

# **Solomon Islands National Report for**

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Third International Small Island Developing  
States Conference on Sustainable Development

**Melchior Mataki**

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## Executive Summary

This is a preparatory report for the Solomon Islands towards the Small Islands Developing States (SIDs) Sustainable Development (SD) Conference in Samoa next year. The report assessed substantive issues pertinent to the 4 conference objectives (assess progress & gaps, seek political commitment, identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities, and priorities for the conference), identified key issues and barriers to the implementation of the conference objectives, and practical and pragmatic actions at the country level, and identified opportunities for cooperative partnerships.

Progress towards meeting commitments under the Barbados Plan of Actions (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) was reportedly low. However; notable milestones of progress have been achieved in the recent three years. Political commitment is paramount to sustaining the high visibility of sustainable development and equitable allocation of national resources for SD initiatives. To this end, Solomon Islands has demonstrable internal political commitment evidenced by the progress it has made in spite of the constraints it faces.

Nevertheless, more needs to be done by building upon the gains of past efforts, learning from short-comings, embracing challenges, harnessing the opportunities, prioritising interventions and implementing them accordingly. Additionally the international community especially developed countries also need to meet their commitment to assist SIDs such as the Solomon Islands with implementation of their SD plans.

The priorities of the Solomon Islands for the 2014 Conference centres on the economic pillar of SD with a clear intention to provide the necessary resources to address the environmental and social protection pillars. Listed below is a synthesis of priorities derived from relevant national policy documents:

- Equitable and Sustainable Rural and General Economic Development
- Good Governance and Leadership at all levels
- Invest in Human Resources, Education Infrastructure and Institutional Development
- Improve Health and Medical Services
- Improve Water Supply and Sanitation
- Law and Order and Peaceful Country
- Improve Social and Cultural Services
- Promote Green Growth
- Improve the Integrity of Marine and Oceans Environment and Resources
- Increase Education and Employment Opportunities
- Sustainability of Livelihood and Access to Basic Infrastructure and Services
- Environment Protection and Resource Management

- Invest in Renewable Energy Resources to progressively replace fossil fuel use for electricity generation
- Enhance ICT Connectivity
- Promote Private Sector Development
- Promote and Develop the Tourism Sector
- Promote and Invest in Sustainable Agriculture for National Food and Water Security
- Promote and Invest in Sustainable Oceanic Fisheries through measures such as expanding pole and line, onshore landing and processing of catch, investment in the local fishing industry and ensuring appropriate infrastructure to support fisheries development.
- Build on the Gains from MDGs, MSI and Rio+20 outcomes
- Merge the Inter-Governmental Processes of MDGs and SD goals
- Cost Effective and Sustainable Service Delivery Modality for SD goals

In addition to these national priorities, the Solomon Islands remains convinced that SIDs are special cases of SD given their unique environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities; nevertheless, they also possess varying degrees of resilience against their vulnerabilities. Consequently, the international community should continue and increase its assistance to SIDs to enable meet their SD goals and commitments under internationally agreed SD programmes such as the MSI.

The key barriers of meeting the objectives of the conference centre mainly on the lack of comprehensive national assessment framework covering both government and non-government institutions, and sustaining political commitment for SD.

Challenges and opportunities for SD are driven by both internal and external factors. The challenges are numerous but are not entirely new and processes are already place to address some of them. Challenges such as the abuse of the cultural practice of compensation and corruption which are driven primarily by internal factors (within the control of the country) should be prioritised for appropriate action. Likewise, there are also numerous opportunities and the key ones are as follows: heighten the awareness of political parties and groups about SD, equitable allocation of development budget to all 3 pillars of SD consistent with national priorities, build on gains of past development efforts, merge reporting and assessment processes for SD goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), promote and utilise green growth to underpin economic development, promote education for sustainable development as a means to orient future generation towards SD, and harness local cultures and their hybrids to promote SD on the ground.

Immediate practical and pragmatic actions to aid the implementation of the BPOA and MSI lie on the implementation of the national development strategy, and maintenance of a conducive enabling environment through peace and security, giving equitable budget allocation to all pillars of SD, elimination of corruption and increasing the capacity of relevant government agencies with functions aimed at

eliminating corruption, and promotion of racial and gender sensitive development policies.

There are many opportunities for cooperative partnerships. However, any cooperative partnership the Solomon Islands is a party to should accrue quantifiable benefits. In terms of the MSI themes, the following are particularly amenable to cooperative partnerships: Climate Change and Sea Level Rise, International Trade and Development Finance, Management of Wastes, Health, Science and Technology, and Information and Communication Technologies.

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BPOA	Barbados Plan of Actions
CBSI	Central Bank of Solomon Islands
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
NDS	National Development Strategy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDPAC	Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination
MSI	Mauritius Strategy of Implementation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
SBD	Solomon Islands Dollar
SD	Sustainable Development
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
SIDs	Small Islands Developing States
SKM	Sinclair Knight Merz
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USP	University of the South Pacific

## Introduction

This report was prepared in line with Solomon Islands preparations for the Third International Conference on Sustainable Development (SD) of Small Islands Developing States (SIDs) to be held in 2014. The above conference was mandated under the UN General Assembly resolution A/C.2/67/L.40 with the following objectives:

- Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Actions (BPOA) and Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) building on *inter alia* existing reports and relevant processes;
- Seek renewed political commitment by all countries to effectively address the special needs and vulnerabilities of SIDs by focussing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the BPOA and MSI, *inter alia* through mobilisation of resources and assistance for SIDs;
- Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the SD of SIDs and ways and means to address them including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships between SIDs and the international community;
- Identify priorities for the SD of SIDs for consideration, as appropriate, in elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

In particular this report addresses the following areas:

- Discuss substantive issues relating to the conference objectives.
- Identify the key issues and barriers to addressing the objectives of the 2014 conference;
- Practical and pragmatic actions at the country level; and
- Identify opportunities for cooperative partnerships with the international community.

