

# Vanuatu's National Ocean Policy

30<sup>th</sup> May 2016



**Our Ocean**

**Our Culture**

**Our People**



# Vanuatu's National Ocean Policy – *our ocean, our culture, our people*

30<sup>th</sup> May, 2016

## Ocean Sub Committee

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### Dedication

We would like to dedicate this Ocean Policy to the late Miss Ruth Obed from Burumba Village, Epi Island. Miss Obed, a 70-year-old disabled and hard working woman died when she went swimming in the sea, a few minutes before the consultations were scheduled to take place in her village. A life was taken by the ocean during the course of the Ocean Policy consultation, symbolizing the respect of the Ocean. ***"If we respect the Ocean, the Ocean will respect us."***



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# Executive Summary

The Ocean is a natural and dynamic bridge that connects continents to continents and oceanic islands to islands. It is also a bridge between the living and the dead and between people and the marine resources upon which they rely. It is the bridge of life.

Our ancestors used the sea as a passageway to move from their place of origin to where we are today. From their voyage in the sea they learned and believed that there exists a God of the sun, a God of the wind and a God of the Sea – our God. When they arrived safely to our shores they gave thanks and revered the sea as a sacred place. They built their livelihoods around it and finally established a culture of the ocean. A culture that protects and respects the God of the ocean.

In this Modern age, people have access to advanced technology and use it to explore and exploit the ocean and its resources more and more effectively and efficiently. The population of the modern age is also growing and the global and local demand to further explore and exploit the ocean resources is very high.

For the sake of humanity and all living things on land and in the sea, each atoll island, oceanic island and continent must play its part to ensure that our ocean bridge continues to function and the ocean continues to sustain life. Vanuatu is an ocean state and is geared to play its part in managing the ocean for our people and contributing also to the planet's future.

Vanuatu's maritime jurisdiction comprises 98% of the nation and includes living and non-living marine resources that contribute significantly to the country's economy, that are fundamental to the wellbeing of its citizens and are an integral part of our. While the economic potential of many of the resources in this area remains un-assessed and under-utilized, some are being overexploited or damaged and there is an urgent need to resolve Vanuatu's territorial disputes and maritime boundaries.

Vanuatu stands to protect and enhance the contribution made by its marine environment to its national development. The best approach was to support traditional marine resource management and coordinate management across different sectors and resources and integrate environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals. This latter was a challenge, because such an approach requires a change in perspective towards valuing the environment as a fundamental input to economic development – and one that must be protected. The building of our ocean's resilience increases its ability to withstand negative impacts arising from, for example, climate change or natural disasters. However, an integrated approach means a change in how we view, manage, govern and use the marine environment.

Fundamental changes in the way our marine space is managed and regulated were required at the Central Government, Provincial Governments and the community level. Core to such a change is the need to transition to a more integrated governance approach that requires all uses, users and values to be considered and that empowers traditional leaders and traditional marine resource managers.

Review of existing legislations and policies has informed development of an effective common National Ocean Policy and, finally, a legislative basis for implementing the same. This Ocean Policy aims to ensure that management of our marine environment and its resources will achieve the desired objectives, programs and measures across all the agencies and for all people in Vanuatu that have a role in using and managing the marine environment. The Ocean policy embeds the culture of the ocean into ocean management and merges across different uses, users and ocean managers.

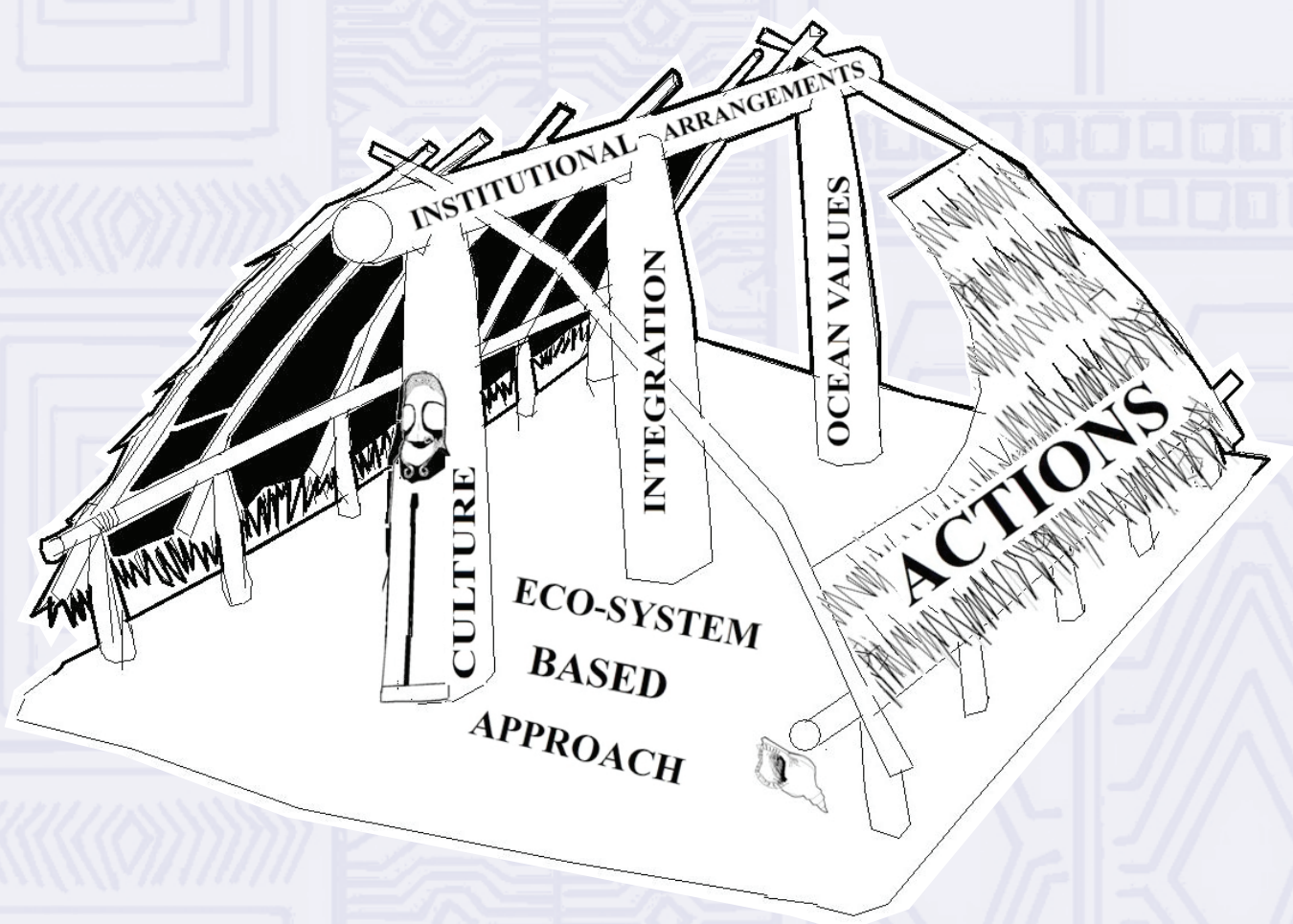
We have harmonized and aim for more harmonization in the work and pursuits of the various agencies and people who manage and use the marine waters around our islands including working with traditional marine resource managers and people involved in shipping, environment management, mining, fishing and the tourism industry (e.g. hoteliers, dive operators, fishers and boat operators).



Mechanisms whereby to achieve these aspirations are set out in this Ocean Policy. The mechanisms are framed around the Nakamal (The Nakamal is an institution for traditional custom governing systems for Vanuatu):

- the foundation is an ecosystem-based approach to management as envisaged and implemented by our forefathers using traditional marine resource management systems;
- upon the foundation are three pillars: the multi-dimensional value of our ocean; the integration across uses, across boundaries, across sectors, across governance structures and our resilient ocean culture;
- the beam across the Nakamal is the overarching institutional arrangements; and
- the thatched roof is emblematic of the sectoral and cross-sectoral policy actions that will protect the Nakamal.

The structure of the Nakamal forms the framework for this Ocean Policy as illustrated on the diagram below.



# 1. Introduction

Vanuatu's ocean connects her people to each other and to the world. The ocean bridges the past, in which our ancestors traversed the seas to arrive in this country, to the future, where the rich marine resources define the future of our children. We stay connected with each other, between our islands and provinces, through travel over our waters.

Through this history, our connection with the ocean has defined our Kastom: our culture and beliefs are strongly tied to our marine environment, our marine resources and the natural beauty of our sea and the diversity of life contained within it. Our livelihoods, too, rely upon sustainable development of our maritime riches.

The local pressures and global threats to the ecosystem services that the Ni-Vanuatu derive from our ocean are placing the human benefits of these services at risk.

Vanuatu, and the world, has two options: a path of unsustainable use of our ocean resources or a transition to more ecologically sustainable, ecosystem-based ocean management. Through this Ocean Policy, Vanuatu is choosing the latter option – a sustainable ocean future.

Vanuatu is an ocean state with jurisdiction over an extensive maritime area including significant living and non-living marine resources that, as mentioned, make a significant contribution to the country's economy and our people's cultural identity. This ocean includes an amazing variety of habitats which are interlinked and inter-reliant, for example, seamounts, coral reefs, deep ocean ridges, mangroves, seabed troughs, seagrass beds, hydrothermal vents, oceanic trenches and deepwater basins. In order to fully benefit from the range of resources these habitats bring us, there is a need to better coordinate management across different marine sectors and resource users and to integrate environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals. Social goals include protecting our maritime culture which remains at the heart of every citizen of Vanuatu.

