Background

Tourism is often one of the few activities for which their location, isolation, coupled with exceptional natural and cultural resources, is a strong competitive advantage for SIDS. At the same time, it is exactly the characteristics such as remoteness which places SIDS at an economic dis-advantage especially in terms of transport and communication and access to world markets. Many SIDS are often excluded from main air and sea transport routes, eroding economic competitiveness.

Tourism development in the SIDS depends on air connectivity. SIDS need competitive, frequent, reliable and fair air connectivity. Policies on regulation and taxation of air transport, for example, therefore need take into account the dependence of SIDS from air transport.

This session will discuss connectivity as a cross-cutting theme which unites various thematic areas of importance to SIDS including sustainable tourism. The discussions will focus on actions by all stakeholders to better tap into the opportunities for enhanced connectivity in SIDS including the role of governments and the private sector to introduce competition to overcome the challenges in SIDS markets.

Key objectives:

1. Share country experiences and exchange of views on how improving connectivity for tourism can improve the tourism sector and complement the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway.
2. Explore how policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks can help improve connectivity for tourism in SIDS.
3. Identify successful public-private sector partnerships for improving connectivity for tourism and examine how these can be scaled in other SIDS and regions.
4. Announcement of new partnerships related to improving connectivity for tourism that can help unlock the potential of sustainable tourism in SIDS and support the achievement of the SDGs.
**Structure of the session**

The session will be subdivided into two segments:
- First Segment: Expert Panel Discussion (15:10 – 16:15)
- Second Segment: Interactive Dialogue (16:15 – 16:45)

**Guidance for Speakers**

General progression of session:
- All speakers will be introduced by the Moderator at the beginning of the session.
- Speakers are asked to make 10-minute presentations.
- Following the presentations, there will be an interactive dialogue with questions from the floor as directed by the Moderator.
- The use of PowerPoint is encouraged.
- Please email a copy of the presentation/speaking notes to the session focal point (below) by 20 May 2018 at the latest.

**Guiding Questions**

1. What are the challenges and opportunities related to connectivity for tourism promotion in SIDS?
2. What are some of the examples and best practises at the national, regional and global levels on improving connectivity for tourism in SIDS.
3. How can policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks help integrate connectivity (land, sea and air) for tourism in SIDS, including inter-island connectivity and regional connectivity.
4. How can SIDS leverage access to development finance, including concessional finance, to improve connectivity for sustainable tourism development?
5. How are public/private sector partnerships geared to improving connectivity for tourism in SIDS; what areas have shown promising results and what are the areas where partnerships are lacking?
6. Explore options for strengthening international/global, regional cooperation and coordination for scaling-up partnerships for improving connectivity including through large scale infrastructure development to advance land sea and air transportation.

**Focal Point**

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