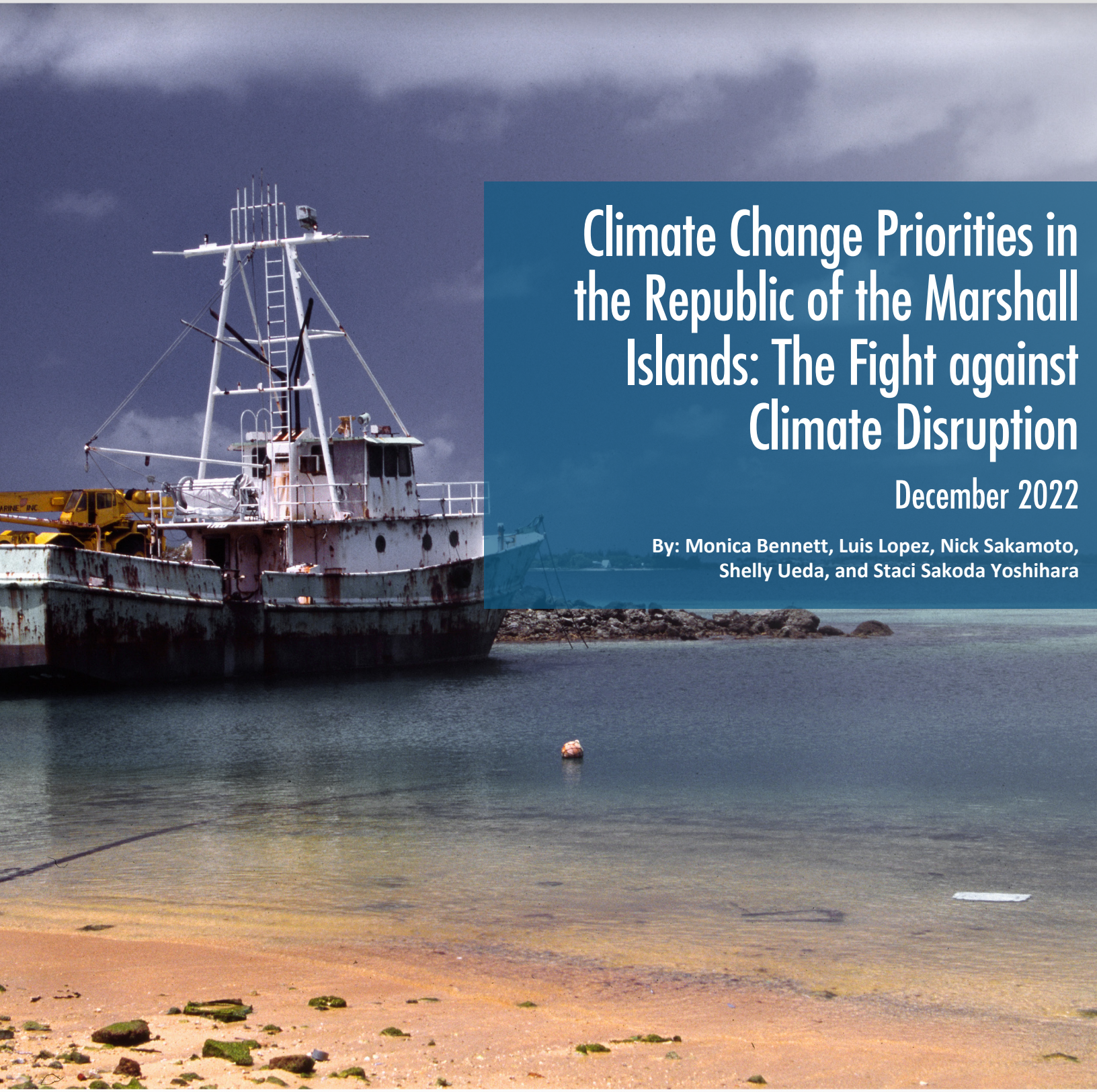
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Climate Change Priorities in the Republic of the Marshall Islands: The Fight against Climate Disruption

December 2022

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University of Hawai'i, College of Social Sciences, Public Administration Program
The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
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Executive Summary

Surging temperatures and rising sea levels associated with climate change will intensify storm activity, droughts, and flooding in the coming decades. These impacts are expected to be especially severe for the low-lying Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). As negotiators from RMI and the United States (U.S.) prepare for renegotiation of the Compact of Free Association (set to expire in 2023), U.S. representatives appear to anticipate that negotiations will involve proposed measures to improve climate resiliency.

