



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
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12 April 2021

Mr. Liu Zhenmin
Under-Secretary General for
Economic and Social Affairs
UNDESA

Excellency,

Iakwe and Greetings from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

As I'm sure you are aware, the Marshall Islands will be undertaking its Voluntary National Review this year, a good opportunity to review our current progress toward the 2030 Agenda and also an opportune time to analyze the gaps and challenges and identify solutions for growth and improvement, especially in light of the current global situation.

We are very much looking forward to engaging in this important process and look forward to the recommendations and feedback from the international community during the review.

In that regard, I am very pleased to submit herewith the Republic of the Marshall Islands' Key Messages which will later be followed by the National Report.

We thank UNDESA for its support in this process and look forward to the review later this year.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casten N. Nemra", written over a horizontal line.

Casten N. Nemra

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Republic of the Marshall Islands



Republic of Marshall Islands – 2021 Voluntary National Review

Main Messages

Our commitment to sustainable development

We have a clear vision for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, “in our hands is our future”. This vision guides our efforts as a resilient, productive, and self-supportive nation. Embracing the inherent challenges faced as a small island developing state, including geographic isolation, rising sea levels and the impacts of climate change, and diseconomies of scale, we remain resolute to transform our development pathway, in a manner which maintains and enhances a united and inclusive Marshallese identity.

Achieving this will require building our resilience to the damaging effects of climate change, global pandemics such as COVID-19, and improving our social and wellbeing concerns. Moreover, we need to continue developing an economy that delivers effective public services, and productive opportunities for all Marshallese children, women and men, living in urban areas and the outer islands.

Our National Strategic Plan (NSP) provides a roadmap for our approach to sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Plan is aligned to the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, with relevant aspects of global initiatives already integrated in relevant national strategies and policies. The Plan prioritizes five strategic areas, namely social services and cultural identity, economic development, infrastructure, environmental awareness and climate change, and good governance.

Negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic

The RMI has successfully ensured the safety of our people from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have received budget support and supplies from our development partners and have provided support to our people and local businesses to ensure the economic and social fabric of the Marshall Islands remains resilient. Despite this, COVID-19 has negatively impacted our economy and progress against specific development priorities.

VNR issues of focus

The VNR reporting allows RMI stakeholders to reflect on progress made against the strategic areas and respective commitments in the NSP. The process also underscores the value of partnerships with local stakeholders and development partners, and highlights the need for collectively responsibility to achieve the desired results.



RMI's VNR will share achievements in issues of strategic importance contained in the NSP, and related SDG implementation. It will also highlight challenges and opportunities for accelerated implementation. Issues of strategic importance include:

- **Good health and wellbeing** - while RMI's broad human development indicators such as infant and child mortality rates and educational attainment have steadily improved since independence, the overall progress in building human capital can still be improved. Our strategy embraces the value of "*Kumiti Ejmour*" or "health is a shared responsibility".
- **Reduced inequalities** - between rural-urban areas continue to exist. The economies of the outer atoll communities have not fundamentally changed over the past century, with reliance on copra and handicraft production and limited commercial fisheries and farming activities for their livelihoods. An inclusive, "*One Nation Concept of Vision*" aims to *integrate* the unique development needs of each atoll.
- **Decent work and economic growth** - urban economies in Majuro and Kwajalein rely heavily on government bureaucracy and the Kwajalein missile base for employment and income. These economies are dominated by the wholesale and retail trade, construction, banking and insurance. The productive economy has evidenced great potential in harnessing the "blue economy", as evidenced already in commercial fisheries as well as tourism, trade and investment.
- **Climate change** - sea level rise combined with more frequent and severe periodic wave surges are creating tipping points for tolerability of habitation. Accelerated and targeted adaptation measures for well-being and livelihood of atoll communities are being pursued, with additional and accessible resources needed to support further climate proofing and resilience building efforts. At the same time, RMI calls for decisive global action, especially from the larger emitters, to reduce greenhouse gases.

Conclusion

RMI is committed to implementing its NSP, which integrates the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway commitments as relevant. We acknowledge that reaching the targets in the NSP and the 2030 Agenda remains a challenge, noting the capacity and resource constraints we face. It requires the collective efforts of all stakeholders, including for the transboundary issues such as marine resource management and climate change which depend on global leadership and action. Notwithstanding, we strive to achieve our national development priorities for the benefit of all Marshallese people.