



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP) Technical Working Groups

2023

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE MSP PROCESS

On November 4th, 2021, the Government of Belize signed the Blue Loan Agreement (BLA) and Conservation Funding Agreement (CFA) in collaboration with the Belize Blue Investment Company (BZBIC) and the Nature Conservancy (TNC). The BLA and the CFA are contingent on eight primary Conservation- Commitments/Milestones and an agreed payment schedule to be realized by the Government of Belize by the 8th anniversary of the agreements. Clause 1 of the CFA obligates Belize to complete a legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). The five time-bound milestones related to the MSP process are outlined in Annex I of this Terms of Reference.

The MSP, as defined in Clause 7 of the CFA is ***“a plan analysing and allocating parts of three-dimensional marine spaces (or ecosystems) to specific uses or objectives in order to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that are specified through a political process”***. The Belize MSP process includes identifying Biodiversity Protection Zones through an inclusive, transparent, equitable, science-based participatory and interactive process. The goal of designating up to 30% of Belize’s Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones will be part of the overall MSP design such that the Biodiversity Protection Zones identified will facilitate achievement of Milestone 4 and 6.

On the 19th of October 2022, Belize’s MSP process was officially launched by the Government of Belize, making the achievement of Milestone 3 under the CFA. The “Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan” (BSOP) was unveiled at the launch event as the name for Belize’s MSP, which was selected by the public through an open voting process.

The Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI), under the Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation, has been designated as the government’s lead agency for the MSP process with funding support from the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future (BFSF).

2 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE BELIZE SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PLAN (BSOP) PROCESS

The governance framework for the Belize MSP Process has been developed and identifies five major groups that will play key roles in the development of the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (See figure 1). These groups include the Executive Committee, BSOP Steering Committee, BSOP Core Team, Technical Working Groups and the general public/other stakeholders.