This report<sup>1</sup> was prepared based on desktop review of national reports prepared in line with the BPOA and MSI, and national reports of their global partner processes such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Post-2015 development agenda and national position papers on SD. Further information was drawn from national and regional reports pertinent to the conference to which this report is prepared for, suggestions from a stakeholder consultation workshop<sup>2</sup> and written feedback from key stakeholders including civil society organisations.

## Progress in the implementation of BPOA and MSI

The approach taken to assess the progress in terms of the implementation and the BPOA and the MSI was to review the conclusions of the pertinent national assessment reports.

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<sup>1</sup> A major drawback to this report is the limited time frame available to the author to prepare the report. An amended process described herein was agreed upon after consultation with MDPAC and UNDP.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1 for a summary of issues raised in the workshop.

The Rio+20 report reported some progress towards meeting commitments made in international and regional processes for SD especially in climate change and biodiversity conservation. Overall, it concluded that the progress was low and fell short of meeting its commitments mainly due to the skewed focus on the economic pillar of SD, which inadvertently relegates the social and environmental pillars to becoming secondary priorities.

The skewed focus was also evident in the 2013 development budget, where development estimates when classified according to their contribution to functions of government showed the dominance of the economic

**Text Box 1**

The Rio + 20 report (2011) being the latest report directly related to both the BPOA and the MSI concluded as follows:

The consensus reached regarding progress towards SD and elimination of poverty is that in both, the progress is low and fell short of meeting commitments made in the international SD process originating from the Earth Summit in 1992. The factors responsible for the low progress are numerous, and tied closely with the predominant development paradigm where economic growth is given more importance over the other two pillars of SD and the Solomon Islands' increasing vulnerability to economic, social and environmental maladies and marked low endogenous capacity to adequately address them.

pillar in terms of fund allocation (see Table 1). Whereas the economic pillar was allocated close to 35% of the development budget, the allocations to environmental and social protection are both under 1%. The skewed funding allocation was also observed to be an on-going practice. On the other hand, the sum of the allocations to those development categories with cross-cutting and enabling functions can also be considered to be also supporting all three pillars and therefore reduce the disparities in development budget allocation across SD pillars.

**Table 1. 2013 Development Budget Estimates**

<b>Development Budget Category</b>	<b>Estimate \$ SBD</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rationalised against 3 pillars of SD</b>
General Public Service	\$392,838,407	19.4	Cross-cutting and enabling
Public Order & Safety	\$187,860,663	9.3	Cross-cutting and enabling
Economic Affairs	\$707,320,452	34.9	Economic Pillar
Environmental Protection	\$17,051,000	0.8	Environment Pillar
Housing & Community Amenities	\$246,691,159	12.2	Cross-cutting and enabling
Health	\$141,784,494	7.0	Cross-cutting and enabling
Recreation & Culture	\$37,078,826	1.8	Cross-cutting and enabling
Education	\$277,119,964	13.7	Cross-cutting and enabling

Social Protection	\$17,586,345	0.9	Social Pillar
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NB: (i) Derived from the Solomon Islands Government Approved 2013 Development Estimates, (ii) Cross-cutting and enabling functions supports all three pillars of SD

The MSI +5 report of 2010 reported that a major challenge lies in institutional development and deployment to manage the rapidly changing development context in the Solomon Islands (Roughan & Wara, 2010). Nevertheless, the basic institutions (e.g. rule of law and property rights) and institutional structures (governance structures, ministries, financial institutions and churches) for growth and development are already in place. In other words the required institutions for SD are already in place, but are aligned independently with SD pillars, fragmented and do not see themselves as functional units with a common goal of achieving SD (Mataki M. , 2011) .

What’s needed is long term political commitment to ensuring that institutions are augmented to deliver their intended services and be responsive to the needs of Solomon Islanders. In addition, there is need for integration of relevant legislation, policies, plans and activities toward SD, to maximise outputs, minimise duplications and remove redundancies.

Text Box 2

The MSI+5 national assessment report reported that the principal challenges facing Solomon Islands sustainable development and progress in the MSI lie in institutional development and deployment to manage the rapidly changing context that is being driven internally by population growth, cultural and environmental changes, and by global environmental change and global economic systems.

In terms of MSI thematic areas, there has been a notable and rapid acceleration in the policy recognition for climate change issues and food security, while there are certain subsectors of MSI focus which have yet to achieve widespread mobilisation and public awareness.

In terms of the MSI themes, MSI+5 report documented some progress on climate change and food security at the political and policy levels. Since the above report came out on 2010, the policy underpinning for climate change was further enhanced through the national climate change policy and NDS. Likewise the policy basis for food security was also strengthened through objective 5 of the NDS, more specifically the policies aimed at developing natural resource based sectors.

