

**Saint Vincent and the
Grenadines**



National Ocean Policy



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National Ocean Policy and Action Plan

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Department of Maritime Administration

Ministry of National Security, Air and Sea Port Development

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Executive Summary

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has jurisdiction over an extensive marine area along with the associated living and non-living resources. It is an acknowledged fact that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is well served by the surrounding oceans. No one disputes that the oceans contribute to the overall well-being of Vincentians; that they offer tremendous potential for creating employment, generating incomes and contributing to overall social and economic development. In recognizing this potential, the National Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2025), under its first goal of “reengineering economic growth”, has as one of its objectives: “To optimise the economic contribution made by ocean resources”.

However, while a number of existing sectors undoubtedly contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, by and large, the benefits to be derived from the oceans are not fully explored, and neither is there anywhere, an indication of what precisely is the economic worth of the contribution of the oceans.

While emerging opportunities exist to enhance the contribution made by the marine environment to the sustainable development of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, it is unlikely than any one resource is sufficient to sustain development goals. An approach is needed that coordinates management across sectors and resources and integrates environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals. Such an approach requires a change in how we view, manage, govern and use the ocean.

Apart from having to value the economic and financial benefits of the oceans, there is another challenge with regard to the utilization of the oceans. This relates to how best, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines can manage its oceans, nearly 90 times the area of land, such that these resources are not exploited to the detriment of the country. The development and sustainable use of a portfolio of marine resources will require governance and policies that integrate environmental and economic considerations. We must ensure that within the broad policy guidelines that are fashioned, a comprehensive framework which also incorporates the legal and institutional imperatives and which addresses the fragility of the oceans, is taken into consideration. Also, in identifying the priorities, care should be taken that these are driven by national realities.

1 Introduction

The marine area under the jurisdiction of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is estimated to be about 36,000 square km¹, over 90 times its land area. The marine environment contributes significantly to the economy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and is fundamental to the wellbeing of its citizens; through direct economic activities, the provision of environmental services and as a vital amenity for Vincentians and tourists alike. The interconnected nature of the marine environment means that utilisation of one type of resource has the capacity to impact on other resources and the wider marine environment. These factors present Governments with significant challenges in terms of ensuring the integrated and sustainable management of marine resources within their jurisdiction.

With the exception of the Maritime Action Plan (2005), the draft Marine Tourism Policy and the draft Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy,² Saint Vincent and the Grenadines lacks an overarching policy framework to deal with the development and management of marine resources. 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 requires all uses, users and values to be considered.

The National Ocean Policy is the Government's policy statement for the management of the nation's ocean space and resources, which sets out the Government's policy direction for modern marine management. The development of the policy has been informed by discussions and consultations with marine stakeholders, other related initiatives, such as the multiple-use marine zoning project, and emerging experience in ocean policy and marine management in the international community.

The National Ocean policy sets out the goals for ocean use and management and provides a framework for legal and institutional development that will guide Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' marine waters toward a more sustainable future.

In addition the policy includes a Strategic Action Plan which sets out the Government's initial priority areas of focus. This Action Plan will be further refined and implemented by the Government in collaboration with local communities, marine industries such as fishing, shipping and tourism interests, environmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

¹ Source <http://www.searoundus.org/eez/670.aspx>. Accessed 19/03/13. The figure is subject to final delimitation of outstanding maritime boundaries with neighbouring coastal States.

² A Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Revised Final draft, October 2012. 22 p.

2 A Vision for the Ocean

Vision

To maintain healthy and richly biodiverse oceans by securing, enforcing and sustainably managing the space in an integrated way so as to promote social, cultural and economic development and support the livelihoods and aspirations of current and future generations of Vincentians.

Purpose of the National Ocean Policy

The purpose of the National Ocean Policy is to establish a framework that can guide inter-sectoral planning and development of ocean activities in a rational and sustainable manner for the social and economic development of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, to generate jobs and income and to contribute to social inclusion.

This policy is the basis for effective coordination among all Government agencies with responsibility for maritime and ocean affairs and the harmonisation of national actions in relation to the marine resources of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Scope of the National Ocean Policy

The geographical area and the jurisdiction where this policy shall be applied will include all national waters up to the outer limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone or the extended continental shelf, whichever is the greater.

