



**Governance Committee Meeting**  
***Noo Raajje Program***  
**Summary Minutes**

**Meeting No:** 02  
**Date:** Wednesday, 08 September 2021  
**Time:** 09:00 am – 10:30 am (Maldives Time)  
**Venue:** (Virtual)

**Attendees:**

**Governance Committee Members:**

1	Attorney General's Office	Uza. Fathimath Shirveen	Senior State Attorney
2	Attorney General's Office	Fathimath Nadha Ibrahim Zuhair	State Attorney
3	Ministry of National Planning, Housing & Infrastructure	Fathimath Niuma	Deputy Minister
4	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology	Aminath Shauna	Minister
5	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology	Dr. Abdulla Naseer	Minister of State
6	Ministry of Finance	Mariyam Manarath Muneer	Senior Policy Director
7	Ministry of Tourism	Dr. Abdulla Mausoom	Minister
8	Maldives Marine Research Institute	Shafiya Naeem	Director General

**Program Leadership Representatives:**

1	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture (Chair)	Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan	Minister
2	President's Office (Host)	Sabra Noordeen	Special Envoy for Climate Change

**Blue Prosperity Coalition Representatives:**

1	Waitt Institute	Shayna Brody	Media and Communications Director
2	Waitt Institute	Andy Estep	Science Director
3	Waitt Institute	Dr. Angus Friday	Blue Economy Director
4	Waitt Institute	Asia Williams	Blue Economy Manager
5	Waitt Institute	John Weber	Marine Spatial Planning Program Director
6	Waitt Institute	Vanessa Dick	Program and Legal Director
7	Waitt Institute	Dr. Pablo Granados-Dieseldorff	Sustainable Fisheries Director

**Program Administration Representatives:**

1	Waitt Institute	Robin Ramdeen	Program Manager
2	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture	Munshidha Ibrahim	Senior Fisheries Officer
3	President's Office	Sara Abdul Ghanee	Senior Foreign Relations Officer
4	<i>Noo Raajje Program</i>	Fathimath Nistharan	<i>Noo Raajje Site Manager</i>
5	<i>Noo Raajje Program</i>	Moosa Zameer Hassan	<i>Noo Raajje Program Coordinator</i>
6	<i>Noo Raajje Program</i>	Maeesha Mohamed	<i>Noo Raajje Administrative Coordinator</i>

**Meeting Hosted by:** President's Office

**Meeting Chaired by:** Hon. Minister Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan

### **Welcome Remarks & Introduction**

The honorable Minister of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture, Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan, extended a warm welcome to the Governance Committee members and thanked everyone for their presence and participation in the second Governance Committee meeting of the *Noo Raajje* Program. He thanked all the stakeholder government agencies, private sector and civil society organizations who have been working closely with *Noo Raajje* program and contributing to the program efforts. He also extended a warm welcome to the Waitt Institute project team.

Minister Dr. Hussain highlighted that the *Noo Raajje* program was officially launched by HEP President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in December 2020, following the first Governance Committee last year, and has been progressively moving forward with program activities, including conducting important marine research expeditions and completing additional baseline work by the program. He applauded the Waitt Institute, the Blue Prosperity Coalition, government agencies, and stakeholders for their strong commitment and involvement.

Minister Dr. Hussain highlighted that the *Noo Raajje* program, spanning over five years, is focused on building a vibrant Blue Economy, achieving sustainable use of ocean resources, growing our economies sustainably, improving people's livelihoods, and protecting and restoring ecosystem health. He expressed gratitude to the program's leaders, HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and Mr. Ted Waitt, for their immensely important initiative for the Maldives. He noted that maintaining the health of the ocean ecosystem is imperative for the Maldives' future economic growth and development, as well as in other aspects of our lives. In his remarks, he highlighted the challenges that ocean ecosystems and economic activities face, emphasizing the importance of long-term sustainable plans for the utilization of marine resources.

Minister highlighted that the government is developing necessary short and long-term blue economy strategies and visions through the *Noo Raajje* program, with the support of the Blue Prosperity Coalition (BPC), and that the realization of those strategies is required to meet the program's objectives. To attain these objectives, the Minister emphasized the importance of full support, commitment, and engagement from all stakeholders.