On the other hand, on the ground implementation of these policies through projects and programmes for climate change and food security remains a challenge as progress has been slow. Evidences for the sluggish progress on the ground lie in the continued significance of external funds in climate change work and the identification of food security issues in recent climate change vulnerability studies by Mataki et al. (2012) and the UNDP and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock climate

change and food security project<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the 2011 national food security and sustainable livelihood assessment report (Galo, 2011) also concluded that food security is an on-going issue for the Solomon Islands.

The latest national MDG report (although MDGs are premised upon bringing about certain level of human development and therefore do not adequately cover the economic pillar of SD) also reported that of the 8 targets, only three registered good progress and are on track to be achieved by 2015, 3 registered mixed progresses<sup>4</sup> and have medium probability to be achieved by 2015, and 2 targets registered mixed progress but with low probability of being achieved by 2015 (see Table 2). Nevertheless significant achievements have been made in education, health and developing global partnership for development (PT Strategic Asia Indonesia, 2010), however, these progresses are precarious and require sustained commitment by all stakeholders. More so, the achievements reflected the on-going commitment by successive governments and development partners to these sectors as reflected in resource allocations in both recurrent and development budgets<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, certain sectors of the society such as people with disabilities still continue to be marginalised in terms of access to education, although some effort has been put into the inclusive education policy. The above observation further emphasises a gap in the MDGs score card as it does not adequately reflect quality aspects of actions counted towards meeting the MDGs.

Moreover, for a country with a relatively high population growth rate and subsequently a young population, children and youth issues are pertinent to address and noted to have been inadequately addressed albeit their identification in various reports by the national government and non-government organisations. On a positive note, the NDS for that matter already has development strategies and policies aimed at children and youth issues, and this report reiterates their significance within the context<sup>6</sup> of SD. However, on-the-ground progress is still in dire need of renewed attention and focus.

**Table 2. MDG Score Card for the Solomon Islands**

<b>MDG</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Traffic Light Score</b>
MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Mixed progress, no abject poverty but many people are cash poor	
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary	Good progress in primary level but mixed progress at	

<sup>3</sup> Strogem Waka lo Community for Kaikai

<sup>4</sup> MDG 8 is an on-going one and will not be achieved by 2015.

<sup>5</sup> See Table 1 for the allocations to Health and Education.

<sup>6</sup> SD is not only concerned with development concerns and priorities of present generations but that of future generations as well, and this ties well with the need to mainstream children and youth issues across all the above priorities, for they are the 'future' of Solomon Islands.

education	secondary level	
MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Mixed progress, improvements noted in female representation in primary education and secondary education but still very limited female representation in politics	
MDG 4: Reduce child mortality	Good progress	
MDG 5: Reduce maternal mortality	Good progress	
MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Mixed progress but tending towards good progress	
MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	Mixed progress	
MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development	Mixed results	
<b>Low probability to achieve MDG by 2015</b>		
<b>Medium probability to achieve MDG by 2015</b>		
<b>High probability to achieve MDG by 2015</b>		

NB: Adapted from MDG report for the Solomon Islands 2010 (PT Strategic Asia Indonesia, 2010)

In addition, the national consultations report on the post 2015 development agenda (Wa'etara, 2013) made a conclusive statement that the MDGs are 'unfinished businesses' for the Solomon Islands. In other words, the goals have not been fully attained and will remain relevant after 2015. The above assessment came up with following thematic needs for the "future you want":

- Education and Employment
- Health, Water Supply and Sanitation
- Sustainability of Livelihood and Access to Basic Infrastructure and Services
- Good Governance and Leadership at all levels
- Environment Protection and Resource Management
- Law and Order and Peaceful Country

Apart from 'Law and Order' which was implicitly referred to in the MSI, the other themes are covered under the 19 themes of the MSI and the MDGs. This observation supports the proposition that progress towards meeting commitments under BPOA and MSI was low.

### ***Putting the Low Progress in Perspective***

The low progress in meeting BPOA and MSI commitments also reflected the overall limited economic and social development progress since political independence more than 30 years ago. The limited progress is primarily due to poor economic and natural resources management as well as the erosion of integrity and professionalism in public service (ADB; AusAID, 2010; CBSI, 2011), sluggish private sector development and inadequate infrastructure (CBSI, 2011), although in the past year (2012) significant public investments into infrastructure developments (e.g. construction of new wharfs and airports) helped the national economy to grow by 4.8% albeit contraction of about 30% in the agriculture sector (CBSI, 2012). The above situation constrained government revenue (Hon. G, D, Lilo, 2013) which limits its capacity to cope with rising expenditure and meet its BPOA and MSI commitments. As such, it is quite difficult to adequately and effectively address BPOA and MSI commitments outside of the mainstream development planning and implementation framework of the national government. Interesting in the recent decade, the Solomon Islands has registered positive economic growth, driven mainly by proceeds from logging and inflows from overseas development assistance and more recently by mining (CBSI, 2011). However, these positive economic growths have not translated into increased rural economic development and delivery of basic social services.

### ***Building on the Gains of Progress so far***

The development of 2011-2020 National Development Strategy (NDS) was departure from the usual practice where the government usually prepare shorter time-framed medium term development plans. The NDS has a long term development vision of a "united and vibrant Solomon Islands" and centred on the following focal areas: "building better lives for all Solomon Islanders, taking better care of the people, improving the livelihoods of the people and creating and maintaining an enabling environment" (Solomon Islands Government, 2011). MDGs have been used as well to guide national strategies in the above focal areas. As such, the NDS is a fulfilment of the MSI call for the development of a national sustainable development strategy. However, the Solomon Islands took a step further by mainstreaming SD into each national development strategy instead of having a parallel SD plan.

