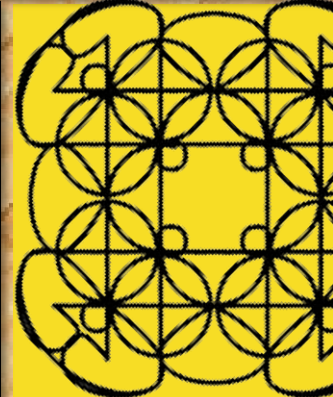


VANUATU NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY

Second Edition

June 2024 - 2030



Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade (MoFAICET)

Acknowledgements

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VANUATU NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY 2

Second Edition, June, 2024

Maritime and Ocean Affairs Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade (MoFAICET)

FOREWORD

As Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have the privilege of overseeing the Government's work to effectively manage and protect our ocean space.

I am a fisherman, a ship owner and a diver, born and raised on Santo Island. I grew up in the sea every day of my childhood. As a proud Ni Vanuatu coastal dweller, I share an unbreakable tie to our solwota with all of my countrymen and women.

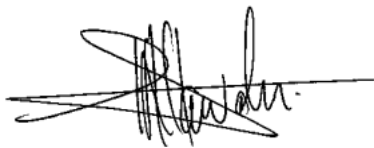
When I represent our country at international fora around the world, I hear from scientists how at risk our planet is due to the drastic effects of climate change and global warming. I have experienced this first hand in Vanuatu. I have seen many of my countrymen and women facing loss and damage of land, homes and food gardens. Our people are finding less and less fish to catch, and our beautiful coral reefs are dying. Our apex predators, sharks, rays and schools of pelagic fish like trevally and barracuda, are fast disappearing. We must, as a nation, do all in our power to allow our ocean to heal from all the damage that we are facing. We can give the ocean a way to regenerate through protection. We can responsibly manage our marine resources to ensure our future generations enjoy the bounties of the ocean, our life source. It is our duty and our sacred responsibility.

As Deputy Prime Minister, I call upon every citizen of the country to take part in the active implementation of our Vanuatu National Ocean Policy 2, our new and streamlined plan to preserve, protect and sustain our solwota.

Everyone has a part to play. I will play my part. Please, voyage with me. We have no time to lose to save our ocean and our future.

Together, we can make a difference.

Hon. Matai Seremaiah NAWALU



Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
International Cooperation and
External Trade



ACRONYMS

BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (High Seas Treaty)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCOA	Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EBAs	Ecosystem-Based Approaches
ECS	Extended Continental Shelf
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FAD	Fish Aggregating Devices
FPO	Framework for a Pacific OceanScape
FRDP	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
MoFAICET	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation & External Trade
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NOC	National Ocean Committee
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Strategy (The People's Plan)
OECM	Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measure
OPOC	Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries, Climate Diplomacy
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TK	Traditional Knowledge
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VFD	Vanuatu Fisheries Department
VNOP1	Vanuatu National Ocean Policy (2016)
VNOP2	Vanuatu National Ocean Policy Revised (Second Edition)
WCPFC	Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Our Call to Action, Our Commitment, Our Ocean Roadmap

As the new Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy, I am pleased to have been appointed by the Government of Vanuatu to oversee the implementation of the Vanuatu National Ocean Policy 2 (VNOP2).

I will be leading the resource mobilization needed to ensure that the policy is fully funded and fully implemented by 2030, starting now.

Additionally, I will lead Vanuatu in acting collaboratively with our Melanesian subregion and with our entire Pacific family, hand in hand with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, to achieve a protected and productive Pacific Ocean as a community of nations and Territories responsible for the most important ocean in our world.

The VNOP2 document is based on the following background and proactive forward thinking:

In 2012, the Government of Vanuatu Council of Ministers adopted a **National Ocean Governance Framework**, outlining pillars for holistic management of ocean space. These remain:

1. Maritime Boundary Delimitation
2. Ocean Policy
3. Legislative Framework
4. Assessment of all marine resources
5. Institutional Framework
6. Organizational Framework
7. Marine Spatial Plan
8. Blue Economy
9. Economic Investment

In the past eight years, Vanuatu has faced unprecedented climate challenges and severe natural disasters with increasing prevalence. We faced and experienced the ravages of the COVID19 pandemic. Nonetheless, we achieved substantial milestones under the VNOP1.

In the same past eight years, we have also learned lessons from the experience of VNOP1. To this end, a new enabling environment has been created to ensure full implementation of VNOP2. This includes creation of a dedicated Department of Ocean to coordinate and resource mobilize for all Government Ministries to do their part as well as the new Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy that I lead.

Four new priority policy areas are included in VNOP2, stemming from Vanuatu's active role in international and regional bodies to advocate and act to protect our Pacific Ocean. These four policies will be achieved by 2030 by a nation fully committed to protecting and preserving our sacred ocean space:

- a) The Marine Spatial Plan will be fully implemented
- b) Marine litter will be drastically reduced
- c) Vanuatu will secure rights to our unresolved maritime spaces
- d) Ocean governance will be reformed

VNOP2 has enhanced the VNOP1 seven (7) Strategic Priorities, with full resourcing to achieve all priorities using the time bound and costed Ocean Roadmap as the implementation plan:

- 1. Secure rights to maritime space and marine resources
- 2. Reform ocean governance
- 3. Preserve and protect the marine environment
- 4. Promote sustainable economic development resources
- 5. Promote public awareness, participation and accountability
- 6. Knowledge and capacity sharing
- 7. Build resilience and manage for uncertainty

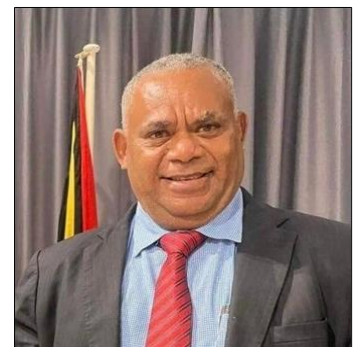
The Ocean Nakamal has been rebuilt.

I invite you to do your part to ensure that we implement the full VNOP2 by 2030. The Chiefs and Communities and Government of Vanuatu invite you to share some shells, as we protect our ocean and provide for our people from the sacred space of our Solwota.

