



CONCEPT NOTE

Sixty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee Special Event

on

“ICT and E-Government in SIDS: Responding to the SAMOA Pathway Call for Action”

14 November 2014, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 2 (CB)

Organized by

e-Government Branch and
United Nations Project Office on Governance
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

OBJECTIVE

The Special Event of the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in its sixty-ninth session on “ICT and E-Government in SIDS: Responding to the Samoa Pathway Call for Action” will serve as an opportunity to discuss the implementation of the policy recommendations from the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, especially in the area of ICT and e-government capacity-building, to better enable SIDS to address multiple challenges in pursuing sustainable development.

The proposed panel discussion will provide a platform for Member States from SIDS and development partners to better define the needs of SIDS in the Technology/Data/Statistics areas, discuss challenges and opportunities of building-up e-infrastructure, including e-government development in pursuing sustainable development, and start shaping the UN system response in this area. As an input to the discussion, the findings on SIDS of the 2014 United Nations E-Government Survey, as well as a study on e-government in SIDS conducted by the United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) will be presented with the purpose of enhancing knowledge-sharing and transfer of innovative e-practices. Experts, high representatives of Member States, Government Chief Information Officers, as well as practitioners from SIDS, private sector representatives and development partners are expected to present their perspectives and concrete suggestions.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

World leaders met in Apia, Samoa, from 1-4 September 2014, at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, with the full participation of civil society and relevant stakeholders, to reaffirm their commitment to promoting sustainable development of SIDS. One of their proposed commitments, as outlined in the SAMOA Pathway of the 3rd SIDS Conference, is to support SIDS efforts to increase connectivity and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), through improving ICT infrastructure, training, national legislation as well as public and private sector involvement¹.

In addition, the SAMOA Pathway has recognized the importance of supporting SIDS in their ongoing efforts to ensure peaceful societies and safe communities, including through building responsive and accountable institutions. Transparency and accountability are significant aspects of good governance which is viewed as critical for sustainable development, and are essential in integrating and addressing social, economic and environmental challenges. For instance, establishing accountability for public expenditure and developing mechanisms for scrutiny of performance by public institutions will assist in fighting corruption, and in increasing the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public investments and financing for sustainable development programmes and projects. The development of national capacities in ICT and e-government is thus of paramount importance for promoting sustainable development and institutional building².

Oftentimes good governance is also a prerequisite for receiving financial support from developed countries, and governance issues once incorporated in inter-governmental processes will nurture durable partnerships and sustainable financing for development.

The Samoa Conference has also highlighted a number of challenges that SIDS face, including climate change and adaptation, improving the health of the oceans and the imperative to safeguard it, and the search for sources of energy that are local, renewable and a permanent alternative to fossil fuels are formidable challenges for SIDS, and addressing them is a priority. To do so will require, among other things, the mastering of ICT, much capacity for managing complex data systems, including geospatial data platforms, and information dissemination hubs.

SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- *Why is e-government essential to address the multiple sustainable development challenges of SIDS?*

SIDS countries are confronted with unique challenges in pursuing sustainable development, especially environmental challenges, including threats to coastal and marine resources, sea level rise, natural disaster risks and waste management. Governments utilizing traditional approaches and mechanisms of communication are unable to meet these challenges, whereas the use of technology and innovation in government can lead to a more holistic and multi-stakeholder approach, which can help nurture a participatory and people-centric form of development. Specifically, e-government holds the potential to address multiple challenges faced by SIDS, e-participation and e-service components such as e-health, e-education and e-commerce can

¹ Draft outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. SIDS ACCELERATED MODALITIES OF ACTION [S.A.M.O.A.] Pathways. <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537>

² USG WU Hongbo: Opening Remarks at Panel on Safeguarding Financing for Sustainable Development (28 May 2013, New York).

enable the governments in SIDS to work and deliver as one and to advance sustainable development in all its dimensions (2014 UN E-Government Survey).

- *What are the challenges and success factors of ICT and e-government development in SIDS?*

The event will provide the opportunity to redefine difficulties to overcome and indicators of success that match the present reality in SIDS.

- *What is the role of development partners in supporting capacity building activities on ICT and e-government for SIDS?*

The SAMOA Pathway has set the framework as to how the development partners can best assist SIDS to face their complex and multiple challenges. The event will offer a forum for bringing forward practical solutions for context specific circumstances.

- *How can the policy recommendations related to ICT and e-government development in SIDS emanating from the Draft Outcome Document of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States be implemented?*

One of the proposed policy recommendations is to promote and enhance the use of information and communication technologies for, *inter alia*, education, employment creation, in particular youth employment, and economic sustainability in SIDS. In this context, institutional support from the UN system is called upon to fully take into account SIDS issues and include support to SIDS and development of capacities in their programmes at appropriate levels.

FORMAT and PARTICIPANTS

The Event will be chaired by H.E. Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi (Italy), Chair of the Second Committee, and Ms. Tishka Francis (Bahamas), Vice-Chair of the Second Committee. Mr. Wu Hongbo, USG, will give an Introductory Remarks which will be followed by the presentations of the Panel Members. A session of questions and answers will ensue and at the end, the Moderator will summarize the main points of the debate and conclude with a set of recommendations.

Chairs:

Amb. Sebastiano Cardi

Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations
Chairman, Second Committee of the General Assembly

Ms. Tishka Francis

Vice-Chair of the Second Committee of the General Assembly
Bahamas

Introductory Remarks

Mr. Wu Hongbo

Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Secretary-General for the Third International
Conference on Financing for Development

Former Secretary-General for the International
Conference on Small Island Developing States

Moderator

Mr. Antonio Navarra, Ph.D.
President, Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change

Panel Members:

Hon. Tuisugaletaua Sofara Aveau
Minister of Communication and Information Technology
Samoa

Amb. Robert Guba Aisi
Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations

Ms. Rowena Bethel
Director/CEO, The National Insurance Board, Bahamas
Member, United Nations Committee of Experts in Public Administration

Mr. Young Bum Lee, Ph.D.
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