Despite the preparation of a number of strategies and policies of relevance to the governance of Vanuatu's marine space, no single overarching legislation or national policy exists to harmonize and coordinate these at the national level nor support local traditional marine resource management practices. The existing policy framework is inadequate for supporting the integrated approach needed in ocean governance. Fundamental changes are therefore required in the way our marine space is managed and regulated. Central to such a change is the need to transition to a more integrated governance approach that supports traditional marine resource management as well as government-led management and requires all uses, users and values to be considered.

This National Ocean Policy is the Government's policy statement for the management of its sovereign water and marine ecosystems through to 2030. The policy has been developed by the Ocean Sub-Committee of the National Committee for Maritime Boundary Delimitation. This Sub-Committee was also tasked to undertake discussions and consultations with marine stakeholders nationally and with other related initiatives regionally and globally on the Oceans Policy. It is acknowledged that this Ocean Policy contributes to Vanuatu's efforts to implement Sustainable Development Goal 14 on Oceans, to build marine ecosystem resilience to climate change and natural disasters and commitments under the Convention of Biological Diversity.

This National Ocean Policy sets out the new policy direction for modern marine management which includes traditional marine resource management knowledge and systems. The policy includes ecosystem-based ocean management and planning, and it describes the implementation arrangements and guiding principles for better management of the Vanuatu's Ocean.

This National Ocean Policy outlines the overarching structure for the management of our oceans is framed around the Nakamal (The Nakamal is an institution for traditional custom governing systems for Vanuatu):

- the foundation is an ecosystem-based approach to management as envisaged and implemented by our forefathers using traditional marine resource management systems;





- upon the foundation are three pillars: the multi-dimensional value of our ocean; the integration across uses, across boundaries, across sectors, across governance structures and, thirdly, our resilient and intrinsic ocean culture;
- the supporting beam across the Nakamal is the overarching institutional arrangements; and
- the thatched roof is emblematic of the sectoral and cross-sectoral policy actions that will protect the Nakamal.

The structure of the Nakamal forms the framework for this Ocean Policy as illustrated on the diagram below.



## 2. A Vision for the Ocean

### 2.1 Vision

To conserve and sustain a healthy and wealthy ocean for the people and culture of Vanuatu, today and tomorrow.

### 2.2 Purpose of the National Ocean Policy

The purpose of the National Ocean Policy is to achieve an ocean governance framework that supports traditional marine resource management practices and knowledge and manages all line agencies with responsibility for maritime and ocean affairs, and harmonizes national actions in relation to the marine resources of the Republic of Vanuatu.

This policy builds upon and complements important sectoral-level management plans, policies and strategies. It introduces a new coordination mechanism to assist departments, Ministries, users and communities to better work together and synergise, versus contradict, each other's efforts.

Achieving the Ocean Policy vision and purpose will help Vanuatu to build resilience in its marine ecosystems to climate change and disasters.

### 2.3 Geographic scope of the National Ocean Policy

The scope of the National Ocean Policy is from the coastline starting at the high water mark to all marine waters and the seabed of the Republic of Vanuatu.

## 3. A foundation of ecosystem-based ocean management

We must embrace global and regional initiatives and local traditional-knowledge approaches that appeal for an integrated ecosystem-based approach to the management of the ocean. Ecosystem-based management acknowledges that healthy natural capital is the basis for the benefits that people derive from ecosystems: the foundation of our Nakamal. Ecosystem-based management recognizes the full array of interactions within an ecosystem, including humans, rather than considering single issues, species, or ecosystem services in isolation.

The diversity, health and productivity of marine ecosystems are fundamental to the sustaining the ecosystem services derived from both the ocean and the land. The marine environment must be treated as a distinctive and indivisible system, recognizing the interrelationships between marine users and ecosystems and between the land, sea and air.

Area-based management measures including large-scale marine spatial planning are integral parts of an ecosystem approach to marine management.

Planning and management decisions should be based as far as possible on the best available traditional and scientific information concerning the natural, social and economic processes that affect the marine environment. Decision makers should be able to obtain and understand quality science and traditional information in a way that facilitates sustainable use of marine resources.

There is a need to move away from the sectoral and species-based approaches that characterize existing governance systems. Integrated management is a commitment to planning and managing human activities in a comprehensive manner, while considering all factors necessary for the sustainable use of marine resources.

The ocean offers the potential for numerous opportunities to generate significant and ongoing economic, social and cultural benefits. Examples of the potential are found in fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, transportation, oil and mineral production, education and research. Developing this potential in a sustainable manner presents the Government of Vanuatu with opportunities to create new jobs, achieve a higher rate of growth, reduce poverty, and secure international biodiversity and sustainability obligations



## 3.1 Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives for the National Ocean Policy are to:

1. Secure rights to marine resources;
2. Reform ocean governance;
3. Preserve and protect the marine environment;
4. Promote sustainable economic development;
5. Promote public awareness, participation and accountability;
6. Increase knowledge and capacity building; and
7. Build resilience and managing for uncertainty.

## 3.2 Policy Actions

### 3.2.1 Secure rights to marine resources

Lack of clearly defined maritime boundaries inhibits the management of maritime space and marine resources and may create obstacles to the exercise of rights accorded under international, national and traditional law. The settlement of unresolved maritime boundaries should therefore be a priority and concerted action should be taken to finalize outstanding boundaries, for example, with neighbouring States. This will be critical to enabling Vanuatu to safeguard territorial integrity, and realize the full economic and developmental potential of the nation's maritime space.

#### Policy action

***3.2.1.1 Negotiate and formalize Vanuatu's maritime boundaries in order to secure, exercise and protect rights and jurisdiction over marine areas and resources.***

### 3.2.2 Recognise culture

Throughout Vanuatu, there have been calls to better recognise and support traditional marine resource management systems and governance structures (see also Section 4.3).

#### Policy Actions

***3.2.2.1 .Recognise and support traditional marine resource management, use and governance systems including, where appropriate, within formal legal arrangements.***

***3.2.2.2 . Facilitate introduction of curriculum within schools that teaches traditional marine resource management, use and governance systems.***

### 3.2.3 Reform Ocean Governance

Governance is an overarching theme that is an essential part of the National Ocean Policy. Well-integrated governance frameworks help to accommodate and resolve conflicts between the vast range of marine-related interests and values, and can highlight any trans-boundary implications of marine developments. The overall aim of reforming the current governance arrangements should be to establish, strengthen, and implement effective governance mechanisms at all levels, including traditional governance mechanisms, that contribute to the implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

#### Policy Actions

***3.2.3.1 Establish and implement clear, coordinated institutional mechanisms for integrated marine management across relevant sectors such as fisheries, tourism, transport, mining and environment including, where appropriate, partnerships between the different levels of government, private sector and civil society and supporting traditional management systems.***

***3.2.3.2 Update national legal frameworks to harmonise discrepancies and to give effect to reflect an integrated ecosystem-based approach to planning and management of marine space and, where appropriate, to provide legislative support to traditional management systems.***



### 3.2.4 Surveillance and Enforcement

Effective surveillance and enforcement of legal and planning arrangements within the Vanuatu's marine jurisdiction is fundamental to protecting our national interests. The Government of Vanuatu will continue to employ various measures to guarantee the integrity of its marine space and resources. These measures include the protection of maritime borders and marine resources including by the Police Maritime Wing and the Fisheries Department, as well as national and international measures that reaffirm Vanuatu's jurisdiction over its marine, island and mainland territory.

#### Policy Actions

**3.2.4.1** *The Government will provide increased support for the maintenance of maritime sovereignty and security and amend relevant laws to make surveillance and enforcement of marine activities more effective.*

**3.2.4.2** *Promote local (traditional leader, Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs and provincial), national and international collaboration to prevent illegal activity and enforce traditional, national and international management systems and obligations.*

**3.2.4.3** *Coordinate existing resources and communication systems held by the various agencies, including local government, and civil society (including traditional owner groups and communities) to centralize and share efforts in surveillance and enforcement, optimizing their use and effectiveness.*

**3.2.4.4** *Build capacity, including of local government and communities, to conduct monitoring, surveillance and enforcement and to share information on same.*

### 3.2.5 Preserve and protect the marine environment

Vanuatu's marine waters and resources are a key national asset. The Government recognizes that ecosystem health and integrity is fundamental to ecologically sustainable development. Ecosystems also provide a range of essential services that would be extremely costly or impossible to restore or replace once they are lost. And these ecosystems are under threat, thereby threatening the ecosystem services they provide. If our use of these ecosystems is well-managed they will meet a broad range of economic, social and cultural aspirations now and into the future.

#### Policy actions

**3.2.5.1** *Conserve and enhance the overall quality of the marine environment through protection, maintenance or restoration of natural and physical features, processes and biological diversity including through traditional management systems.*

**3.2.5.2** *Ensure the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources through relevant legal and traditional management frameworks.*

**3.2.5.3** *Engage and empower traditional leaders and communities in marine resource protection.*

**3.2.5.4** *Ensure Vanuatu's marine environment is protected from devastating impacts by exercise its jurisdiction in accordance with relevant international law.*

**3.2.5.5** *Reduce the impact of all sources of pollution (including land-based, solid waste, shipwrecks and shipping pollution) on the marine environment.*

### 3.2.6 Promote sustainable economic development

Marine-based economic development that degrades the resources upon which it depends will lead to a decrease in the benefits of Vanuatu's ocean to her people. Ecologically sustainable and well-planned development will help maintain the values that people derive from using marine resources. Existing safeguards must be more effectively implemented and, where there are gaps in the safeguards, additional protection of marine resources should be applied to ensure future economic benefits.

