



Governance Committee Meeting Noo Raajje Program Summary Minutes

Date: Monday, 07 September 2020
Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm (Maldives Time)
Venue: (Virtual)

Attendees:

Governance Committee Members:

1	Attorney General's Office	Uza. Fathimath Shirveen	Senior State Attorney
2	Ministry of National Planning, Housing & Infrastructure	Fathimath Niuma	Deputy Minister
3	Ministry of Environment	Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan	Minister
4	Ministry of Economic Development	Uz. Fayyaz Ismail	Minister
5	Ministry of Finance	Mariyam Manarath Muneer	Senior Policy Director
6	Environmental Protection Agency	Ibrahim Naeem	Director General
7	Ministry of Tourism	Dr. Abdulla Mausoom	Minister
8	Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI)	Shafiya Naeem	Director General
9	Local Government Authority (LGA)	Fathimath Afshan Latheef	Chief Executive Officer

Program Leadership Representatives:

1	Waitt Institute	Dr. Kathryn Mengerink	Executive Director
2	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture (Chair)	Zaha Waheed	Minister
3	President's Office (Host)	Sabra Noordeen	Foreign Relations Secretary

Waitt Institute Representatives:

1	Waitt Institute	Shayna Brody	Communications Director
2	Waitt Institute	Andy Estep	Science & Field Director
3	Waitt Institute	Ute Zischka	Program Director & Blue Economy Lead

Program Administration Representatives:

1	Waitt Institute	Robin Ramdeen	Program Manager
2	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture	Munshidha Ibrahim	Senior Fisheries Officer
3	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture	Moosa Zameer Hassan	Noo Raajje Program Coordinator
4	Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources & Agriculture	Maesha Mohamed	Noo Raajje Administrative Coordinator

Meeting Hosted by: President's Office

Meeting Chaired by: Hon. Minister Zaha Waheed

Welcome Remarks & Introduction

The honorable minister of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture, Zaha Waheed extended a warm welcome to the Governance Committee members and thanked all for their presence and participation in the first Governance Committee meeting of *Noo Raajje* Program. She also extended a warm welcome to the project team from Waitt Institute.

Minister Zaha highlighted that HEP President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and Mr. Ted Waitt discussed following the 74th Session of United Nations General Assembly in New York and led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Maldives and Blue Prosperity Coalition in September 2019. And through this MOU, the two parties agreed to devise a long-term program to protect and preserve the Maldives' marine environment and resources, which will ensure sustainable use of ocean resources in the Maldives.

Minister Zaha explained that *Noo Raajje* program spanning over a period of five years with a three-phased approach is expected to explore the diverse marine habitats of the Maldives and support the Blue Economy initiatives while the research would aid in policy decision making towards sustainable utilization of our ocean's resources, and subsequently helping the local communities. She elaborated that maintaining the health of our ocean ecosystem as imperative for future growth in all aspects of our lives.

The Chair then invited the committee members for a round of introduction and representatives from each government organization took their turn to introduce themselves.

Following the introduction and a query as to whether Ministers ought to represent in the Committee, Minister Zaha clarified that this is the first Governance Committee meeting and as it is the highest level decision making committee for the program on behalf of the government, it will be valuable to have ministerial level representation in the committee. She mentioned that there will be endorsements from the cabinet and higher level as well.

It was noted that representatives from the Ministry of Defence, Maldives Police Service, and Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation were not represented in the meeting.

Dr. Kathryn Mengerink, representative and Executive Director from the Waitt Institute was then invited to introduce her team and share her remarks on the program and as well as the Blue Prosperity Coalition partners. Dr Kathryn explained that the Blue Prosperity Coalition is a global network of NGOs, academic institutions, foundations, and other organizations working together to assist committed governments in developing and implementing sustainable marine spatial plans to protect the environment and improve the economy at the same time.