The consolidation of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) and creation of a climate change division within the ministry are also important milestone of progress made by the government to mainstream SD into the national ministerial structure, and to address climate change in a coordinated and coherent manner consistent with national circumstances. The onus is now on the government to properly resource the ministry to effectively and efficiently discharge its mandate.

Furthermore, the list below highlights some post 2011<sup>7</sup> national undertakings which are consistent with the BPOA and MSI and are also pivotal to enhancing sustainable economic development:

- **Prime Minister’s Roundtable on Development, Society and Environment:** It is probably one of the first initiatives from the highest office of the country that started discussions on the connectivity between development, environment and society. Whilst the roundtable is a start it helped in identifying key development issues with equal concern for environmental and social/cultural implications of development with respect to key sectors such as the minerals, forestry, fisheries, education and tourism.
- **The Choiseul Integrated Climate Change Programme:** This pilot climate change/development programme hosted by Choiseul Province and supported by the national government and several development partners and non-government organisations aimed at increasing the resilience of Luru people and communities against the impacts of climate change and threats of natural disasters, to enhance their food security and strengthen the resilience of natural ecosystems. Two key features of this programme are its emphasis on the integration and coordination of partners, stakeholders and resources, and the management of natural resources from the Ridges (land) – Communities – Reefs to maximise benefits to the people of Luru, avoid duplications and minimize redundancies.
- **Conversion of Solomon Islands College of Higher Education into the Solomon Islands National University (SINU):** The conversion to university is a National Coalition for Reform and Advancement Government policy initiative and is within the scope of the NDS and the national government’s priorities for 2013. The need for a university is evidenced by the increasing demand for cost effective skills training and higher education (SINU Project Team, 2012).
- **Government’s Commitment to the development of the 4<sup>th</sup> University of the South Pacific (USP) Campus in the Solomon Islands:** As a member of the USP and its needs for higher education, the Solomon Islands stands to gain from the development of the USP campus through increased access and opportunities for tertiary education at home.
- **Draft National Energy Policy (2013-2023):** The draft energy policy differs from its predecessor because of its strong linkage to the NDS and recognition of its connectivity with climate change and whole of sector approach, which are amongst its guiding principles. The policy is centred on 5 thematic areas, Planning, Coordination, Leadership and Partnership; Electric Power, Renewable Energy; Petroleum and alternative liquid fuels; and Energy Efficiency and Conservation. The draft policy also captured aspects of voluntary commitments<sup>8</sup> Solomon Islands made in the RIO+20 meeting under sustainable energy.

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<sup>7</sup> After the MSI+5 and Rio + 20 national reports

<sup>8</sup> Replace current use of imported fossil fuel for electricity generation by 100% by Year 2030; Increase access to reliable, affordable and stable electricity grid by 50% from the current 12% by Year 2030; Reduce the price of electricity by half the present tariff rate by 2020; Increase access to

- **Revitalisation of Cocoa and Coconut industries:** These two cash crops have been around since colonial days but have subsided out of the development limelight for some time. The government and partners including local private businesses have developed policy documents to revitalise these industries including the promotion of value addition and allocation of substantial national budget outlays. The promotion of value addition is particularly notable because for too long, the focus has been on copra and cocoa bean export only.
- **Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative:** Solomon Islands is the only Pacific SIDs to be a member of this international initiative. It will benefit from this Initiative through the support for revenue transparency in the extractive sector and better management and resolution of disputes in the mining sector from the programs of this initiative.
- **Launch of the Submarine Cable Project:** This infrastructure project once completed will enhance information and communication technologies in line with one of the thematic areas of the MSI. This will also create and assist the business sector.
- **Tina River Hydropower Project:** This is a significant renewable energy project for the Solomon Islands because of its scale. It will increase the availability of affordable electricity on Guadalcanal and encourage private power financing.

**In summary**, progress towards meeting commitments under the MSI has been slow, however notable progress has been observed in some of the thematic areas especially in the recent three years since the MSI+ 5 and Rio+20 reports were prepared. The challenge for the Solomon Islands is to move forward with its strategic development priorities building on the framework of the NDS and past development gains consistent with SD and emerging needs.

## **Key Issues/Barriers to addressing 2014 Conference Objectives**

This section focuses on the key issues/barriers to addressing each of the 4 objectives of the SIDs international conference.

### ***Assessment of Progress and Gaps in the implementation***

The Rio+20 stocktaking report clearly identified that stocktaking of progress as a result of the implementation of development plans was insufficiently given attention, and this finding also includes the implementation of BPOA and MSI commitments. A number of factors are responsible for this particular situation including the lack thereof or limited data and information, disjointed data sets and the lack of a comprehensive central data and information clearing and storage mechanism for development planning and implementation. As such assessing progress towards BPOA and MSI commitment remains a difficult undertaking. Recognising this, the MSI has an action point under its thematic area on national and regional enabling environments for countries to develop national targets and indicators for SD built

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Solar-Home-Systems by remote rural dwellers located far from electricity grid from current 8.7% to 30% by Year 2020.

into existing data collection and reporting systems (United Nations, 2005). Even the latest MDG reported noted similar difficulties in assessing progress even when goals were specified (PT Strategic Asia Indonesia, 2010).

