



## Republic of the Marshall Islands

### Submission on matters relating to the global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement

#### Introduction

1. The nationally determined contributions (**NDCs**) put forward by more than 185 countries are to be welcomed. But even if fully implemented they could still lead to a catastrophic rise in global temperatures of almost 3°C by the end of the century. Clearly then the current crop of NDCs are woefully short of what is needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Achieving that goal is required to ensure the survival of our country and to stop runaway climate change throughout the world.
2. This deficiency in the ambition of NDCs has been recognized in the Paris Agreement, which sets out at its very core a mechanism to operationalize the principle of progression by raising ambition over time in order to achieve its long term temperature goals. The global stocktake (**GST**) is one essential component of this mechanism.
3. It is important to recall that the Paris Agreement and Decision 1/CP.21 already set out many key aspects of the ambition mechanism. We are not faced with a blank sheet of paper. We need to build on what we have already agreed.
4. While it is critical that the ambition mechanism results in achieving all of the long term goals of the Paris Agreement as set out in its Article 2.1, this submission focuses on achieving the long term temperature goal of 1.5°C set out in Article 2.1(a) as elaborated in Article 4.1. Whether or not the ambition mechanism is fully and effectively implemented will ultimately determine whether our island nation, and others like it, survive or perish.
5. This submission sets out initial thoughts of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (**RMI**) on the inputs and modalities of the Paris Agreement ambition mechanism. In particular the submission stresses that the question of ambition should be regularly elevated for the highest political consideration. In that context we call upon the next United Nations Secretary-General (**UNSG**) to convene a Summit on or around Earth Day every five years at which world Leaders are invited to submit their new and more ambitious NDCs. The first such summit pursuant to the Paris Agreement should take place in 2025 informed by the outcome of the 2023 GST. Although outside the scope of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (**APA**), given the urgency of peaking global emissions, we also call on the next UNSG to convene a Summit in 2020 at which world Leaders would submit new NDCs following the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue.

## **Purpose of the global stocktake & relationship to the wider ambition mechanism**

6. Article 14.1 of the Paris Agreement sets out the overall purpose of the GST:

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement (CMA) shall periodically take stock of the implementation of this Agreement to assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this Agreement and its long-term goals (referred to as the "global stocktake"). It shall do so in a comprehensive and facilitative manner, considering mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation and support, and in the light of equity and the best available science.*

7. It must be recalled that Article 14.1 is not an isolated provision. Although critical, it must be considered in the wider context of the provisions that make up the overall ambition mechanism in the Paris Agreement and Decision 1/CP.21. These include:

- The long term goal in Article 2.1(a) as elaborated by Article 4.1;
- Obligation to have NDCs (Art 4.2) and to communicate successive NDCs every five years, to be informed by the GST (Art 4.9);
- A Party can upwardly adjust its NDC at any time (Art 4.11);
- Each country's successive NDC must represent a progression in its level of ambition (Art 4.3);
- Developed countries should take the lead by undertaking economy wide absolute emissions reduction targets, and all countries are encouraged to do so over time (Art 4.4); and
- Parties must submit NDCs 9 to 12 months in advance of relevant CMA with a view to facilitating clarity, transparency and understanding (1/CP.21, para 25).

8. Essential to providing a broader context for the ambition mechanism will be the long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies that Parties must communicate by 2020<sup>1</sup>. We strongly urge Parties to come forward with their strategies well before that deadline and commend those countries that have already done so, or have committed to doing so.

9. As such, taking Article 14.1 together with the relevant provisions of Articles 2 & 4 and Decision 1/CP.21, it is clear that the overall purpose of the ambition mechanism is to operationalize the progression principle by raising raise ambition over time so as to achieve the long term temperature goal of 1.5°C.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 4.19 and Decision 1/CP.21 paragraph 35.

## **Inputs into the Global Stocktake**

10. Paragraph 99 of Decisions 1/CP.21 requests the APA to identify the sources of input for the GST. In undertaking this task the APA could usefully consider at COP22 some generic issues in relation to all inputs into the GST.
11. For example it is the view of RMI that the APA should not seek agreement of an exhaustive list of specific inputs to the GST. Aiming to do so would likely take a lot of negotiating time. Efforts would be better focused on agreeing a non-exhaustive list of generic and specific inputs. In addition to this non-exhaustive list, Parties and accredited observers to the UNFCCC should be allowed to make submissions as inputs to the GST.
12. Paragraph 99 sets out a non-exhaustive list of information that is to be provided, including on:
  - The overall effect of the nationally determined contributions communicated by Parties; and
  - The latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (*IPCC*).
13. To understand the overall effect of the NDCs will require information on both the effect of the NDCs that are being implemented by Parties at the time of each GST, and the anticipated effect of NDCs that have been communicated for subsequent periods but not yet finalized or implemented.
14. The transparency framework under the Paris Agreement must provide information on the impact and state of implementation of current NDCs. As such it is critical that the transparency provisions under the Paris Agreement are fully elaborated and implemented in a timely manner. Without good quality information on the state of implementation of NDCs the ambition mechanism cannot function effectively.
15. Consideration needs to be given as to the most useful form in which information on NDC implementation could be inputted to the GST. One option could be for the UNFCCC Secretariat to produce a synthesis report based on information available pursuant to the transparency framework, including information from technical expert reviews and the implementation & compliance committee.
16. The Secretariat's Synthesis Report on NDCs, which is to be produced every five years after Parties have communicated new NDCs<sup>2</sup> and before they are finalized at the relevant COP, would also be useful input into the GST.
17. Inputs relating to considering the impact of NDCs must ultimately help inform an understanding of how we are collectively progressing towards delivering the ambition represented by NDCs, and so the magnitude of further efforts required to achieve the 1.5°C goal.