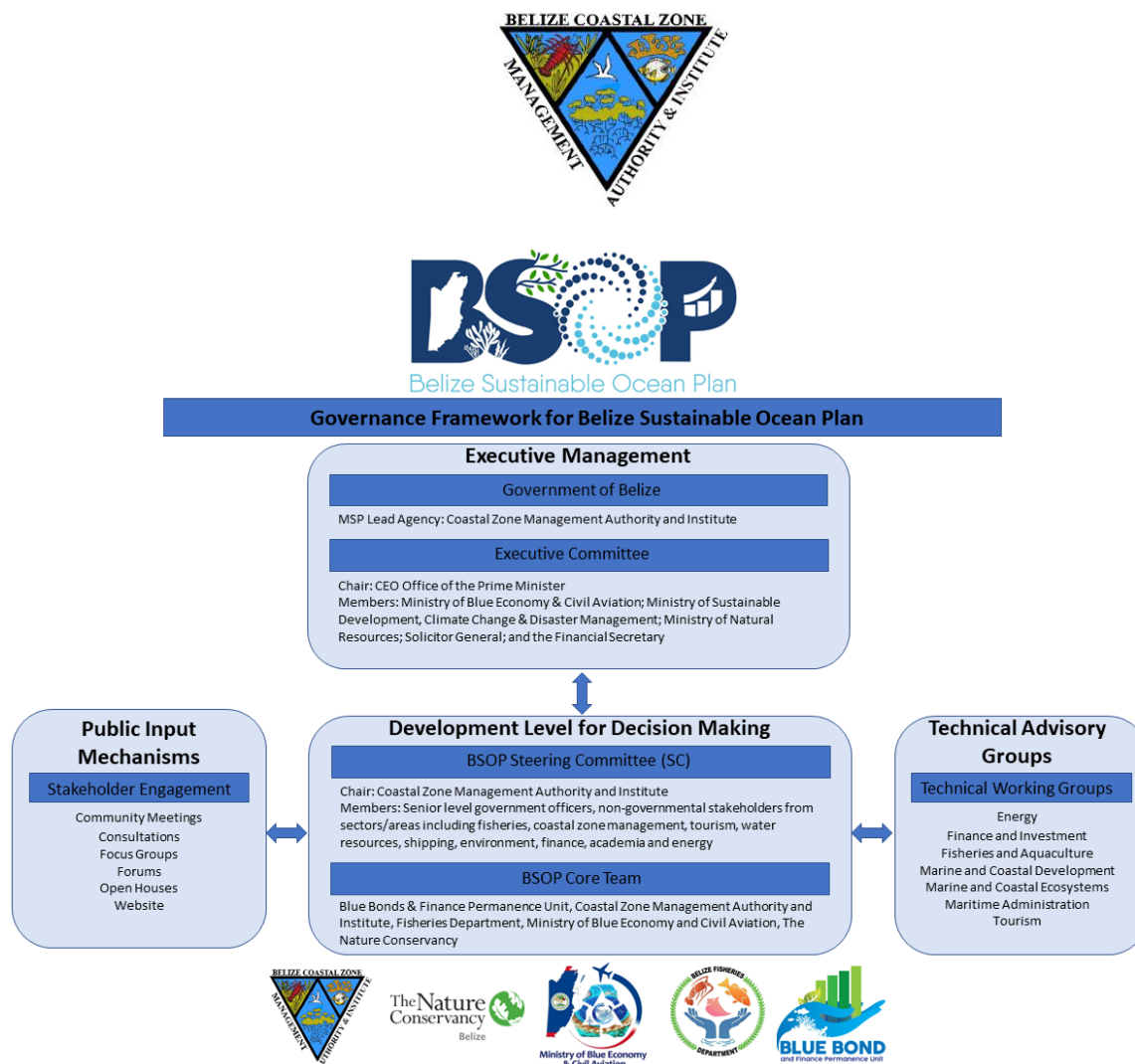


Figure 1: Governance Framework for the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan

This framework has been designed to facilitate a two-way flow of information between the groups tasked with the responsibility of coordinating technical, policy and legislative inputs into the MSP process (i.e. BSOP Core Team, and BSOP Steering Committee) with that groups expected to, provide inputs to inform the formulation of the BSOP (i.e. Technical Working Groups and Public Stakeholders). Information and input derived from the Technical Working Groups and the general public will be used to inform all outputs generated throughout the process. Once prepared, outputs will then be sent to the Executive Committee for final approval and onward submission of progress reports required under the BLA and CFA.

3 PURPOSE OF THE BSOP TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

The purpose of the BSOP Technical Working Groups (TWG) is to provide technical and sectoral information, local knowledge and topic expertise to inform the development of planning tools and draft outputs for the MSP process. This includes the provision of all relevant data, knowledge, and information that can be used to ensure that relevant ecological and socio-economic matters for each sector are appropriately addressed within the BSOP. Finally, the TWGs will provide technical feedback on outputs to inform the MSP Process via the BSOP Steering Committee.



4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BSOP TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

The BSOP TWGs are envisioned to be comprised of technical experts and industry practitioners in specific sectors who will be expected to provide technical and sectoral guidance, and recommendations to the BSOP Core Team and Steering Committee on draft components of the BSOP blueprint during its developmental stage.

Specific functions of the TWGs are to:

1. Provide oversight to, and ensure coordination, collaboration and synergies between the MSP process and other national/large-scale initiatives at the technical level.
2. Provide any relevant knowledge, data, or information necessary to support an inclusive, participatory, transparent, equitable, scientific, and technically sound MSP process.
3. Discuss and review updates on the MSP process provided by CZMAI.
4. Review and provide sector specific feedback on all draft BSOP outputs and provide additional technical guidance/input and recommendations to the Steering Committee.
5. Provide inputs, where applicable, to help inform necessary legal and policy reforms to support the implementation and enforcement of the BSOP.
6. Serve as the focal point tasked with supporting the provision of appropriate information from their respective agencies/organizations to the MSP process, through formal data sharing agreements.
7. Facilitate the dissemination of BSOP related information to relevant sectoral agencies, organizations, departments, and stakeholders to ensure efficiency of the engagement process.
8. Abide by the Ground Rules and Code of Conduct (Annex II).
9. Abided by the MSP Guiding Principles for Decision Making (Annex III).

5 COMPOSITION OF THE BSOP TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

Invitations will be extended to qualified technical experts, industry practitioners, etc., to join the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to represent the key sectors and user groups necessary for a broad-scale and multi-sector planning process. The TWG membership will reflect key sectors of interest relevant to the BSOP, with representatives from Government, Non-Government, and Private Sector, representing socio-economic activities. Each TWG will have a cap of ten (10) members and will be selected based on stakeholder mapping and expert recommendations from the sectors.

Technical Working Group members reserve the right to reconsider their involvement in the process at any time throughout the MSP process. As such, TWG members are required to provide at least two months' notice (a written letter vacating the membership, signed and dated to CZMAI with copy to the Co-Chairs) of their decision to vacate the membership.



As per the governance framework for the development of the BSOP, the following seven (7) Technical Working Groups will be established:

1. Energy

The Energy Sector Technical working group will spatially analyze the entirety of the Belize's coastal/marine areas, inclusive of internal waters, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zone, and allocate space to support existing and future uses. This includes the identification of areas to support current activities within the energy sector, as well as areas to support potential or emerging activities, which will allow the sector to achieve the overarching national goals of economic growth and long-term prosperity, security, and social equity.

More specifically, The Energy Sector TWG will be responsible for the following:

- Analyse and share current activities (if any) within the coastal/marine space to determine spatial requirements.
- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to the energy sector.
- Identify areas that may support expansion of existing activities and/or potential activities.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning to facilitate the transformation of the sector in support of a low carbon economy by 2033.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Aid in the resolution of any spatial conflicts that may be identified throughout the MSP process.

2. Finance and Investment

The Finance and Investment Technical Working Group will ensure that there are adequate spatial allocations across all sectors in support of current and future national investment priorities. Additionally, this Technical Working Group will identify existing and potential financing opportunities to ensure the sustainability of the MSP Process in Belize.

More specifically, the Finance and Investment TWG will be responsible for the following:

- Analyse and share existing demand for space to support current national investment priorities.
- Ensure that spatial requirements necessary to support blue economy sectors identified in the Belize Maritime Economy Plan are met.
- Identify funding streams to support addressing data gaps and other priorities identified through the MSP Process.

3. Fisheries *inclusive of Aquaculture*

The Fisheries Sector Technical working group will spatially analyze the entirety of the Belize's coastal/marine areas, inclusive of internal waters, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zone, and allocate space to support existing and future activities. This includes the identification of areas necessary to support a thriving and sustainable Fisheries Sector, inclusive of aquaculture and mariculture, in Belize.



More specifically, the Fisheries TWG will be responsible for the following:

- Analyse spatial requirements for existing fisheries, aquaculture, and mariculture activities within the entirety of Belize's Ocean.
- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to the fisheries/ sector.
- Identify areas that may support the expansion of existing activities and/or potential fisheries activities.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning to identify and designate Fisheries Priority Areas and Aquatic Reserves to better bridge the gap between biodiversity conservation and food security.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Aid in the resolution of any spatial conflicts that may be identified throughout the MSP process.

4. Marine and Coastal Development

The Marine and Coastal Development Technical Working Group will consider all aspects of development, including but not limited to mangrove removal, dredging, environmental impact etc., to allocate space necessary to support current and future demands. This includes the identification of areas to support the expansion of existing and new development within coastal zone, considering the potential impacts of climate change.

More specifically, the Marine and Coastal Development TWG will be responsible for the following:

- Analyse and share trends in development to identify current and future spatial requirements.
- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to marine and coastal development.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning to promote development in areas that are.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Aid in the resolution of any spatial conflicts that may be identified throughout the MSP process.

5. Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

The Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Technical Working Group will analyze the existing distribution of coastal/marine ecosystems and National Protected Areas System to identify priority areas for management interventions that would bolster biodiversity protections and safeguard ecosystem services.

More specifically, the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems TWG is responsible for the following:

- Identify gaps for ecologically and functionally important/ sensitive habitats for inclusion in the existing MPA system.
- Identify habitats for commercially important, threatened, or endangered species.



- Anticipate and identify potential areas for the expansion of the MPA network.
- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to marine and coastal development.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Identify all relevant international conventions that might influence the use of Belize's Ocean Space.
- Improve environmental stewardship.
- Aid in the resolutions of any spatial conflicts that would reduce any direct and/or indirect pressures on Belize's marine/coastal ecosystems to sustain and enhance national biodiversity and ecosystem services.

6. Maritime Administration

The Maritime Administration Technical working group will spatially analyze the entirety of the Belize's coastal/marine areas, inclusive of internal waters, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zone, and allocate space to support existing and future maritime activities. This includes the identification of areas to support existing and future port operations as well as any use of waterways to support marine transportation activities.

More specifically, the Maritime Administration TWG is responsible for the following:

- Analyse and share spatial requirements to support existing and potential maritime activities within the coastal/marine space.
- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to the maritime sector.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Identify all relevant international conventions that might influence the use of Belize's Ocean Space.
- Aid in the resolution of any spatial conflicts that may be identified throughout the MSP process to improve the effectiveness of maritime activities with the main focus on the protection of the marine environment.

7. Tourism

The Tourism Technical working group will spatially analyze the entirety of the Belize's coastal/marine areas, inclusive of internal waters, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zone, and allocate space to support existing and future tourism activities. This includes the identification of areas to support existing and potential tourism products that are suitable and complementary to Belize's national direction.

The Tourism TWG is responsible for the following:

- Analyse spatial and other resource requirements to support existing and potential tourism activity within the coastal/marine space.



- Where possible, present and review any plan/policy/guideline that may influence the use of space related to the tourism sector.
- Incorporate climate change into future planning, to identify and assess coastal tourism areas in Belize that are vulnerable to Climate Change and provide support to coastal planners and policy makers in selecting appropriate policies and adaptation strategies that meet climate adaptation, developmental and environmental goals.
- Identify data gaps that need to be addressed to better inform planning.
- Aid in the resolution of any spatial conflicts that may be identified throughout the MSP process to minimize negative impacts on ecosystems and local communities arising from pressure on resources and environmental or social damage and degradation.

Consistent with the approved Terms of Reference for the BSOP Steering Committee, the Chair of the following four (4) TWGs have been appointed by the BSOP SC to serve as members of the committee to ensure that there is adequate representation from civil society and private sector:

1. Finance and Investment - Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
2. Fisheries (*inclusive of Aquaculture*) - Northern Fisherman Cooperative
3. Marine and Coastal Ecosystems - Wildlife Conservation Society
4. Tourism - Belize Tourism Industry Association

The remaining Chairs of the three (3) TWGs will be co-opted by the BSOP Steering Committee, participating in meetings, providing information/ reports to the Steering Committee as needed.

The Chairs of the remaining three Technical Working Groups and all Co-Chairs will be elected from amongst the membership through a voting process. The Chair and Co-Chairs are expected to serve a two-year term, after which there will be another appointment process. The Chair and Co-Chair who previously served will be eligible for re-appointment.

Responsibilities of the **Technical Working Groups Chair and Co-Chair**

1. The Chair and Co-Chair (in the absence of the Chair) shall perform the following functions:
 - i. Ensure that all information, advice, and recommendations from the TWGs are delivered to the SC in a clear and timely manner.
 - ii. Ensure that appropriate information from their respective sectors/agencies/organizations is made available to the MSP process.
 - iii. Ensure that the dissemination of information about the BSOP to sectoral and other stakeholders is efficient and consistent with any official messaging.
 - iv. Where applicable, attend scheduled BSOP Steering Committee Meetings on behalf of the TWGs as required, with the Chair serving as the primary member and the Co-Chair as alternate.



- v. Review, discuss, and provide timely feedback on all outputs on behalf of their respective TWGs along with the BSOP Steering Committee.
- vi. Participate in, and encourage all relevant stakeholders to attend, any public meetings organized by the BSOP Core Team to gather input at key stages of the MSP process; and
- vii. Provide any other required support for the finalization of Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan.

Specific tasks for all **Technical Working Groups Members** are the following:

1. Participate in Technical Working Groups meetings; in the event any TWGs member fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without due cause or reason, a formal letter of concern will be sent from CZMAI, as the BSOP Steering Committee Chair, to the respective agency/organizations to re-affirm their participation.
2. Review and provide feedback on draft outputs within ten (10) business days. For urgent and time-sensitive matters requiring a quicker response, the timeframe for submission of feedback shall be specified; a member's agreement will be assumed if s/he does not respond by the deadline date established.
3. Collaborate with other Technical Working Group members and the MSP Process Lead during meetings and in between meetings as required.
4. Assist with outreach activities and/or networking with individuals, groups, organizations, and government agencies having similar interest to convey information on emerging BSOP products, develop feedback and advice on the BSOP components.
5. Serve as an active and effective liaison to facilitate information flow between the Technical Working Groups, CZMAI and the sector/agency/organization that they represent.
6. Disseminate collectively agreed information about the process and derived products to their own networks, according to the processes outlined within the MSP process Communications Plan and Strategy.
7. Consult and liaise with their sector/agency/organization on technical related issues; and
8. Communicate any concerns or questions to the Steering Committee.

