



Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee

Meeting no: 08

Noo Raajje Program

Summary Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 16th June 2021

Time: 09:00 am – 10:30 am (Maldives Time)

Venue: (Virtual)

Attendees: 25 participants (*Refer annex for the virtual attendees list*).

Meeting Chaired by: Ilham Atho Mohamed, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology

(MSP Subcommittee meetings are co-chaired by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture on a rotating basis).

Welcome Remarks & Meeting Minutes Recap

The Chair, Ilham Atho Mohamed, opened the meeting welcoming the members of the eighth MSP Subcommittee and providing a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

Maesha Mohamed, *Noo Raajje* Administrative Coordinator, provided a brief recap of the previous meeting minutes. She asked the members to review and comment on the draft minutes, which were shared via a Google document link, by Tuesday, June 22nd, 2021. She also informed the members that the *Noo Raajje* website has been updated with program materials (i.e., previous meeting minutes and presentations) and is now publicly accessible.

Recap of Goals

(Presentation attached)

Waitt Institute's MSP Director, John Weber, provided a recap of goals that were presented in detail at the 5th MSP Subcommittee meeting, reminding the participants of the definition and the general characteristics of MSP goals. He mentioned that the last couple of MSP Subcommittee meetings focused on the Principles for the MSP Process in the Maldives and are now transitioning on to discussing the subjects and nature of the MSP itself. He briefly described the MSP Compendium work done through the *Noo Raajje* program, which is a desktop review of the existing laws, policies and commitments (national, international and regional) that relate to the Maldives, and noted that this Compendium will be used as a starting point for a conversation about MSP goal setting. The MSP Subcommittee will delve deeper into the specifics and objectives of the MSP in the coming meetings.

John highlighted that there is no one way to define a goal and that it is up to the MSP Subcommittee members to come together and decide on the goals that this marine spatial planning effort should have for the Maldives or to address the issues that are important for the Maldives.

Presentation of the Compendium Work

The chair then handed over to Dr. Shaistha Mohamed, the Consultant for developing the MSP Compendium for *Noo Raajje*, to present the compendium work that had been done.

(Presentation attached)

Dr. Shaistha presented how the Compendium was developed, and the goals and objectives that the Maldives had already committed to, as well as the resources and references that were reviewed for this work. She continued to explain that some of the key documents that were reviewed were out of date and/or were not available at the time of review, so they were not included in the actual compendium. She further explained the eight themes (or areas) that were used to synthesize the goals and objectives that Maldives has committed to, noting that each document was reviewed in terms of these eight different themes.

Hudha Ahmed, representing Renewable Energy Maldives Pvt. Ltd, inquired whether the Local Government Authority Act had been reviewed as part of the compendium work, and Dr. Shaistha clarified that it had not.

Breakout to Review, Adapt/ Select Goals

John described how the breakout room sessions will be carried out and organized. Noting that each room will have a facilitator to take notes and answer questions, he emphasized that this is an opportunity for members to provide feedback and make suggestions. He reiterated that Dr. Shaistha's presentation of the MSP Compendium was to help members understand what already exists and the Maldives' commitments. Members may or may not agree with what has been captured in the Compendium, and they are free to make suggestions and fill in any gaps. He then instructed the members to choose one of the four breakout rooms and alternate between them as desired. The four breakout rooms were as follows:

- Breakout Room 1, facilitated by *Noo Raajje* Program Coordinator Moosa Zameer Hassan: Culture and Heritage theme, and Tourism theme.
- Breakout Room 2, facilitated by *Noo Raajje* Site Manager Fathimath Nistharan (Nisthu): Climate Change theme, and Fisheries theme.
- Breakout Room 3, facilitated by Waitt Institute's MSP Director John Weber: Development and Services theme, and Resource Management theme.
- Breakout Room 4, facilitated by *Noo Raajje* Administrative Coordinator Maeesha Mohamed: Biodiversity and Ecosystems theme, and Species theme.

The Chair then handed over to Nisthu to open the breakout rooms where the discussions took place. The feedback was incorporated into the shared **MSP Compendium Goals document** (*link in annex*).

Report Back on Breakout Rooms

At 10:10 AM, the members reconvened in the main room for discussions after 35-minute discussions in the breakout rooms (Maldives time).

Following is a summary of the discussion.

Breakout Room 1: Culture and Heritage, and Tourism goals.

Moosa Zameer Hassan, *Noo Raajje* Program Coordinator, facilitated Breakout Room 1 and invited Shaziya Saeed (Saazu) from Save Our Waves to provide an overview of the discussion.

- The goal that was synthesized in relation to Culture and Heritage was to identify and preserve national cultural heritage.
- Members suggested to cover marine and coastal cultural heritage preservation in the goals.
- Local and traditional names for surf points such as Cokes / Randhaa need preservation. Surfing is also a cultural activity and a way of life for recreation especially for the children. Emphasized on the importance of maintaining and promoting traditional names given to places. For example, earlier attempts have used words like 'province' which sort of loses this cultural element. It is important to include this under culture and heritage goals.
- Gleaning and other traditional activities on the coastal areas are affected by development. For example, small Dhoni for lagoon fishing & retaining traditional fishing methods.
- Members suggested looking into Local Governance Act for the culture conservation and preservation.
- In relation to tourism there were two goals synthesized; (1) Identification of and increase economic benefits from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable / eco-tourism, and (2) Minimize adverse impacts from development activities on biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Members suggested to consider sewage outfalls from tourist resorts and highlighted that tourism development and operational activities cause negative impacts, which should be reflected in the goals.
- Some of the tourism development impacts are not just biological but physical as well such as on wave regimes /coastal dynamics are changed through coastal modification.

Breakout Room 2: Climate Change, and Fisheries goals.