Presentation on Overview of the Program by Waitt Institute

Ms. Robin Ramdeen, the Program Manager on behalf of the Waitt Institute made a presentation with her colleagues providing an overview of the program, its key principles and update on the Noo Raaje activities. The highlights of this overview are;

1. Introduction to Waitt Institute, its founding members and the organizing body of the Blue Prosperity Coalition (BPC), Partners and engagements with governments in developing and establishing Blue Prosperity plans.
2. She highlighted that Government of Maldives commitment to protect 20% of marine area as per the MoU signed between the Government and BPC. Informing that the core aspects of the program include Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), promote Blue Economy and establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
3. Blue Prosperity Coalition has partnered with the Governments of Bermuda, Barbuda, Curacao, Montserrat, The Azores, The Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga and recently the Maldives
4. Further, the Waitt Institutes team was introduced and its network of collaborators including SeaSketch conducting GIS aspects, emLab providing fisheries scientific expertise, Scripps Institute that works closely on expeditions and UCLA as well working in the field of blue economy.
5. Ms. Robin explained that the meeting between HE the President of Maldives, Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and Mr. Ted Waitt's in 2019 during the UN General Assembly led to the partnership and signing of the MoU between the two parties in September 2019.
6. She highlighted that *Noo Raajje* program is now running at year 1 during which the assessment of the existing environment are to take place. This includes ecological assessments, socio-economic and stakeholder surveys. Currently, legal assessments are being conducted through local lawyers to understand and evaluate the existing laws and regulations and mandates of the different authorities. Additionally, economic valuation as well as habitat mapping are expected during this assessments phase.
7. In year 2-3 the focus is on policy design and planning aspects. As such, in parallel to the zoning analysis and marine spatial planning it was explained that it will involve legal drafting and drafting of the sustainable financial plans.
8. Year 3-5 is planned for monitoring and enforcement aspects and is expected to involve such tasks as demarcating the marine areas using bouys, etc and enforcement of marine spatial plans and monitoring of the sites to assess impacts.
9. It was informed that Waitt Institute will support the program throughout the 5-year period.

Update on the ongoing Program Activities in the Maldives

Ms. Robin Ramdeen and members from Waitt Institute provided an update of the ongoing program activities in the Maldives. These include;

1. An underwater research expedition conducted earlier in 2020 for the assessment of existing environment.
2. Program work planning carried out onsite by Waitt Institute with Policy Advisers from PO and development of Terms of Reference (ToR) for *Noo Raajje* Governance structure that has been shared with the Governance Committee Members.
3. Blue Economy priorities discussion with economists and fisheries scientists from UCLA
4. Hiring of local lawyers who commenced work in July 2020 on legal assessments as well as hiring of Program Secretariat staff.
5. It was noted that marine science and stewardship training program are being planned towards the end of this year for government technical staff and those interested

Mr. Andy Estep, Science & Field Director from Waitt Institute then gave an update on the *Noo Raajje* Expedition undertaken in February 2020

1. It was explained that the month-long expedition visited 16 atolls and conducted a total of 978 dives during which coral reef composition, fish populations, water quality and benthic communities were studied. It was planned to visit North and South of Maldives in two lags but was only able to finish the North lag before the Covid19 health emergency.
2. The ongoing tasks seeks to understand the goals of MSP in the Maldives and the data collected will be used to analyze the priority areas. The MSP working group within the steering committee will be reviewing the available data layers, defining the zoning criteria, and creating draft plans.
3. The stakeholders will be given opportunity to provide feedback on draft plan and then the Governance Committee will be responsible for putting a final plan forward for legal adoption.

Dr. Kathryn Mengerink briefly updated on the legal assessment work that is being undertaken with the assistance of hired two local lawyers working with Waitt Institute team in the evaluation of the Maldivian laws and institutional mandates to support the design and implementation of a comprehensive MSP and blue economy process.

It was highlighted that prior to the completion of the drafting of the legal aspects the Table of Content of the “Maldives Legal Framework Assessment Report” is requested to be shared among the committee for any comments.

Ms. Shayna Brody, Communications Director for Waitt Institute presented an update on the Program Communications objectives and tasks for 2020. She highlighted on the “*Noo Raajje*” program Logo. It was further explained that the expedition video is in progress while the National Geographic team awaits for a safe time to visit and create a National Geographic film as well. It was noted that MMRI staff from Maldives will be also presenting at an international event “The Virtual Island Summit” on September 8th, 2020.

Ms. Ute Zischka, Program Director & Blue Economy Lead from Waitt Institute presented an update on the *Noo Raajje* Blue Economy aspects. She highlighted that the National COVID Economic Recovery Task Force will act as *Noo Raajje* Blue Economy Working Group in

identifying current national priorities whilst economists at UCLA Institute of Environmental Sustainability will work as the lead collaborators.

Mr. Andy Estep talking on the *Noo Raajje* Sustainable Fisheries aspects highlighted that the MoFMRA will help identify the priorities until a Sustainable Fisheries Working Group is established within the Steering Committee, who will work on improving the sustainability of ocean resources and coastal livelihoods. Fisheries scientists at UCSB emLab are to work as the lead collaborators and will reach out to local and regional experts as necessary.

The floor was opened for questions or comments after the presentation on the Overview of the *Noo Raajje* Program to which Minister of Environment Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan indicated to intervene but could not comment due to a technical issue. Thus, the meeting continued indicating interventions would be welcome when raised by members later.

***Noo Raajje* Program TOR Presentation by the Program Secretariat**

Ms. Robin Ramdeen gave an overview of the program governance structure explaining the four levels of engagement including:

1. **Principals**- HEP Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on behalf of the Government of the Maldives, and Mr. Ted Waitt on behalf of the Blue Prosperity Coalition.
2. Program oversight undertaken by the members of **Governance Committee** (representative from each Ministry. This member could be the minister, or an alternative representative of the Ministry approved by the Chair. Therefore, it was encouraged to nominate 2 representatives to the Governance Committee who could act as a proxy), **Program Leadership** (Executive Director Dr. Kathryn Mengerink from Waitt Institute, Minister Zaha from MoFMRA and Senior Policy Advisor from the President's Office) and **Blue Prosperity Coalition Partners**.
3. Technical support to be provided by the *Noo Raajje* **Steering Committee** and **Technical Subcommittees**. The Steering Committee and the Subcommittees will contain technical input from government ministries as well as other institutions, NGO's and academics.
4. **Program Administration** formed by the Waitt Institute Program Manager Ms. Robin Ramdeen, Senior Representative of MoFMRA Ms. Munshidha Ibrahim, President's Office's Policy Secretary Ms. Jauza Khaleel, Site Manager (to be hired), the Program Secretariat represented by Mr. Moosa Zameer Hassan (Program Coordinator) and Ms. Maesha Mohamed (Administrative Coordinator).

Mr. Moosa Zameer highlighted that as he has a Coordinator role for the *Noo Raajje* program, he would like to establish excellent relations with all the parties involved, and then continued to present the roles and responsibilities of the Committees as described in the *Noo Raajje* Program TOR emailed to the Governance Committee members prior to the meeting. These include;

1. The Governance Committee- acting as the **ambassadors of the Government and liaisons** for *Noo Raajje* providing final approvals for the actions that lead to program

objectives throughout the program and identifying necessary technical experts from relevant Ministries, NGOs, and the private sector to serve in the Steering Committee.

2. He went onto explain the **roles and responsibilities** of the Steering Committee and Subcommittees, the members of committees as organizational representatives and **rules of engagements**.
3. Furthermore, the **three levels of decision making** were highlighted, indicating the arrangement for decision making, proxy participation, decision making through consensus ensured by the Chair, and if a consensus cannot be reached, the decision to vote.

Moosa indicated that if the Governance Committee wishes and considers that this is not the best process to follow for the decision making, then this should be highlighted and commented by the Governance Committee for review.

Discussion

Minister Zaha then introduced the representative member from LGA as she was not introduced in the beginning of meeting and handed over to Ms. Fathimath Afshan Latheef to introduce herself for which she expressed a high level of interest towards the project confirming that LGA would be willing to facilitate anything necessary, including coordinating with the Councils. She requested to have a copy of the presentation and the contact details of the Governance Committee members.

Minister Zaha responded that these will be shared along with the meeting minutes and opened the floor for further comments from the members. These discussions were;

1. Minister of Environment Dr. Hussain raised concern regarding the voting process and suggested it to be changed explaining that the Governance Committee as the government decision making body for the program should follow government decision making process. And that obtaining majority vote is not the normal procedure to make government decisions.
2. Dr. Hussain also highlighted the protected area declaration is already within the mandate of the Ministry of Environment, and that there are over 62 designated marine protected areas in the country and that a lot of plans and studies required for the protection of areas have been undertaken by the Ministry such as the establishment of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Baa atoll, Nature Parks in Addu and also Fuahmulah. He highlighted that those designation and plans are undertaken with the contribution from International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
3. Dr. Hussain reminded of the commitments from the government Strategic Action Plan (SAP) to work to establish at least one island, one reef or lagoon and mangrove from each atoll in the Maldives as designated marine protected areas. Adding to that, he highlighted that there are existing Laws and Regulations that allows the Ministry to designate and declare protected areas. Therefore, what would be required will be perhaps improve or review on the existing laws and regulations if required. Minister Dr. Hussain

suggested that these be considered during the marine spatial planning process so that everyone is on the same page.

4. Ms. Mariyam Manarath Muneer representing the Ministry of Finance informed of their interest in the project as well and highlighted that she hope the programme will create an avenue for obtaining further funding towards climate change related expenditures.
5. Ms. Sabra Noordeen emphasized on discussing ways to incorporate and promote the products of pole and line tuna fishery and revitalizing the tourism industry through *Noo Raajje* program.
6. Dr. Kathryn Mengerink commented on Dr. Hussain's intervention and highlighted that the existing protected areas will be included in the MSP while the program focuses on building, complementing and expanding on the existing works. She also confirmed that the comment by Ms. Sabra has already been taken into consideration by Waitt Institute.
7. Minister of Economic Development Uz. Fayyaz Ismail stepped out of the meeting, however, the Chair noted that the Minister will give full support to the program and the communications will be continued with the Ministry of Economic Development.
8. Minister Zaha responded that Dr. Hussain's concern regarding the voting process for decision making will be noted for consideration.

Action Points & Closing Remarks by the Chair

1. Minister Zaha requested to nominate alternative representatives from each Organization for the Governance Committee as well as provide names for Steering Committees and Technical Subcommittees from each Organization when the communications are made to the representing organisations.
2. She also requested for an endorsement for *Noo Raajje* Terms of Reference from the Governance Committee members. And highlighted that this ToR was developed with consultations from the ministries but requested to provide comments if there is anything additional that needs to be incorporated.
3. As highlighted by Kathryn during the presentation, the Table of Contents of the "Maldives Legal Framework Assessment Report" is to be shared by the Program Secretariat to the Governance Committee members for any comments.
4. Minister Zaha highlighted that the program Work Plan will require endorsement by the Governance Committee members. Once the Program Secretariat gets it ready, the work plan will be shared and the Governance Committee members will be called for a meeting.
5. She also requested to check on the possibility to have the Governance Committee meeting bit earlier or another time in the day so that it would be a more convenient time for the international partners joining the meeting.

Minister Zaha concluded the meeting by thanking all the participating members and the program partners for joining the meeting.

Attachments:

1. *Noo Raajje* Program Terms of Reference
2. Copy of the Presentation by Waitt Institute & *Noo Raajje* Program Secretariat
3. Copy of the Table of Contents of the “Maldives Legal Framework Assessment Report”

Noo Raajje Program Secretariat-09/09/2020