

Minutes of the kickoff meeting on the UNDA project “Stronger & Greener Productive Capacities for Just Transitions in Caribbean Small Island Developing States”

17 March 2025

Attendees:

Government Officials: Adys Puello Cruz, Angélica Cedeño, Carla Pou, Daniela María Veras Pérez, Emmanuel David Gatón Peña, Fernando Sánchez, Hillary Aguilera Almonte, Jose Guillermo Sarita Paulino, Lisbeth Abreu, Melisa María Guzman Bencosme, Mildred Grabiela Martínez Mejía, Paola Esmeralda Rodríguez Adames, Paola Jacqueline Del Villar Alcántara, Perla Massiel Rosario Fabián, Sarah Esther Diaz Armando de Defrank, Wisneuri Mercedes Diaz Camacho and Yolanda Altagracia Reyes (Dominican Republic); Brittany McCrea, Jonathan Isaacs, Mikhail-Ann Urquhart, and Tamar Nelson (Jamaica); Corrine Lewis and Geeta Samaroo (Trinidad and Tobago);

Permanent Missions in Geneva: José Luis Domínguez (Dominican Republic) ; Brandon Crooks (Jamaica)

United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs): Andrea Vera Andrew (Antigua and Barbuda); Manuel Ortiz Sanabia (Dominican Republic); Stuart Alan Davies (Jamaica); Christelle Parris-McKay, Mark Thomas and Tracey Hutchinson (Trinidad and Tobago);

UNCTAD: Rachid Bouhia, Oumarou Djelbeogo and Corey To

Objective of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the UN Development Account project, “Stronger and Greener Productive Capacities for Just Transitions in Caribbean Small Island Developing States,” planned to begin implementation in 2025. In this project, UNCTAD will support selected Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to strengthen and green productive capacities, with the goal of boosting just transitions that align with the unique needs of SIDS and advancing economic transformation.

Briefing Presentation of the Project by UNCTAD

Introduction

Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) introduced the meeting and outlined the purpose: briefing stakeholders on the recently funded UN Development Account project aimed at enhancing productive capacities in Caribbean SIDS.

Policy Frameworks

The project supports the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) by focusing on productive capacities, data governance, and holistic development programs, as well as UNCTAD's Strategy for SIDS. It also aligns with major global development frameworks.

Project Overview

The initiative aims to strengthen and green productive capacities in Antigua and Barbuda, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica, running from 2025 to 2028 with a budget of \$848,600. Key outcomes include:

1. Strengthened National Statistical Capacity: Enhancing data measurement and analysis using the updated Productive Capacities Index (PCI).
2. Enhanced Policy Development Capacity: Supporting stakeholders in identifying gaps and fostering economic diversification.
3. Development of Holistic National Development Programs: Assisting in designing and implementing sustainable economic policies.

Project Structure and Phases

The project consists of three phases:

1. Measurement (2025-2026):
 - Enhancing the PCI and addressing data gaps.
 - Developing a satellite PCI tailored for SIDS.
 - Conducting regional meetings and training sessions for statistical capacity-building.
2. National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (2026-2027):
 - Organizing national sensitization workshops.
 - Conducting National Productive Capacities Gap Assessments (NPCGAs).
 - Holding validation seminars with stakeholders.
3. Policy Design & Implementation (2027-2028):
 - Drafting and validating national programs.
 - Hosting regional workshops and securing funding for implementation.
 - Establishing Regional Centres of Excellence.

Implementation and Coordination

UNCTAD will oversee the project with two working teams (economic and statistics) supported by international and national experts. Two steering committees (economic and statistics) will guide the process, with representation from various stakeholders, including country focal points, RCOs and international/regional organizations.

Timeline of Key Activities (2025-2027)

- March 2025: Online briefing meeting.
- March-May 2025: Data mapping, conceptualization of a satellite PCI.
- June 2025: Presentation of the conceptual framework to the Statistical and Technical Advisory Group on the Productive Capacities Index (STAG).

- July 2025: Calculation of the first satellite PCI and regional meeting preparations.
- November 2025: Regional validation meeting for the satellite PCI.
- 2026: PCI training sessions and NPCGA workshops.
- 2027: Finalization and implementation of policy recommendations.