While the policy applies to all uses and activities in the marine environment, it recognises that additional, sector specific policies and action plans also exist with regard to maritime transport, tourism, fisheries and the establishment of marine protected areas. In recognition of the significance of these four themes to the overall socio-economic development of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines this policy aims to reflect the provisions of those sector specific policies and actions plans and to provide a framework for their integration into a broader national ocean governance framework.

In many cases the policies reflected in this Policy should also be taken into account in the terrestrial planning system and other consenting regimes which affect or might affect the marine area.

3 Context for the National Ocean Policy

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Marine Environment

In accordance with international maritime law, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has declared a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).³ While a number of maritime boundaries remain to be resolved with neighbouring states, the marine space under the jurisdiction of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is estimated to be about 36,000 square km,⁴ over 90 times its land space, and therefore represents perhaps the most significant opportunity for future sustainable economic growth.

The nation's marine waters constitute a rich and unique habitat, which includes coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangroves and salt ponds. The coastal and marine biodiversity includes a rich diversity of reef and pelagic fish, lobsters, conch, turtles, algae, resident and migratory birds.⁵ Offshore waters are home to numerous species of marine mammal and sea turtles as well as deep water pelagic fish species.

Ocean Uses

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is well served by the surrounding marine waters. Uses of the marine environment already make a significant contribution to the overall economy, supporting a diverse network of commercial activities, including commercial and sport fishing, tourism, shipping, yachting, recreation and as a source of building materials. Indeed marine-based activities are the mainstay of the economy of the area particularly in the Grenadines, where tourism and fishing are especially important. As such, the marine environment offers tremendous potential for creating employment, generating incomes and contributing to overall social and economic development.

There are also strong social and cultural attachments to the marine environment and its uses in terms of the amenity and range of environmental services it provides.

Opportunities may also exist for further development of existing sectors, particularly fisheries and tourism, and also the development of new activities or sectors such as aquaculture, marine-based ecotourism, bio-prospecting (pharmaceutical products), offshore oil and gas production and offshore renewable energy.

³ Section 7 of the Maritime Areas Act (Act No. 15 of 30 August 1983; CAP 464 of the 2009 Edition of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

⁴ Source <http://www.searoundus.org/eez/670.aspx>. Accessed 19/03/13.

⁵ *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*. May 2010. Available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/world/vc/vc-nbsap-01-en.pdf>.

If our use of the marine environment is well managed and balanced, it will continue to meet a broad range of economic, social and cultural aspirations for generations to come.

Environmental Impacts on the Marine Environment

Changes in the marine environment resulting from human activities are occurring faster than ever before, affecting especially the most vulnerable marine ecosystems such as coral reefs. Major threats to the marine ecology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines include: those related to climate change including rising ocean temperatures and ocean acidification; coastal development and the destruction of marine ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves; unsustainable, illegal and destructive fisheries practices; land-based and ship sources of pollution; unregulated extraction of sand near coastal areas, illegal and or unregulated dredging of the seabed; unauthorized building of groins into the sea (Villa, Adams Bay), construction in near coastal areas without use of silt trap; anchor damage to coral reefs; and the introduction of marine invasive species.

The Tobago Cays ecosystem is also fragile and there is growing evidence that this ecosystem is being affected by non-sustainable use and natural environmental impacts. Key human induced impacts include: (i) overfishing attributed to both local fisher folks and visiting yachts (particularly in the use of spear guns); (ii) physical impacts associated with visiting yachts (anchor damage and running aground); (iii) snorkelling and diving; and (iv) bilge and wastewater discharge from yachts.

These activities, along with active hurricane seasons, have contributed to the loss of biodiversity in the area. In recent years this deterioration has accelerated. 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.

Integrated Management

It is clear that the need exists for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to transition to a more integrated governance approach, which addresses the fragility of the oceans and that requires all uses, users and values to be considered. A new approach is needed that recognises the full portfolio of possible uses and activities within the extent of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' marine waters and therefore coordinates management across this portfolio, integrating environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals.