Nevertheless, the lack of a national assessment framework based on the thematic areas of the BPOA and MSI built into the assessment framework of the NDS is the most important factor in determining the ease of assessing progress in the implementation of BPOA and MSI. Without a national assessment framework that has nationally adapted outputs, indicators, milestones and objectives, assessment of progress will remain challenging. On the other hand, the setting up of development assistance database at MDPAC is a notable achievement in line with facilitating the assessment of SD progress.

An inspection of the 19 themes of the MSI reveal that nearly all of them have been captured directly or indirectly within the NDS which is the national sustainable development strategy of the country. As such, the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the NDS should assist in assessing the progress of the MSI and BPOA. To this end, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework proposed under the NDS is a positive step; however, a quick check with MDPAC revealed that since its enactment in 2011, the NDS has not been evaluated.

Reporting mechanisms at the national level are disjointed and non-comprehensive. The national government and its agencies have their own monitoring and reporting systems. Likewise non-government agencies also have their own ones. The NDS as an overarching development plan does not specify where and how non-government institutions will report to Government all their activities pertinent to the NDS and therefore the BPOA and MSI. Moreover, the lack of awareness amongst all government and non-government agencies about the BPOA and MSI, and even the NDS under cuts implementation efforts and obscures BPOA and MSI compliant activities and outputs by all stakeholders.

### ***Seeking Renewed Political Commitment***

This particular objective is aimed at mobilising resources and assistance for SIDs or the Solomon Islands in this particular context. Whilst this objective is important, in so far as mobilising external resources and assistance to assist the country meet its BPOA and MSI commitments; what's more pressing for the Solomon is the internal political commitment, allocation of national resources and implementation of concrete actions in line with the BPOA and MSI.

Internal long-term political commitment to SD is crucial if plans under the BPOA and MSI are to be implemented to the extent where desired SD imperatives are attained. The long-term focus of the NDS is a positive internal political commitment by the national government for long term development planning. Such forward long term planning is aligned with the SD principle of planning and implementing development actions to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. However, the NDS alone is inadequate if its policies and plans within it are not implemented, monitored and evaluated.

In other words, seeking external political commitment for resources and assistance to SIDs to implement BPOA and MSI will be diminished by the lack of internal political commitment for the BPOA and MSI and allocation of internal resources to activities which if implemented well will also meet SD commitments.

Whilst, there are genuine concerns about the overall decline in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to SIDs which also hampers BPOA and MSI efforts, their implementation should not rest entirely on ODA. In this regard, the Solomon Islands has shown progress through the allocation of national budgetary support for initiatives in line with BPOA and MSI such as its development budgetary support utilising national funds for the Coral Triangle Initiative, the constituency renewable rural electricity programme, the Rural Development Project and Women in shared Decision-Making Project. Increased use of national funds for BPOA and MSI compliant initiatives is a way forward, provided it's properly monitored and guarded against corruptive practices.

Moreover, areas which are clearly identified under the BPOA and MSI for appropriate action need to be augmented with appropriate legislation and policies that align with SD. For example, it is a well known fact that logging in the Solomon Islands is unsustainably carried out resulting in localised deforestation, siltation of rivers, extraction of large volumes of logs beyond determined sustainable level and the pollution of adjacent coastal waters (Mataki, Donohoe, Solo, Alele, & Sikajajaka, 2012; Pauku, 2009; Roughan & Wara, 2010; SKM, 2012). Yet, existing mechanisms such as the enforcement of existing relevant legislation and policy in the forestry sector remain weak, and this has been partly blamed on the under-resourcing of government agencies overseeing the timber industry (SKM, 2012). Moreover, the repealing of the existing forestry legislation which has been identified as one of the contributing factors to the logging status quo remains a daunting task. Within the context of finding a way forward, the forestry sector needs a new legislation and in the absence of this new legislation, existing mechanisms under present legislation need to be enforced with more rigour.

## **Challenges for SD**

New and emerging challenges for SD arise from both internal and external factors. The internal factors arise from local legislations, policies, decisions and practices including cultural ones and the external factors arise from the Solomon Islands position as a small developing country in rapidly globalising world. The management of both types of factors and recognition of their connectivity is paramount to the identification of new and emerging challenges.

The understanding and appreciation of the internal and external factors requires heightened awareness of development planners about the plans and key action areas promoted by the MSI and consistent focus on implementing measures and actions in line with the MSI. Without this awareness and consistent focus on implementation, the MSI or any other similar commitment will only traverse the focus of development planners and implementers during review exercises such as this report.

The MSI+5 and Rio+20 reports identified a series of SD challenges which are relevant to this report and are reproduced herein:

- Appropriate institutional change to meaningfully engage with the people and their needs bearing in mind the social and cultural specificities of communities
- Management of engagement with global systems (e.g. international trade and globalisation, and meeting requirements of multilateral environmental agreements)
- Rapid environmental changes pose a challenge especially the maintenance of the relationship between society and ecosystem services which is crucial for food and water security
- Negotiation of rapid cultural (traditional versus introduced practices, internet and mobile connectivity) and demographic changes
- Balancing of development and provision of social services between rural and urban areas (Honiara)
- Upholding of good governance principles tailored to the socioeconomic, environmental and political circumstances of the country
- Development of internal research and development (in particular science & technology elements for an island country) capacity to secure the basis of development (planning- implementation- monitoring and evaluation)
- Clearer articulation of the integrative outlook of SD in policies and strategies espoused in development plans including the NDS