Noo Raajje Site Manager Fathimath Nistharan (Nisthu) facilitated Breakout Room 2, and she invited Shaha Hashim from Blue Marine Foundation/ Maldives Resilient Reefs to provide an overview of the discussion.

- The goals synthesized under the Climate Change theme were (1) Strengthen adaptation actions and opportunities and build climate-resilient systems to address current and future vulnerabilities, and (2) Reduce carbon emissions through alternative energy development.
- Members agreed that under the first goal of climate change, mitigation should be included.
- There Was a general consensus that under the second goal of climate change, protection of carbon capture ecosystems as a means to reduce carbon emissions should be included in addition to alternative energy development. Even though this is not yet reflected in the existing national documents and policies, it is important to consider it, as it is now a globally accepted commitment and members believe that potential policy changes could be driven through this MSP process.

- Two goals were synthesized in terms of fisheries; (1) Develop opportunities for sustainable fisheries markets with maximum social and economic benefits to the Community, and (2) Improve or sustain populations of traditionally/culturally important fish through sustainable practices.
- Members suggested changing the language to reflect "access" to sustainable markets and adding improving domestic markets specially to create demand for sustainable reef fisheries in the tourism sector.
- It was also suggested to add "Improve or sustain 'wild' populations" to the second goal and change the language to 'commercially' important species (because it can include invertebrates as well) instead of 'traditionally/culturally' important fish.
- Members also suggested adding an additional goal to reflect food security.

Breakout Room 3: Development and Services, and Resource Management goals.

Waitt Institute's MSP Director John Weber facilitated Breakout Room 3. He summarized the discussion in the room.

- There were three goals synthesized under the development and services theme; (1) Develop sustainable transportation and increase connectivity between islands, (2) Consider sustainability and resilience when developing infrastructure, and (3) Enable local councils to execute and coordinate development projects.
- In relation to resource management, there was one goal which is to sustainably use and manage the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Noted that the notions related to climate change, resiliency and sustainability in terms of infrastructure and infrastructure services should be at the forefront.
- Discussed the importance of considering traditional knowledge in the context of decision making in relation to ocean use and development.
- Need to bring in transparency and evidence-basis for development decisions or more broadly for the use of ocean/natural resources.
- Noted the need to include value of ocean, seas as natural assets, including values that are not easily measurable (such as clean air). Need to include accounting of such values in government decision-making.
- There are ways to estimate values of even those costs or benefits associated with utilization of natural resources. This could be a research-issue (could fit under the research goal). Such assessments could help inform development review.
- With regards to sustainable transportation, members noted that multi-modal, safety, and efficiency should be included; energy efficiency and new technology should be also included so that the transportation system would be forward-looking.
- Members suggested to include air, land, and sea in thinking about transportation both internal and connection to other countries.
- Should link increased maritime transportation to Climate Act: transition to renewable energy is very important.
- Need to balance development and protection of the environment simultaneously.
- Suggested to include the Decentralization Act in the Compendium as it identifies islands' jurisdictions and there is an important authority given to the local councils in decision making in terms of resource use and management within their jurisdictions. This should be reflected in the goals.

- The need to ensure that protected areas have equitable practices of governance involved in their management. MSP should include specific objectives on assessing the protected areas and ways to assess how well the goals are being met. It is not enough to have a plan but also include plans for implementation and assessments that happen after making the plan.

Breakout Room 4: Biodiversity and Ecosystems, and Species goals.

Maesha Mohamed, Administrative Coordinator at *Noo Raajje*, facilitated Breakout Room 4, and she invited Aya Naseem, representing the Maldives Coral Institute, to provide an overview of the discussion.

- Two goals were synthesized in terms of biodiversity and ecosystems; (1) Maintain or improve the health of ecosystems, habitats, and traditionally important marine species populations, (2) The natural environment and its resources are a national heritage that needs to be protected and preserved for the benefit of future generations.
- Members noted the need to consider protection of keystone species/ indicator species in order to keep a balance of ecosystems.
- Suggested to include traditionally as well as economically important marine species populations.
- Discussed the language of the goals for example whether it should be "natural heritage" instead of/in addition to national heritage and noted that terms such as "national biodiversity" may not be the most accurate language.
- Suggested to include ecosystem services and functions as well in the goals.
- In relation to species, there were three synthesized goals; (1) Identify, protect, conserve and promote recovery of threatened, endangered and endemic species, (2) Identify, control and prevent invasive or alien species, and (3) Conserve highly migratory species.
- Members also noted that at goal level it might be good to combine species, biodiversity and ecosystem goals to make a broader goal and break them down at target/objectives level instead. Members noted that at the moment they are not broad enough for goals.
- The importance of including the resilient species/reefs under species goals was highlighted.
- Members highlighted that at the moment there is no goal to address drivers of biodiversity loss (ex: plastic pollution, reclamation etc) - important to have a goal to address threats to biodiversity loss.
- The importance of including a goal that addresses indirect drivers of biodiversity loss (such as lack of capacity, lack of financial capability to switch from one resource/ activity to another etc) was also noted.

Wrap Up, Action Points & Closing Remarks

Shaha Hashim requested for a workplan timeline for the MSP Subcommittee.

Nisthu asked the members to provide additional feedback and suggestions to improve the language on the shared document.

Nisthu and Ilham concluded the meeting with brief remarks thanking the attendees for the very productive discussions and summaries.

Annexes:

1. Attendees' list
2. Link to **MSP Compendium Goals** (working document for feedback)
3. Recap of Goals presentation
4. MSP Compendium - MSP Targets Presentation
5. Final meeting minutes of the 7th MSP Subcommittee meeting

Noo Raajje Program Secretariat

24/06/2021