This is the unique key to achieving adequate management of the ocean and seas under our national jurisdiction and is one of the most important conditions for the future of the marine environment. Integrated management should therefore be an essential approach for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' maritime space.

4 Basic Policy Framework

Goal and Guiding Principles

The overall goal for the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' National Ocean Policy is:

To make better use of the marine environment and marine resources of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, promoting sustainable economic and social development, through an efficient coordinated and integrated national governance framework.

The policy framework is intended to guide the co-ordination and management of maritime activities, although all levels of government will, subject to the need for amendments to existing institutional arrangements, retain respective legislative and jurisdictional responsibilities and authorities.

Guiding Principles

The National Ocean Policy is based on the following principles that should be considered together and applied to all policies, plans, regulations, decisions and actions affecting access to and use of the marine environment.

Sustainable Development

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recognizes the need for integration of the social, economic and environmental aspects of decision making, and that any current and future marine resource development must be carefully and justly undertaken without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development principles should rest at the core of the National Ocean Policy.

The Right to Development

Human development in harmony with the environment is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development. The value of marine resources must be recognized and opportunities for their economic development optimised to meet society's needs and promote the wellbeing of Vincentians.

Ecosystem Health

The integrity of marine ecosystems must be maintained and, where appropriate, rehabilitated, with a desired end of maintaining or recovering natural levels of biological diversity and ecosystem services.

Ecosystem Based Management

Marine environments must be treated as a distinctive and indivisible system, recognizing the interrelationships between marine users and ecosystems and between the land, sea and air.

Large scale marine spatial planning and other area-based management measures should be integral parts of an ecosystem approach to marine management.

Integrated Ocean Governance

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

Duty of Care and Accountability

Access to environmental resources carries attendant responsibilities to use them in an ecologically sustainable, economically efficient, and socially fair manner. All people and organisations must act with due care to avoid negative impacts on the marine environment.

Decision makers and members of the public should be accountable for the actions they take that affect marine resources.

Knowledge Based Decision Making

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

Precautionary Approach

The knowledge base for managing the marine environment is arguably weaker than for other ecosystems, but this should not be used as ground for lack of action.

In the face of uncertainty about potentially irreversible environmental impacts, marine management efforts must err on the side of caution, adopting a risk-averse and precautionary approach to decision making.

Public Participation

Full stakeholder awareness and participation contributes to credible, accepted rules that identify and assign the corresponding responsibilities appropriately. All stakeholders should therefore be engaged.

Access and Benefit Sharing

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines should govern marine resource use in a manner that aims at the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of common marine resources (including genetic resources), including by appropriate access to resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies.

User Pays and Other Economic Instruments

Access to common marine resources for private profit should be priced to give a reasonable rate of return to the community. Charges for access to marine resources and maritime space should reflect the community interest and short-term and long-term economic, environmental, social, and cultural costs and benefits.

Those who generate and release wastes into the marine environment should bear the costs of containment, avoidance, abatement, or remediation to the level of best practice.

Policies and Goals

Policy 1 – Exercise jurisdiction over marine resources

Securing access to and the rights to utilise marine resources, requires countries to establish the legal limits of their maritime jurisdiction through the delimitation of maritime boundaries in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The absence of clearly defined maritime boundaries in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines inhibits the management of the ocean space and marine resources. The settlement of unresolved maritime boundaries is therefore a priority.

Goals

- 1.1 The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines negotiates and formalizes maritime boundaries with neighbouring States in order to secure, exercise and protect rights and jurisdiction over marine areas and resources.

Policy 2 - Promote education and public awareness of the marine environment

The care of the marine environment is the responsibility of everyone. However, lack of awareness and environmental education results in low levels of personal responsibility and a lack of community stewardship. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines needs marine education that teaches people about the marine environment both in terms of its environmental and amenity values and the wide range of possibilities for industry and the development of economic.

Goals

- 2.1 Greater understanding and appreciation of the importance of the ocean is realised through the promotion of marine education and dissemination strategies in the context of both school education and of public awareness raising.
- 2.2 Community understanding of the marine environment, its natural processes and cultural marine heritage is increased and the capacity for informed decision-making by all stakeholders is developed and strengthened.