Hon. Jotham NAPAT



Special Envoy on Oceans and Maritime Boundaries and
Climate Diplomacy



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vanuatu National Ocean Policy – Second Edition (VNOP2) is a comprehensive framework designed to sustainably manage and protect Vanuatu's ocean resources from 2024 to 2030. Building on the foundation of VNOP1, this policy aims to address the increasing challenges of climate change and natural disasters while leveraging lessons learned over the past eight years. VNOP2 envisions conserving and sustaining a healthy and wealthy ocean for the people and culture of Vanuatu, both now and in the future. The policy seeks to strengthen the ocean governance framework and harmonise national actions related to ocean conservation, thereby contributing to resilience against ocean threats.

The VNOP2 sets out clear policy positions of the Government of Vanuatu on our ocean management and protection. This policy is backed by a high political will from Government to support and drive outcomes through the office of the Special Envoy from within the new Department of National Boundaries and Ocean Affairs. Together, we are dedicated to assisting all parts of government to successfully contribute to protecting and managing our ocean space.

Covering all maritime spaces and seabed within Vanuatu's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extended continental shelf, and the High Seas surrounding Vanuatu, VNOP2 emphasises core principles such as respect for culture and tradition, ecosystem integrity, sector integration and coordination, public trust, transparent governance, public participation, the precautionary principle, and the polluter-pays principle.

VNOP2 outlines seven strategic objectives with renewed actions and activities:

1. Secure Rights to Maritime Space and Marine Resources: Ensure Vanuatu's sovereign rights are upheld, resolve maritime boundary issues, and ratify relevant treaties.
2. Reform Ocean Governance: Establish a new Ocean Department and develop comprehensive ocean legislation.
3. Preserve and Protect the Marine Environment: Fully protect 30% of Vanuatu's ocean by 2030, implement the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP), and manage marine litter and pollution.
4. Promote Sustainable Economic Development: Develop new blue industries, attract investments, and establish international partnerships for sustainable ocean development.
5. Promote Public Awareness, Participation, and Accountability: Advocate for good ocean governance, implement ocean literacy curricula, and conduct nationwide consultations.
6. Knowledge and Capacity Sharing: Ensure all marine research includes data sharing agreements and capacity-building provisions.
7. Build Resilience and Manage for Uncertainty: Provide alternative livelihoods for coastal communities and collaborate on MSP jurisdictions for better blue economy management.

The VNOP2 continues to advocate for significant ocean initiatives such as fully implementing the MSP by 2030, subregional and regional collaboration, promoting collaborative and capacity-building marine scientific research (MSR), peacefully resolving maritime boundaries, ensuring maritime security, promoting sustainable fisheries management and marine tourism, advocating for eco-friendly marine transport (blue shipping), reducing pollution, managing deep sea mining activities responsibly, and mitigating climate change impacts.

The policy defines roles and responsibilities for the government, traditional leaders, the private sector, and civil society to ensure coordinated and effective implementation. The Government is committed to fully implementing VNOP2 by 2030. The new Special Envoy for Ocean Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy will lead these efforts, supported by high political will and collaboration with regional partners. VNOP2 represents a significant step towards a sustainable ocean future for Vanuatu, providing a clear roadmap for implementation and committed governance to protect and manage ocean resources for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Vanuatu became the first nation in the Pacific region to have a National Ocean Policy.

Prior to this, the Government of Vanuatu, through the Council of Ministers (COM), had adopted a **National Ocean Governance Framework** in 2012, outlining pillars for holistic management of ocean space: These remain:

1. Maritime Boundary Delimitation
2. Ocean Policy
3. Legislative Framework
4. Assessment of all marine resources
5. Institutional Framework
6. Organizational Framework
7. Marine Spatial Plan
8. Blue Economy
9. Economic Investment

In response to the COM decision, The VNOP1 was created. This policy document set out to pave the way to achieving the other 8 pillars as well as resetting policy direction to amalgamate modern marine management based on science and best practice with traditional marine resource management knowledge and systems.

From 2012 until today, Vanuatu has faced unprecedented climate challenges and severe natural disasters with increasing prevalence. Vanuatu has been struck repeatedly with Category 4 and 5 Tropical Cyclones, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes and dangerously high tides and warm seas that are harming our reefs, corals, and fish populations. Furthermore, from the period of 2020 to 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic halted the progress of VNOP1 activities.

Nonetheless, we achieved substantial milestones under the VNOP1:

❖ **Special Envoy on Ocean Appointed**

In early December 2023, a new Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy was appointed to help advocate for political will, to resource mobilize and to act on 7 priority issues, all of which are included in the VNOP2 Strategic Objectives:

- 1) Dispute over Matthew and Hunter Islands;
- 2) Outstanding Maritime Boundaries;
- 3) Revised National Ocean Policy;
- 4) Marine Spatial Plan for Vanuatu;
- 5) Legislative Reform;
- 6) Awareness and Advocacy;
- 7) Ocean resilience program and maritime surveillance.

❖ **New Department for National Boundaries and Ocean Affairs**

A new Department of Oceans under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Cooperation and External Trade was established in 2024, solidifying the Vanuatu's Government commitment to amicably resolve its outstanding maritime boundaries with Fiji and France and also to manage its sovereign ocean space. Furthermore, overseeing the Implementation of the revised oceans policy and the Marine spatial Plan for Vanuatu within Vanuatu waters EEZ required a dedicated department.