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<sup>2</sup> Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 25.

18. At the same time the GST should also consider inputs that will be useful in identifying potential solutions for achieving the level of collective mitigation effort required. To that end, relevant experience gained from the technical process to raising mitigation ambition before 2020 might be usefully drawn upon.
19. It would be helpful to consider during our deliberations in the APA whether there are other inputs that would be helpful to convey the overall effect of NDCs.
20. 1/CP.21 identifies the latest reports of the IPCC as a key input to the GST. It is therefore essential that the IPCC assessment cycle is aligned with the five year ambition cycle under the Paris Agreement.

## **Modalities & outcome**

21. The Paris Agreement provides some guidance on the modalities of how the GST should be conducted. More specifically Article 14.1 sets out that the GST shall be undertaken:
  - by the CMA;
  - in a comprehensive and facilitative manner;
  - considering mitigation, adaptation and MOI and support;
  - in the light of equity and the best available science; and
  - every five years, beginning in 2023.
22. The APA will need to consider the details of what this means in practice. Overall, RMI supports the notion that the GST should be separated into a technical process followed by political consideration of the outputs of that technical process.
23. The purpose of the technical process should be to ultimately provide a very clear understanding of:
  - where we collectively stand in relation to achieving the 1.5°C goal;
  - the magnitude of future efforts needed to achieve that goal; and
  - an indication of potential solutions and policy options to achieve that goal.
24. A key part of the discussions under the APA will need to be devoted to how best to deliver these understandings in a timely manner and in a form that is most useful for political level decision-makers. In any event the technical process must allow for a thorough consideration of all relevant inputs into the GST, pointing to a process lasting for at least a year.
25. The separate components of the GST – mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation – sit in the context of the separate relevant substantive Articles of the Paris Agreement and related parts of Decision 1/CP.21 that set out the components of the Paris Agreement ambition mechanism. As such the GST technical process should for the most part consider these elements in their proper contexts and in parallel.

26. The technical process could involve a range of possible modalities, including discussions among Parties, presentations and workshops. Ultimately the technical process should result in an output that is informative and appropriate for political level decision-making relating to the formulation of new or updated NDCs.
27. The political consideration of the output from the technical process should be undertaken by Ministers. This political consideration would be the appropriate opportunity and forum to examine the interlinkages between the different aspects of the ambition mechanism – mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation and support.
28. The Paris Agreement<sup>3</sup> sets out in high level terms what the outcome of the GST should be:
- The outcome of the global stocktake shall inform Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Agreement, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action.*
29. It is therefore clear that the output of political consideration would have to be timed and in a form that sends a clear signal to clearly influence national domestic processes leading to the production of new or updated NDCs. As such this political consideration must also generate political momentum and incentivize increased global climate action.

## **Sequencing and timings**

30. We know from the Paris Agreement and Decision 1/CP.21 that:
- Parties must communicate new or updated NDCs by 2020 and every 5 years thereafter<sup>4</sup>;
  - the GST will take place every five years, starting from 2023<sup>5</sup>; and that
  - Parties must submit their new or updated NDCs at least 9 to 12 months in advance of the relevant CMA<sup>6</sup>.
31. Given that, and what has already been agreed on timings as outlined above, one could envisage that for the first GST under the Paris Agreement comprising:
- The technical process starting after the CMA in 2022, and ending before or at the CMA in 2023;
  - A political consideration of the outputs of the technical phase by Ministers before or at the CMA in 2023;
  - Domestic preparation of new or updated NDCs, starting after the CMA in 2023;

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<sup>3</sup> Article 14.2

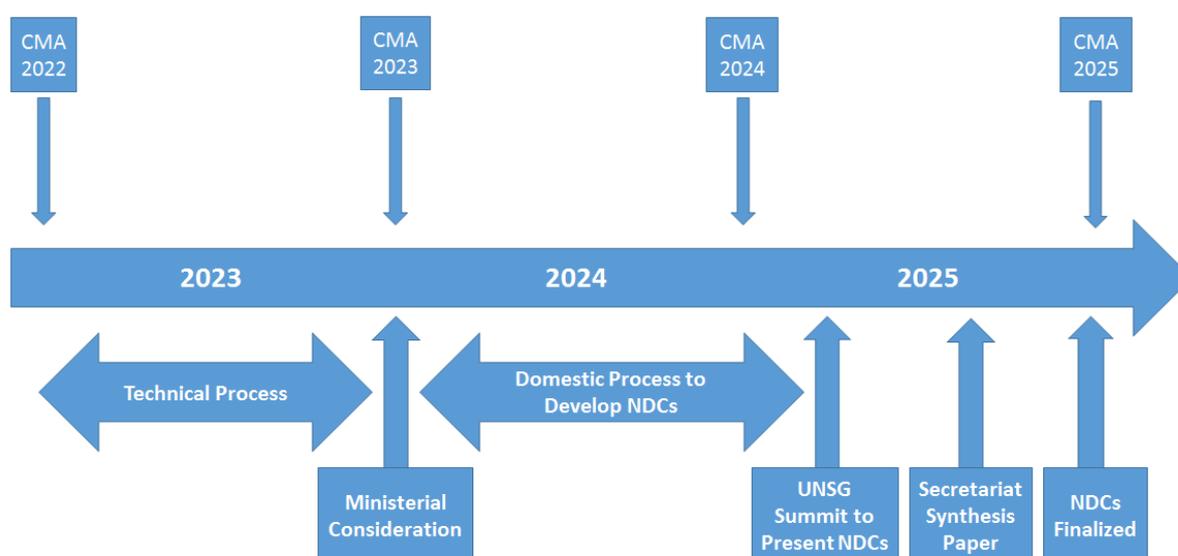
<sup>4</sup> Decision 1/CP.21, paragraphs 23 & 24

<sup>5</sup> Article 14.2

<sup>6</sup> Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 25

- A UNSG Summit of world Leaders well in advance of the CMA in 2025;
- Production of the Secretariat synthesis paper well in advance of the CMA in 2025; and
- Finalization of NDCs at the CMA in 2025.

32. In that context we call on the next UNSG to invite World Leaders to a Climate Summit on or around Earth Day 2025 to present their new NDCs well in advance of the CMA in 2025 at which they will be finalized.



## **Common timeframes**

33. The GST and the Paris Agreement ambition mechanism will be much more effective if all Parties adopt a common timeframe of five years for future NDCs. That is because:

- all Parties will be in the same position with regard to having to produce new NDCs following each GST; and
- the risk of Parties locking in a low level of ambition for long periods is reduced.

34. This was acknowledged by Parties by committing to consider the issue of common timeframes at CMA1<sup>7</sup>. We urge all Parties to converge on a common five year timeframe for all future NDCs.

<sup>7</sup> Paris Agreement, Article 4.10

## **The 2018 Facilitative Dialogue**

35. The APA co-Chairs made it clear at the last session of the UNFCCC that consideration of the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue (**FD**) is outside the mandate of the APA. Nevertheless, assurances must be given to Parties that the design of and preparations for the 2018 FD are being taken forward.
36. The 2018 FD is critical to inform those countries with NDCs that run from 2020 to 2025 in the preparation of their post 2025 NDCs, as well as for those countries with 2020 to 2030 NDCs to raise their level of ambition.
37. In relation to the latter RMI notes with grave concern that some countries with 2020 to 2030 NDCs appear to be ruling out any possibility of raising their ambition as a result of the 2018 FD. Such a position runs counter to both the content and the spirit of the Paris Agreement that their Leaders signed only some months ago. Such a position would put the 1.5°C goal out of reach and so threaten the very existence of our island nation.
38. In any event, RMI suggests that much of what is set out in this submission is also relevant to the 2018 FD, which is clearly focused on mitigation. In particular, RMI also invites the next UNSG to convene a Summit at which World Leaders should present their new or updated NDCs. That Summit should take place on or around Earth Day 2020, well in advance of CMA in 2020 at which the NDCs would be finalized.

## **NDC Implementation**

39. The Paris Agreement ambition mechanism will come to nothing unless, as a starting point, all countries fully implement their NDCs. However the poorest and most vulnerable countries will clearly need help to do so.
40. RMI's NDC was the first commitment by a developing country to an absolute economy wide reductions target. It is also an ambitious NDC<sup>8</sup>. But we are already running against barriers to fully implementing it. For example, we had plans to install additional solar power generation capacity in our capital island of Majuro, but were only able to deliver just over half of this because our grid would have been unable to cope with increased input.
41. Possible solutions to this and other implementation challenges are of relatively modest cost in global terms. Yet we are encountering difficulties in quickly accessing the necessary climate finance. In many cases this means we are unable to leverage private sector investment that we have already lined up.
42. So it will be critical for COP22 to deliver real and tangible progress on the issue of access to climate finance, particularly for those countries that need it the most.

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<sup>8</sup><http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/PublishedDocuments/Marshall%20Islands%20First/150721%20RMI%20NDC%20JULY%202015%20FINAL%20SUBMITTED.pdf>