Policy 3 - Understand community needs through broader public participation

Vincentians have expressed a desire to be more engaged on marine management. Public participation is a key to promoting and instituting a duty of care for the marine environment. Local communities and local industries should be encouraged to participate in planning and management strategies and share responsibility for the management of ocean resources. There is also a need to make available accurate, timely and documented official information on proposed ocean governance activities through media coverage and public fora, meetings and discussions, and information campaigns.

Goals

- 3.1 All citizens have access to sufficient information concerning the marine environment, marine resource uses, proposals and alternative uses and their impacts;
- 3.2 Marine management decisions and how they are made are open to public scrutiny;
- 3.3 Public have the opportunity to participate in the development of new policies as well as the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Policy 4 - Protect and Preserve Marine Ecosystems

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' marine waters and the marine resources they contain are a significant national asset. The Government recognise that ecosystem health and integrity is fundamental to ecologically sustainable development. If our use of them is well managed they can meet a broad range of economic, social and cultural aspirations. They also provide a range of essential services that would be extremely costly or impossible to restore or replace once they are lost.

Goals

- 4.1 The overall quality of the marine environment is conserved and, where possible, enhanced through protection, maintenance or restoration of natural and physical features, processes and biological diversity and the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources.
- 4.2 The environmental impacts of all marine and land based developments and activities are rigorously assessed in an open and transparent manner.
- 4.3 Establish a network of marine protected areas/ marine management areas and implement the Caribbean Challenge Initiative and the Eastern Caribbean Marine Management Area Network Project for OECS States.

Policy 5 – Apply integrated ocean governance arrangements

Governance is an overarching theme that is an essential part of the National Ocean Policy. Well-integrated governance frameworks, which recognize the interactions and interdependent nature of the various systems on islands, 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 integrated governance arrangements should be to establish, strengthen, and implement effective governance mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

Goals

- 5.1 Clear coordinated institutional arrangements are established and implemented for integrated marine management across relevant sectors such as fisheries, tourism, transport, physical planning, health and environment including, where appropriate, partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society.
- 5.2 National legal frameworks that give effect to international and regional obligations are updated to reflect an integrated approach to planning and management of marine space.
- 5.3 An overall strategy is developed to ensure that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' international obligations and responsibilities as a flag, port and coastal State are met.
- 5.4 Monitoring, compliance and enforcement initiatives are strengthened at the national and regional level.

Policy 6 – Adopt multiple-use ocean planning and zoning

The vast range of both land-based and marine human activities affecting the ocean requires integrated planning and management to ensure that development goals, strategies, and projects do not operate at cross purposes. The application of integrated and ecosystem based management approaches can assist in this regard.

Goals

- 6.1 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines explores and builds on multiple use marine spatial planning and zoning mechanisms by linking the ocean to coastal and inland issues for improved planning and control of marine activities.

Policy 7 – Develop the blue economy

The ocean offers the potential for numerous opportunities to generate significant 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with many new opportunities which can create new jobs, achieve a higher rate of growth, reduce poverty, and secure international biodiversity and sustainability obligations.

Goals

- 7.1 Sustainable use of marine resources, taking into account social, economic and environmental needs, is promoted and incorporated in national development policies and planning framework to ensure long term social and economic development.
- 7.2 Activities in the marine waters of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are planned and conducted so as to minimise adverse impacts on the marine environment and avoid, on the basis of information sufficient to allow prior assessments of, and informed judgments about, their possible impacts on the marine environment.
- 7.3 Opportunities from existing, under-utilised resources are optimized while new and emerging opportunities for marine industries and marine-related development are identified and encouraged.

Policy 8 - Research and capacity building

Investment in scientific research and the development of additional human capacity applied to the marine environment is essential to create a solid basis for the sustainable development of the blue economy. Training, education, capacity building and access to information, are all essential to promote and support public and private investment in marine-related activities.