❖ **Marine Spatial Plan Completed**

The Vanuatu Government has also completed its Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). Notably, the MSP legal review was completed, paving the way for legislation reform. This will enable Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to be legally established and managed using Traditional Governance of our Chiefly system to help coastal communities restore and protect their devastated marine resources and declining fish stocks. Through the MSP, Vanuatu is committed to protecting 30% of its EEZ as a party to Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

❖ **Vanuatu Maritime Safety Authority upgraded from OMR**

The Office of the Maritime Regulator (OMR) has become the Vanuatu Maritime Safety Authority (VMSA), with reinforced powers/role to regulate the maritime sector and impose a maritime safety regime throughout Vanuatu, including marine waste and protection. Vanuatu is also a member of the "6PAC" group of states at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) which is advocating for a universal levy on international shipping greenhouse gas emissions from 2025 onwards, with revenues used to accelerate an equitable transition to zero emission shipping. This has led to transition away from fossil fuel dependence with Vanuatu and Tuvalu co-chairing movement for Just Transition away from Fossil Fuels in March, 2023. Pacific nations, with the leadership of Vanuatu and Tuvalu, are pushing for a new Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

❖ **Nationwide Coral and Coastal Maritime Resource Assessment Completed**

The Vanuatu Government, in collaboration with the Waitt Institute, undertook a nationwide study in September 2023 to assess Vanuatu's coral health. This was done to provide evidence/science-based data for ocean management solutions. The information collected in this study will help inform and strengthen traditional governance in coastal communities due to the climate emergency we are currently facing.

❖ **Vessel Day Scheme Adopted**

The longline Vessel Day Scheme was adopted by the Vanuatu Fisheries Department (VFD) in 2023 for better tuna management. Additionally, a new Fisheries Research Vessel was acquired by VFD.

❖ **Legislation adopted to Eliminate Single Use Plastic Bags and other items**

In a bid to protect its marine life and manage the problem of plastic litter and pollution around its islands, the Vanuatu government has passed legislation to ban the use, manufacture and importation of a number of single use plastic items including single use plastic bags, polystyrene take away containers, plastic plates, cups, knives, forks and spoons, plastic coffee stirrers and plastic flowers. The Department of Environment plans to implement a container deposit scheme by the end of 2024, which will encourage the proper disposal of used beverage containers by providing a refund for their deposit. Additionally, a scheme will then be replicated for other types of waste.

❖ **The National Waste Water Taskforce**

The National Waste Water Taskforce, established under the Pollution Control Act, has the mandate to monitor the condition of water sources, identify potential pollutants, and ensure adherence to national standards established under the Act. The taskforce is currently developing Vanuatu's first waste water (sewage) regulation and new recreational water standards to meet the evolving needs of Vanuatu's water quality management.

❖ **Ports and Harbour has obtained two new tugboats (2024)**

The acquisition of new tugboats will dramatically improve shipping safety in Port Vila Harbour and fulfil a key recommendation of the Port Vila Harbour Risk Assessment study.

We have much to be proud of through these achievements. VNOP2 builds on VNOP1 by providing a new overarching policy and legal framework. VNOP2 will operate from a position of strength through multi-sectoral cooperation. With political will, genuine respect for each other and a clear understanding of each sector's roles and function, we are able to look ahead with optimism and hope.



Vanuatu ocean stakeholders during the revision of National Ocean Policy in March 2024.

2024-2030 PRIORITY TARGETS

VNOP2 is crafted with enthusiasm and dedication, using lessons learnt from VNOP1 and focusing on practical solutions that are achievable under the Government's enabling environment. The VNOP2, akin to VNOP1, 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 our marine environment. VNOP2 will aim to achieve the following priority targets by 2030; which are part of the priority areas of the Special Envoy on oceans and Maritime Affairs and Climate Diplomacy.

➤ **The Marine Spatial Plan will be fully implemented**

Achieving 30 by 30: Vanuatu commits to closing 30% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to fishing and other extractive activities before 2030, with the aim of promoting ocean regeneration, enhancing biodiversity recovery, and safeguarding marine habitats. This initiative will be implemented through the recognition of traditional tabu areas, the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs), integrated coastal zone management, and sustainable fisheries management practices. Vanuatu also commits to sustainably managing 100% of our ocean space by 2030 through equitable conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems.

➤ **Marine litter will be drastically reduced**

Addressing Marine Litter and all forms of Plastic Waste that affect our ocean: Vanuatu acknowledges the urgent need to tackle ocean plastic pollution, which poses a significant threat to marine life, ecosystems, and human health. To address this challenge, Vanuatu will implement comprehensive measures to track, manage, reduce and prevent plastic waste from entering our oceans. This includes promoting plastic waste reduction through new and innovative measures. Vanuatu is also collaborating and actively engaging with other Pacific Island countries in undertaking negotiations to develop a new international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including the marine environment.

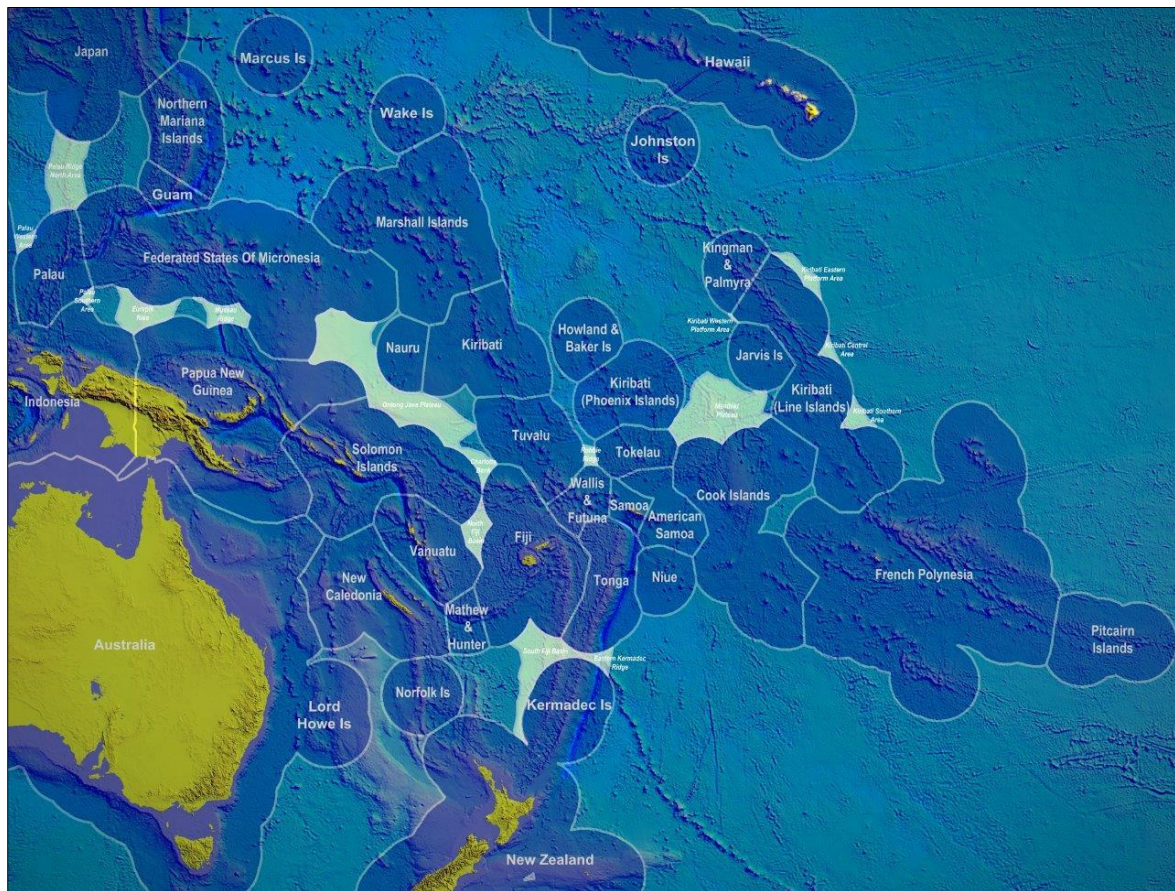
➤ **Vanuatu will secure rights to our unresolved maritime spaces**