Next Steps and Discussion Points

- Focal Points: Antigua & Barbuda and the Dominican Republic still need to nominate focal points. Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago have nominated representatives.
- RCOs Participation: Steering committee members need to be identified.
- Regional Expert Group Meeting: Venue and dates need to be determined.
- Feedback on Timelines: Ensuring project completion by 2028.
- Project Website: Under development, expected to launch by the end of the week.

Closing Remarks

Rachid Bouhia emphasized the importance of this project for UNCTAD, as it advances productive capacity mandates and serves as a model for similar initiatives in Pacific SIDS. He encouraged continued collaboration and thanked participants for their contributions and engagement.

Discussion:

- Stuart Alan Davies (UN RCO, Jamaica) noted that the RCO in Jamaica has been conducting extensive research on productive capacities, particularly their relationship with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He shared the latest paper on the topic, "*Productive Capacities and the SDGs: Critical But Nuanced Relationships*," which utilizes the Productive Capacities Index (PCI). He suggested further examining the connection between productive capacities and economic complexity.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) emphasized that the project team welcomes contributions from all participating SIDS' institutions and aims to integrate relevant regional and national initiatives. He highlighted that the PCI incorporates UNCTAD's Economic Complexity Index as an input indicator and agreed on the need for further research on the links between productive capacities and economic complexity and their policy implications.
- Tamar Nelson (Jamaica) sought clarification on how country responsibilities are assigned within the steering committees. She also requested for terms of reference to help countries recommend suitable representatives, and early discussions to facilitate project planning.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) confirmed that there will be one Economic Committee and one Statistics Committee overseeing the work across all four participating countries. Terms of reference will be shared at a later stage. Bilateral meetings will be arranged to support project planning and discuss Committee's compositions.
- Tamar Nelson (Jamaica) followed up with enquiries on the frequency and format of meetings, and the role of the STAG in the project.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) replied that in addition to the regional meeting, there will also be national workshops (in hybrid format) and an online closing workshop. The STAG consists of

high-level economists and statisticians from international, regional and national institutions to ensure that the PCI methodology is in line with international statistical standards.

- Tracey Hutchinson (UN RCO, Trinidad and Tobago) requested for the terms of reference for national focal points to facilitate nomination and initiation. She also asked if the project website link and presentation slides of this meeting could be circulated among participants.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) confirmed that the meeting materials, link to the project website and terms of reference will be shared later.
- Emmanuel David Gatón Peña (Dominican Republic) enquired about the process of appointing country focal points and the expected frequency of PCI indicator updates.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) responded that focal points are nominated by the respective governments, typically from relevant public institutions.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) noted that the core PCI is updated every two years. He highlighted that due to significant data gaps for PCI input indicators among SIDS, the project aims to collect relevant national data where available and identify challenges in data reporting and collection. He emphasized that these insights could help shape Holistic Programs to address such gaps. He further explained that a key component of the project is the development of a Satellite PCI, specifically designed to reflect the unique characteristics and needs of SIDS. He concluded by stating that its long-term continuation could be undertaken either by UNCTAD or by the participating countries themselves, with UNCTAD's support.
- José Luis Domínguez (PM of the Dominican Republic) thanked UNCTAD for including the Dominican Republic in the project and for the valuable briefing. He noted the country's strong interest, reflected in the participation of various national institutions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will coordinate the next steps, including the selection of a national point of contact, with updates to follow soon.
- Brandon Crooks (PM of Jamaica) requested further details on the regional meeting, specifically regarding its location and the support provided by UNCTAD.
- Rachid Bouhia (UNCTAD) confirmed that the project funding covers all expenses of the workshop, such as venue hire. He invited participating countries to suggest suitable locations, and to assist with nominating and inviting participants.

Action items

- Missions in Geneva and UN RCOs to assist in getting the nomination of country focal points for Antigua and Barbuda and Dominican Republic for the project
- UNCTAD to elaborate ToRs for the Steering Committees and share with country focal points and RCOs.
- UNCTAD to coordinate with the UN RCO and country focal points to finalize the venue, participants, and exact dates for the Regional Expert Group Meeting.
- UNCTAD to collect feedback on the proposed project timelines to ensure successful completion by 2028.
- UNCTAD to share the project website link, which will serve as a central platform for relevant information and outcomes.