricultural Site WHA (PNG) and Chief Roi Mata's Domain WHA (Vanuatu). Additional units on Lakalaka (Tonga), Groundwater (with some focus on Niue), Deed of Cession MOW project (Fiji), Pacific Values, Gender Equality, Youth and organic farming are still in production (i.e. testing to be conducted in 2010). The first UNESCO workshop on HIV/AIDS education was held in Nadi in October 2009. Trials of the UNESCO educational CD-ROM based resource **The Canoe Is the People** and an associated Learners' Resource pack have recently been completed at select schools in the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

In a strategic partnership with the Intersectoral Platforms on Climate Change and Education for Sustainable Development and with support from the Government of Denmark, the SIDS Platform contributed to the **International Seminar on Climate Change Education** from 27 to 29 July 2009. The seminar took stock of climate change education challenges and opportunities with particular emphasis on SIDS, with participation from 17 SIDS Member States. Experts asserted that the focus of climate change education should be on vulnerability and adaptation. Moreover, a general consensus was achieved stressing climate change education should address the ethics of climate change and the social dimensions of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Several priority actions on climate change education set at the International Seminar are currently underway. Pilot climate change education projects are going to be developed in several countries, including the Maldives. In addition, UNESCO will launch a climate change education hub in close cooperation with the UNFCCC Secretariat. The hub will undertake a review of existing educational policies and curricula, in order to initiate the development of guidelines and facilitate the inclusion of climate change issues into education programmes. The hub would therefore serve as a gateway for the exchange of information on climate change education and enhance action-research in social and

human sciences, ethics and adaptable teaching materials to suit specific climate change situations relevant to SIDS.

o **Local and indigenous knowledge recognized and reinforced in SIDS education and environmental management, including as a response to climate change**

Under this expected result, **Climate Frontlines** (www.climatefrontlines.org) is a moderated online forum where small island communities and indigenous peoples share and discuss their knowledge and experiences related to climate change. Climate Frontlines facilitates discussion across the globe on diverse topics from early impacts observations and coping with climate change to concerns and opinions on deforestation and REDD. Led by UNESCO, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Climate Frontlines forum reaches almost 60,000 readers. With the support of the Government of Denmark, Climate Frontlines is supporting an array of field projects that further contribute towards an understanding of local and indigenous knowledge related to climate change. Twenty-four projects have been selected for support and are now in the early stages of implementation, with another 5-6 projects in the pipeline. The Climate Frontlines field projects will eventually form a global network of community-based climate change observation and adaptation sites, which will be further developed as the projects are implemented. The corresponding field offices will be involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the projects. Particular emphasis will, in this regard, be placed on communities that face the greatest risks from climate change, such as SIDS.

In the Pacific region, a set of **seven educational posters**, available in English, French, Spanish and Bislama (Vanuatu) and addressing critical policy issues for indigenous knowledge, was launched by the Minister of Education and the National Commission of Vanuatu. The poster have since been translated into another six Pacific indigenous languages (Fiji, Kiribati, Maori, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu), due to be launched in early 2010.

o **Knowledge base for assessing water resources, especially in SIDS, enhanced**

In the context of this expected result, a training programme was undertaken by the UNESCO Dar es Salaam Office seeking to ensure increased technical capacities and knowledge for sustainable management of water resources on small islands. Participation of young people and good gender representation at the meetings ensured that the training met key UNESCO priorities. Participation of policy-makers also ensured that the outcomes would easily be followed through in planning and budgeting. Among the lessons learned from the implementation of the activity, the Dar es Salaam Office noted that divergence between different island States' needs can make activity planning difficult as all are not at the same level of development and thus have different priorities.

In the case study volume of the third edition of the **World Water Development Report**, the state of water resources, problems facing the society and the water managers as well as progress towards meeting Target 7 (environmental sustainability) of the Millennium Development Goals in Pacific Islands were examined from the lens of climate change/climatic variability as a case study. This joint work accomplished in coordination with the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) is being featured on the case studies section of the World Water Assessment Programme's website since March 2009.

At the global scale, **UNESCO-IHE** works in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme – Global Programme of Action (UNEP-GPA) on the delivery of **training in wastewater management in coastal cities**. The training material was initially developed for coastal countries in Africa, but through a series of revisions been adapted for different world regions. The course material is available in Arabic, English, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and Turkish. Between March 2003 and August 2009, a total of 1,800 professionals from the 67 countries, of which 26 were SIDS, have been trained in wastewater management

- o **Integrated heritage policies developed for SIDS, representation of heritage from SIDS on the World Heritage List improved, capacities for sustainable conservation and effective management of properties enhanced and intangible cultural heritage safeguarding plans developed**

Under this expected result, significant progress was made relating to the engagement of SIDS Member States with the conventions on world heritage and intangible heritage, respectively.