Strengthening Vanuatu's maritime security: 75% of Vanuatu's Maritime Delimitation Boundaries remain unresolved. Vanuatu commits to resolving all outstanding maritime boundaries and to secure maritime sovereignty over Matthew and Hunter Islands in accordance with regional and international commitments and obligations.

➤ **Ocean governance will be reformed**

Ocean governance reform and strengthening partnerships: Effective Ocean governance reform will ensure future sustainable management of the ocean space and marine resources. The Government, Province and coastal communities must strengthen their respective governance mechanisms in order to collectively address

all the ocean threats that affect the livelihood of our people. The ocean is so huge and complex that collaboration with regional and international partners is paramount to build the technical expertise, capacity, national systems and to harness the science needed to make better informed decisions.



Pacific regional boundaries. Photo credit SPC

REBUILDING OUR NAKAMAL: MERGING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND OCEAN SCIENCE

The VNOP2 will continue to navigate into the future with divine guidance through our faith in God and based on our traditional values in our ocean Nakamal

- The foundation of our Nakamal remains an **ecosystem-based approach** to management as envisaged and implemented by our forefathers using traditional marine resource management systems.



The nakamal is the institution for traditional custom governing systems for Vanuatu

The VNOP2 will continue to place highest importance and fully support ecosystem-based management as the foundation of its approach to managing its oceans. As our Nakamal. Area-based management measures including large-scale marine spatial planning, supported by social, environmental and economic accounting, are integral parts of an ecosystem approach to ocean management. This is critical to save our fast-declining biodiversity.

The VNOP2 will seek as a matter of priority to establish and house the science of the ocean. Hard science, social, economic and environmental data will all be readily available so that our communities, traditional leaders and Government can make better informed decisions. The Policy recognizes that traditional ocean management practices can be enhanced by such data, allowing Vanuatu to respond to the ravages of climate change and disasters. By strengthening scientific and data sharing partnerships and holistic national accounting systems, Vanuatu is empowered to develop solutions that compliment traditional practices resulting in effective management and preservation of marine biodiversity.

- Our Nakamal is supported by three key pillars: **culture, integration, and ocean values.**
- The overarching framework across the Nakamal is the **EFFECTIVE institutional arrangements.** VNOP2 reinforces an enabling environment through collaborative and effective governance arrangements.
- The thatched roof is emblematic of the **cross sectoral policy actions** that will protect the Nakamal.

Vision

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

Purpose

The purpose of the VNOP2 is to strengthen our ocean governance framework and harmonize national actions in relation to the conservation and protection of the ocean. This policy will compliment ongoing national efforts to enhance resilience in the face of ocean threats, including climate change.

Scope

The geographic scope of VNOP2 is from the high-water mark to all marine waters and seabed of our EEZ and including extended continental shelf and the High Seas surrounding Vanuatu, specifically as pertains to Vanuatu's ratification of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty in 2024.

Integrating Principles

The implementation of the VNOP2 requires careful and agreed integration of activities and stakeholders of our ocean space. Our overarching principles remains the same as VNOP1 – providing cohesion to the cross-cutting and management aspects of our ocean.

a) *Respect our culture and tradition*

VNOP2 respects culture and traditional authorities of land and sea and supports and reinforces traditional marine resource management systems, cultural values and traditional knowledge.

b) *Integrity*

VNOP2 places its primary focus on protecting, conserving and maintaining the ecosystem structures in the maritime spaces. VNOP2 recognizes that marine ecosystems are under severe threat, therefore, decision-making is structured to ensure that these vital, fragile, and at-risk ecosystems are protected.

c) *Integration*

Working in sectoral and institutional compartments or "silos" creates significant costs of non-coordination that are identified and addressed in this policy. Coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation among Government departments and stakeholders is key to all underlying principle to enhance complementary and mutually reinforcing decisions and actions. Spatial planning and zoning underpinned by comprehensive data and ocean accounting systems, are tools of the VNOP2 to facilitate coherence and integration.

d) Public trust

The Government pledges to responsibly manage the ocean space of Vanuatu for its citizens. Therefore, it is held in trust by the Government for its people and future generations.

e) Transparency and accountability

The processes that the Government uses to make decisions around ocean space must be transparent and inclusive. This ensures citizens understand and engage in the responsible management and utilization of ocean resources in the best interest of the nation.

f) Public participation

It promotes public involvement in planning and informing decisions through community engagement and national consultations on ocean use and protection.

g) Precautionary principle

This adheres to the notion of caution in decision making that could potentially pose severe or irreversible harm to the marine environment and communities. It further underlines the need for science-based decision making.

h) Polluter-pays

Processes are underway to develop and implement legislation that holds polluters accountable.