#### Policy actions

**3.2.6.1** *Sustainable use of marine resources, taking into account social, economic and environmental needs, is promoted and incorporated into national and sectoral development policies and*



*planning frameworks to ensure long term social and economic development.*

**3.2.6.2** *Ensure that activities undertaken in the marine environment meet all relevant international and regional standards and national legislation requirements and do not cause environment damage or harm to social and economic values.*

**3.2.6.3** *Incorporate Environmental and Socioeconomic Impact Assessments into development planning and decision-making frameworks.*

**3.2.6.4** *Incorporate sound environmental and social practices into economic development activities.*

**3.2.6.5** *Optimize ecologically sustainable opportunities from existing resources, while identifying and encouraging new and emerging opportunities for marine industries and marine-related development.*

**3.2.6.6** *Undertake a systematic analysis to quantify the value of the 'ocean economy' and the potential value of key marine resources/activities.*

### **3.2.7 Promote public awareness, participation and government accountability**

One of the main difficulties associated with improving ocean management is the lack of appreciation and awareness, by the wider community, of the importance and role of the marine environment. Few citizens look at the ocean as an integral part of their life, investment, or as a business opportunity – it's often taken for granted. To achieve a healthy ocean for our children it is necessary to invest in medium- and long- term measures that provide a way of increasingly mobilizing society to the importance of the marine environment in the nation's development.

There is also a need to make available accurate, timely and documented official information on proposed ocean governance activities through media coverage and other public fora, meetings and discussions, and information education campaigns.

#### **Policy actions**

**3.2.7.1** *All relevant government agencies, Chiefs and other marine users are to:*

- Be involved in awareness raising also raise public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the importance of the ocean.
- Be involved with sensitizing the media regarding the marine environment and marine activities.
- encourage education and outreach programmes aimed at promoting ocean- related activities in schools.
- support and promote public awareness of, and access to information about, oceans and ocean issues and engagement in stewardship initiatives.
- promote and, as appropriate, apply traditional marine resource management knowledge and systems.

**3.2.7.2** *Ensure, as far as possible, that all relevant stakeholders (including local communities, Chiefs, Area Secretaries and Provinces) have the opportunity to participate in the development of new policies that pertain to ocean management.*

### **3.2.8 Increase knowledge and capacity building**

To ensure effective governance of marine space, a whole array of information and knowledge will need to be called upon and management systems must be able to harness this information. Governance requires factual information about the ecosystems being governed. It requires knowledge of geographical occurrence and abundance of ecosystems as well as information on human uses and how human actions affect these ecosystems. Only through a consistent and sustained investment in scientific research will it be possible to create a solid basis for management decisions in sustainable development and integrated resource management.

A key challenge will be to make the national structures effective and this will require capacity building. Awareness creation, participation and consultation will assist in upgrading skills and understanding of decision-makers and professionals in all sectors to the issues and facts that are relevant to ocean management.



Modern ocean management requires integrating social and environmental information (including traditional knowledge) so that human activity is better factored into decision-making. For this reason, a system should be developed to integrate and provide marine-related information, now dispersed among different organizations, efficiently, rationally and in a user-friendly manner.

## **Policy actions**

**3.2.8.1** *Where mining companies and marine scientific research institutions are. Improve co-operation in the collection, monitoring and disseminating of information, including local and traditional ecological knowledge throughout Vanuatu.*

**3.2.8.2** *Where companies are conducting exploration of Vanuatu's marine environment, the results of the exploration remain under the ownership of Vanuatu unless explicitly excluded by permit. They are to share information gathered with the Government of Vanuatu and all intellectual property associating with and benefits arising from the data gathered is retained by the Government of Vanuatu, unless specifically excluded by permit.*

**3.2.8.3** *Promote, as far as possible, the centralisation of metadata pertaining to existing marine data, marine databases, management of marine data and use of historical information.*

**3.2.8.4** *Increase our understanding of the marine environment, its natural processes and our cultural marine heritage and develop our capacity for informed decision-making.*

**3.2.8.5** *Develop a marine scientific research strategy that identifies key data requirements for decision-making and supports investment for new and emerging opportunities.*

**3.2.8.6** *Promote formal and informal training and capacity building for scientists, technicians, professionals and school students at various levels in marine science, marine affairs and related disciplines.*

## **3.2.9 Building resilience and managing for uncertainty**

Planning and management for use of marine resources, particularly living marine resources, must be able to respond to considerable uncertainty. Beyond planning for uncertainty, understanding the impacts and effects of climate change and other stressors, such as cyclones, coastal flooding, is also key to maintaining a healthy environment. This will influence how we use and value our coasts and seas both now and in the future. Adaptation of management, including in the marine environment, is necessary to deal with the potential impacts of these changes, many of which are already in train.

## **Policy actions**

**3.2.9.1** *Recognise and manage the increasing risk to the whole marine area and climate change through the incorporation of appropriate adaptation and resilience-building strategies into sustainable development, conservation and governance actions at all levels.*

**3.2.9.2** *Adopt and implement National Disaster Prevention and Response Plans in relation to risk management in marine and coastal areas. The implementation of the Plan should be accompanied by protection programs (re-housing, protection and adaptation) for communities settled in high-risk areas on the coasts.*

**3.2.9.3** *Protect naturally resistant or resilient areas including coral reefs that still have high coral cover and mangroves and coastal wetlands which can migrate inland.*

**3.2.9.4** *Integrate uncertainty into marine protected area planning, management & evaluation, for example, by replicating protection across space.*

**3.2.9.5** *Establish controls on the removal of beach sediment that contributes to coastal erosion and loss of protection.*

**3.2.9.6** *Apply adaptive management in coastal and marine areas, including working with traditional leaders, when implementing this policy.*



# 4. Three pillars of the Vanuatu Ocean Policy

The three pillars of this Ocean Policy are required to secure the future of our Ocean: ocean values; integration and culture. These are discussed below in more detail.

## 4.1 Ocean values

### 4.1.1 Jurisdiction

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Vanuatu has rights and responsibilities over approximately 600,000 square kilometers of maritime space - roughly 54 times its land space. While the constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu makes a strong statement on ownership and use of Land, it is silent on that of our Ocean.

Large parts of Vanuatu maritime space is under maritime boundary dispute, for example, with Fiji to the east and France in the west and southern frontiers. Vanuatu has made two submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) for an Extended Continental Shelf beyond its 200 nautical miles. Vanuatu also disputed two Extended Continental Shelf submissions by France and Fiji.

- The question of an unfair Maritime line, drawn on the eve of Vanuatu's independence by the colonial government, displacing two of Vanuatu's most important historical and cultural islands (Leka {Hunter} and Umaenupne {Matthew}), remains an important issue to be resolved. Such matters, when resolved, will be important to defining the wider marine economic and social base upon which Vanuatu can rely for its future.

More inshore, traditional management and use of marine resources takes precedence and this Ocean Policy aims to support and reinforce traditional knowledge about, and management of, the marine environment.

This Ocean Policy will assist Vanuatu to achieve National Sustainable Development objectives as articulated in the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030 and will significantly advance Vanuatu's achievement against the Sustainable Development Goals such as 13 on Climate Change (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and SDG14 on Oceans (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources).

### 4.1.2 Natural Capital of Vanuatu's ocean

Coastal and ocean areas and their marine biological diversity are core national assets that also provide a range of essential environmental services that would be costly or impossible to restore or replace if damaged or lost. If our use of them is well managed, they can meet a broad range of economic and social needs and cultural aspirations for generations to come.

Vanuatu's marine and coastal zones support a rich and unique range of habitats, such as coral reefs, deepwater troughs and basins, seagrass beds, other soft seabed communities, seamounts and mangroves. The biodiversity of these habitats includes a rich variety of plants and animals including reef and pelagic fish, lobsters, conch, turtles, algae, resident and migratory birds. Offshore waters, in particular, are home to numerous species of marine mammal and sea turtles, a range of commercially important pelagic fish species and deepwater communities of fish and other animals and plants about which we are just starting to learn.

### 4.1.3 Human Uses and Values

The marine environment already makes a significant contribution to the overall economy of Vanuatu, supporting a diverse network of commercial activities, including commercial and sport fishing, tourism, shipping, yachting, recreation and it is a source of building materials.

Marine ecosystem services of Vanuatu are known to bring billions of Vatu worth of benefits to the country annually including in terms of food security, livelihoods and building climate change resilience.



Examples of ecosystem services are subsistence and artisanal fisheries, mariculture, tourism, coastal protection, carbon sequestration, genetic resources, sanitation and offshore fishing. Indeed, the marine environment is the lifeblood that supports and defines many coastal communities and is also the backbone of the local and global transportation system: safe and secure navigable waters are critical to the effective functioning of the national economy.

The coastal zone also supports numerous sites of historic and cultural significance and organisms of medicinal value. Most of Vanuatu's cultural and traditional practices on land are reflected in the Ocean thus making the ocean very important culturally. These coastal resources also provide the basis for a range of economic and social activities, including the tourism and fishing industries. Many of these values disproportionately benefit the less advantaged in our communities directly, e.g. women, children and even the disabled.

