

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Climate Change Roadmap 2010

A. Background and Objective

Based on discussions at a whole-of-government, inter-agency ‘Workshop on Climate Change Fast-Start Finance’ held in Majuro, RMI from 16 to 18 August 2010, participants elaborated the following RMI Climate Change Roadmap 2010 to:

1. Enhance the **coordination and coherence** of RMI’s efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change;
2. Inform the development and adoption of a **RMI National Climate Change Policy by the end of 2010**; and
3. In parallel, take advantage of the **unique window of opportunity afforded by climate change fast-start finance** for the period 2010 to 2012 (as captured in the Copenhagen Accord) by committing immediately to:
 - (a) expedite implementation and scaling-up of current climate-related development plans, programs and projects; and
 - (b) prioritize, initiate, design and seek development partner support for new initiatives.

The Roadmap should be implemented in line with a clear timetable of successive deliverables, with clear allocation of duties for achieving milestones along the way.

B. Guiding Principles

“All we have and are today as a people, we have received as a sacred heritage which we pledge ourselves to safeguard and maintain, valuing nothing more dearly than our rightful home on the islands within the traditional boundaries of this archipelago.”

- RMI Constitution

As one of world’s lowest-lying atoll nations, climate change represents a grave threat to the livelihood, sustainability and survival of the Marshall Islands.

Climate change severely compromises RMI’s efforts to achieve key national development priorities, as laid out in the Government’s **‘Vision 2018’ Strategic Development Plan**, and to establish a sound basis for future economic and resource self-sufficiency and sustainable growth, consistent with the Millennium Development Goals and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

RMI will address the climate change challenge with national dignity, taking the future into its own hands. RMI's approach, to be expressed in a National Climate Change Policy, will:

- Be underpinned by political commitment and demonstration of “climate leadership” at the highest levels of government, including the President, the Cabinet and the Nitijela.
- Safeguard the country's natural assets or “vital organs”, and ensure that future generations of Marshallese rightfully enjoy *Aelon Kein* and have the opportunity to achieve national development and wealth.
- Focus on direct implementation (not just policies and plans); and mainstream climate change considerations into core social development goals and the development and implementation of sectoral plans and programs;
- Be mindful of RMI's international rights and obligations, including those under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, and leverage sub-regional, regional and international opportunities and partnerships.
- Be “Whole-of-Government” for the “Whole of the Marshall Islands”: take into account and address the unique characteristics and priorities of both the population centers and the outer islands.
- Recognize the inherent complexity of the climate change challenge, and the need for multi-focal and cross-sectoral responses, designed and implemented in a coherent and coordinated way.
- Establish a framework for long-term financial sustainability to support RMI's response to climate change.
- Be reinforced by the national legislature: regulation; legislation; and enforcement.

B. Institutional framework

An institutional framework to support the development and implementation of the RMI National Climate Change Policy must build on the substantial existing framework of sectoral approaches, while at the same time enhancing the coherence, coordination and effectiveness of national efforts. The overriding aim must be to “climate-proof” all development activities, including those under the US-RMI Compact of Free Association.

In January 2010, the RMI Government considered a Preliminary Report prepared by the Office of the Chief Secretary on RMI's current capacity to access and manage large-scale climate funds for climate adaptation and energy purposes. In approving the Report, the Government decided to establish a National Committee on Climate Change, or ‘N3C’.

The N3C is chaired by the Chief Secretary, with Director OEPPC as Vice-Chair, and should be comprised of Secretaries of the following RMI government agencies: Ministry of Resources & Development (R&D); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA); Environment Protection Agency (RMIEPA); Ministry of Finance (MoF); Ministry of Health (MoH); and Ministry of Education, among others. Relevant NGOs (in particular the Marshall Islands Conservation Society) and CBOs also participate.

Recognizing the need to reinforce the mandate of the N3C, and significantly enhance its capacity to quickly coordinate and put forward climate-change-related plans, programs and project proposals to fast-start finance partners for support, it is proposed that the N3C be strengthened immediately by establishing a ‘**N3C Coordination Unit**’ within the Office of the Chief Secretary.