By applying these principles, we acknowledge divine intervention and wisdoms of our ancestral stewardship to the animals and plants in Vanuatu's sacred blue spaces.



Vanuatu's first nation-wide coral expedition

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & POLICY ACTIONS

VNOP2 maintains the seven (7) Strategic Objectives of VNOP1 with renewed actions and activities. To achieve this, a critical mandate of this policy is RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.

Secured financial and human resources from the Government of Vanuatu and development partners will equip relevant Ministries to implement the strategic activities.

To this end, the new Department of National Boundaries and Ocean Affairs with the Special Envoy for Ocean are committed to mobilizing both human and financial resources to meet the full implementation plan of VNOP2 (2024–2030 Ocean Roadmap).

Secure rights to maritime space and marine resources

Vanuatu must secure its sovereign rights for the purpose of conserving and managing our marine resources, living or non-living. Vanuatu rights over part of our maritime space have been illegally claimed. Other maritime spaces are currently being negotiated with neighbouring States.

- a) Resolve France's illegal occupation of Matthew and Hunter Islands (Umaenupne and Leka)
- b) Peaceful negotiation, settlement and treaty deposition of all outstanding Vanuatu Maritime Boundaries (Fiji and France)
- c) Negotiate joint ocean management area (border arrangement agreements) with all neighbouring countries (Solomon Islands, Fiji and New Caledonia)
- d) Joint management of our Extended Continental Shelf with Solomon Islands and Fiji over the North Fiji Basin
- e) Ratify BBNJ treaty- a legally binding instrument for conservation and sustainable use of marine resources in areas Beyond Borders of National Jurisdiction

Reform ocean governance

Establishment of a new Department of National Boundaries and Ocean Affairs, (planning, resourcing, coordination, monitoring, enforcement, and data management for VNOP2 implementation.

Other processes underway to:

- I. establish a statutory regulatory body (Ocean Authority)

- II. review all ocean related legislation across Government Ministries to enable VNOP2 compliance for ocean related activities and policies; including to allow for traditional governance authority to proactively conserve and manage coastal marine resources
- III. legislate the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP).

Preserve and protect the marine environment

Fully protect 30% of Vanuatu's ocean through MSP and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), including MPA's, by 2030:

- a) Fully implement the MSP for 100% sustainable ocean management by 2030
- b) To establish a "Melanesian Corridor" of traditionally managed ocean space of all Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) members to benefit Melanesian countries
- c) Implement specific legislation and effective compliance measures to eliminate marine litter and waste water pollution



Promote sustainable economic development of marine resources

- a) Develop new blue industries (Fisheries, Aquaculture, Geoparks, floating solar and wind farms, etc.) that produce value from the conservation, restoration or sustainable management of marine space and resources.
- b) Work through the Department of Cooperatives resources to open business opportunities with access to market at community level.
- c) Attract investors to engage in public private partnerships for the full spectrum of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to national level projects.
- d) Establish international partnerships that increase flows of finance for sustainable ocean development and build long term capacity for national stakeholders and institutions.

Promote public awareness, participation and accountability

- a) Support the Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy to advocate for strong ocean governance at national, regional, and international forums
- b) Support the development of an ocean literacy curriculum in Vanuatu's education system
- c) Undertake nationwide consultations on the implementation of the VNOP2 and MSP

Knowledge and capacity sharing

- a) Marine Scientific Research (MSR) in Vanuatu waters must be undertaken with a data sharing agreement in place and a capacity building provision for relevant sectors
- b) Engage scientific and other research organizations/partners to work with Vanuatu scientists and experts to develop baselines and evidence-based research on the status of Vanuatu's ocean, and ensure these are integrated into government processes and systems
- c) Specific training and qualification courses offered to Vanuatu tertiary and in-service government technical staff to increase skilled ocean professionals
- d) Support and build capacity of community marine champions throughout our coastal communities

Build resilience and manage for uncertainty

- a) Strengthen resilience of coastal dwellers through provision of alternative sources of livelihood and food: Encourage community self-reliance through diversification while remaining ecologically sound
- b) Collaborate with relevant government agencies to utilize MSP jurisdictions and usage plans for a better managed and more resilient blue economy



A journey to a healthy ocean future.