Environmental changes and SD challenges are driven by the same factors such as population growth, economic processes, scientific and technological innovations, and wealth distribution patterns, social, cultural, political and institutional processes (UNEP, 2007). As such, the interaction between these factors and internal (e.g. development plans policies and implementation activities) and external interventions (e.g. global systems and donor partners) give rise to issues which have emerged in the recent decade to challenge SD:

- Increasing vulnerability to climate change and inability to respond effectively
- Changes in production and consumption patterns to mirror patterns in developed countries
- Complex and uneven international trading regimes
- Competing development priorities versus resource constraints
- Mixed progress towards meeting MDGs
- Unstable political commitment to SD
- Abuse of the cultural practice of compensation
- Corruption

In terms of external challenges, the primary challenge lies in the difficulty in collectively addressing a highly contestable topic such as SD given the diversity and increasing polarity in views at the regional level but especially at the global level. The Solomon Islands as it is with the rest of SIDs face this conundrum and their circumstance is amplified by their limited negotiation capacity even when negotiating collectively as a group. Nevertheless, the Solomon Islands and other SIDs need to keep reiterating their unique SD vulnerabilities and more importantly their inherent social and economic resilience which has help them throughout their development history albeit numerous vulnerabilities and the need for more output oriented cooperation with the international community and amongst SIDs themselves.

To give a firmer footing for the Solomon Islands towards SD, these challenges should be addressed. To this end most if not all, the country is already addressing them but it needs to do more either by intensifying and expanding its current efforts or develop new measures where there are gaps. Challenges such as the abuse of the cultural practice of compensation<sup>9</sup> and corruption should be dealt with swiftly and firmly.

## Opportunities for SD

Opportunities also depend on both internal and external factors. The opportunities for the Solomon Islands arise mainly from its position as young developing country which can draw from both external and internal experiences to chart its SD path. To scrutinise opportunities, one would need to ascertain what gains are accruable from harnessing opportunities. Consequently, the opportunities below were assessed by the author to hold potential to advance SD gains in the Solomon Islands.

- Given the significance of **political commitment** for SD, the awareness of registered political parties and groupings should be heightened prior to elections and during the formation of governments for this where initial government plans are developed. To implement this, MDPAC and MECDM need to advocate for SD using appropriate mechanisms. In addition, if the recommendation of the Rio+20 report for the establishment of an SD Commission is implemented, advocacy for SD could be one of its roles.
- The dominance of the economic pillar in development budget allocation is striking from the perspective of SD where it is commonly understood to have 3 pillars which all of them should be given adequate consideration. Therefore an opportunity for SD also lies in an **equitable and inclusive<sup>10</sup> allocation of resources** in the annual development budgets.
- Owing to the need for continuity and recognising past efforts, and to avoid reinventing the wheel, the **Solomon Islands need to build on gains from MDGs, MSI and Rio+20 outcomes** (Hon. G, D, Lilo, 2013). The achievements of the Solomon Islands which are consistent with the BPOA and MSI are also the entry points to internalise SD.
- **Merge the MDGs and SD goals reporting and assessment processes.** Both types of goals are clearly connected in terms of their development focus. The above situation is a manifestation of their parallel inter-governmental processes at the international level which gives rise to confusion as to which one should form the basis of development, and places stress on limited national resources to monitor both goals separately. In terms of the NDS, MDGs were used to articulate the targets of strategies. On the other hand, the SD goals as espoused by the MSI were not directly used in it, although most of its themes are covered in the NDS. Furthermore, a close examination

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<sup>9</sup> The government is often asked to pay compensation on behalf of aggrieved parties even if the government is not directly involved in a situation.

<sup>10</sup> Recognising the "future of the Solomon Islands" which lies on addressing children and youth issues, and rendering assistance and resources to address social issues such as gender and violence, the plight of disadvantaged citizens such as disabled people and human rights.

of the core structure of the NDS reveals that SD underpins it (Mataki M. , 2011).

- **Green Growth** offers an opportunity which the Solomon Islands can meaningfully plan, organise and control its economy in line with SD. The outcomes of the recent Prime Minister's Roundtable on development, society and environment offer a pathway to introduce and augment green growth in the Solomon Islands. The gains accruable from implementing green growth need to be clearly articulated and quantified if it is to be worthwhile vehicle to achieve SD. Engagement with the private sector is an imperative, nevertheless the government needs to take the lead in forging green growth in the Solomon Islands.
- Because of the futuristic outlook of SD and the need for long term and wider societal alignment with SD, **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** is an important mechanism and opportunity to achieve the above needs. Some efforts to promote ESD have already taken place through inclusion of environmental education into school curriculum and ESD in early child education teacher training programme at SINU.
- **Local cultures and innovative hybrids of traditional and modern cultures** must be harnessed to promote and implement SD on the ground. Traditional land tenure systems must be viewed positively for what they could accrue for SD within the local context rather than their present depictions as obstacles to development (Mataki M. , 2011)

Harnessing the above opportunities and addressing the challenges in the previous section offer a broad spectrum of opportunities to address BPOA and MSI and subsequently SD.

### **Practical and Pragmatic Actions to implement BPOA and MSI**

The NDS and its Medium Term Development Plan, National Climate Change Policy, National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan, Coral Triangle Initiative National Plan of Action, Education Strategic Framework and its 3-year national action plan, National Transport Plan and other relevant plans which directly and indirectly implements aspects of the BPOA and MSI are already in place. A rationalisation and scrutiny of these plans within the context of SD will add value to orienting them clearly towards SD.