The N3C Coordination Unit should initially be staffed by one senior Technical Adviser (TA), reporting directly to the Chief Secretary, and who could act as ‘Chair Designate’ of the N3C when required. The N3C TA’s primary roles would be to expedite project development and implementation, and oversee the development of RMI’s National Climate Change Policy, including through a process of stakeholder consultation.

Meetings of N3C should be held at least monthly, with advance input sought from line agencies and key RMI diplomatic posts (New York, Washington, Taipei and Tokyo). Outcomes from N3C meetings should be reported quickly to Cabinet and key diplomatic posts, focusing on decisions taken and priority program or project proposals identified by the Committee.

The initial funding and hiring of the N3C TA is an urgent priority for RMI, and may be accelerated by drawing on existing technical assistance packages. Further expansion of the N3C should be considered while developing the National Climate Change Policy. Careful consideration should also be given to seeking support for placement of a resident TA within the Ministry of Finance to manage and coordinate the anticipated proliferation of funding sources on climate change, in close cooperation with the NC3.

C. Plans, Programs and Projects

RMI’s climate change-related plans, programs and projects must reflect its national goals and priorities, address its vulnerabilities and promote the achievement of key economic development aspirations. In other words, RMI’s development must be “climate-proofed”. But there is no need to “reinvent the wheel”. Action now and under the National Climate Change Policy must make best use of existing sectoral plans, institutions and governance arrangements, including:

- RMI National Energy Policy and Energy Action Plan and the Energy Taskforce;
- Micronesia Challenge, *Reimaanlok* National Conservation Area Plan and the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC); and
- Disaster Response Management Plan and National Disaster Committee

RMI should adopt a ‘modular’ approach to developing its climate change initiatives, allowing RMI to work flexibly with development partners in choosing to pursue funding for a whole plan or program, or rather an individual project or cluster of projects, as available resources and funding priorities allow.

RMI’s climate actions now and under a National Climate Policy could be categorized broadly into four ‘implementation clusters’:

- 1. Energy security and low-carbon future;**
- 2. Adaptation for a climate-resilient future;**
- 3. Disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response capacity; and**
- 4. Education, awareness, community mobilization, culture and gender.**

More specific sub-categories have been outlined below in an effort to identify potential areas for priority action, to be considered further by the N3C. To this end, the N3C should begin work *immediately* to compile short descriptions of high-priority programs and projects to inform diplomatic efforts to secure technical and financial support from existing sources and emerging fast-start finance opportunities, including the www.faststartfinance.org initiative to be co-launched by RMI in early September 2010. These descriptions should fall generally into one of three categories: (i) projects underway and fully funded; (ii) projects currently implemented, but which require further funding or upscaling; and (iii) new project ideas.

A second stage should involve populating a Climate Action Matrix (to be developed) containing these priority action items, to be regularly updated by the NC3 Coordination Unit over time (with input from NC3 agencies). Once populated, the Matrix should grow organically as a key reference point for the coordination of RMI’s climate change response, and the further development of the National Climate Change Policy.

Implementation Clusters

① *Energy security and low-carbon future*

- Implement National Energy Policy and Action Plan (which could serve as a *de facto Low-Carbon Development Plan*), including broad goals / targets
- National target to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 40% below 2009 levels by 2020, based on the national energy plan and taking into account the GHG Inventory aspect of RMI’s forthcoming Second National Communication under the UNFCCC;
- Sub-regional Green Energy Micronesia (GEM) – 20:30:20 targets

Subcategories with examples / further ideas for implementation:

- (a) **Energy efficiency:** greatest emphasis for early action, through *inter alia*, grid improvement, further roll out of energy-saving lightbulbs.
- (b) **Renewables:** solar-to-grid power, outer-island solar, conduct wind-power feasibility study.
- (c) **Biofuels:** upscale current trialing for copra- and coconut-based fuels.
- (d) **Waste-to-energy:** feasibility study, connected to waste-management initiatives.
- (e) **Sectoral growth / emissions:** consider energy usage and emissions trajectories for RMI's potential growth sectors (eg. fisheries and tourism)