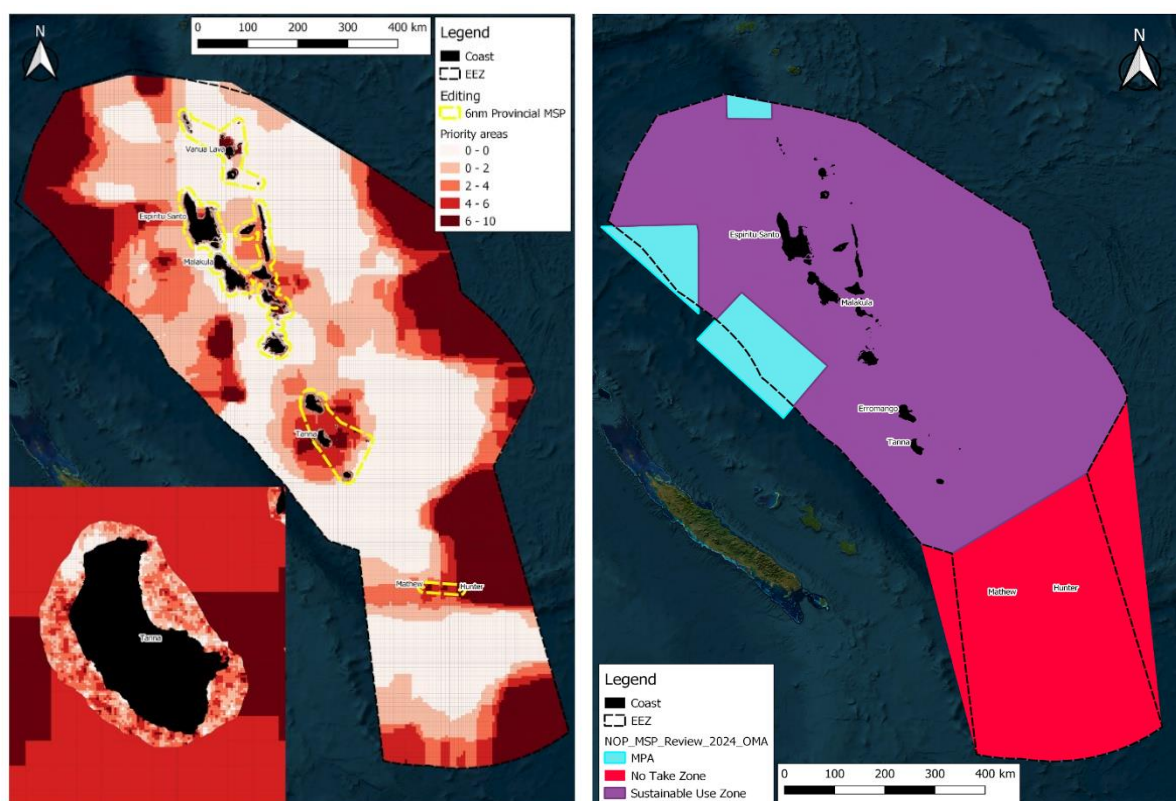
POLICY POSITIONS OF VNOP2

The Government of Vanuatu has been leading the region in advocating and committing to important ocean initiatives and programmes such as establishing the region's first National Ocean Policy, the region's first single use plastic ban and the internationally acclaimed campaign for climate justice through the International Court of Justice.

The policy positions of the Government of Vanuatu under VNOP2 with regards to major ocean threats and challenges remains paramount to safeguarding ocean resources. The Government of Vanuatu Ocean policy positions are as follows:

Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

The MSP for Vanuatu was approved by the Government in 2024 following extensive community and stakeholder consultation and agreement by all relevant ministries (Figure 2). The MSP is an area-based management tool that will be used mainly to achieve the policy objectives of VNOP2.



(Left) - Map highlighting biodiversity priority areas. (Right) – Map of Vanuatu's Marine Spatial Plan

Policy Position:

Vanuatu aligns to the UN COP15 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to conserve 30% of our marine space through gazetted MPAs and through recognition of effective area-based conservation measures and fully manage our ocean space by 2030.

Vanuatu will fully protect 30% of its EEZ as a “no take” zone by 2030. The initial “no take” zones in 2024 have been identified in the MSP process. Based on ongoing scientific research, the “no take” zones will be steadily expanded to include all traditional tabu areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA's) and Special Unique Marine Areas (SUMA's) to achieve the 30% target by 2030.

The Government will assist both the Provincial Governments and coastal communities to declare and strengthen management of traditional tabu areas and MPA's.

Due to the complexity of marine governance and the roles of specific stakeholders in different marine areas, Vanuatu's MSP process is categorized into three distinct jurisdictions:

- i. **Offshore** – from 6 nautical miles (nm) to 200 nm from baselines – primarily involving relevant national government ministries and agencies.
- ii. The **intermediate ‘marine managed area’** – from the shoreline to 6nm – encompassing the custom management areas, outside of which planning will be negotiated collaboratively with government, and local stakeholders (Reef + 100m).
- iii. **Inshore ‘custom/coastal management areas: Reef+100’** – from shorelines to 100m beyond reefs, including specific sites beyond that boundary where communities claim stewardship and governed by traditional practices.

Subregional and Regional Collaboration

Policy Position:

Vanuatu will look beyond its national aspiration and support efforts to establish a ‘*Melanesian Corridor*’ to strengthen the regional frameworks for ocean governance such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy) and the Framework for Pacific Oceanscape (FPO).

This will also include resolving all remaining outstanding maritime boundaries the pacific way together with OPOC.

Marine Scientific Research (MSR)

Vanuatu acknowledges that up-to-date oceans science with social information, including traditional knowledge, plays an integral role in ocean management.

Policy position:

All MSR undertaken in Vanuatu's marine environment must include data sharing agreements and capacity sharing programs specific to the research. All marine scientific data will be shared amongst the sectors and most importantly to be used for reviewing Vanuatu's MSP.

Maritime Boundaries and Security

Clearly defined maritime boundaries enable effective management of maritime space and maritime resources. This allows the people of Vanuatu to exercise their sovereign rights accorded under international and domestic laws. Vanuatu is undertaking efforts to secure rights to its maritime space and resources, and safeguard its territorial integrity through diplomatic negotiations.

Policy position:

Vanuatu is committed to undertake peaceful and coordinated actions through diplomatic negotiations to finalize its outstanding delimitation of boundaries with neighboring states.

Vanuatu maintains its sovereignty over Mathew (Umaenupne) and Hunter (Leka) Islands in Tafea Province.

Fisheries Management

Policy Position:

The overarching Vanuatu Government policy for Fisheries Management is to maintain and restore populations of marine species and produce optimal sustainable yields.

Oceanic Fisheries Policy:

- Vanuatu is a member of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and adheres to the regional tuna management framework, where all tuna stock management decisions are based on best available scientific information and adherence to recommended catch levels to avoid over-exploitation and to maintain healthy stock levels.
- Ban on shark (International species specific), turtle (harvesting, farming and eco-tourism banned), dolphin and dugong fishing (Fisheries Act 2014)
- Vanuatu's entire EEZ is a declared whale sanctuary.
- The Fisheries Act of 2014 is being reviewed to strengthen monitoring and compliance surveillance.
- Vanuatu supports the ban of harmful fishery subsidies under WTO
- Vanuatu supports the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ) for biodiversity protection, to enhance ecosystem health, preserve genetic diversity, and improve fish stocks for Vanuatu as a direct benefit

Coastal Fisheries Policy:

Vanuatu adheres to effective Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) for enforcement of fishing activities and regulations through use of community-based management plans to sustain utilization of coastal fisheries resources including:

- a) Beche-de-mer
- b) Trochus
- c) Marine Aquarium Trade
- d) Coconut crab
- e) Other critical species

Marine Tourism

Policy position:

- a) Vanuatu will promote Marine Tourism that is ecologically-friendly to open new eco-Tourism and Blue Tourism opportunities.
- b) Vanuatu will develop a Marine Tourism Guide (economic diversification) based on promotion of our traditional cultural practices of conserving and protecting our ocean to provide substitute livelihoods. This will support coastal communities who manage and protect their fragile coastal ecosystems and Reef+100 waters from exploitation.
- c) Tourism operators to follow a prescribed code of conduct that does not negatively impact the marine environment.