Maesha Mohamed, *Noo Raajje* Administrative Coordinator, then provided a brief review of the previous meeting minutes before handing over to Robin Ramdeen, Program Manager at Waitt Institute, to provide program pillar updates.

### **Presentations providing an update on ongoing *Noo Raajje* program activities in the Maldives**

*(Presentations attached)*

On behalf of the Waitt Institute, Robin Ramdeen, Program Manager, gave a presentation with her colleagues, providing updates and progress on the program pillars. The highlights of the presentations are;

1. The Maldives government has formed a 5-year partnership program [*Noo Raajje* program] with the BPC to protect 20% of the Maldives' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and a Blue Economy strategy.
2. The program is currently in its second year, having completed the assessment phase and moving on to the policy design and planning phase.

## DRAFT MINUTES FOR REVIEW

3. She then presented the key achievements of the program in year 2020-2021 and the goals for remainder of 2021.
4. She also offered that the *Noo Raajje* Governance Committee meet more frequently to review *Noo Raajje* program updates.

Vanessa Dick, Program and Legal Director at the Waitt Institute, then provided updates on the legal assessment work.

5. The *Noo Raajje* Legal and Policy Framework Assessment Report has been completed. This is a public document that will be made available to the public.
6. One of the commitments made under the *Noo Raajje* Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that specifically applies to the legal aspects of the program is the call for a legally binding EEZ-wide marine spatial plan that includes the designation of at least 20% of Maldives waters as fully protected Marine Protected Areas (MPA). Therefore, the legally binding primal will not only be applicable to the MSP but also to the MPAs that are designated as part of it.
7. The MoU includes the parties' commitment to an assessment, which is the Legal and Policy Framework Assessment, that is now complete. Following the assessment, the next step would be to support with legal analysis and drafting as needed to achieve the MoU objectives.
8. She then outlined the content of the Legal and Policy Framework Assessment Report, emphasizing that the report does not make any policy recommendations on the policy pathways moving forward, but rather describes how the existing legal authorities contribute to ocean management in the Maldives.
9. This report serves as a foundation for understanding the current legal framework and landscape in relation to the marine environment, as well as a background for the policy pathway conversation.
10. She noted that in the next phase, where policy pathway discussions will take place, government stakeholders would play a critical role in identifying what is most appropriate in the Maldives context.

Attorney Fazeela Shaheem, one of the two lead authors of the *Noo Raajje* Legal and Policy Framework Assessment Report, then highlighted some of the key legal elements identified in the report.

11. She highlighted that there are numerous legislations currently in the pipeline that may be relevant, and therefore, this report is never completely up to date.
12. The legal team noted that the report is accurate up until the July 2021, and there maybe amendments to the report as those instruments that are pending, drafted and expected change.

The floor was then opened for members to ask questions and make comments.

13. The Minister, Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan, asked whether the proposed sand mining legislation would have any implications, to which Attorney Fazeela responded that it would, but as highlighted in the report that it is up to date until July 2021, and have indicated in the report that there is a draft legislation pending for sand mining and the contents of the sand mining legislation has not been included in detail in the report.
14. Dr. Abdulla Naseer, Minister of State at the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology stated that with reference to the recent ship grounding occurrence and other comparable events in the Indian Ocean, it is critical to look at the gaps, especially because the Maldives is entirely of sea. The usage of the ocean is heavily on transportation, and it is one of the key areas where legislation needs to be thoroughly examined to identify what is missing. There may be severe gaps in environmental legislation,

maritime zones, and concerns relating to conventions such as MARPOL that must be addressed within the *Noo Raajje* legislative framework.

The floor was then handed to *Noo Raajje* Site Manager Fathimath Nistharan (Nisthu) to present the Maldives Offshore Marine Spatial Planning Principles proposed by the MSP Subcommittee (MSP Working Group) for the approval of *Noo Raajje* Governance Committee.

15. She described the work of the MSP Subcommittee or the Working Group, as well as what has been undertaken thus far in developing the Offshore MSP Principles.
16. The proposed offshore MSP Principles are included in the briefing memo distributed to members of the Governance Committee prior to the meeting.
17. Nisthu presented the details of the proposed principles, which were divided into three themes: Governance and Development, Ethical and Social, and Biophysical.

The Waitt Institute's Marine Spatial Planning Program Director, John Weber, then outlined the proposed timeline for the Maldives offshore MSP.