② *Adaptation for a climate-resilient future*

- Implement Micronesia Challenge (including conservation targets) and the *Reimaanlok* Action Plan
- Undertake enhanced planning and interventions to address climate vulnerabilities in food security, public health and other core social development goals
- Safeguard core infrastructure and resources on the basis of comprehensive planning and inter-agency coordination

Subcategories with examples / further ideas for implementation:

- (a) **Coastal erosion (including impact on infrastructure):** study of possible structural interventions (such as sea walls) and consider environmental/social impacts; further conservation and 'living shorelines' initiatives (upscale *Reimaanlok*); replanting native plants (panadus, koin, konnat, lukwe etc).
- (b) **Water security:** address substantial leakage/waste/evaporation (immediate issue); address failing and climate-exposed infrastructure (underground pipelines); consider desalinization potential.
- (c) **Agriculture / Food security:** boost climate-resilient crops, including coconut replanting and traditional foodstuffs to reduce import dependency
- (d) **Marine conservation:** promote coral and fishery health, including use of traditional knowledge.
- (e) **Natural resource mapping:** enhance use of GIS, remote sensing, and develop models to simulate weather events and impacts
- (f) **Waste management / recycling:** improve garbage-dump and sewage facilities, including climate resilience; address wave action overtopping waste infrastructure, including waste management and sewage facility
- (g) **Sectoral growth vulnerabilities:** consider climate-adaptive approaches for potential growth sectors, including sustainable fisheries and tourism

③ *Disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response capacity*

- ‘Climate-proof’ the Disaster Risk Management Plan (DRMP), to be overseen by the National Disaster Committee.
- Consider broad range of risk reduction initiatives, primarily in the infrastructure and health portfolios

Subcategories with examples / further ideas for implementation:

- (a) **‘Climate-proof’ the DRMP:** study impact of more frequent and intense natural disasters and weather events on operation and implementation of DRMP.
- (b) **Climate-related health impacts:** data collection underway on climate-related changes in prevalence of vector- and water-borne diseases.
- (c) **Government-wide risk reduction:** enhance zoning, local planning and possible building codes for government buildings.
- (d) **Climate-proof infrastructure:** conduct infrastructure vulnerability assessment; timetable key infrastructure upgrades in light of increasing climate impacts
- (e) **Insurance and micro-insurance:** commission advice on the likely impact of climate change on access to / cost of insurance for weather-event-related impacts and slow-onset damage; seek RMI-specific recommendations.

④ *Education, awareness, community mobilization, gender and culture*

- Ensure public education and participation, boost understanding of climate change within communities and traditional structures.
- Ensure inclusive consultation processes in the development and implementation of the National Climate Change Policy.

Subcategories with examples / further ideas for implementation:

- (a) **Translation** of core climate terminology into Marshallese.
- (b) **Curriculum** and sustained climate-related educational/community programming.
- (c) **Public participation & outreach:** enhance local government climate literacy, develop local conservation plans and adaptation initiatives; Bob festival.
- (d) **Gender:** promote female community groups and climate leaders, address gender-accentuated climate impacts.
- (e) **Broad-based consultation** with traditional leaders, religious institutions, private sector, NGOs, CBOs, etc.

- (f) **Traditional knowledge / preservation of vulnerable cultural resources:** identification of resources, including through consultation with cultural guardians (traditional leaders and elders).

D. Next steps

This RMI Climate Change Roadmap will be presented for consideration by the Government during the week of 23 August. If endorsed, the Roadmap should be publicized widely – locally, regionally and internationally – as reflecting RMI's desire to tackle the climate change challenge head on, and to take control of its own destiny.

The Office of the Chief Secretary should move quickly to implement the recommendations outlined in 'Section B: Institutions', establishing the basis for the strengthening of the N3C, the development of a coordinated and coherent National Climate Change Policy, and quick engagement with a wide range of development partners on the opportunities afforded by fast-start finance for the period 2010 to 2012.

Majuro, RMI
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