Marine Transport (Blue Shipping)

Policy position:

Vanuatu is a part of the Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership (PBSP), comprised of Pacific Island Countries pursuing an ambitious commitment of a 100% carbon-free maritime transport sector by 2050. This includes a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from shipping by 2030. Vanuatu will:

- a) Support the decarbonisation of domestic shipping through projects funded under the Pacific Blue Shipping Project (PBSP) and other development partners program.
- b) Promote the establishment of policy and regulatory framework for the reduction of GHG in the maritime transport sector.
- c) Ensure all Port State Control (PSC) measures are effectively carried out under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and national inspection targets ensure foreign vessel conformity to pollution prevention regulations and standards.
- d) Transition all major ports to Green Ports.
- e) Support new product development for cruise ships, domestic vessels and yacht tourism will be based on sustainably protecting the ocean.

Marine Pollution

Marine pollution is detrimental to the health of the coral reefs, fish and marine resources. It is also detrimental to people who rely on marine resources for their livelihoods. As a co-champion with the United Kingdom in tackling marine plastic pollution under the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA), Vanuatu is undertaking measures to address the issue of plastic pollution at all levels.

Policy position:

- a) In 2018, the Government committed to ban all single-use plastic bags, plastic straws and polystyrene takeaway boxes including other items. Measures are also being taken to address plastic waste and strengthen compliance and regulations.
- b) Vanuatu collectively aligns its position with the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) in addressing plastic pollution, particularly, through its active engagement to develop an internationally legally binding instrument to end all forms of plastic pollution.
- c) The Government acknowledges the continuous commitment of partners engaging in programs and projects to address marine litter and pollution in the maritime sector of Vanuatu

Deep Sea Mining (DSM)

Policy position:

- a) The Government will make decisions about DSM by applying the precautionary principal approach and supported by the best available scientific information.
- b) Vanuatu will ensure that any decisions regarding DSM exploration or extraction, must always consider the potential environmental impacts of DSM activity on the marine ecosystems.

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Policy position:

- a) Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) planning for addressing threats with relation to marine environment will utilize the Ecosystem-Based Approach (EBA) and use of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS).
- b) Vanuatu will move to ban sand mining on white sand beaches and to develop alternate sources of sand through sustainable limestone crushing, and other options that are less harmful to the environment.
- c) Vanuatu is aligned to the MSG Leader's decision to phase out fossil fuels while at the same time holding global polluters accountable for the harm caused through failure to act on climate change. Vanuatu supports the "Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific," outlines a suite of ambitious actions.

- d) Vanuatu will dramatically scale up the deployment of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies across all sectors, including electricity systems. This builds on the Framework for Energy Security and Resilience in the Pacific, ensuring energy independence, resource resilience, and sustainable air, maritime and land transport.
- e) Vanuatu commits to a low carbon and mitigation approach to protect the marine environment.



Climate Change effects in Vanuatu

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

International:

Vanuatu is a Large Ocean State (LOS) with 98% of our sovereign territory being ocean space (approximately 900,000 square km). The outer limit of our EEZ connects Vanuatu to other Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), and to the rest of the world.

Vanuatu has adopted a number of conventions, arrangements, and commitments at international and regional levels that promote sustainable use and conservation of maritime spaces and resources, which among others, include the following:

I. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The adoption of the UNCLOS in 1982 marked a historic turning point in the development of ocean law and became the Constitution of the Sea. Vanuatu ratified the Convention on 10 August 1999 to govern all activities of its ocean space and manage its marine resources. The Convention remains arguably the most ambitious milestone achieved in the progressive codification of Maritime Law.

The Convention of the Law of the Sea is a charter of rights and duties for State-Parties. Since the Convention defines the rights and responsibilities on the use of the ocean and management of marine resources, Vanuatu as a member State, has been actively involved in ongoing negotiations to delimit its borders, resolve its outstanding maritime boundary issues, and secure and maintain its sovereignty.

The Vanuatu Government is still negotiating Maritime Boundary overlaps with the Solomon Islands to the North, Fiji to the East, and New Caledonia to the West. There remains an ongoing dispute with France to the South on the Matthew and Hunter Islands. 70% of our Maritime Boundaries are yet to be resolved.

II. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Government of Vanuatu signed the CBD in 1992 and ratified it in 1993. The Convention covers all aspects of biodiversity including species, ecosystems and genetic resources. It promotes the development of global targets and national strategies relating to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in both terrestrial and marine environment. In 2010, over 190 State parties to the convention agreed on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and Aichi Biodiversity Targets which include applying ecosystem-based management approaches for sustainable fisheries (Target 6) and targeting 10 % of coastal and marine areas through marine protected areas and other area-based management measures.

The Government has recently committed internationally at the UN Biodiversity Conference to protect and conserve 30 percent of its maritime space (Target 3) through marine spatial planning and marine protected areas.

III. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Vanuatu is committed to the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all UN members in 2015 to strengthen universal peace, eradicate poverty in all its forms, protect the planet and revitalize global partnership. These SDGs are intended to be achieved by 2030. SDG 14 – Life Below Water, specifically focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Regional:

I. Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP)

The PIROP was adopted in 2002 by Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Leaders as a regional overarching framework for ocean governance in the region. It envisions “a healthy ocean that sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of Pacific Island communities.” The PIROP Integrated Strategic Action (PIF-ISA) was also endorsed in 2005 to guide regional coordination, integration and collaboration on ocean issues to improve ocean governance and ensure sustainable use of the ocean and its resources.

II. Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO)

The FPO is a strategic action plan endorsed by PIF Leaders in 2010 with a vision of securing the future of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) based on sustainable development and management of our ocean. FPO acts as a catalyst for the implementation of the PIROP and marine priorities of the Pacific Plan and relevant regional and international instruments. The integrated ocean management and the adaptation to environmental and climate change are specific objectives of the FPO.