Goals

- 8.1 The Government, in cooperation with higher education institutions in the Caribbean region and internationally, will promote and encourage the creation of academic programmes relating to the use and preservation of the ocean and coastal areas.
- 8.2 All data and information relating to the marine environment, that is collected as a result of commercial or third party research activities, will be provided to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

- 8.3 Gaps in technical capacity relating to management of the marine environment and marine related-activities will be identified.
- 8.4 Develop a strategy to enhance capacity-building and training of marine professionals and seafarers, in line with international standards and national needs including securing capacity building and funding support.

Policy 9 - Adapt to a changing environment

Planning and management for use of marine resources, particularly living marine resources, must be able to respond to considerable uncertainty. The conservation of coastal areas under threat of natural phenomena such as tsunamis, hurricanes, sea-level rise causing floods, saline encroachment and loss of coastal areas and other events due to climate change, is a priority for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Understanding the impacts and effects of climate change and other stressors is 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, including in the marine environment, is necessary to deal with the potential impacts of these changes which are already in train.

Goals

- 9.1 The increasing risk of coastal hazards and climate change are recognised and managed through the incorporation of appropriate adaptation and resilience building strategies into sustainable development, conservation and governance actions.
- 9.2 Adopt and implement National Disaster Prevention and Response Plans in relation to risk management in maritime space and coastal areas. The implementation of the Plan should be accompanied by protection programmes (rehousing, protection and adaptation) for communities settled in high- risk areas on the coasts.

Policy 10 – Develop comprehensive and coordinated maritime security systems

As an archipelagic coastal state, the environmental and economic safety of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines depends upon the security of the world's ocean and in particular the Caribbean Sea. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has strengthened maritime security as part of national, regional and global efforts. Maritime security is best achieved through a comprehensive, integrated national effort that addresses all threats and challenges emanating from the maritime environment through a combination of public and private maritime security activities.

Goals

- 10.1 Develop an understanding of the issues within the global maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- 10.2 Enhance Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' capability to identify threats to its Maritime domain in a timely manner by sharing and integrating intelligence, surveillance, observation and navigation systems into a common operating picture to position decision-makers to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from a broad spectrum of potential maritime related threats.
- 10.3 Facilitate a coordinated response to threats against Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and its interests in the maritime domain by establishing roles and responsibilities, to enable a quick and decisive response and recovery.

5 Implementation Arrangements

General Approach

Management of marine activities already exists in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 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 key 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 fulfil the policy objectives.

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 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 organisational structures, to progress the implementation of the policy.

Institutional Arrangements

An important first step in the process is the nomination of a lead national agency. Such an agency must be explicitly mandated to take on this role and to provide a coordination role among all national agencies with a mandate for the management of ocean space and resources.

~~The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will establish a National Ocean Coordination Committee (NOCC), formed of representatives drawn from those agencies that have responsibility for some aspect of maritime affairs and marine resource management. Likewise, representatives from the local government (Grenadines), the private sector, local NGOs and key marine user groups should participate.~~

The main tasks of the NOCC will be to:

- coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Ocean Policy with other cross-cutting strategies, planning instruments and programmes;
- contribute to the coordination, implementation and monitoring of Government-approved cross-cutting actions, measures and policies related to maritime affairs;

- 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 maritime policy, that makes a wise use of the country's resources and assets; and
- 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.

Private sector

A diverse network of private sector activities are undertaken in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, including commercial and sport fishing, aquaculture, boat maintenance, marine aggregate extraction, 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.

Civil society

There are also non-government organizations, 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 NOCC should actively encourage the participation of these groups and individuals in the evolution and implementation of this policy.

Broader community based participation

Local communities should be encouraged to participate in planning and management strategies and share responsibility for the management of ocean resources. As such, the public should have sufficient opportunities for informed community contributions to decisions and management and ocean management decision making should be open for public scrutiny.

7 Strategic Action Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this Strategic Action Plan is to propose the next series of actions to materialize the vision and strategy for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' maritime future for the period 2015 to 2020. It contains a number of short and medium term actions designed to enhance the implementation of the policy objectives of the National Ocean Policy.