18. He noted that the proposed MSP timeline is based on the *Noo Raajje* program's broad target dates.
19. The timeline indicates the products that the MSP Subcommittee will or has already reviewed, as well as the stages that require approval from the *Noo Raajje* Governance Committee in order to move forward with the work.
20. The MSP Subcommittee is currently discussing the Maldives offshore MSP goals and objectives.
21. He highlighted that approval from the Governance Committee is also required in the coming months, and in order to be efficient and effective with time and the decision-making process, he welcomed members to make any suggestions moving ahead.
22. He thanked everyone who has been involved in data sharing agreements and data requests, noting that those data will be informing future work, particularly the maps that will be based on offshore data, and the spatial analyses that will take place that will support the identification of areas to conserve and potentially other areas for other types of human activities.
23. He also highlighted that the Maldives offshore MSP goals and objectives, which requires approval from the Governance Committee, are very important because they describe what the MSP for the offshore is seeking to achieve in the Maldives. Those decisions will also directly inform some of the spatial analysis, mapping, and zoning scenario development that will take place in the next months.
24. Another important area that will develop from the objectives type dialogues is zone typology, which is designed to establish the types of zones or spatial management areas in the offshore that the management plan would include. This will also require the approval of the Governance Committee.
25. There is also a public consultation process that must be completed, with some elements of the consultation plan requiring approval from the Governance Committee.

The floor was then opened for members to pose questions and make comments.

26. The Minister of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology, Ms. Aminath Shauna, indicated that the Ministry has no further comments on the proposed offshore MSP Principles. However, discussions regarding zonation are important areas that demand a lot of effort and may necessitate extra time in discussing and approving.

With no additional remarks from the members present, the floor was passed over to Dr. Angus Friday, the Waitt Institute's Blue Economy Director, to outline the blue economy strategy work.

*(Presentation attached)*

27. He walked through the ongoing blue economy work, highlighting areas of potential competitive advantage and emphasizing that the goal is to potentially position the Maldives as a global blue economy leader.
28. In terms of the work done to support the Maldives become the World's First Smart Ocean State, a variety of tasks were completed in phase one, including research, workshops with four development scenarios, and a government workshop on Scenario X. (Blended scenario or the Smart Sustainable Ocean State).
29. The work is currently in phase 2, which includes looking at the blue economy matrices, where a number of parameters were mapped against the level of investment that might be needed, followed by a government workshop with technical staffs.
30. The next steps in phase 2 will include prioritization of tracks, and prioritization of actions within the tracks which will lead to the Blueprint 1 (Trunk and Branch strategy/roadmap) which outlines the key areas and the key sequencing that can be anticipated. Following that will be the Blueprint 2 (Deep Dive Economic Plan, Business Plan, and Financial Plan), which will look at the economic and business case that underpins some of the solutions.
31. He then detailed some of the major challenges and solutions identified in each track.
32. He then invited the Governance Committee members to vote on the seven tracks to indicate their priorities. The survey results will be collated and presented to the Governance Committee at a later date.
33. The blue economy matrices, which map all of the solutions against the level of investment that may be needed, were then explained to the members.
34. The next steps once the government priorities are clear were then presented, which includes (1) Trunk and Branch Strategy based on the government's priorities, (2) Deep Dive Economic Plan, Business Plan, and Financial Plan, (3) Roadshow of the prospectus to prospective partners, (4) Support partnership Forum with the Government of the Maldives, and (5) Launch Institutional Framework and Team to oversee Execution of Strategy.

The floor was opened for members to ask questions and make comments.

35. Ms. Sabra Noordeen, Special Envoy for Climate Change from the President's Office, inquired when the new blue economy scenario would be presented to the Cabinet, and Dr. Angus Friday confirmed that the team is ready to present that to the ministers and is awaiting guidance from the program leadership.
36. Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism, expressed his pleasure that wellness tourism received a high score, noting that a large tourism project is currently underway for the localization and diversification of tourism to the local islands, which will provide a good opportunity to engage with local communities and integrate local products into tourism products. He further said that the project's key purpose is to give locals more ownership in all tourism businesses, as well as to ensure that fisheries, agricultural products, and other local products and services related to tourism are well-integrated into the local communities, and he believes that the work of the *Noo Raajje* program will be able to capitalize on that.