III. 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

The 2050 Strategy is the overarching regional blueprint recently endorsed by PIF Leaders in 2022 to advance Pacific regionalism over the next three decades. The Strategy envisions a resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity. The Strategy aims to ensure that all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives. The ocean and natural environment, including climate change and disasters, are among the key thematic areas of the Strategy.

National:

I. National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP)

The successful implementation of our National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP – The People’s Plan) is dependent on multi-sectoral, cross ministry collaboration to achieve the NSDP goals.

This is possible with a dedicated Department of Ocean to coordinate the collaboration of all ministries in doing their part to implement national policy and achieve the NSDP goals as follows:

- a) SOC 1.2 Preserve and enhance cultural and traditional knowledge,
- b) SOC 1.3 Conserve sites of cultural and historical significance
- c) SOC 1.4 Strengthen links between traditional and formal governance systems
- d) SOC 5.5 Strengthen links between traditional and formal justice systems and the
- e) role of chiefs in maintaining peace and stability
- f) ENV 4.7 Build capacity and support local communities to manage natural resources
- g) ENV 4.5 Reduce and prevent the degradation and erosion of foreshore and coastal areas
- h) ENV 5.1 Protect biodiversity and ecosystems and their significant role in our culture, society and environment
- i) ECO 3.2 Deepen the integration of the tourism sector into the rural economy to spread opportunities to rural communities
- j) ECO 4.9 Strengthen dialogue between government and the private sector, and enact a robust governance framework for effective partnerships
- k) ENV 5.2 Create and manage conservation and protected areas
- l) ECO 4.9 Strengthen dialogue between government and the private sector, and enact a robust governance framework for effective partnerships
- m) ENV 5.4 Protect our borders and environment through effective customs and biosecurity services
- n) ENV 5.5 Increase awareness on biodiversity conservation and environmental protection issues across government and publicly
- o) ENV 5.6 Enhance environmental monitoring, evaluation and research with relevant, open and transparent data sharing and accounting systems among relevant agencies
- p) ECO 1.2 Improve government revenue generation and international flows of sustainable finance
- q) ECO 4.2 Strengthen linkages between urban and rural business and promote trade between islands

II. Existing Legislation

Existing laws in Vanuatu provide the regulatory framework to manage and protect marine spaces, including the implementation of regional and international commitments. These laws include:

- a) Maritime Zones Act 2010
- b) Environmental Management and Conservation Act 2002
- c) Fisheries Act 2014
- d) Physical Planning Act 1986
- e) Shipping Act [Cap 53] as amended
- f) Vanuatu Maritime Safety Authority Act 2016
- g) Maritime Conventions Act 2017
- h) Maritime Act [Cap 131] as amended
- i) Ports Act [Cap 26] as amended
- j) Mines and Minerals Act 1986
- k) Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act 1993
- l) Custom Land Management Act 2013
- m) Foreshore Development Act 1975

- n) Decentralization Act 1980
- o) Waste Management Act 2014
- p) Pollution (Control) Act 2013
- q) National Parks Act 1993

These Acts provide the basis that informs a robust MSP and the requisite legislation for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Government Roles and Responsibilities

Department for National Boundaries and Ocean Affairs

This new Department was established in 2024 within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade (MFAICET). The new Department will be able to function as a “one-stop-shop” resource for all Government Departments and partners implementing the Ocean Roadmap. Key roles are policy implementation, coordination of stakeholders and resource mobilization as well as monitoring and evaluation of the VNOP2 and the MSP implementation.

Special Envoy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a new high-level position of the Special Envoy for Ocean, Maritime Boundaries and Climate Diplomacy. This is to build political support for VNOP2 aspirations, to ensure Parliamentary engagement and support and to represent Ocean Stakeholders to Provincial Governments, Malvatumauri, Provincial based Chiefs and community leaders. The Special Envoy will be based at the new Department of Ocean.

Ocean Authority

A new Ocean Authority will be established as a statutory body to serve as the regulatory agency specifically tasked with overseeing the compliance of the MSP.

The National Committee on Maritime Boundary Delimitations

This is an existing committee co-chaired by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade (MoFAICET) Director General and the Special Envoy. It is composed of relevant Ministry Director Generals who meet at minimum on a quarterly basis and as needed for matters arising to provide input and advice on maritime boundaries, VNOP2 implementation and MSP implementation.

Science and Technical Committee (STOG)

The STOG membership includes all technical line Ministries. This includes:

- I. Department of Fisheries
- II. Department of Environment, Protection and Conservation
- III. Department of Climate Change
- IV. Department of Ports and Harbour
- V. Geology and Mines Unit
- VI. Department of Finance
- VII. Department of Local Authorities
- VIII. Department of Urban Affairs
- IX. Vanuatu Police – Maritime Wing
- X. Vanuatu Maritime Safety Authority

Chiefs and traditional leaders

Chiefs of communities who have traditionally protected areas under the Reef+100 boundary are designated by the MSP as being within the 'custom management area zone' and have full authority for rules of access, use, and marine trespass penalties. Their authority to implement the VNOP2 in their areas will be legislated under a new legislation proposed for MSP and ocean governance.

The 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.

- a) VNOP2 actively promotes the development of private/public partnerships to develop sustainable Blue Economy industries.
- b) The VNOP2 implementers (specifically Departments of Environment, Fisheries, Climate Change, Energy, and the National Maritime Safety Authority (NMSA) act as regulatory agencies providing standards for existing and emerging ocean industries to ensure environmental-friendly operation within Vanuatu waters.

Civil Society and community engagement

VNOP2 supports regular and substantial government interaction with Civil Society. NGOs, churches, interest groups and academics have a wealth of expertise that can provide informed advice on economic, environmental and social issues, science and technology, community living, jobs and growth, and public education with respect to ocean protection and management.

Rural and urban communities across the country in the VNOP2 through inclusive consultative processes over a period of twelve months. Local communities are a vital part of planning and management strategies that impact marine areas. As such, the public will have opportunities to inform ocean conservation and management decisions in marine areas they use, particularly under the Reef+100 management practice explained later in this document.



Our Ocean

Our Culture

Our People