The Strategic Action Plan is designed to serve as a guide for implementation rather than as a prescriptive work plan. However, it is expected to contribute to sector specific work plans in different government agencies, to help direct the work they undertake on behalf of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Implementing the National Maritime Policy

Implementing the National Maritime Policy will involve new initiatives as well as existing and on-going activities. Implementation requires action under each of the ten policies:

- 1 Exercise jurisdiction over marine resources
- 2 Promote education and public awareness of the marine environment
- 3 Understand community needs through broader public participation
- 4 Protect and Preserve Marine Ecosystems
- 5 Apply integrated ocean governance arrangements
- 6 Adopt multiple-use ocean planning and zoning
- 7 Develop the blue economy
- 8 Research and capacity building
- 9 Adapt to a changing environment
- 10 Develop comprehensive and coordinated maritime security systems

For the foreseeable future, the government will apply increased priority to the following key components:

- Resolving outstanding maritime boundaries
 - Raising awareness among stakeholders and creating opportunities for increased stakeholder participation in decision making processes
 - Implementing measures for the preservation and protection of the marine environment
-

- Reforming the ocean governance framework including institutional arrangements and the application of integrated marine planning
- Considering options for optimising the economic opportunities from marine resources
- Increasing our understanding of the marine environment and capacity building
- Building resilience and managing for uncertainty

These are the areas of activity that require new or additional focus in the future, particularly to address the key challenges facing the marine environment. They do not represent all issues and further elaboration will be required to develop this plan further to address the full range of issues identified in the National Oceans Policy.

Actions

Priority 1 - Resolving Outstanding Maritime Boundaries

It is in the national interest that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines deposits with the United Nations, base-point coordinates, charts and other information delineating its maritime zones in order to establish and secure rights and responsibilities over the Federation's marine waters and the resources therein.

Action 1.1: The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will negotiate, agree and delimit maritime boundaries with all neighbouring States bilaterally or in conjunction with the OECS.

Priority 2 - Raising Awareness Increasing Stakeholder Participation

One of the main difficulties associated with the implementation of a National Maritime Policy is the lack of appreciation and awareness of the importance and role of the marine environment by the wider community. Few citizens look at the ocean as a life, investment, or business opportunity. To achieve that goal 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.

Action 2.1: Support and promote strategies to build public awareness of the importance of the sea and its resources, protection of the marine environment and cooperating to find environmental and sustainable development solutions.

Activities:

- Engage with and sensitise 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 oceans and ocean issues and engagement in stewardship initiatives

Action 2.2: Establish a process to identify and stimulate the participation of local communities and local industries in planning and management strategies and to share responsibility for the management of ocean resources.

Activities:

- Encourage local communities and local industries to participate in planning and management strategies and share responsibility for the management of ocean resources
- Provide support to empower communities to take on resource management and monitoring responsibilities
- Ensure that marine management decisions and how they are made are open for public scrutiny

Priority 3 - Preserve and Protect the Marine Environment

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' marine environment and the biodiversity and ecosystem services it supports are a key national asset. Such essential services would be extremely costly or impossible to restore or replace once lost. If utilisation of these resources is well managed they can meet broad range of economic, social and cultural aspirations. The Government recognises that ecosystem health and integrity is fundamental to ecologically sustainable development.

Action 3.1: The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will establish a network of marine protected areas, implementing, where practicable, the Caribbean Challenge Initiative to which it has signed up.

Activities:

- Undertake an assessment of existing MPAs in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Develop a strategy for a national network of Marine Protected Areas
- Strengthen management systems and capacities
- Establish management plans for MPAs/Zones
- Identify other potential MPAs

Action 3.2: The Government will ensure that activities undertaken in the marine environment meet all relevant international and regional standards and do not cause environment damage or harm to social and economic values.

Activities:

- Incorporate Environmental and Socioeconomic Impact Assessments into planning and decision making frameworks

- Reduce the impact of all sources of pollution on the marine environment

Priority 4 - Reform Ocean Governance

The National Ocean Policy stems from the desire to achieve responsible ocean governance. Governance is an overarching theme that is an essential part of the National Ocean Policy. The overall aim of reforming the current governance arrangements should therefore be to establish, strengthen, and implement effective integrated governance mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

Action 4.1: The Government will promote a shift from the traditional sector-specific approaches to management to a more integrated ‘whole of government’ approach to development and management of marine resources across relevant sectors such as fisheries, transport, tourism, minerals and environment, through harmonised institutional, policy and legal arrangements.