An important next step is to undertake a **rigorous** stock take of these plans and their translation into completed activities at the policy and implementation arenas, and link them to the objectives of the NDS. To this end, the following actions need to be implemented as soon as possible:

- Provide resources for the M&E unit intended for the NDS and,
- Develop a national reporting and assessment framework which covers both government and non-government development activities in line with SD
- Carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the NDS
- Continue the implementation of NDS and all other plans that are directly linked with BPOA and MSI
- Equitably allocate development budget amongst all pillars of SD

- Rid off and manage corruption in all three arms of the government (legislature, public service and judiciary) and the private sector
- Provide fiscal and human resources, and empower institutions such as Office of the Auditor General, Leadership Code Commission, and Ombudsman Office to effectively and efficiently execute their work
- Improve national security and maintain peace throughout the country
- Promote racial and gender sensitive development policies and practices cognisant of international obligations and local cultural contexts

The implementation of the above measures will assist consolidate the enabling environment for the country to address its SD challenges and accrue gains through opportunities that come with strengthening its development in line with SD.

## **Issues for Cooperative Partnerships**

The importance and need for cooperative partnerships with the international community cannot be over-emphasised. However, such cooperative partnerships must be based on mutual terms of benefit and therefore Solomon Islands needs to articulate its cooperative partnerships from that pretext from the start. In other words, all cooperative partnership must be subjected to critical scrutiny to ensure that it's a win-win situation where the Solomon Islands can clearly quantify its benefits. Such insistence on quantifiable benefits fall in within the ambit of the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness, especially the following targets for 2005-2010

- Aid flows are aligned on national priorities
- Untied aid
- Results oriented frameworks
- Mutual accountability

Interestingly none of the above targets were met following an assessment of the Paris declaration by OECD (OECD, 2011), which also included the Solomon Islands.

In addition, the Solomon Islands needs to indicate to its partners that the Solomon Islands is not only a recipient but also a 'donor' of resources (Aqorau, 2013), market space and political support at the inter-governmental level within the United Nations system and socio-economic and political groupings at the sub-regional and regional levels.

To the question as to what issues are particularly relevant for cooperative partnerships, one can almost pick any of the 19 thematic issues of the MSI. However, in view of the need to strategically prioritise and focus cooperative partnerships, the author has utilised two pre-conditions to assist the identification of issues:

- Issues requiring trans-boundary considerations and global effort, and
- Issues requiring external experiences, expertise and fiscal resources in order to be effectively and efficiently implemented.

As a consequence of applying the above pre-conditions to the MSI thematic areas, the following areas have been identified as being amenable to cooperative partnerships:

- Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

- International Trade & Development Finance
- Management of Wastes
- Health
- Science and Technology
- Information and Communication Technologies

## Solomon Islands Priorities for 2014 Conference

Whilst recognising the importance of all three pillars of SD, the relatively unstable trend in economic growth over the past 3 decades is a concern for the Solomon Islands because of its ramifications on the Solomon Island's ability to provide adequate financial resources for the other two pillars of SD. The above situation is partly responsible for a variety of development deficiencies such as the thin infrastructure (e.g. roads and wharfs) coverage around the country, lack of reliable energy/power supply in most rural areas which also supports nearly 80% of the national population and the challenges encountered in providing adequate basic health and sanitation services to most Solomon Islanders. Without diminishing the value and importance of the environmental and social protection pillars, the practical importance of the economic pillar for a developing country such as the Solomon Islands stands out in a highly globalised and monetised world.

However, it must be pointed here as well that national budget allocations have consistently favoured the economic pillar for some time. A pertinent question is why have these development deficiencies prevailed albeit the focus on economic development over the past decades. Whilst there will be many postulations and explanations as answers for this question, what is clear is that the Solomon Islands will have to **refocus on its economic pillar** of SD and it **must rigorously scrutinise its economic pillar plans and activities** and **ensure** that they **aid and strengthen the social and environmental protection pillars**.

The above assertion stemmed from the observation in the recent decades in which some of the well-known environmental and subsequently social problems faced by the Solomon Islands were set off by the narrow focus on the economic pillar and amplified by the lack of enforcement of relevant legislation and policies, corruption and mismatch between local institutions and modern governance institutions. Moreover, at the international level, there is disillusionment with the prevailing economic paradigm which was seen to be responsible for multiple fiscal, environmental and development crises; for example, the financial and economic crises of 2008, climate change and reoccurring global food shortages (Mataki M. , 2011).

Nevertheless, the **economic pillar of SD** remains a **primary focus** of the national government and this has been captured in the NDS and its medium term priorities<sup>11</sup> (MDPAC, 2013). In line with the need to refocus on the economic pillar and ensure it does assist the Solomon Islands provide high quality social services and distribute development benefits to the Solomon Islands at large, one of the identified priorities (green growth) offers an opportunity to promote sustainable economic growth whilst

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<sup>11</sup> Sustainable economic and rural development, Governance, Education and Human Resource Development, Health and Medical Services, Public Order and Safety, Other Social and Cultural Services.

simultaneously protecting the natural environment, alleviate poverty and prevent and proactively address crisis (UNEP, 2011).