Going forward, the sea and ocean around us must continue to generate significant economic, social and cultural benefits to the people of Vanuatu. Every inch of space within our maritime boundaries, above and below the surface of the sea, is important to the future development of our nation.

The Government of Vanuatu believes that there is a need for an integrated approach that marries environmental management directly with economic, fiscal and social policy and objectives. In other words, a new approach is needed to manage our maritime space - one which is strategic, scientific, pragmatic, and cross-sectoral. Such a paradigm must encompass the need for a healthy, productive and biologically diverse marine environment, including our coral reefs, which supports traditional management while at the same time encouraging economic opportunities which can contribute to sustainable livelihoods, and secure human settlements in Vanuatu.

#### **4.1.4 Value under threat**

While the oceans offer great potential in terms of sustainable economic development, they are also under increasing pressure from many uses and impacts. Changes in the marine environment resulting from human activities are occurring faster than previously anticipated, affecting, especially, vulnerable marine ecosystems such as coral reefs. Major threats to the marine ecology of Vanuatu include: impacts associated with climate change including rising ocean temperatures, acidity and sea level rise; coastal and offshore developments (e.g. from Deep Sea Mining, shipping) and the destruction of marine ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves; unsustainable and destructive fisheries practices; pollution from land-based and offshore sources including from ships and damage from shipwrecks; conflicting uses and the increasing intensity of hurricanes and other storm events, as recently experienced.

Many stretches of coastline, notably some important tourism areas within Vanuatu, have experienced dramatic rates of coastal erosion with considerable economic costs to owners and the nation. Nevertheless, significant areas remain relatively pristine and are targeted for tourism and other development.

The marine environment's ability to maintain its diversity and productivity, and to provide a wide array of valuable services to people, is therefore increasingly being compromised. Designing and implementing effective governance and management strategies is critical to address the challenges posed by the increasing impacts of human activities on the marine environment and to ensure the effective management and sustainable use of living and non-living marine resources.

## **4.2 Integrating principles**

The development and implementation of this Ocean Policy will require integration across uses, across management and institutional structures, across geographies from the local to national and even international and across different governance structures. But, overarching principles will provide cohesion to these cross-cutting aspects of the ocean and its management:

### **a) Respect tradition:**

This principle means that the Ocean Policy will be implemented in a way that respects culture and traditional ownership of land and sea and respects, and as appropriate, supports and reinforces traditional marine resource management systems, cultural values and traditional knowledge.





**b) Ecosystem integrity:**

The principle implies a primary focus on maintaining ecosystem structure and functioning within a marine area. It includes the recognition that ecosystems are dynamic, changing and sometimes poorly understood (therefore requiring precautionary decision-making).

**c) Integration:**

Working in sectoral and institutional compartments or “silos” is often an efficient way to manage, but it creates significant costs of non-coordination that should be identified and addressed. Spatial planning and zoning can play a critical role in facilitating coherence and integration. Integration among levels of government can help create complementary and mutually reinforcing decisions and actions.

**d) Public trust:**

This principle implies that marine resources, including marine space, belong to the people and, to the degree that government has jurisdiction, are held in trust by the government for its people and future generations.

**e) Transparency and accountability:**

This principle suggests that the processes used to make decisions should be easily understood by the public, allow citizens to see how decisions are made, how resources have been allocated, and how decisions have been reached that affect their lives.

**f) Public participation:**

This principle promotes public involvement in, and influence over, planning decisions as far as possible including communities and traditional owners.

**g) Precautionary principle:**

This principle suggests that if a decision could potentially prevent severe or irreversible harm to society or the environment, then the absence of scientific consensus should not prevent the decision being made.

**h) Polluter-pays:**

The costs of pollution or damage to the environment should be paid by the responsible party.

By applying these principles, we are acknowledging God’s trust in our people to apply wise stewardship to the animals and plants of this Earth, including those in Vanuatu’s seas. We remain committed to our national motto: “long God yumi stanap.”

### 4.3 An ocean culture

All of Vanuatu’s people treasure their ocean. There is a long tradition, which continues today, of connection with and management of the sea and its resources.

As one example, this connection is evidenced from the historical use of shells as money by the people of Vanuatu. Shells could be used in part or whole and woven into different shapes. The ni-Vanuatu also used shells, urchin arms and turtle shell for body ornamentation, conch shells to call people together, augur shells (Terebridae) as spearheads, the hard, sharp edges of the turtle limpet as a tool in cooking, coral rock to pound kava, and people travelled regularly between islands in canoes. These voyages were a traditional part of life and allowed for inter-island trading for both socioeconomic and ritual purposes.

Today fish and shellfish remain important sources of food for the ni-Vanuatu as both nourishment and in cultural ceremonies. Shellfish and other invertebrates are more traditionally gathered by the women. Giant clams, once the flesh is eaten, can serve as basins or can be carved into axes. Some local languages have the same word for giant clam and for axe. Palolo worms are still seen as a delicacy and can only be caught at specific times of the year.

Even the sand on the beach, literally, has stories to tell. In 2003, UNESCO proclaimed Vanuatu sandroing (sand drawing) to be a “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of mankind”. Vanuatu



sandroing was also recognised as being of outstanding cultural value; it is used to leave messages, explain concepts and teach children. It is often accompanied by stories or song and is especially important in the northern islands of Vanuatu.

Customary stories are known and still told about the animals of the sea. The stories differ from island to island and even village to village, and include stories about turtles, the reef heron, the nakato (hermit crab), the black and white seasnake (natopu), the octopus, the swamp hen and the barracuda.

Marine resources were, and continue to be, subject to traditional marine resource management systems and about 113 local languages contain traditional environmental (including marine) knowledge. Some of the traditional marine resource management tools used in Vanuatu include resource ownership, seasonal controls, gear restriction, size limits, restrictions on access and tabu areas. These controls may be due to totemic affiliations, observations about the stock status, village hierarchy or roles, traditional calendars or customary celebrations, ceremonies and rules. The community polices itself and enforces compliance with the traditional management system. In addition to resource management, the exchange and sharing of resources, including marine resources, are common and form part of the customary suite of obligations that ties kin. Although faltering in places, the traditional culture, language, knowledge and resource management surrounding marine resources in Vanuatu remain an important part of life today and are an integral part of the definition of society and communities throughout the country.

In this Ocean Policy, the culture connection, customary uses and traditional marine resource management practices have been recognised and will be supported.

## 5. Institutional Arrangements

The institutional arrangements to support an holistic approach to ocean management is symbolized by the supporting beam of the Nakamal – it builds upon the foundation of an ecosystem-approach and the pillars of ocean values, integration and culture and is the support-base for the on-the-water actions to be implemented.

### 5.1 General Approach

Management of marine activities already exists in Vanuatu, whether adequate or not. A key to successful implementation of the National Ocean Policy is to build on what already exists – improving the management and making it more efficient and effective. A first step, therefore, in the implementation of the National Ocean Policy is to compare the status quo with the vision and objectives defined in this policy. In particular, this will focus on institutional and legal arrangements needed to fulfill the policy objectives. A second step would be to ensure greater cross-sectoral policy coherence through the Vanuatu National Development Plan.

Implementation of the National Ocean Policy requires an orderly process of planning and assessment, consultation and collective decision making, policy making, coordination and management. Implementation of the National Ocean Policy must be guided by a high-level government entity. This is required to ensure the necessary political engagement and to establish effective coordination mechanisms with other competent entities, priorities and the community in general. Considering this context and the critical importance of integration in the management of oceans, it is clearly necessary to modify the present institutional structure.

An important step therefore will therefore be the establishment of an effective multi- sectoral institutional framework, within existing organizational structures, to progress the implementation of the policy.

### 5.2 Institutional Arrangements

#### 5.2.1 National Ocean Council

An important first step in the process, at the government-level, is the nomination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation & External Trade (MFAICET) as the lead national agency for implementing the Ocean Policy. This agency must be explicitly mandated to take on this role and to



provide a coordination role among all national agencies with a responsibility for the management of ocean space and resources.

The Government of Vanuatu will establish a National Oceans Council with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as secretariat. This Council will report and make recommendations to National Committee on Maritime Boundary Delimitation for decision. The National Committee, in turn, reports to the Council of Ministers (COM). The National Oceans Council will be formed of senior representatives drawn from those Government agencies that have responsibility for some aspect of maritime affairs and marine resource management, especially Departments of Mines, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Fisheries, Climate Change, Ports and Tourism and representatives from the Council of Chiefs, private sector, local NGOs, civil society (including churches) and key marine user groups.

The main tasks of the National Oceans Council will be to:

- a) coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Ocean Policy with other cross-cutting strategies, planning instruments and programs;
- b) identify lead agency and responsibilities for all aspects of implementing this Ocean Policy including planning, consultations, implementation, monitoring, compliance and enforcement and review;
- c) establish an organizational structure and lines of communication that supports the programs established by the National Ocean Council and facilitates consultation with private stakeholders;
- d) clarify, where necessary, the responsibilities attributed to the different agencies dealing with ocean affairs;
- e) contribute to the coordination, implementation and monitoring of Government- approved cross-cutting actions, measures and policies related to maritime affairs;
- f) promote efforts to build coordination, create greater capacity and reduce duplication by pooling resources to reduce costs;
- g) promote favourable conditions for the attraction of private investment to marine- related activities, in coordination with the competent bodies, making it possible to develop a strong and modern ocean policy, that makes a wise use of the country's resources and assets; and
- h) stimulate the participation of public and private institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and civil society in the implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

The National Ocean Policy provides the basis for a new strategic management framework to involve all levels of government and interested parties to work towards a set of common objectives. A mechanism for stakeholder engagement is also necessary. Initially, an advisory group of major stakeholders, including key marine user groups and civil society, may be most useful in the implementation of this policy.

