



**Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee**  
**Meeting no: 3**  
***Noo Raajje Program***  
**Summary Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

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

**Venue:** (*Virtual*)

**Attendees:** 29 participants (*Refer annex for the virtual attendees list*).

**Meeting Chaired by:** Mr. Mohamed Imad, Chief Project Executive, Ministry of National Planning, Housing & Infrastructure

*(MSP Subcommittee meetings are co-chaired by the Ministry of Environment, 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, Mr. Mohamed Imad commenced the meeting at 9:08 am Maldives time, welcomed the members for the third MSP Subcommittee, gave a brief meeting introduction and an overview of the meeting agenda.

*Noo Raajje Site Manager, Nistharan (Nisthu) provided additional information that previous meeting minutes have been emailed and if any comments and feedback are there to send in by next Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021. Further, it was informed that ocean use survey forms will be shared once ready in the upcoming days.*

#### **Presentation on MSP**

Will McClintock (Will) from University of California Santa Barbara presented an introduction to Marine Spatial Planning. Will explained that combined activities of ocean space users are cause for potential conflicts, marine pollution and ecological impacts which require better management of ocean space. Will further informed of key principles of MSP and gave an overview of the general MSP process and the phases, including the Process Planning, Data collection & goal setting process, spatial analysis and plan creation.

In his presentation Will gave an introduction to the SeaSketch mapping platform with examples on data inputs and survey queries and feedback using the platform and demonstrations of the kind of spatial data from Barbuda and Micronesia in SeaSketch platform which are made publicly available.

Will informed that when ocean use survey is sketched and data is input, it can be combined with prioritizing tools based on specified criteria such as important habitats for creating zoning scenarios. And further elaborated on stakeholder participation, engagement and explained various means of documenting the information.

At the end of the presentation the Chair, briefly informed the participants that the National Spatial Plan of the Maldives is being formulated by GoM and that the draft plan is being reviewed by the cabinet. He further informed that another important plan underway is the Integrated National Spatial Ferry Network that is being developed by the government.

(*presentation attached*)

### **Presentation on MPAs**

Nisthu spoke about the initial MPAs designation, the goals and current MPA designations. Furthermore, Nisthu explained the current MPA conservation efforts in a systematic conservation planning that includes the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve and Nature Parks in Addu & Fuvahmulah where various sector users, their values and threats were assessed. These MPAs have different zones such transition, buffer and core areas are identified in their management plans.

Muhusina from Ministry of Environment commented to update an update on the number of current PA's with recent designations amounting to a total of 73 PAs and of which 55 are MPAs.

Nisthu then continued explaining the status of the *Noo Raajje* MSP process and informed that earlier efforts on conservation planning and information collected will be considered in the *Noo Raajje* MSP process. She also informed that the subcommittee will assist in developing the MSP process and in the next meeting discuss on the timelines.

(*presentation attached*)

### **Q&A and Discussion;**

Imad opened the floor for discussion and questions for which answers were provided by the Program and Government representatives. Following are the questions posted by participants in the Chat and responses made during the meeting.

*Q1. Whether Hans Hass Reef and Guraidhoo Kandu is still a protected Area?*

Muhusina from ME responded that Hans Hass and Guraidhoo Kandu are still accounted as a designated protected area and that it was designated prior to the current regulations. Protected areas designated after the current regulations have different categories of protection such as strict nature reserves, sustainable use areas and habitat or species management to serve the purpose of PA's. And ME is working to categorise existing such areas into different IUCN categories.

*Q2. Re the current MPAs, would it be useful to evaluate the efficacy of the 55 MPAs in place? How have they helped achieve conservation goals?*

Muhusina from ME highlighted that they are trying to monitor the PA management efficiency. There are different formulas and methods to determine the efficiency. As pilot study ME is working on some of the sites in Boduthiladhunmathi, Baa atoll, Addu and Fuvahmulah for their management effectiveness. And informed that they intend some of the areas especially under the new projects to be listed under IUCN green listing as well. Shaha from Maldives Resilient Reefs highlighted that because these areas will be counted in the 20% pledge, it would be ideal to make sure the right areas are selected to achieve conservation goals.

*Q3. Will this MSP program include re-evaluation or current designated areas, in addition to re-assessing management of them?*

Nisthu answered that the program will be considering all of the listed MPAs and taking guidance from the subcommittee if there are needs to improve the management plans and if there are suggestion that would be taken to the Governance Committee for any decision making to follow the Program decision making.

*Q4. All resort house reefs are basically protected areas that are managed. Are they being considered to be included in the list of MPAs?*

Nisthu informed that some works were previously done by ME on that earlier to which Muhusina from ME confirmed that several works were done as part of the effort to declare the whole country Biosphere Reserve. Since then there are some policy changes but carried out ecological surveys for the resort house reefs to serve the purpose of protected areas. Under the convention on Biodiversity there is a category for such sites to be designate as OECMs or “Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures”. Ilham from ME further elaborated on the OECM, its aims and use of the OECM as an opportunity and plan to adopt in the national protected areas guidelines.

Nisthu highlighted that existing information will be compiled and used in this MSP work. It was explained that guidance from the MSP sub-committee will be required if there are any gaps or need for improvements and then it will be raised during draft planning work and implementation activities identified.

Philippa from Maldives Underwater Initiative commented that not all resort house reefs are managed. Although, they are utilized for a purpose they are not managed in the interest of biodiversity. Responding to that, Ilham explained that as mentioned earlier, the resort house reefs are not protected for the purpose of conservation but rather tourism purposes. Similarly, heritage sites are protected for heritage purposes. However, due to the restricted usages and regulations that they follow, there is less intrusive activities and thereby gives a secondary benefit which is conservation.

*Q5. What is the process of adding species to the list, which would protect areas that they exist in? Is it possible to include species in the MSP process, that are not necessarily listed under EPA lists?*

Nisthu replied that in the MSP process as explained by Will areas in need of management will be considered and not only species protection but also for other management needs. Will further elaborated that MSP is an ecosystem based management tool and that supporting conservation and

targeting a threatened species not in the current protected species list could be made in the form of protection of its ecosystem through the MSP process.

*Q6. At what stage of planning will the local communities/councils be involved in the process?*

Nisthu responded informing that the current project status is in the timeline development and information compilation stage and that once the baseline information is collated the MSP subcommittee will be reached out in setting the goals and objectives. In parallel the ocean use survey will be conducted where the local communities and councils will be consulted.

*Q7. Can the recently concluded hydrography survey (by MNDF) data be incorporated into this process? It was only conducted for South Thiladhunmathi/ North Miladhunmadulu. Though this is patchy data, incorporation of it may be useful to identify the exact locations of Thila and sea mounts, and other areas of potential scientific/environmental interest.*

Nisthu informed that whatever data in various scales may be still useful to create the maps and identify what is there. However, Will noted that such patchy data may not be able to be used to compare in the spatial planning due to the various scale of the data and at least 70% coverage will be ideal.

### **Action Points & Closing Remarks**

The meeting was concluded by a short concluding remarks by Imad informing that the agenda was well covered and by thanking everyone for the attendance.

Next meeting was agreed to be held in a fortnight (Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

### **Annex:**

1.     Attendee's list
2.     3rd MSP Subcommittee Meeting Presentation Slides

*Noo Raajje Program Secretariat  
28/03/2021*