In keeping with above focus, this report provides a list of identified priorities. The priorities are drawn from position papers on SD by the national government (Hon. G, D, Lilo, 2013), NDS Medium Term Priorities and Performance Evaluation Report (MDPAC, 2013) the national post 2015 consultation report (Wa'etara, 2013) and the NDS:

- Equitable and Sustainable Rural and General Economic Development
- Good Governance and Leadership at all levels
- Invest in Human Resources, Education Infrastructure and Institutional Development
- Improve Health and Medical Services
- Improve Water Supply and Sanitation
- Law and Order and Peaceful Country
- Improve Social and Cultural Services
- Promote Green Growth
- Improve the Integrity of Marine and Oceans Environment and Resources
- Increase Education and Employment Opportunities
- Sustainability of Livelihood and Access to Basic Infrastructure and Services
- Environment Protection and Resource Management
- Invest in Renewable Energy Resources to progressively replace fossil fuel use for electricity generation
- Enhance ICT Connectivity
- Promote Private Sector Development
- Promote and Develop the Tourism Sector
- Promote and Invest in Sustainable Agriculture for National Food and Water Security
- Promote and Invest in Sustainable Oceanic Fisheries through measures such as expanding pole and line, onshore landing and processing of catch, investment in the local fishing industry and ensuring appropriate infrastructure to support fisheries development.
- Build on the Gains from MDGs, MSI and Rio+20 outcomes
- Merge the Inter-Governmental Processes of MDGs and SD goals
- Cost Effective and Sustainable Service Delivery Modality for SD goals

Apart from green growth which is implicitly mentioned in the NDS, and the call to merge the inter-governmental processes on MDGs and SD goals, all other priority areas are covered in the NDS. Moreover, they are also consistent with the national medium term priorities. Moreover, all these priorities are on-going development areas for the Solomon Islands.

In addition to these national priorities, the Solomon Islands remains convinced that SIDs are special cases of SD given their unique environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities; nevertheless, they also possess varying degrees of resilience against their vulnerabilities. Consequently, the international community should continue and increase its assistance to SIDs to enable meet their SD goals and commitments under internationally agreed SD programmes such as the MSI.

## Conclusion

Progress towards meeting commitments under the BPOA and MSI is low in general; however, notable milestones of progress especially in the recent three years have been registered and for that the Solomon Islands Government, its people and development partners should be commended for their efforts with limited fiscal resources and a host of other well-known constraints.

Solomon Islands continued engagement with inter-governmental processes on SD and MDGs has helped heightened its resolve in the recent years to internalise SD starting with the NDS and subsequently the milestones documented in this report.

There are barriers to achieving the objectives of the 2014 conference especially the ones concerned with assessing progress and securing political commitment. However, these barriers can be removed through measures highlighted in this report as well.

Forging SD ahead within the context of the BPOA and MSI requires steadfast political commitment, refocus on the economic pillar with clear intention to provide sufficient resources to service the environmental and social protection pillars, wide stakeholder participation in development efforts including children, youths and disabled people, build upon the gains of past development efforts, learn from short-comings, embrace challenges, harness opportunities, prioritise interventions and implement them accordingly with resources from national budget and other sources, although the emphasis lies on the former to ensure long term sustainability.

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## **Annex 1: Summary of Stakeholder Consultation**

The stakeholder consultation workshop was held after the author prepared a draft national report which was used as basis of the consultation. Key national ministries and UN agencies were invited. Listed below are the main issues raised by stakeholders:

- There was consensus that the draft report captured the essence of its intention and has their backing with due regard to their suggestions to improve the report.
- Children and youth issues need to be at the centre for SD given the high proportion of children and youth in the national population. Moreover, children and youths are the future of the Solomon Islands, therefore a proactive approach to addressing their issues are pertinent to SD and attainment of MDGs.
- Peace and social security is also pertinent for SD in the Solomon Islands. This proposition is line with the MSI+5 report, and more recently the Post-2015 development national consultation report which identified law and order and peaceful country as a development priority. In connection with peace and social security, national development has to be also conflict sensitive – where by national development should not lead to conflicts at all levels.
- Cooperative agreements (e.g. trade and finance) must be scrutinised to ensure that such agreements do not cause, aid or lead to development becoming unsustainable.
- SD must be made a policy pillar of all successive governments.
- All development and development policies, legislations must be rationalised and made consistent with the ideals of SD.
- The point about political commitment as being paramount to making SD an outcome of national development was supported.
- The meeting also supported the need for a central coordinating unit for all policies and frameworks for SD. It was further pointed out that MDPAC is the most appropriate ministry to play this coordinating role.
- A point was also made regarding the milestones reported in this report and the progress reported in the latest MDG report that on-the ground translation to improve livelihoods is far more important than meeting targets. The main issue is the strive to ensure quality and progress reflected by on the ground action as opposed to 'paper-based' progress.
- The point about merging the inter-governmental processes on SD and MDGs as suggested in this report was acknowledged as being important because of capacity constraints and the connectivity between MDGs and SD goals as espoused by the BPOA and MSI.
- The point about a national assessment framework for MDGs and SD goals was also supported and a further point was made regarding the need for national ministries and other stakeholders to also report their cross-sectoral activities which are consistent with SD pillars other than the one/s that directly aligns with their mandate.
- The point about positive valuation of local cultures for SD was also supported.
- The point about the need to eliminate and manage corruption was widely supported and was recognised as a serious impediment to SD.