### **5.2.2 Chiefs and traditional leaders**

The Council of Chiefs, village chiefs and other traditional leaders have the most direct control over the use and management of the nearshore marine environments of Vanuatu. Their engagement in implementing the on-the-ground aspects of the Ocean Policy will be of crucial importance in terms of the success or otherwise of efforts to improve the sustainability and benefits of inshore marine resource use.

### **5.2.3 Private sector**

Vanuatu has a diverse network of private sector marine activities, including commercial and sport fishing, aquaculture, boat maintenance, tourism and recreation, boating, marine transportation and ports, marine navigation, and communications.

The development of an integrated ocean governance framework should aim to promote the development of private/public partnerships and standards that will support existing and emerging ocean industries, and ensure the conservation and sustainability of ocean resources.



## 5.2.4 Civil society

There are also non-government organizations, churches, interest groups and academics with a wealth of expertise that can provide informed advice on matters such as economic, environmental and social issues, science and technology, community living, jobs and growth, and public education. The regional ocean governance framework should actively encourage the participation of these groups and individuals in its evolution and implementation.

## 5.2.5 Broader community-based participation

Local communities should be encouraged to contribute to planning and management strategies that might impact upon marine areas under their ownership and share responsibility for the management of ocean resources. As such, the public should have sufficient opportunities for informed contributions to relevant ocean management decisions in marine areas they use.

# 6. Action Areas

These action areas are the roof of the Nakamal – the tangible accomplishments that will be achieved on the waters of Vanuatu’s sea and which will ensure the ocean future of our country.

## 6.1 Marine Spatial Planning and Marine Protected Areas

### 6.1.1 Marine Spatial Planning

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a practical way to create and establish a more rational organization of the use of marine space and the interactions between its uses, to balance demands for development with the need to protect marine ecosystems, and to achieve social and economic objectives in an open and planned way. Such spatial planning complements and supports sectoral management and development plans.

This integrated approach to ocean management will help build resilience in the marine environment of Vanuatu to climate change impacts as well as to other natural and man-made disasters. It also will assist the country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 14 on Oceans. This goal is to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The principal output of MSP is a comprehensive spatial management plan for a marine area or ecosystem. Such a plan can help define priorities for the area and defines what these priorities mean in time and space. It can also reflect and support traditional management practices inshore. The comprehensive marine spatial plan is usually implemented through a zoning map(s) and/or a permit system. Individual decisions made within individual sectors (for example, the fisheries or tourism sector) should be based on the zoning maps and the comprehensive spatial plan.

Implementing an integrated spatial plan for the future of Vanuatu’s ocean will require effective maritime compliance including education, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement initiatives at the national, regional and local level.

The goal for marine spatial planning is:

**“By 2020, a healthier ocean for our people and our culture, today and tomorrow”**

The strategic objective for marine spatial planning is:

1. Have in place by 2020, throughout Vanuatu’s ocean, spatial zoning that identifies priority areas for development and for conservation, that separates conflicting uses and builds resilience to climate change impacts and disasters.

### Policy actions

**6.1.1.1 The Government will build on existing spatial planning mechanisms, including traditional spatial management systems (e.g. tabus), for improving management of maritime space to achieve economic development, cultural, social and environmental objectives.**

**6.1.1.2 Collate and audit existing marine data to determine data gaps.**



**6.1.1.3 Map biological information, including biological regions, and existing and possible future uses of the marine environment by different activities.**

**6.1.1.4 Facilitate workshops and consultations to evaluate and synthesize the data and to start generating a Marine Spatial Plan which provides for zoning of Vanuatu's ocean.**

## **6.1.2 Marine Protected Areas**

Marine protected areas (MPAs) and traditional management areas can be considered types of zones in an ocean zoning plan. Different types of marine protected areas play key roles in biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of marine resources such as fisheries. This is strongly underlined by the international attention they have received. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development called for a representative global network of MPAs by 2012, and the 2010 Biodiversity Target established under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) urged member states to effectively conserve at least 10% of each ecological region, including marine environments.

MPAs may be established for a wide range of purposes, including protecting marine species and habitats, conserving marine biodiversity, restoring fish stocks, managing tourism activities and minimizing conflicts between diverse resource users. The management of each MPA varies depending on the nature of the resources, their use and the human activities occurring within them. A range of management tools must therefore be applied: in some areas protection may be given from all the activities which could give rise to environmental damage, whereas in other areas, protection may be provided by limiting the allowed types of activities.

The Government is committed to establishing a well-managed, ecologically representative network of MPAs in our seas.

The goal for Marine Protected Areas is:

**“To establish, by 2020, a national ecologically representative system of marine protected areas that contributes to cultural, social, economic and environmental goals.”**

The strategic objectives for marine protected areas are to:

- Pursue appropriate measures to manage biological resources and, where necessary, restore biological diversity.
- Support and promote efforts to protect marine cultural heritage and traditional marine resource management systems.
- Manage and administer MPAs in a professional manner ensuring that benefits arising from their management accrue to all citizens and enhance traditional management systems.
- Establish sustainable sources of funding to support the ongoing management and administration of MPAs and traditional management systems.

## **Objectives**

**6.1.2.1 Pursue appropriate measures to manage biological resources and, where necessary, restore biological diversity**

### **Issue**

Many marine habitats and species are subject to pressure from human activities. Some important habitats and species are declining and a number of commercial fish stocks are under pressure. The Government of Vanuatu is committed to substantially completing an ecologically connected and representative network of MPAs by 2020 as part of a broad based approach to nature conservation.

This network of MPAs will be a key tool in allowing damaged ecosystems to recover in order to realize the benefits from the marine environment particularly in ensuring biodiversity is protected, conserved and where appropriate recovered, and loss of biodiversity halted.

### **Policy actions**

**6.1.2.1.1 In collaboration with other government departments, provincial government and local leaders, ensure that biological resources are conserved in collaboration with regional and global initiatives.**



**6.1.2.1.2 Conduct a nation-wide protected area analyses to identify areas that would contribute to the MPA system's priority conservation objectives and that would benefit from additional protection.**

**6.1.2.1.3 Implement the protected area measures contained in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) including by working cross government departments.**

**6.1.2.1.4 Protected areas shall be established to ensure the future sustainability of Vanuatu's ocean environment and so established on the basis of, inter alia, ecosystem function, ecological adequacy, representativeness, critical habitats, natural genetic resources, connectivity and scenic values.**

**6.1.2.1.5 All protected areas shall be integrated under a consolidated protected areas system. This shall include consideration of protected areas within the coastal waters of each island and traditional management systems.**

**6.1.2.1.6 Declaration, designation and management of marine protected areas shall involve collaboration with relevant government departments and consultation with the relevant stakeholders including traditional leaders.**

**6.1.2.1.7 Improve appreciation of protected areas and their biodiversity at all levels through communication, education and public awareness.**

## **Objective**

**6.1.2.2 Support and promote efforts to protect marine cultural heritage and traditional marine resource management systems**

## **Issues**

Achieving and maintaining healthy marine ecosystems requires a fundamental understanding of the relationships between people and the environment. Cultural heritage, which belongs to all people, emphasizes these connections, whether that heritage takes the material form of, for example, maritime resources (such as shipwrecks), natural resources (such as marine species and habitats), or culturally important places.

Through the national MPA system, cultural relationships among people and historic, natural, and place-based heritage resources can be preserved and perpetuated in ways that recognize and share multiple cultural voices and knowledge systems for the benefit of all.

## **Policy actions**

**6.1.2.2.1 Promote the identification and inventory of cultural archaeological property existing in Vanuatu's maritime zones and endorse legislation for the protection of marine archaeological and cultural heritage where this is supported by local leaders.**

**6.1.2.2.2 As far as possible, MPAs be designed and managed to respect, preserve, maintain and reflect the cultural and historic knowledge and traditional management systems.**

**6.1.2.2.3 Improve coordination among locally-based and managed MPAs and tabu sites.**

**6.1.2.2.4 Encourage public awareness and the dissemination of information concerning cultural and maritime archaeological sites to raise appreciation of marine archaeological and cultural heritage including working with local traditional leaders.**

## **Objective**

**6.1.2.3 Manage and administer MPAs in a professional manner ensuring that benefits arising from their management accrue to all citizens and enhance traditional management systems**

## **Issue**

Building and developing effective management capacity is crucial to achieving the objectives for marine protected areas and tabu areas. Whilst MPAs are being designated, the necessary institutional instruments, human resources, infrastructure, and other management tools and capacity needs must all be established.

Local stakeholders' perceptions of MPAs and tabu areas are an important indicator of their success



and these perceptions will significantly influence their behaviour. The inclusion of local leaders in the development and management of MPAs and tabu areas is therefore one of the major mechanisms for effectively improving MPA operations and, at the same time, enhancing activities within existing financial and human resource constraints.