Ten elements of intangible cultural heritage – dances, music, songs, sung speeches, drawings, drumming styles, cultural spaces, and manufacturing were safeguarded with the support and engagement of SIDS field offices in the following countries: Tonga, Vanuatu, Jamaica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Comoros, Cape Verde, Haiti, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. New ratifications of the **2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** were undertaken in Papua New Guinea (September 2008), Barbados (October 2008), Grenada (January 2009), Haiti and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (September 2009). In the Pacific region, governmental and non-governmental experts were trained in the safeguarding of heritage at four national consultation meetings in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu. In **Timor-Leste**, one of the world's youngest SIDS and LDCs, a presentation on the 2003 Convention was made to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Timor Leste museums were supported through a range of activities undertaken by the UNESCO Jakarta Office, including the translation into Indonesian of the UNESCO/ICOM Museum Studies Training Package "Running a Museum" and a series of Cultural Heritage Protection Handbooks. In the Pacific, a feasibility study on developing creative industries as sustainable livelihoods in Kiribati was completed.

Relating to the **1972 World Heritage Convention**, the Cook Islands ratified the Convention in January 2009, while Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau and FSM nominated new sites in January 2009. Requests for funding from the World Heritage Fund were received from Vanuatu, Seychelles, Dominican Republic and Fiji, and a review of the World Heritage Pacific 2009 Programme was undertaken and reported to the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee. An Australian Funds-in-Trust to project to support World Heritage activities was established in 2008, with a particular priority for projects in the Pacific region. Youth PATH projects were initiated in 12 Caribbean countries, through which over 150 young people were trained in heritage tourism, entrepreneurship, product development and life skills. In 2008, Youth PATH in Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Barbados accessed funds from GEF, USAID and IDB to support poverty alleviation.

- o **Information literacy and knowledge of sustainable development challenges and practices enhanced**

In relation to this expected result, participatory mechanisms and community networks in SIDS were strengthened with five community media projects from four SIDS countries – East Timor, Palau, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu – supported through the IPDC with a total sum of \$119,800.

The IPDC is a key funding mechanism for SIDS. Fifteen IPDC projects were implemented in SIDS during the 2008-2009 biennium. Regional consultations on the adaptation of Model Curricula for Journalism Education were organized in Barbados and Papua New Guinea, with the participation of journalism departments of universities and training institutes of 14 SIDS. The Caribbean Media and Resource Centre was launched in Jamaica, providing an internet-based distance learning mechanism offering courses in online journalism and media.

Scientific understanding of climate processes were enhanced for a total of **40 journalists in the Pacific trained to report on climate change** during the 2008 Annual Pacific Climate Change Roundtable and at the 2nd Pacific Media & Climate Change Workshop in Tonga in February 2009. The International Conference on Broadcast Media and Climate Change in September 2009 helped build a coalition for action of regional broadcasting unions, in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, Caribbean Broadcasting Union, Commonwealth Broadcasting Association

and European Broadcasting Union, among others. This joint CI and SC sector activity enhanced capacities to report on climate change among national broadcasters from SIDS. Rights-free UNESCO-supported productions on climate change have been prepared for free distribution to broadcasters in LDCs and SIDS, including **The climate game and the poor**. In addition, over 150 new productions are available to broadcasters on themes such as HIV/AIDS, climate change, children and youth, and indigenous peoples, via the UNESCO Audiovisual E-Platform, including contributions from other United Nations organizations.

Eighteen media professionals from nine Pacific SIDS were trained in sustainable development issues including climate change, water and biodiversity using UNESCO's awareness-raising tool entitled Media as Partners in Education for Sustainable Development: A Training and Resource Kit.

In the Maldives, information literacy and knowledge of sustainable development challenges and practices enhanced through the development and adaptation of information and media literacy curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, and through the provision of a comprehensive set of recommendations based on media development indicators. In Timor-Leste, 15 journalists were trained in peace journalism, reflecting on the role of reporting in conflict situations.

o **Participatory mechanisms and community networks strengthened, with particular emphasis on youth participation**

Under this expected result, the global **Youth Visioning for Island Living** initiative promotes capacity-building and involvement of youth in sustainable development in SIDS. Through joint action by UNESCO Headquarters and SIDS field offices, a call for proposals for youth-led projects on raising awareness and education on HIV/AIDS prevention was widely distributed in November 2008 to SIDS countries. In response, more than 90 proposals from the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean and Africa were received. After the selection process, support was given to 12 projects (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga and Zanzibar). Projects were implemented during 2009 with information available at www.youthvisioning.org. In the Pacific, a regional youth stakeholders' consortium was established including youth organizations, regional (CROP) organisations and United Nations agencies. Collaborative approaches are in place for developing improved national youth policies, strengthening Pacific youth organisations and projects focused on vulnerable youth. The United Nations also set up a Youth Advisory Panel to provide input to UNDAF and United Nations agency activities. Substantial support was provided to the Second Pacific Youth Festival.