Activities:

- Establish an agency responsible for Ocean Affairs

Action 4.2: The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will establish a National Ocean Coordination Committee by mid-2016 composed of senior representatives of the Ministry responsible for ocean governance, Maritime Administration, Fisheries, Environmental Protection, Tourism, Energy, Foreign Affairs, Attorney General’s Office, Central Planning, Physical Planning, National Parks Authority, Defence and Customs, the Civil Society and others from both the national Government and Grenadine Islands administrations to function as a high-level advisory committee to the Minister responsible for ocean governance.

Activities:

- Cabinet to identify and mandate a national lead agency to coordinate the National Ocean Coordination Committee
- Establish an organizational structure and lines of communication that supports the programs established by the National Agency and facilitates consultation with private stakeholder
- Clarify, where necessary, the competencies attributed to the different agencies dealing with maritime affairs
- Promote efforts to build coordination, create greater capacity and reduce duplication by pooling resources to reduce costs

Action 4.3: The Government will review, strengthen and/or establish policy, legal and planning arrangements in accordance with national and regional needs and capacities.

Activities:

- Accede to and implement all relevant international and regional instruments
- Develop and enact national legislation and guidelines on marine environmental protection and harmonise conflicting legislation and agency regulations
- Improve existing legislation and guidelines on marine environmental protection and maintain an on-going review and assessment of the adequacy of environmental standards
- Explore mechanisms for strengthening compliance with relevant international agreements
- Effectively participate in relevant regional (Caribbean-wide) ocean governance initiatives

Action 4.4: The Government will develop an overall maritime strategy to address the interests of SVG including those arising from regional and international instruments.

Activities:

- Establish a methodology to monitor and assess that the strategy ensures effective implementation and enforcement with national laws and of relevant regional and international instruments.
- Continuously review the strategy to achieve, maintain and improve the overall performance and capability of SVG to effectively implement and enforce national laws and relevant regional and international instruments.

Action 4.5: The Government will provide increased support for the maintenance of maritime sovereignty and security.

Activities:

- To enact and amend relevant laws to make surveillance and enforcement of marine activities more effective.
- Promote national, regional and international collaboration to prevent illegal activities and enforce national, regional and international obligations
- Coordinate existing resources held by the various agencies with competences in surveillance and enforcement, optimizing their use and effectiveness
- Support capacity building initiatives to strengthen monitoring, surveillance and enforcement

Priority 5 - Adopt Multiple-Use Ocean Planning and Zoning

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.

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. 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.

Action 5.1: The Government will build on and promote existing marine zoning and spatial planning mechanisms for improving management of maritime space to achieve economic development and environmental objectives.

Activities:

- Implement the Grenadines Marine Resource and Space-Use Information System (MarSIS)
- Map existing and possible future uses of the marine environment by different activities
- Conduct an audit to ascertain existing availability of marine data
- Facilitate a workshop to evaluate and synthesise the data and to start generating a Marine Spatial Plan for the whole of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Priority 6 - Optimise Economic Opportunities from Marine Resources

A strong and sustained blue economy is only possible if the mechanisms that enable investors to support maritime activities are created. To do so it is essential to promote a transparent and competitive investment environment for the creation and attraction of maritime industries and the exploitation of existing natural resources. In this vein, the Government will work with all sectors to manage the use of living marine resources, in order to highlight the importance of marine activities in national and international trade. These activities include exploitation of fishery and mineral resources, shipping and tourism, all of which play a role in the country's socio-economic development.

However, while marine sectors contribute significantly to the overall economy, this contribution comes largely from traditional industries such as fishing, transport and tourism. Emerging industries, including marine-related biomedicine, renewable power, chemicals and seawater utilization, are not currently pursued in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Action 6.1: Support and promote business development in the oceans sector.