## Policy actions

**6.1.2.3.1 Management of Vanuatu's system of MPAs shall be accountable and transparent.**

**6.1.2.3.2 Participatory mechanisms for MPA planning, implementation and management will be implemented to optimize socio-economic benefits.**

**6.1.2.3.3 Collaborative management agreements shall be encouraged to maintain the cultural and ecological integrity of marine areas within MPAs including the appropriate application of traditional marine resource management systems.**

**6.1.2.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms shall be established, especially by working with communities, for the on-going assessment of MPAs and tabu areas and shall be based on locally compatible methods, indicators and site-specific standards to ensure management effectiveness and biological and cultural integrity.**

**6.1.2.3.5 MPAs shall support the sustainable economic development of the local communities that are adjacent to these areas.**

**6.1.2.3.6 MPAs shall facilitate environmental education, research, monitoring, recreation and ecotourism for tourists and the general public.**

## Objective

**6.1.2.4 Establish sustainable sources of funding to support the ongoing management and administration of MPAs and traditional management systems**

## Issues

There are multiple sources of financing for MPAs and traditional management systems, including domestic government budgets, international assistance, visitor fees, and more. While each source plays a vital role for sites worldwide, they can also be subject to fluctuation: domestic budgets can be cut; international donors can change their area of interest; tourism rates can rise and fall. These variations create instability for management funding.

There is therefore a need to ensure and manage a sustainable funding stream to assure the long term viability of marine protected areas in Vanuatu.

## Policy actions

**6.1.2.4.1 The MPA system, which can include traditional management systems, shall seek to maintain itself financially and to contribute to national development.**

**6.1.2.4.2 Funding of MPAs shall be encouraged through collaboration with a range of relevant stakeholders.**

**6.1.2.4.3 The concept of cross-subsidization, between MPAs, shall be recognized as a means of funding since some protected areas have more revenue generation potential than others.**

**6.1.2.4.4 Multiple government departments operating in the same location will be encouraged to pool resources for mutual support in monitoring, surveillance and enforcement of various legislation they are working to implement.**

**6.1.2.4.5 The management of MPAs shall be geared to maximize socioeconomic benefits, cost recovery and revenue generation schemes without undermining the cultural integrity of the local communities and ecological integrity of the marine environment.**

## 6.2 Fisheries Management

While ni-Vanuatu commercial fishing activities do take place within Vanuatu, they are predominantly local and small scale. Fish are usually sold at landing sites, direct from boats, except for the main fisheries center in Port Vila. With the exception of the tuna fishery and some coastal fisheries such as



bêche-de-mer, trochus and marine aquarium trade, which have significant exports, all harvested fishery products are marketed and consumed locally.

The local fishing fleet includes vessels of varying sizes and capacities, using a variety of gear types and fishing methods. There are three major fisheries in Vanuatu: demersal/reef/bank; coastal pelagic; ocean pelagic. Demersal/reef fishery is the largest in terms of number of vessels (80%), fishers (75%), and types of gear (fish traps, hand line, spear gun). Coastal pelagic fishery employs 10% of fishers, has <3% of the registered vessels, but accounts for over 40% of total annual landings.

The Department of Fisheries is the national agency executing government policy on fishery matters around the islands of Vanuatu, pursuant to the Fisheries Act and subsidiary regulations. The Government is committed to the conservation management and sustainable use of fisheries resources for the benefit of the people of Vanuatu.

The goal for fisheries management is:

**“To conserve, manage and develop fisheries in Vanuatu in order to ensure its long term sustainable use for the benefit of the people of Vanuatu.”**

The strategic objectives for fisheries management are to:

- Maintain or restore populations of marine species at levels that can produce the optimal sustainable yields.
- Achieve economic growth through ecologically sustainable development of offshore fisheries.
- Achieve economic growth through the ecologically sustainable development of inshore fisheries.
- Preserve rare or fragile ecosystems, as well as habitats and other ecologically sensitive areas and spawning and nursery areas.
- Ensure effective monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement with respect to fishing activities .

## Objective

### 6.2.1 Maintain or restore populations of marine species at levels that can produce optimal sustainable yields

#### Issue

Coastal fisheries have declined sharply in recent years, while storms and anchoring have heavily damaged the reefs. Anecdotal evidence from fishers suggests that catches of lobster, coconut crabs, sea cucumber, clams, some large pelagic and demersal fishes have all declined.

#### Policy actions

**6.2.1.1 .Rebuild the stocks of fisheries resources (e.g. coconut crabs, lobster, sea cucumber, trochus, clams) by identifying and implementing targets for each fishery to: stabilize the net incomes of the operators in the fisheries; ensure sustainable harvests; and promote co-management of the fisheries.**

**6.2.1.2 Rebuild the reef, bank and deep slope finfish stocks and identify targets for the fishery to: stabilize the net incomes of the operators in the fishery; maintain biological diversity; ensure that the maximum sustainable yield is not exceeded in any of the species of this multi-species fishery; and, promote co-management of the fisheries.**

#### Objective

### 6.2.2 Achieve economic growth through the ecologically sustainable development of offshore fisheries resources

#### Issue

Opportunities exist to develop parts of some fisheries as a source of income revenue. This should occur in an ecologically sustainable manner, to ensure stocks are not depleted.





## Policy actions

**6.2.2.1** *Develop capacity for optimizing local (Ni-Vanuatu) benefits from catches of tuna fisheries in an ecologically sustainable manner.*

**6.2.2.2** *Improve management linkages with international regulatory bodies in order to access information to properly manage offshore fisheries especially and to ensure their ecological sustainability.*

## Objective

### **6.2.3 Achieve economic growth through the ecologically sustainable development of inshore fisheries**

#### Issue

Fisheries in rural areas are important in the socio-economic development of local communities within the archipelago. Coastal fisheries also include sport fishing.

## Policy actions

**6.2.3.1** *Small scale fisheries represent a significant proportion of the total fish harvested from marine waters. Emphasis will be given to supporting the small scale fisher for communities with sustainable fishing practices and value-adding processing in the coastal areas.*

**6.2.3.2** *The Government will work with private and public sector stakeholders to develop a strategy for promotion of locally beneficial recreational and sport fisheries.*

**6.2.3.3** *Promote the sustainable development of the sport fisheries for large pelagic species including through the development of appropriate regulations for the fishery and manage the fisheries to maximize benefits to Vanuatu.*

## Objective

### **6.2.4 Preserve rare or fragile ecosystems, as well as habitats and other ecologically sensitive areas and spawning and nursery areas**

#### Issue

Fisheries cannot be sustained in the absence of a healthy marine ecosystem. Local fisheries are already threatened by many factors including overfishing, habitat damage and loss, pollution and siltation. In addition, healthy fisheries are dependent on the maintenance of spawning and juvenile growth habitats that are most vulnerable to coastal development.

Successful development of the fisheries sector therefore requires coordinated collaboration between the various agencies responsible for marine management, and the primary resource users.

## Policy action

**6.2.4.1** *Implement, in collaboration with other relevant government departments, marine protected areas and support traditional tabu areas in Vanuatu that contribute to sustaining fisheries.*

## Objective

### **6.2.5 Ensure effective monitoring, control, surveillance (MCS) and enforcement with respect to fishing activities.**

#### Issue

Effective MCS of fishing activities and enforcement of regulations is crucial to ensuring compliance with fisheries regulations so that fish stocks are exploited in a sustainable way to assist the long-term economic survival of the fishing industry and to protect a valuable natural food source. Illegal, Unregulated and Un-reported fishing is a significant issue worldwide including in Vanuatu.



## Policy actions

**6.2.5.1** *Engage with local communities and traditional leaders to develop a voluntary nationwide monitoring network and encourage reporting of illegal fishing activities.*

**6.2.5.2** *Increase awareness among fishers of existing regulations, the reasons for them and the economic impacts of unsustainable fishing practices on livelihoods.*

**6.2.5.3** *Work with other government agencies and island nations Governments to pool resources for harmonized maritime monitoring control and surveillance programme in the region.*

**6.2.5.4** *Ensure effective enforcement of existing regulations.*

## 6.3 Marine Tourism

The marine tourism sector has now become the largest single maritime economic activity in Vanuatu. A range of economic activities such as yachting, boating and cruising are specific to marine tourism. Many tourists do not venture far from the shoreline and open water activities are on the increase. Yachting is expected to growing within Vanuatu and the cruise industry is also growing.

Tourism is heavily reliant on the marine environment in terms of cruise ship tourism, beach side hotels and beaches, scuba diving, snorkelling and recreational yachting. The quality and status of the marine environment therefore has a significant impact on the value of this sector, depending upon how tourists perceive the quality of the marine environment and the experience it offers, relative to other islands in the region.

The tourism policy, together with initiatives taken in this National Ocean Policy, such as integrated management, maritime spatial planning, promoting marine heritage, will provide a basis to support a sustainable and competitive marine tourism sector for Vanuatu.

The Strategic objectives for marine tourism are to:

- Facilitate the ecologically sustainable growth of the marine tourism sector in Vanuatu, whilst providing further employment opportunities; and
- Promote economic diversification of new and existing marine sectors which support tourism activities.

## Objective

### 6.3.1 Facilitate the ecologically sustainable growth of the marine tourism sector in Vanuatu, whilst providing further employment opportunities

#### Issue

Although marine tourism represents a significant economic activity to Vanuatu, if not properly managed tourism activities can potentially pose significant problems in terms of environmental sustainability.