We conducted a systematic examination of domestic RMI policies, plans, resolutions, and strategies to assess RMI's own climate change priorities. It is clear that RMI requires the cooperation of the U.S. to mitigate climate change impacts by establishing and supporting an environment to improve disaster risk management and climate change adaptation measures. For example, rising sea levels combined with an increase in frequency of severe storm surges and wave-driven flooding have the potential to carry radioactive materials within water from below the Runit dome containment structure into the local marine environment (U.S. Department of Energy, 2020). A cooperative bilateral stance could go a long way to mitigating this threat.

Our recommendations to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are the following:

- Participate alongside RMI officials and community leaders in the development of climate change plans, especially during Compact negotiations
- Assist RMI with cleanup of the nuclear legacy
- Assist with upgrading public infrastructure that promotes climate change resiliency; and
- Push for Paris Agreement stakeholders to comply with reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

U.S. climate resiliency initiatives have the potential to strengthen the bilateral relationship if these initiatives are attuned to RMI's domestic policy priorities.

Introduction

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is one of the lowest lying nations in the world and is vulnerable to climate change-influenced hazards and to associated impacts from the U.S. nuclear testing program that ran from 1946-1958 in the islands. This report focuses on RMI executive policies and parliamentary resolutions as well as strategic plans published by both the RMI and the U.S. We analyze these policies, resolutions, and plans in order to find shared ground between RMI's priorities and U.S. interests. Among the key areas of common concern are the impacts of rising seas and storm surges on nuclear waste containment areas.

Country Background

RMI is a chain of over 1,200 islands and islets spread over 180,000 square miles (466,198 square kilometers) of the Pacific, as shown in Figure 1. None of the inhabited 29 low-lying atolls and five coral islands are more than 20 feet (6 meters) above high tide (Kiste, 2022). The total population as of 2022 is 42,782 people (RMI Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office, 2022). Spain claimed the islands as a colony in the 1500s and then sold the islands to Germany in 1885. The Japanese military seized the islands in 1914. A combination of massive Japanese immigration and forced labor led to a significant drop in the native population. The U.S. took control of the islands in 1945 during World War II and eventually signed a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with RMI in 1983. The Compact was finalized in 1986, and the RMI has been an independent nation thereafter.

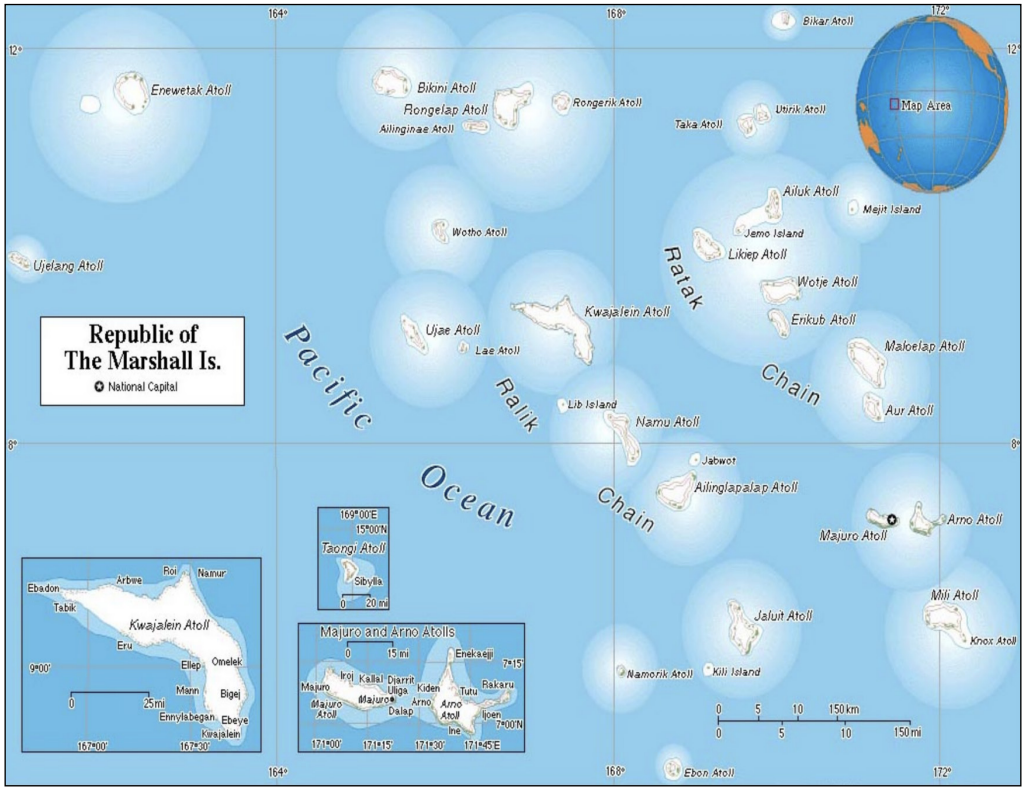


Figure 1: Map of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (EPPSO)