Activities:

- Undertake a systematic analysis to quantify the value of the 'blue economy' and the potential value of key marine resources/activities
- Promotion of the ocean as a key element in the tourism sector, creating conditions for the best use of the ocean and coastal zones and supporting the quality and diversity of the range of tourist products
- Promote and enhance Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' port and marina facilities, by examining the viability of value added services, to enhance the opportunities they present
- Evaluate opportunities to derive revenue from the portfolio of marine resources and activities that more accurately reflect their 'value' (e.g. levies, user fees, licence and permit fees etc.)
- Support economic diversification in coastal communities to ensure participation within the larger oceans economy

Action 6.2: Evaluate and support new and emerging opportunities for oceans industries and oceans-related coastal development.

Activities:

- Support new and emerging fisheries and aquaculture developments, marine eco-tourism operations and tourism services to enhance cruise ship passengers' experience

- Identify one or two (maximum) key emerging opportunities and develop strategies to attract investment to support their development
- Evaluate opportunities for economic diversification that may arise from the expansion of the Panama Canal and the resulting increase in maritime transport in the region

Priority 7 - Research and Capacity Building

To ensure effective governance of marine space, a whole array of information and knowledge will need to be called upon. Only through a consistent and sustained investment in scientific research will it be possible to create a solid basis for management decisions, in a sustainable development and integrated management perspective. 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 professional in all sectors.

There is also a need to devise new ways of working that leverage greater capacity from current systems. Increased cooperation on such issues, coupled with greater coordination across Governments will help reduce costs and speed up the transition to more sustainable governance and management arrangements.

Action 7.1: Improve marine scientific knowledge base for management of the marine environment.

Activities:

- Improve co-operation in the collection, monitoring and disseminating of information, including the integration of local knowledge
- Promote the integration of existing marine databases, management of marine data and use of historical information
- Facilitate/support research to increase understanding of the marine environment, its natural processes and cultural marine
- Develop a marine research strategy that identifies and prioritises information needs and the cooperative mechanisms for acquiring accessing and disseminating information

Action 7.2: Build and maintain the human capacity to meet the needs of the maritime sector; e.g. through tailored education and training programmes and research capacity building.

Activities:

- Identify future skills needs and labour market supply and demand trends in the marine area

- Tailor higher education, vocational and professional training programmes to meet the identified needs
- Encourage utilisation of employment and training programmes that offer training and upskilling for marine personnel, taking account of local employment needs and opportunities

Action 7.3: Support and promote strategies to build technical capacity among decision makers and resource managers.

Activities:

- Determine training needs related to marine science, marine affairs and marine management that is relevant to coastal and ocean management
- Support training of decision makers and planners in marine science, marine affairs and marine management that is relevant to coastal and ocean management
- Explore opportunities for technical cooperation and knowledge sharing between countries in the region, in particular OECS Member States, concerning matters related to marine management

Priority 8 - Adapt to a Changing Environment

The protection of coastal areas under threat of natural phenomena such as hurricanes, sea surge and flooding, sea-level, loss of coastal areas and other events due to climate change, is a priority for the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Accordingly, the Government will promote the adoption of appropriate adaptation and resilience strategies to minimise the effects of such events. Implementation of the other policy areas in this policy will contribute substantially to this effort.

Action 8.1: Identify and ensure the incorporation of appropriate adaptation and resilience building strategies for incorporation into sustainable development, conservation and governance actions to reduce risk of coastal hazards and climate change.

Activities:

- Protect naturally resistant or resilient areas. Examples include coral reefs that still have high coral cover, mangroves and coastal wetlands
- Integrate climate change into MPA planning, management and evaluation
- Establish controls on the removal of beach sediment that contributes to coastal erosion and loss of protection
- Ensure that adaptation in coastal and marine areas is taken into account in the implementation of this policy

Glossary of Terms

Marine Environment - The oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, and other major water bodies, including their surface interface and interaction, with the atmosphere and with the land seaward of the mean high water mark.

Marine Zoning Project – Refers to the USAid funded marine spatial planning process project led by The Nature Conservancy that has developed a draft marine zoning design for St. Kitts and Nevis

MARPOL 73/78 – the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (1973) as amended by the 1978 Protocol thereto

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding (relating to Port State Control)

MPA – Marine protected area

PSC – Port State Control - the process of inspection of foreign ships in national ports to verify that the condition of the ship and its equipment comply with the requirements of international regulations

NOCC – the National Ocean Coordination Committee established by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines