



**FORTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(18–20 June 2019, Noumea, New Caledonia)

AGENDA ITEM No. 6.2: Mid-Term Review of the SIS Regional Strategy 2016–2020

(Paper presented by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat)

Summary

1. This paper provides an update on the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Smaller Island States (SIS) Regional Strategy 2016–2020, and seeks the Pacific Community’s support to inform the MTR by providing relevant information on its contributions to implementing SIS activities.
2. SIS Leaders, during their meeting in Nauru in September 2018, endorsed the establishment of a small Working Group of SIS Officials to conduct a Mid-Term Review of the SIS Regional Strategy in 2019 and to report back to SIS Leaders at their next meeting in Tuvalu in August this year.
3. The MTR will look to further rationalise the existing five priorities of the Strategy and related activities. The aim is to focus regional efforts and available resources on a select few priorities in order to deliver a set of realistic, tangible results to SIS Leaders in the remaining period of the Strategy (end of 2020).
4. The Working Group currently consists of senior officials representing Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu.

Recommendations

CRGA is invited to:

- i. note the work on the Mid-Term Review of the SIS Regional Strategy 2016–2020 that is currently being carried out by a small Working Group and that is supported by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat;
- ii. comment on areas in the SIS Regional Strategy for consideration in the Mid-Term Review;
- iii. task the Secretariat with providing the necessary information on the implementation of SIS-related activities, upon request from the Forum Secretariat, in support of the review.

Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SIS Regional Strategy 2016–2020

Purpose

5. This paper seeks agreement for the Pacific Community to support the MTR of the SIS Regional Strategy by providing the necessary information on SIS-related activities.

Background

6. The Smaller Island States (SIS) is a Forum construct comprising a sub-grouping of eight Forum member states – Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu. Against a background of ‘unique and particular’ vulnerabilities linked to their small size, lack of natural resources and remoteness, SIS face a range of development challenges that limit their capacity to ensure resilience and long-term sustainable development.
7. In their decision on the review of the SIS Programme Unit, SIS Leaders called for the development of an SIS Strategy for the group. This decision recognised a need to make the group more effective in influencing the direction of development in the region and gaining resources for SIS members to address their special circumstances.
8. The SIS Strategy was endorsed by SIS Leaders in Koror, Palau, on 24 June 2016 and later endorsed by Forum Leaders in Pohnpei on 9 September 2016. The five specific priority areas in the SIS Strategy are: climate change; labour (mobility); health; marine; and air and sea transportation. These priority areas were further articulated in an implementation plan endorsed by SIS Leaders in September 2017 in Apia.
9. In August 2018, SIS Officials agreed to postpone the MTR to 2019 and to establish a small Working Group to carry out this work. Officials agreed that the momentum for SIS work is waning, but that there is still value in the SIS Regional Strategy. Officials further agreed that the current priorities under the Strategy need to be streamlined as some are more/less appropriate for the group as a whole.
10. SIS Leaders, during their meeting in Nauru in September 2018, endorsed the establishment of the Working Group of SIS Officials to conduct the MTR in 2019. The Working Group first met in Suva on 14 February 2019.
11. The aim of the review includes:
 - strengthening commitment at the national level by considering a whole-of-society approach and refocusing national resources to give greater attention to developing SIS policy options and priority initiatives of mutual benefit and shared gains; and
 - re-prioritising current priorities under the Strategy and agreeing on a select few for active advocacy and engagement as a coherent collective in various regional and international forums, including the wider Forum membership, and with a multitude of dialogue and/or development partners.
12. The findings from this MTR will assist the Forum Secretariat to (i) provide succinct policy and advisory support on a whole-of-government approach towards the implementation of a revised Strategy in-country; and (ii) coordinate and mobilise resources (technical and financial) to meet the

needs of SIS countries, in the context of supporting regional cooperation and integration under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

13. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat will be reaching out to SPC for information on its SIS-related activities under the current SIS Regional Strategy, in addition to any other related comments in support of the MTR.
14. The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for early May at the margins of the upcoming Forum Economic Ministers Meeting in Suva where a 'zero draft' of the report will be discussed. A final report by the Working Group is to be presented to the SIS Officials meeting in Suva in July for referral to SIS Leaders at their next meeting in Tuvalu in August 2019.

Key results for the SIS Strategy

15. Key result areas for the current Strategy were premised on two key drivers, namely that there are: (i) mutual benefits and shared gains for all SIS in the pursuit of the listed outcomes; and (ii) potential benefits and shared gains for the wider Forum collective, building on the success within SIS and lessons learned.
16. Through consolidation of key outcomes from SIS country consultations in 2015–2016, consultations with Fiji-based Forum Dialogue Partners and Forum Members Missions, and feedback from SIS, the following key results were identified as the most strategic – that is, those which would foster mutual benefits across SIS, and specifically address the unique vulnerabilities of SIS.
17. Key results included: greater access to climate financing through a subregional joint proposal to the Green Climate Fund (GCF); targeted interventions for SIS in the Regional Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) Roadmap; improved and negotiated policy and legislation changes to facilitate beneficial labour mobility and enhance youth employment; focused action on SIS in the implementation of the Regional Fisheries Roadmap; and a political settlement supported by policy concessions as a basis to negotiate improved air and sea transportation services for SIS.

SPC's role in the MTR

18. The success of the Strategy depends on more strategic partnerships being developed with and between the SIS collective. Key partners include: Pacific Islands Forum members; the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other CROP members; development partners; and South-South arrangements within and beyond the Pacific. CROP agencies are particularly important due to the contribution they make through providing technical and policy assistance and support.
19. In September 2016, SIS Leaders requested CROP agencies to integrate key actions of the SIS Strategy into their programme frameworks and tasked the agencies with providing more specific reporting on targeted SIS work undertaken at the regional and national level, including challenges and constraints for implementing the SIS Strategy.
20. To date, many SIS initiatives under the Strategy's implementation plan have been incorporated into the CROP Strategic Work Agenda 2019 and CROP Action Plan 2019 endorsed by CROP Heads in the first quarter of 2019. That said, there is room for further partnerships to be identified and established to progress the SIS Leaders' intent under their Strategy.

21. The Pacific Community is a valued, committed and important member of CROP. As the largest of the region's technical organisations supporting regional and national resilience and the sustainable development aspirations and objectives of Pacific Island countries and territories, SPC plays a vital role in and across all five priority areas of the SIS Strategy. Therefore, information on SPC's activities and contributions within SIS will be invaluable for informing the MTR.
22. There is an ongoing need for enhanced collaborative and consolidated efforts by all relevant CROP agencies identified under each action/activity/deliverable to effectively engage with one another to achieve the expected results that SIS Leaders have endorsed.

Recommendations

23. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note the work on the Mid-Term Review of the SIS Regional Strategy 2016-2020 that is currently being carried out by a small Working Group and that is supported by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat;
 - ii. comment on areas in the SIS Regional Strategy for consideration in the mid-term review;
 - iii. task the Secretariat with providing the necessary information on the implementation of SIS-related activities, upon request from the Forum Secretariat, in support of the review.