Climate Conditions

RMI has an average temperature of 81°F (27°C) year-round with hot and humid conditions. Wet and dry seasons alternate with the wet season starting in May and ending in December (The Republic of Marshall Islands Embassy, 2022). The northern atolls receive approximately 20 inches (500 millimeters) of rain per year compared to the wetter southern atolls that receive, on average, 160 inches (4,000 millimeters) of rainfall (The Pacific Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments, 2022). Several northern atolls are uninhabitable because of insufficient rain (Kiste, 2022). Although RMI's islands border the Pacific typhoon belt, they rarely experience severe typhoon conditions. The northern islands are more exposed to typhoons than the southern islands.

Two key global oceanic and weather phenomena impact RMI – convergence zones and El Niño. The overall climate depends on the trade winds and movements of the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ), a spur of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). An area of wind convergence and higher temperatures that drive regular rain and thunderstorms, the ITCZ broadly controls the wet and dry seasons in the tropics. The SPCZ is an area of low-pressure rainfall that breaks away from the equatorial ITCZ and moves southward in the Pacific (NOAA, 2022).

The El Niño Southern Oscillation has an impact on both flooding and droughts. RMI tends to experience heavy rain during the first half of an El Niño year as the phenomenon redirects the development of tropical storms away from Micronesia and toward RMI (NOAA, 2015). The year following El Niño tends to bring rainfall significantly below average during the first few months of the new year, leading to severe drought. Sea levels drop significantly during strong El Niño years and rise in the summer months the subsequent year. El Niño conditions affect RMI's freshwater, infrastructure, public health, and agriculture (NOAA, 2015). Because of its low-lying character, RMI is highly susceptible to coastal flooding driven by storms (USAID, 2022), as illustrated in Figure 2, but both storms and drought influenced by a strengthening El Niño trend portend future humanitarian catastrophe for the people of RMI.



Figure 2: Ebeye Island in Kwajalein Atoll (l) and Inundation from Waves in Kwajalein's Lagoon (r) (World Bank)

Rising temperatures have been noted in RMI over the past four decades. Majuro (southern Marshall Islands) and Kwajalein (northern Marshall Islands) have reported an increase in the number of warm days every year and a decrease in the number of days marked by cooler temperatures. Figure 3 shows how RMI's coral will react to rising ocean temperatures. Moreover, annual rainfall recorded in Majuro has decreased by 5% since 1954. Studies suggest the change in rainfall patterns is due to the ITCZ moving away from Majuro. The combination of surging temperatures and rising sea levels will intensify tropical storms, typhoons, droughts, and flooding (World Bank, 2021).



Figure 3: Healthy, Earth-Toned Corals (l) and Coral Showing Signs of Heat Stress, Marked by Purple Tips (r) by LORENA IÑIGUEZ ELEBEE and SEAN GREENE

Compact of Free Association (COFA)

In 1986, the U.S. and RMI entered into a bilateral treaty, the Compact of Free Association (COFA), which has government, economic, and defense provisions. While the agreement recognizes RMI's sovereignty over many policy areas (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016), the defense provisions in particular gave the U.S. perpetual strategic rights to deny third-party nations' military access, and this element is considered a critical component to U.S. national security (Morris, 2019). In exchange, the U.S. assumed all responsibility to defend the RMI from attacks or threats. Furthermore, the Compact provided the right for the people of the RMI to seek employment, education, and medical services, and to establish non-immigrant residency in the United States. Compact provisions also include compensation to Marshallese citizens who experienced loss or damage to property or life as a result of the U.S. nuclear testing program that occurred between 1946 and 1958 (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016).

Pursuant to the economic relations provision (Title II) of the Compact, the U.S. has provided financial assistance to the people of the RMI since 1986. Grants distributed to the RMI are overseen by the U.S. Department of the Interior to aid in the country's economic advancement and self-sufficiency. The U.S. also contributes to the RMI's Compact Trust Fund, which exists to provide revenue to the RMI after the Compact's grant assistance program ends. Additionally, RMI receives funding under the Compact's Federal Programs and Services Agreement for postal, weather, aviation, and disaster assistance and is eligible for U.S. grants to support agriculture, environmental monitoring for nuclear-affected areas, and public health programs (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022). The Compact was renewed

in amended form in 2003 (Compact II), and this renewal extended the economic provisions for an additional 20 years. However, revisions of the agreement require funds to be administered to six sectors under the new Fiscal Procedures Agreement and the Trust Fund Agreement. Distributed funds under the revised Compact are administered by the Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO), which consists of three members from the U.S. Government and two from the RMI (Morris, 2019).

According to a 2022 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the aggregate of U.S. grants provided to the RMI on an annual basis totals US$56 million. The impact is illustrated by the fact that such grant funding supported over one-third of the RMI government's FY2019 expenditure budget (per the RMI's most recently audited financial report). Therefore, it is apparent that the RMI government is reliant on provisions outlined in the Compact. With Compact grants and the Supplemental Education Grant (SEG) set to expire at the end of 2023, there is expected to be a large, potentially destabilizing financial gap as the Compact Trust Fund is not projected to produce disbursements until after 2033.

Methodology

Based on the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's request to illuminate linkages between U.S. policy and RMI priorities and plans. The team first performed an independent search to identify the RMI government's current plans and priorities to address climate change. Documents considered during this search must have identified RMI goals addressing disaster risk and/or climate change objectives for the current and future well-being of the Marshallese people. Common goals and priorities found in the numerous governmental strategic and environmental plans were considered by our team as defining the RMI's priorities.

To be considered for this paper, one or more aspects of an executive policy document must have the ability or intent to impact climate change concerns relative to adaptation, disaster management, mitigation, or loss and damage. We considered policies that address: energy demand by promoting low carbon energy supply and sustainable land use; climate-related research and development; mitigation efforts; natural disaster risk management; restrictions on the growth of fossil fuel-based infrastructure; low-carbon transport; and the nuclear legacy. To enable a distinct understanding of how RMI prioritizes climate change, we assessed policy documents to identify the most relevant areas of government activity relative to achieving their objectives. The criteria for the search of parliamentary resolutions also required that one or more aspects of the resolution address climate change resiliency.

A comparative analysis was performed to align researched policies, resolutions, and strategies to the RMI's climate change priorities. The analysis was then extended to examine how RMI priorities align with U.S. priorities, as outlined in the September 2022 U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy (PPS). Findings from the comparative analysis were used as an aid to form our recommendations (Appendix C).

Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies

This section is not a comprehensive list of policy documents that fit the criteria for consideration. Rather, herein we discuss the major documents that illustrate RMI's conclusion that disaster risk management, disaster response planning, and climate change adaptation dovetail and may, in fact, have knock-on climate change mitigation effects. For a fuller list of policies, acts, and strategies, see Appendix A, Table 1.

RMI - Executive Policies & Acts

The National Climate Change Policy Framework (NCCPF), implemented in 2011, guides the "All Islands Approach" to adapt and develop measures to address RMI's needs. It establishes a blueprint for building partnerships with regional and global partners to foster a sustainable environment where RMI is prepared to manage the current and future impacts of climate change (NCCPF, 2011). In 2014, the Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (JNAP) was introduced to define adaptations against the effects of climate change and to align effective and appropriate responses to natural disasters with actions identified under the RMI National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018 and the NCCPF (JNAP, 2014). Further, RMI recognized the need to promote sustainable development and governance of development efforts to address shortfalls in environmental conservation, and the Office of Environment Protection and Policy Coordination (OEPPC) developed the National Environment Management Strategy 2017-2022 (NEMS, 2018). This document deepens discussion of the environmental risks addressed in the NCCPF and illustrates RMI's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set forth in the United Nations-led 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Though RMI's total greenhouse gas emissions are negligible on a global scale, the country takes its national motto, "Jepilpilin ke ejukaan" ("Accomplishment through joint effort"), very much to heart (Reimaanlok, 2008; Strategy, 2003). RMI recognizes that it has a role to play in the global effort to combat climate change; even with limited means, it will undertake ambitious action. In its Nationally Determined Contributions, the RMI made plain its commitment "to the full, effective, and transparent implementation of the Paris Agreement" per its provisions and relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Nationally Determined Contribution, 2018; Paris Agreement, 2016).

In the JNAP, RMI commits to further developing and enhancing the existing adaptation framework to build upon integrated disaster risk management strategies through the development and implementation of a national adaptation plan and further integration of strategic development planning such as protecting traditional culture and ecosystem resources, ensuring climate-resilient public infrastructure, and pursuing facilitative, stakeholder-driven methods to increase the resiliency of privately-owned structures and resources. The plan committed RMI to seeking the legal and regulatory means to best support these approaches (JNAP, 2013).

RMI has identified that water security is a priority development area urgently in need of adaptation strategies and resources due to experiences of drought and post-disaster rehabilitation (National Water and Sanitation Policy, 2014). The government developed the National Water and Sanitation Policy to

provide guidelines and support central and local governments to formulate water and sanitation laws, strategies, investment programs, projects, and plans.

RMI Parliamentary Resolutions

Resolution 52 (2015)

This Resolution approves RMI's ratification of the 2012 "Doha Amendment" of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) that operationalized the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It encourages RMI to commit to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions during the period 2013-2020.

Resolution 19 (2016)

This Resolution approves RMI's ratification of the Paris Agreement. It also addresses actions and developments to eradicate poverty and promote human rights. The Resolution emphasizes ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans and their biodiversity. It places importance on government engagement with the community in education, training, and active participation in recognizing sustainable lifestyles.

Resolution 83 (2019)

The RMI petitions the entirety of the international community and Paris Agreement signatories to recommit to the goal of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5º C (2.7°F). This resolution declares a national climate crisis as the RMI is a low-lying coral atoll nation, and it calls on all parties to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Resolution 36ND1 (2021)

This resolution appeals to the U.S. government to consider using Mili Atoll as an additional defense site.

Resolution 37 (2021)

This resolution appeals to the U.S. government to integrate climate change concerns into negotiations surrounding the COFA because the impacts of climate change pose a national security threat to RMI. The resolution welcomes the Biden administration's declarations on climate change and rejoining the Paris Agreement. The climate change-influenced hazards mentioned in this resolution are sea level rise, heatwaves, wildfire, disease, drought, crop failure, ocean acidification, mass extinction, collapse of food chains, saline intrusion, pluvial flooding, coastal flooding, and mass population migration.

Resolution 45 (2021)

This resolution underscores the importance of the Laura groundwater lens and highlights the threat of contamination of this resource by a lack of sewerage and a rising population that, over time, will lead to higher mortality rates in the area and, subsequently, to water contamination from mortuary practices. The main priority for residents of the Laura area of Majuro Atoll is to install a proper sewerage system in their community.

U.S. - Pacific Partnership Strategy

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "For years, the Pacific Island region suffered from strategic neglect from Washington and others, and Beijing has stepped into that strategic vacuum, moving to increase its influence and project its power across the region" (Edel, 2022). Assessments such as this one sparked action from the Biden administration to send representatives to the region and to promise more engagement and resources. The three main objectives of the U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy (PPS) are to partner with the Pacific Islands to drive global action to combat climate change, to maintain free, open, and peaceful sea lanes, and to ensure that growing geopolitical competition does not undermine the sovereignty and security of the Pacific Island States.

The PPS is broken down into four complementary and overlapping objectives: a strong U.S.- Pacific Islands partnership, a united Pacific Island region connected with the world, a resilient Pacific prepared for the climate crisis and other 21st-century challenges, and empowered and prosperous Pacific Islanders. The administration will approach these objectives by taking the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) as its guide; that forum has stated it seeks "effective, open and honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships—based on mutual accountability and respect." In pursuit of these partnerships, the Biden administration indicated that its approach will align with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, which envisions a free, open, interconnected, secure, resilient, and prosperous region, and specifically commits in its action plan to "Partner to Build Resilience in the Pacific Islands" (Pacific Partnership Strategy, 2022). A breakdown of the PPS objectives can be found in Appendix B. Table 1.

Case Study - Runit Dome

On Runit Island, one of 40 islands in Enewetak Atoll, sits the Runit Dome, also known as the Cactus Crater containment structure or "the tomb" to locals. It was constructed in the late 1970s and holds over 104,000 cubic yards (79,500 cubic meters) of contaminated soil and debris left by the United States' nuclear testing program. Shown in Figure 4, the dome's diameter is 374 feet (114 meters), and its apex is 24.3 feet (7.4 meters) high. The base of the dome is an unlined nuclear test crater left by the 1958 "Cactus" nuclear test, and because the groundwater beneath the dome is in direct contact with the surrounding ocean and lagoon, it rises and falls with the tides (Gerrard, 2015). The base of the crater is filled with a mixture of contaminated soil, debris, and cement that sits below high-tide level. These contaminants are covered by additional oversize soil and large chunks of cement. Within the top center of the mound (also referred to as the donut hole) sits another section filled with a mixture of contaminated soil, debris, and cement (Gerrard, 2015). The dome itself is made up of 358 18-inch (45-centimeter) thick concrete panels (U.S. Department of Energy, 2020). See Figure 5 below for a cross-sectional view of the dome structure and contents.



Figure 4: Runit Dome (U.S. Dept of Defense, Lawrence Livermore National Lab)

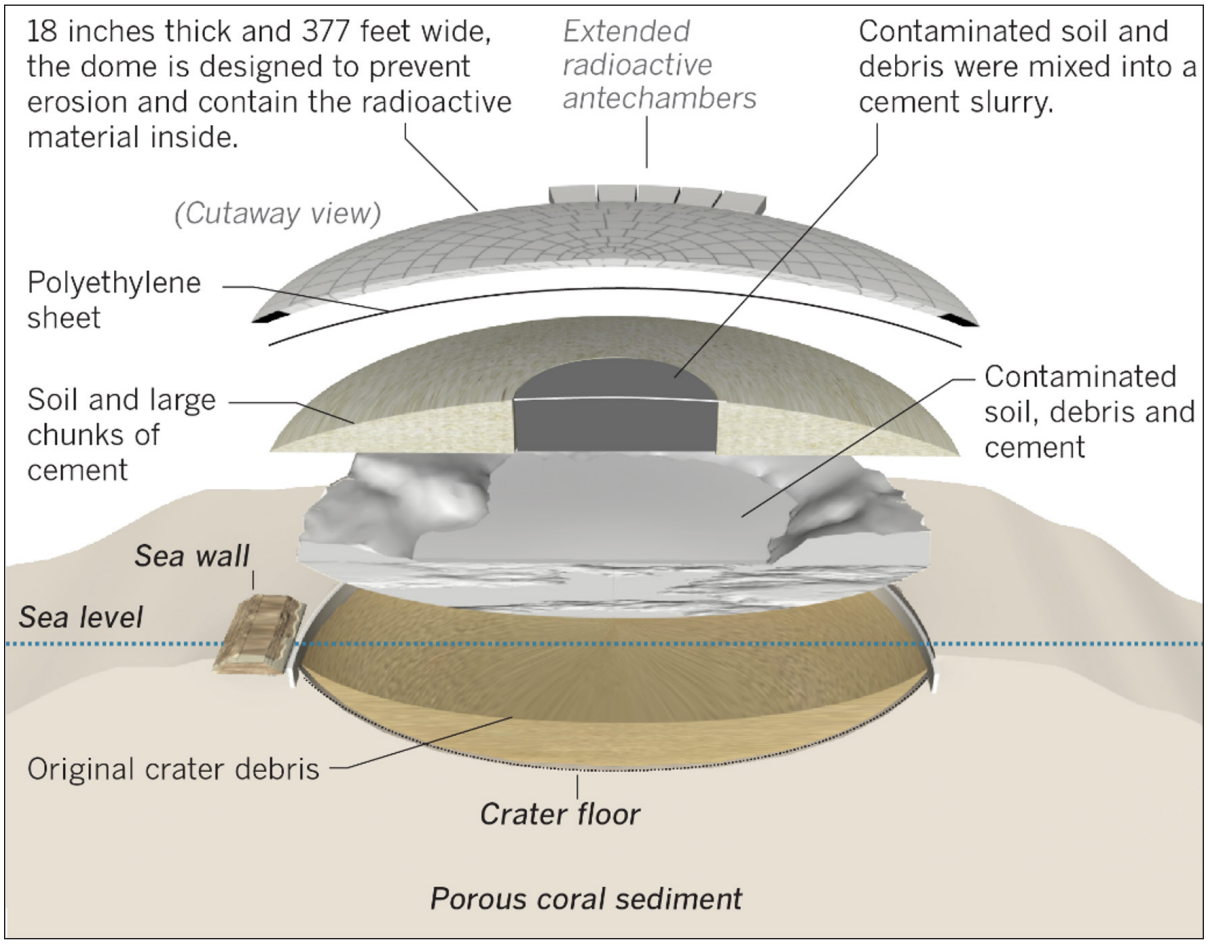


Figure 5. Cross-section of Runit Dome showing structure and contents (U.S. Dept of Defense, Lawrence Livermore National Lab)

The Insular Areas Act of 2011 requires the U.S. Secretary of Energy to monitor and report to Congress on 1) significant changes to the dome, and 2) health risks due to the structure's contaminants. Levels of groundwater contamination within the dome far exceed levels observed in open waters across the Marshall Islands (U.S. Department of Energy, 2020). During a 2014 study to trace the migration of radioactive materials released from Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant in 2011, scientists found plutonium sediments in the South China Sea and its neighboring Pearl River Estuary; instead of tracing to Fukushima, they traced back to the Pacific Proving Grounds (where the U.S. conducted its nuclear testing) in the Marshall Islands (Wu et al., 2014).

Sea levels are rising twice as fast in the western Pacific as anywhere else, creating high concern that climate change poses a catastrophic risk for the structure (World Bank, 2021). Although climate change-related hazards are bringing the containment structure to global attention, the Runit Dome has always been of great concern to the Marshallese people who feared – or even suspected – potential leakage of radioactive waste into the sea. In structural terms, while dome-shaped structures are known to withstand concentrated loads of pressure, such as from heavy rain (Dome Technology, 2019), sea level rise was not considered when the Runit Dome was built and, at the current rate, the structure is expected to be partially submerged by the end of the 21st century (Lubofsky, 2022). Moreover, rising sea levels combined with an increase in frequency of severe storm surges and wave-driven flooding will spell more frequent and forceful interaction of sea water with water below the dome and will likely deliver radioactive materials from within the site directly into the local marine environment (U.S. Department of Energy, 2020). Figure 6 illustrates the way in which changing maritime characteristics could impact the dome. High storm waves could also breach the dome's structure (Hamilton, 2019). Should this occur, not only will it impact food security reserves and create health risks locally, but it also spells unprecedented global ecological catastrophe. Thus, the U.S. Department of Energy (2020) suggests that a measurement of storm events will aid in providing a better understanding of the long-term effects surrounding sea level rise and its correlation to dome-derived radionuclides dispersed into the environment.

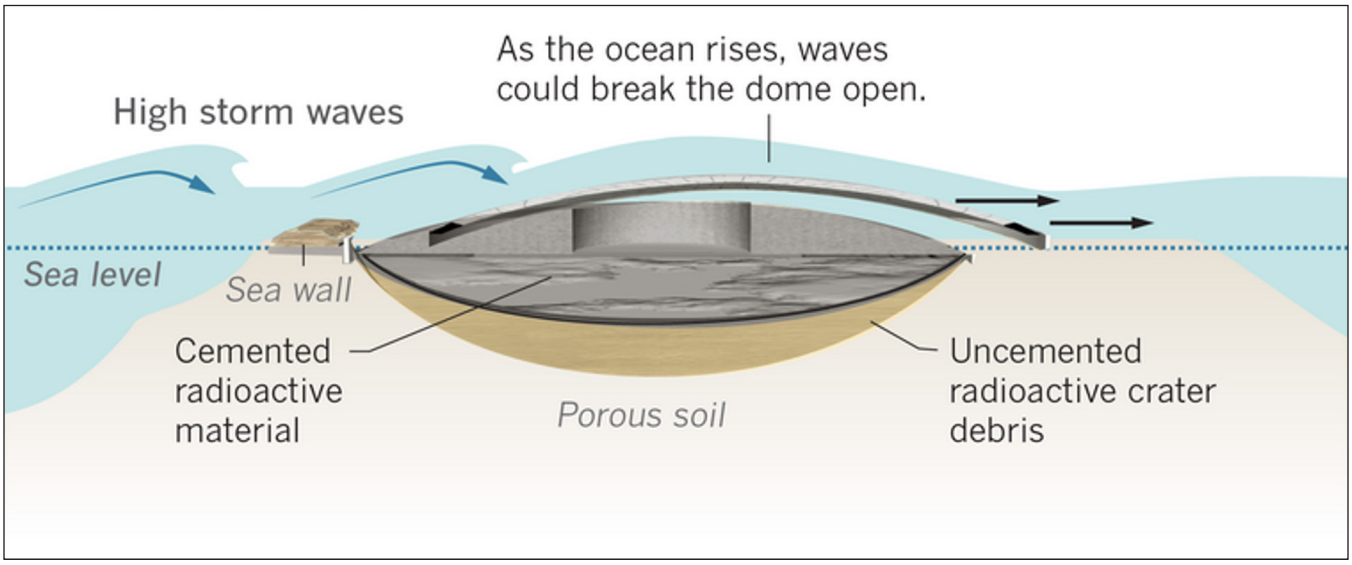


Figure 6: Cross-Section of Runit Dome to Display Sea Level Rise and Storm Impacts on the Structure by LORENA IÑIGUEZ ELEBEE and SEAN GREENE

Summary of Findings

Building the climate change resilience of RMI is informed by the principles of sustainable development outlined by the country's Vision 2018. RMI is incorporating climate change in every aspect of its economy, and analysis of RMI executive policy documents indicates the priority that every sustainable development and planning decision must address climate change. Pervasive themes in executive policy are:

- Requirement for external assistance in cleaning up nuclear waste.
- Establishment of and supporting for an enabling environment for improved coordination between disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.
- Education and public awareness campaigns surrounding effective Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management from local to national levels.
- Enhanced emergency preparedness and response at all levels.
- Improvement of energy security while working towards a low carbon future.
- Enhancement of local livelihoods and community resilience for all Marshallese.
- An integrated approach to development planning, including consideration of climate change and disaster risks.