The floor was turned over to the Waitt Institute's Sustainable Fisheries Director Dr. Pablo Granados-Dieseldorff to provide updates on the *Noo Raajje* program's sustainable fisheries pillar.

37. Fisheries characterization work is currently in review by the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, and the Maldives Marine Research Institute. This characterization mainly focuses on tuna and reef fisheries, but also explores mariculture activities in the Maldives.
38. Seafood Markets Consultancy is launching for 5 months (September 2021 – January 2022), looking at opportunities to promote market access expansion and diversification of the current marketplace, mainly of tuna species, grouper and sea cucumber. The countries that will be looked for opportunities are the UK, USA, Canada, Eastern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the Middle East. The consultation was framed within the recommendations from the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture.
39. Development of a fisheries app to support fisheries-dependent data collection and fisheries management of small-scale fisheries is in discussion.
40. Discussions on monitoring, compliance, and surveillance work are underway, with a focus on compliance and enforcement technology, as well as strategic assessment.

The floor was offered for members to ask questions and make comments, and with no additional remarks from the members, the Media and Communications Director at Waitt Institute, Shayna Brody, shared a video that was developed from the coral reef assessment Expeditions that were conducted in January 2020 and March 2021.

### **Closing Remarks**

Ms. Sabra Noordeen, Special Envoy for Climate Change, thanked all Governance Committee members for attending the *Noo Raajje* second Governance Committee meeting, as well as representatives from the Waitt Institute and *Noo Raajje* partners, for the incredible work being done and perseverance despite the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic.

She also thanked to the legal team that developed the *Noo Raajje* Legal and Policy Framework Assessment Report, noting that this legal assessment will help in identifying the mechanisms required to address gaps in the Maldives legal framework.

She also expressed appreciation to the *Noo Raajje* MSP Subcommittee for the extensive work done with consultative data-backed research by the Science team to develop the Maldives Marine Spatial Plan, the first of its kind in the Maldives. She noted that the results of this work will be felt throughout all blue economy sectors, and the government is excited to see the developments in the blue economy and sustainable fisheries sectors, praising the relentless and unwavering commitment. She also expressed hope that the sustainable and smart ocean use at the heart of blue economy initiatives will be one of the key components needed to address the climate crisis today.

She further said that the Maldives, like most coastal communities, is heavily reliant on ocean resources, and that in order to have a more sustainable and equitable future, it is important to encourage ocean stewardship and sustainable utilization of ocean resources, as evidenced by the *Noo Raajje* program's meeting with local councilors. She highlighted how inspiring it was to see their willingness to not just protect their marine environment, but to protect it in a way that diversifies the economy to include regenerative ocean farming, ensure energy security, and promote sustainable local tourism. She further said that the climate crisis pushes policymakers to pursue high-quality conservation goals in order to preserve the rich ecosystem for future generations. A holistic approach to advancing the blue economy and ensuring equitable access to resources is also required for progressive climate action.

She noted that achieving these ambitious goals would be challenging, but that long-term investment in progressive policies focused on regenerative sustainability pays off, emphasizing the importance of developing a circular economy in order to build resilience in the face of today's multiple global challenges.

She ended her remarks by thanking all of the stakeholders and government partners who are striving to achieve these goals.

The Chair, Minister Dr. Hussain, thanked everyone for attending and for the productive meeting. He proposed holding frequent Governance Committee meetings in order to be informed and involved in decision-making. Minister proposed to have meetings at least on a quarterly basis and hold meetings in between if there is something that requires immediate discussions.

**Action Points**

1. *Noo Raajje* Program Coordinator Moosa Zameer Hassan proposed that the next Governance Committee meeting be held in three weeks, and no members opposed.
2. The Governance Committee's approval and feedback on the Maldives Offshore MSP Principles will be sought.
3. The Governance Committee will also vote on the seven Blue Economy tracks that have been presented in order to gauge the priorities.

Moosa Zameer Hassan then closed the meeting by thanking all of the members and program partners for their attendance.

**Attachments:**

1. Copy of Presentations providing an update on ongoing *Noo Raajje* program activities in the Maldives
2. Copy of the Blue Economy presentation

*Noo Raajje* Program Secretariat

21/09/2020