## Policy actions

**6.3.1.1** *Work with other relevant government departments and other stakeholders to adopt measures to ensure that environmental impacts of tourism development and activities are avoided, minimized or mitigated, ensuring for example that:*

- tourism infrastructure is not located in environmentally sensitive areas and the impacts of tourism infrastructure are minimized, both on- and off-site (e.g., impacts from the extraction of building materials, waste disposal, etc).
- species and habitats are not disturbed or damaged by inappropriate practices such as: approaching turtles, dugongs and other marine animals too closely, approaching breeding sites, littering, reef walking, poor practices in snorkeling or diving, dumping of rubbish and sewage by cruise ships, or destructive anchoring.
- collection and sale of souvenirs (e.g., shells, corals, etc) follows all relevant national regulations, as well as international and regional obligations.



**6.3.1.2 Promote and support programmes and actions to direct and stimulate the development of tourist activities associated with protecting and learning about the marine environment and coastal zone.**

**6.3.1.3 Facilitate the establishment of community-based tourism ensuring that the local community has substantial control over, and is involved in the development of, tourism in an area and that a major proportion of the benefits accrued remain within the community.**

## Objective

### 6.3.2 Promote economic diversification of new and existing marine tourism sectors

#### Issue – Cruise Ship Tourism and Yachting

The majority of tourist visitors to Vanuatu arrive by cruise ship, a sector that continues to grow in Vanuatu with more, larger vessels visiting the region on an annual basis. Yachting is currently a lucrative economic sector in other jurisdictions, however, with a shift away from the traditional sailing locations, yachting in Vanuatu has been identified as a key component of the future growth of tourism.

As tourism increases, the water sports sub-sector will become a more important component of the overall tourism sector. Thus investment in infrastructure and support services to enable growth of this sub-sector will be important.

#### Policy Actions

**6.3.2.1 Optimize the opportunities in cruise shipping through the provision of adequate cruise ship berths and other supporting services.**

**6.3.2.2 Optimize the opportunities in recreational yachting and cruising through the provision of adequate marina facilities, anchorages and support services.**

**6.3.2.3 Support the establishment of well-designed yacht and cruise ship moorings, in particular, avoiding environmentally sensitive areas by working with the Departments of Environment and of Ports and Harbour.**

**6.3.2.4 Facilitate local community and Provincial government benefits from cruise ship tourism through, for example, landing or anchorage fees and other means.**

#### Issue – Marine Protected Areas

Tourism can benefit local communities and MPAs/tabu areas by providing income, both directly to local people and to cover the operational costs of MPAs.

#### Policy actions

**6.3.2.5 The Government will work with tour operators and their suppliers to determine the level of contributions that should be made towards local communities in the management of marine protected areas and/or tabu areas. Contributions can come from various sources, for example:**

- entrance fees charged to visitors for access to MPAs;
- user fees charged to visitors undertaking specified activities, or for use of specified facilities (e.g. fishing, diving, boating);
- concessions and lease contracts between MPAs and businesses operating within the area
- investment and sponsoring of specific facilities by the tourism industry; and/or
- offering opportunities to visitors to support MPAs through voluntary donations.

## 6.4 Maritime Transport

Like all island nations, Vanuatu's economy is dependent on shipping. Approximately 95% of all goods imported to the country arrive by sea and most agriculture products are exported by sea. Our ports also accommodate the many visiting cruise ships. Thus, shipping and the supporting infrastructure such as ports and harbours are vital to the economic growth of the country.



Since Vanuatu operates a sizeable register of international ships, it also derives significant revenue from ships listed on the domestic Register of Ships. Domestic and regional shipping is also an important marine activity sustaining socio-economic development in Vanuatu.

The Department of Ports and Marine is the National Maritime Authority executing government policy on maritime matters (soon to be Office of the Maritime Regulator). It directs, coordinates and monitors maritime activities, exercising its competence as a port State, flag State, and coastal State administrator. It is the jurisdictional authority for the investigation of matters relating to maritime disasters and the administrative authority for investigating and sanctioning violations of merchant marine standards under its jurisdiction.

Under the coordination of the Ministry of Infrastructure & Public Utilities, the Department shall represent the Government in international forums and conferences relating to maritime activities, and shall act as a consultant to the Government in all matters relating to maritime transport.

The Government is committed to promoting shipping and regulatory reforms to ensure that access to efficient, safe and competitive shipping services is maintained. Our international economic competitiveness requires that we be in step with international approaches to shipping regulation.

The goal for maritime transport is to have:

**“A safe, secure, clean and internationally competitive maritime transport sector.”**

The Strategic objectives for the Maritime Transport Sector are to:

- Facilitate and enhance the expansion of international trade, particularly tourism and exports;
- Promote an efficient, effective and internationally competitive maritime industry; and
- Ensure safety, security and protection of the marine environment.

## Objective

### 6.4.1 Facilitate and enhance international trade, particularly tourism and exports

#### Issue

Trade is important to Vanuatu in terms of job creation and economic activity. Shipping is essential to the promotion and preservation of fixed trade links between nations, while trade is essential to a healthy shipping industry.

Cruise shipping and recreational yachting are gaining increased importance in Vanuatu's economy as a result of the continued expansion of cruise shipping within the Pacific region.

#### Policy actions

**6.4.1.1 Promote and develop regular shipping services and related infrastructure as well as a well-defined regulatory framework.**

**6.4.1.2 Promote Vanuatu as a premier cruise ship destination and ensure the provision of effective support services and related infrastructure as well as a well-defined regulatory framework.**

**6.4.1.3 Ensure that all ports and shipping routes fulfill requirements regarding depth, width, harbour channel markings and other navigational safety items.**

**6.4.1.4 Increase the resources of the Department of Ports & Marine to enable it to deal satisfactorily with all maritime matters, including Port State Control.**

**6.4.1.5 Continue the establishment of bilateral agreements to support maritime developmental activities.**

#### Objective

### 6.4.2 Promote an efficient, effective and internationally competitive maritime industry



## Issue

The maritime transport sector is critical to the economic development of Vanuatu. It contributes significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings from both cargo and cruise shipping activities. Vanuatu also maintains, and wishes to grow, a significant international register of ships.

The Government needs to use its resources, both human and financial, in order for Vanuatu to become a premier shipping centre incorporating the inter-related activities of:

- port facilities
- International Ship Registry
- crewing and maritime skills pool
- ship ownership and ship management
- ship repair and maintenance, and
- yacht marinas.

## Policy actions

**6.4.2.1 Implement measures to attract ship owners to register their vessels in Vanuatu through a vibrant ship registry that is internationally respected and profitable.**

**6.4.2.2 Promote Vanuatu as a crewing nation by ensuring that education and training continue to comply with international standards and will support, possibly through legislation, the hiring by shipping companies of Ni-Vanuatu.**

**6.4.2.3 Promote the expansion of ship repair and maintenance activities to support the maritime sector.**

**6.4.2.4 Facilitate the development of marina facilities to tap into the growing nautical tourism market.**

## Objective

### 6.4.3 Safety, security and protection of the marine environment

#### Issue

The sustainable development of the shipping sector, especially the cruise-shipping and yachting sub-sectors, is hinged on the existence of safe, secure and environmentally sound transportation of goods and passengers which adheres to acceptable local and international standards of maritime safety, security and marine environment protection.

#### Policy actions

**6.4.3.1 Ensure that Vanuatu flagged ships and those foreign ships operating in Vanuatu waters operate in accordance with local and international maritime safety, security and environmental protection standards.**

**6.4.3.2 Promulgate appropriate legislation to govern safe operation of Vanuatu flagged ships worldwide and foreign ships operating in Vanuatu waters, including designation of safe navigation routes and procedures.**

**6.4.3.3 Work across government, for example with the Departments of Environment and Fisheries, to preserve and protect the marine environment by:**

- ensuring adequate navigational aids are in place to minimize navigational hazards;
- eliminating shipping pollution e.g. oil, garbage, sewage, ballast and bilge water and other harmful substances;
- minimizing the accidental discharge of such substances;
- installing and maintaining moorings in sensitive habitats to prevent anchor damage and, where not possible, nominating safe anchorages that limit environmental damage; and
- implementing measures (including the polluter-pays principle) to address safe removal of derelict and sunken vessels through the implementation of MARPOL 73/78 and other relevant conventions and/or legislation.



**6.4.3.4 Continue to fulfill international obligations under multilateral and bilateral agreements regarding maritime security.**

**6.4.3.5 Regularly review and update shipping related legislative frameworks in conformity to Vanuatu's International obligations.**

**6.4.3.6 Continue to effectively implement the key international treaties affecting shipping.**

### **Issue**

Port State Control (PSC) is a mechanism instituted through the International Maritime Organisation by which a state may conduct safety inspections of all foreign vessels calling at its ports to ensure their conformity to maritime safety, security and pollution prevention standards. PSC has demonstrably reduced the incidence of substandard ships calling at ports where it is rigorously enforced.

### **Policy actions**

**6.4.3.7 Collaborate with other Regional MOUs (Paris and Tokyo MOUs) to eliminate sub-standard shipping through continued implementation of a Port State Control regime for foreign ships calling at Vanuatu ports.**

**6.4.3.8 Ensure the PSC inspection targets are met, currently set at 15% of all ships making a port call, by ensuring that adequate human resources are available.**

### **Issue**

Ferry services can provide freight and passenger links between coastal communities.

### **Policy actions**

**6.4.3.9 Promote the development of domestic ferry services as an alternative transport mode, where practicable.**

**6.4.3.10 Ensure that appropriate regulations and navigational aids are developed to achieve safe usage of the waterways.**

## **6.5 Deep sea mining**

A seabed minerals sector can bring significant income to Vanuatu, if responsibly managed and run in adherence to international standards, with stringent laws and regulations to manage health, social or environmental risks, prioritising the protection of the marine environment and equal rights of other users. The Government views Vanuatu's mineral endowment as part of the inheritance of every citizen of the country. No seabed mineral activities will be permitted if it is identified that these will cause unacceptable harm to the nation's society or environment, and the people of Vanuatu will be given the opportunity to participate in these decisions.

The Government accepts that mining is a high risk industry for investors. Legitimate investment is attracted to countries having good geological potential, and a clear and predictable regulatory regime and transparent fiscal policies. In order for Vanuatu to attract the most capable and responsible investors and operators, its policies must be internationally competitive but still prioritise the interests for the people, and overall environment, of Vanuatu.

The goal for the Deep Sea Mining sector with regard to Oceans is to:

**"To guide development of offshore mining in Vanuatu to ensure improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the people including protecting the other ecosystem services derived from our coastal and marine environment."**

The Strategic objectives for the Deep Sea Mining sector with regard to the ocean are to:

- Provide a consistent and transparent regulatory framework for offshore mineral activities that is equitable and ecologically sustainable;
- To ensure equitable sharing of the benefits of offshore mineral activities to maximize local improvements in socio-economic conditions; and
- To protect the other marine ecosystems goods and services that benefit the ni-Vanuatu including direct uses and conservation .



## Objective

### **6.5.1 Provide a consistent and transparent regulatory framework for offshore mineral activities that is equitable and ecologically sustainable**

#### Issue

Government recognises the potential economic contribution of DSM developments to national growth, but also accepts that socio- environmental impacts of these developments are likely. By establishing a clear regulatory regime, Government will ensure that only those developments which have a net and equitable benefit to Vanuatu and its citizens, in terms of total economic, social and environmental costs and benefits, will be licensed.

#### Policy actions

**6.5.1.1** *Develop a standardised system for issuing and registering licences and permits through transparent and public processes.*

**6.5.1.2** *Ensuring high standards and qualifications of DSM operators.*

**6.5.1.3** *Define rights and obligations of permit, license, and title holder (including annual reporting, EIA requirements and consequences for breaches of the law and regulations) that protect Vanuatu.*

**6.5.1.4** *Security arrangements in the case of environmental or other breaches of permit, license etc. (including the deposit of bonds and proof of insurance).*

## Objective

### **6.5.2 To ensure equitable sharing of the benefits of offshore mineral activities to maximize local improvements in socio-economic conditions**

#### Issue

A thriving DSM sector will contribute positively to national growth and social welfare improvements for all of Vanuatu's citizen. Any large-scale DSM operations should be linked with conditions for national development. In addition, the government wishes to ensure that income obtained from DSM activities is managed sustainably and in the long-term interests of the country.

#### Policy action

**6.5.2.1** *Implement policies and regulations that integrate DSM development with broader development goals of the country.*

**6.5.2.2** *Establish a Sovereign Wealth Fund to set aside DSM revenue to bring socio-economic benefits to current and future Ni-Vanuatu.*

**6.5.2.3** *Encourage local recruitment in the sector including 100% of unskilled labour needed.*

**6.5.2.4** *Ensure that DSM licence applications include proposals for capacity building of personnel of Vanuatu.*

## Objective

### **6.5.3 To protect the other marine ecosystems goods and services that benefit the ni-Vanuatu including direct uses and conservation.**

#### Issue

Ni-Vanuatu derive a range of benefits from their marine environment including to do with fishing, cultural identity, biological diversity and tourism. At the moment there is incomplete knowledge about the marine environment upon which these benefits rely. And an impact, uppn the marine environment of DSM is likely and the potential scope, magnitude and duration of the impacts is unknown.



## Policy action

*6.5.3.1 The government will make decisions about DSM by applying the precautionary principle (see Section 3.5.g)*

*6.5.3.2 Environmental and social impact assessment will be required and will inform licencing decisions for DSM exploration, prospecting and mining.*

*6.5.3.3 Any potential impacts of approved DSM activities must be avoided, mitigated or minimized*

*6.5.3.4 Any damage occurring due to DSM activities will be compensated for by applying the polluter-pays principle (see Section 3.5h)*

*6.5.3.5 Any DSM company operating within Vanuatu will be required to share scientific data with, and for the use of, the Government of Vanuatu*

## 6.6 Climate change and disaster risk reduction

Vanuatu is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change and disaster risks. It experiences cyclones, storm surges, landslides, flooding and droughts, which may become more intense as a result of climate change. Vanuatu is also highly exposed to geophysical threats from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as human, animal and plant disease, and man-made disasters.

The quality and status of the marine environment has a significant impact on both the effects of climate change upon coastal communities and the resilience of communities to that impact. The Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, as well as this National Oceans Policy, seeks for Vanuatu to be a nation whose communities, marine environment and economy are resilient to the impacts of climate change and disaster risks, the latter being with particular regard to the ocean. Risks cannot be completely eliminated, however this Policy provides a framework through which risks arising from and associated with the marine environment can be identified, assessed, reduced and managed.

The goal for the Climate Change sector with regard to Oceans is to:

**“To conserve, manage and develop the Ocean to help Vanuatu have resilient communities, environment and economy for the long term.”**

The Strategic objectives for the Climate Change Sector with regard to the ocean are to:

- Promote and support efficient, effective Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction efforts using Ecosystem-based Approaches;
- Facilitate and enhance appropriate measures to manage Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction knowledge & information; and
- Promote and support an efficient, effective Low Carbon & Mitigation Approaches & Strategies to ensure safety, security and protection of the marine environment.

### Objective

#### 6.6.1 Promote and support efficient, effective Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction efforts using Ecosystem-based Approaches

#### Issue

Vanuatu's diverse ecosystems, including the ocean, are being threatened by climate change as are the livelihoods and wellbeing of the ni-Vanuatu people who rely on them for income and food. Healthy ecosystems provide cost-effective adaptation services, and effective natural resource management can minimise the risks of climate change impacts and associated disasters whilst enhancing livelihood resilience. This policy aligns with the National Environment Policy and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy that prioritises climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures.

Successful adaptation and disaster risk reduction action in Vanuatu's seas requires co-implementation that is inclusive and builds on both indigenous and externally derived knowledge. It is essential that activities, such as ocean management, are coordinated among multiple partners and natural resource users and take an holistic ecosystem-wide approach.





## **Policy actions**

**6.6.1.1** *Adopt multi-sectoral approaches to address complex climate change impacts upon Vanuatu's ocean*

**6.6.1.2** *Support ecosystem-based approaches to risk reduction through holistic, integrated planning for Vanuatu's ocean and ridge-to-reef solutions*

**6.6.1.3** *Address site specific climate and disaster vulnerabilities*

**6.6.1.4** *Adaptation and risk reduction action in coastal communities addresses real, current and priority vulnerabilities*

**6.6.1.5** *Adaptation and risk reduction in coastal environments is owned and driven by communities*

**6.6.1.6** *Take action around loss and damage*

**6.6.1.7** *Quantify the value and benefit of Vanuatu's marine ecosystem services and build this into adaptation and risk reduction planning and budgeting*

## **Objective**

### **6.6.2 Facilitate and enhance appropriate measures to manage Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction knowledge & information**

#### **Issue**

To meet climate and disaster risk knowledge and information needs, improve understanding and communicate to empower action Vanuatu's information management for climate change and disaster risk management shall be improved to enable informed decision making for planning, development and disaster operations and development of accurate community awareness tools.

## **Policy actions**

**6.6.2.1** *Strengthen existing systems to improve information capture, access and application*

**6.6.2.2** *Build on, and share existing traditional knowledge on climate variability and disaster risk management and expand its use*

**6.6.2.3** *Enhance use of lessons-learned in new programs and projects*

**6.6.2.4** *Enhance data analysis to better incorporating information into planning and decision making processes*

**6.6.2.5** *Strengthen risk assessment assessments and the use of their results in planning*

## **Objective**

### **6.6.3 Promote and support an efficient, effective Low Carbon & Mitigation Approaches & Strategies to ensure safety, security and protection of the marine environment**

#### **Issue**

Renewable energy and energy efficiency investments have significant benefits in terms of minimising negative impacts on the marine and terrestrial environment, and mitigating climate change. Conservation of the natural environment is vital to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and from coastal and marine ecosystem degradation (e.g. mangroves, seagrasses and open ocean systems). Sustainable tourism and other blue/green development activities can bring substantially higher social, economic and environmental benefit and resilience than high-carbon developments.

## **Policy actions**

**6.6.3.1** *Support implementation of the Vanuatu National Energy Road Map and energy considerations for climate change adaptation and risk reduction*

**6.6.3.2** *Enhance Vanuatu's natural resource condition through mitigation of carbon emissions*

**6.6.3.3** *Expand Vanuatu's REDD+ and green carbon activities including for mangroves*

**6.6.3.4** *Prioritise Blue-Green Growth and low-carbon development*