6 PROCEDURES AND COMMUNICATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

1. The MSP Unit will serve as the Secretariat for the TWG meetings.
2. Meetings will be led by the Chair, according to an approved agenda.
3. Minutes of all meetings will be produced, approved, signed, and filed for the record.
4. The Committee will meet quarterly, at minimum, and convene special meetings as needed during the term of the project.
5. The quorum for meetings will be 50% of the membership plus one (1).
6. Decisions are to be made by consensus. If the group is unable to reach consensus, decisions will be put to a vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have the casting vote.



7 AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Technical Working Groups shall periodically review its own performance and Terms of Reference and recommend any changes to the Steering Committee it considers necessary to improve the delivery of its functions and responsibilities.

Name of TWG: _____

Signature of TWG Chair: _____

Name of TWG Chair: _____

Date of Endorsement: _____

Signature of Steering Committee Chair: _____

Name of Steering Committee Chair: _____

Date of Endorsement: _____



8 ANNEX

ANNEX I – MSP MILESTONES

Exhibit A: Conservation commitments related to the MSP

Milestone 1:

No later than six (6) months after signing the Agreement, the National Assembly shall approve and the Government shall formally sign into law and Gazette the commitment made by the Government on April 2, 2019, to expand High Protection for Biodiversity Zones to 11.6% of Belize's Ocean. Upon achievement of this Milestone, Belize will have 11.6% of its Ocean in High Protection for Biodiversity Zones and 9.0% of its Ocean under Medium Protection for Biodiversity Zones, for a total of 20.5% in Biodiversity Protection Zones and Marine Protected Areas (MPA). After achievement of this Milestone, a Conservation Event will occur under the Agreement in respect of this Milestone if and only if Belize shall thereafter have less than 20.5% of its Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones and MPAs.

Milestone 3: No later than one (1) year after signing the Agreement, the Government shall initiate the process of developing a MSP for its Ocean by: (i) designation of a lead ministry or agency for the MSP process and (ii) establishment of a MSP steering committee comprised of senior level officers or employees from governmental and non-governmental stakeholders from sectors/areas including fisheries, coastal zone management, tourism, water resources, shipping, environment, finance, academia and energy. A representative of The Nature Conservancy will be a member of the MSP steering committee. For the avoidance of doubt, the Government shall have full discretion to determine whether the governmental stakeholders participating in the MSP steering committee are Ministry or agency-level members.

Milestone 4: No later than three (3) years after signing the Agreement, the National Assembly shall approve, and the Government shall formally sign into law and Gazette Biodiversity Protection Zones covering a total of 25% of its Ocean. After achievement of this Milestone, a Conservation Event will occur under the Agreement in respect of this Milestone if and only if Belize shall thereafter have less than 25% of its Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones.

Milestone 6: No later than five (5) years after signing the Agreement, (a) the National Assembly shall approve and the Government shall formally sign into law and Gazette Biodiversity Protection Zones covering a total of 30% of Belize's Ocean, or the percentage stated in the MSP; and (b) the MSP shall have been completed and approved by the National Assembly, signed into law, Gazetted and Implemented. After achievement of this Milestone, a Conservation Event will occur under the Agreement in respect of this Milestone if and only if Belize shall thereafter have less than the lower of 30% and the percentage stated in the MSP of its Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones or Belize shall rescind the enactment of the MSP.



Milestone 8: No later than eight (8) years after signing the Agreement, Belize shall have approved Management Plans for the Biodiversity Protection Zones, and the ministry with authority over such plans shall have signed the Management Plans. After achievement of this Milestone, a Conservation Event will occur under the Agreement in respect of this Milestone if and only if Belize shall rescind such Management Plans



ANNEX II – TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS GROUND RULES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

A member's participation on the BSOP Technical Working Groups will be closely aligned to their sector's interests, the broader public and the Committee or Group itself. To ensure that each member's interactions are transparent, effective, and efficient as per the MSP Guiding Principles for Decision Making, Ground Rules and a Code of Conduct (outlined below). All members will endeavor to adhere to the following and should bring concerns to the attention of the BSOP Steering Committee Chair.

GROUND RULES

1. Use the best available knowledge and information to inform decisions for the BSOP including best available ecological, economic, social, and cultural data.
2. Draw on the experience, knowledge and expertise of government staff, resource managers, marine stakeholders, the conservation community, local experts, and scientists to develop sound, scientifically defensible decisions, and recommendations.
3. Utilize methods that are transparent in their application.
4. Work cooperatively to achieve project goals.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Demonstrate a commitment to the Technical Working Group and Steering Committee by working cooperatively and in good faith to move the process towards its goals and products, respecting the context and objectives of the MSP process described above;
2. Demonstrate a commitment to the Technical Working Group and Steering Committee by planning for the continuity of their membership until the end of the process;
3. Demonstrate respect for other members by respecting their values and interests, avoiding inflammatory language, listening to others without interrupting, and being punctual;
4. Ensure honest and open communication and the timely sharing of information or concerns relevant to the Technical Working Group or Steering Committee;
5. Ensure appropriate communication with external audiences that accurately describes the Technical Working Group and Steering Committee and is consistent with these Terms of Reference;
6. Promote the planning process above individual interests;
7. Ensure accountability to the interests of their sector and Technical Working Group and Steering Committee by:
 - attempting to fulfill all the responsibilities outlined in these Terms of Reference,
 - communicating their sectors' issues and information to the Committee or Group; and
 - communicating progress to other audiences.



ANNEX III - MSP GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION MAKING

1. Inclusivity

The MSP process and the resulting plan will address the social, cultural, and economic needs of all stakeholders. Particular efforts will be made to include minority, marginalized, and under-represented groups, and to ensure that stakeholder engagement venues, language, times, and processes are accessible to all stakeholders.

2. Participation

Stakeholders will be invited to participate and contribute, through widespread consultations, in data gathering, planning, and making decisions about uses and zonation of Belize's ocean. Participation should allow for the integration of the expectations, needs and opportunities of various stakeholder groups into the MSP process and outputs. It should address potential conflicts through open dialogue to facilitate equitable and balanced solutions. The Governance Framework and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy reflects the opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation. The Steering Committee for the MSP process will comprise government and non-government representatives from key sectors that depend on and manage marine resources and will be supported by Technical Working Groups.

3. Transparency

The Belize MSP process will be open to public scrutiny. At the start of the MSP process, the vision, goals, objectives, and guiding principles will be widely disseminated to set expectations early in the process. Subsequently, information regarding activities underway, information products developed, decisions made, progress reports, and other relevant information will be promptly shared on multiple media channels in language and formats that are widely accessible and easily understood by the public.

4. Ecosystem-based approach

The strategy for decision-making will ensure "the integrated management of land, water, and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way"¹, which recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems, and that ecosystem goods and services are integral for national development.

5. Precautionary principle

The precautionary principle enables decision-makers to adopt precautionary measures when scientific evidence about an environmental or human health hazard is uncertain and the stakes are high. When there are threats of serious or irreversible harm to the environment or society,



a precautionary approach will be applied to ensure that a lack of scientific certainty shall not be a reason to postpone decisions or actions that prevent or minimize such harm.

6. Evidence-based planning

Decisions will be based on scientific information and global best practices. Where data are insufficient or current information is not available, reasonable efforts will be made to address data and information gaps by consulting the scientific literature, seeking expert scientific opinion and advice, consulting stakeholders, and/or direct field measurement or modeling.

7. Climate smart

The MSP process will take into account the extreme vulnerability of Belize's coastal and marine areas to climate change, which may have dramatic negative impacts on coastal populations as well as coastal and marine ecosystems in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

8. Equity

Decisions made during the MSP process, as well as in the conduct of the process itself, will aim to deliver fair and equal access to participatory processes, economic opportunities, and marine resources, and will make particular efforts to compensate for pre-existing inequalities.

9. Balance

The MSP process will seek the optimal balance between social, cultural, economic, and ecological objectives to provide economic opportunities and preserve cultural and social values, while protecting and improving management of Belize's ocean and minimizing adverse impacts on the environment. Balance is achieved when the protection of marine ecosystems and demands for development are given due consideration in an open and strategic manner.