Additional themes can be derived from the resolutions approved by the Nitijela (Parliament); these themes are:

- All parties who signed the Paris Agreement should commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Eradicating poverty and promoting human rights.
- Ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems by engaging the community through education, training, and active participation to recognize and support sustainable lifestyles.
- Requesting the Cabinet declare that climate change is an issue of national security that should be discussed during the COFA negotiations.
- RMI wants the international community to comply with strategies to reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- RMI requests for the U.S. military to use the Mili Atoll as an additional defense site.
- Residents of Majuro request for the installation of a proper sewage system to stop contamination of their water supply.

Finally, goals highlighted in the September 2022 U.S. PPS are:

- The U.S. wants to strengthen its bond with the Pacific Islands to fulfill and increase the U.S. Commitment to the Pacific.
- Strengthening ties with allies and partners to bolster Pacific regional institutions and elevate the Pacific in regional architecture.
- Helping the Pacific to combat climate change and build climate resiliency by supporting marine conversation, maritime security, sovereign rights, and improving infrastructure.
- Empower Pacific Islanders by creating partnerships to create economic opportunities and forge connectivity.

Recommendations

The Marshall Islands are on the front lines in combating the effects of climate change. RMI requires assistance from the U.S. to enact climate change priorities to fight against climate disruption. We have examined RMI executive policies and Nitijela resolutions alongside the U.S. PPS, introduced by the Biden administration to demonstrate shared regional priorities. Based on our analysis, we recommend the following five strategies and actions to aid RMI in achieving climate resiliency.

1. **Involve RMI officials and community leaders in the development of climate change plans, especially during the Compact negotiations**
   COFA grants are set to expire at the end of 2023. It is pertinent that RMI officials release and allocate funds based on the government's priorities. However, under the 2003 Compact revisions, funds are to be administered by the Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO), wherein the U.S. has three representatives compared to RMI's two. Negotiations should include meaningful discussions to advocate for equitable outcomes for all parties. Such inclusion will engage stakeholders to build a shared vision with a strategic assessment to illuminate benefits and shortcomings. Developing transparency on both sides will allow for a more equitable process and outcome.

2. **Assist RMI with the nuclear legacy clean up**
   In an address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, President David Kabua of RMI stressed the need to address the historical effects and contemporary challenges of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands (Reuters, 2022). Runit Dome is already leaking radioactive contaminants into the ocean. The government is concerned that the structure could collapse due to increased frequency and severity of storm surges, wave-driven flooding, and rising sea levels, and that such a collapse will release plutonium into the ocean and damage the surrounding marine environment (U.S. Department of Energy, 2020). RMI residents are also concerned that nuclear waste from the dome will impact local food supplies underpinned by marine life (Davisson et al., 2012).

3. **Strengthen the relationship between RMI and the U.S. by establishing and supporting a mechanism to improve disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in the Marshall Islands**
   The Biden administration has committed to leadership in driving global action to combat climate change by partnering with RMI and other regional partners through the PPS. According to Pillar 1 (Strong U.S. - Pacific Islands Partnership) the current U.S. administration is interested in completing negotiations on COFAs to create stronger partnerships and promote a policy space for COFA states to make the best decisions for their communities while lobbying the U.S. government to maintain transparency and meet its obligations.

4. **Assist with upgrading public infrastructure that reflect community desires to protect resources such as water**
   Resolution 45 passed in 2021 by the Nitijela urges the RMI government to build a proper sewage system to stop contamination of the Laura groundwater lens. According to PPS Pillar 3 (A Resilient Pacific Islands Region Prepared for Climate Crisis and Other 21st-Century Challenges), the U.S. federal government is committed to supporting regional partners, such as the Marshall Islands, in efforts to mitigate climate change by sharing climate information services, integrating adaptation planning across central and line ministries, and financing resilience through infrastructure, water, food security, and health systems. Supporting projects such as a proper sewage system in Majuro's Laura area promotes climate resiliency by helping RMI to protect its water resources.

5. **Push for Paris Agreement stakeholders to comply with reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**
   The Nitijela's Resolutions 19 (2016) and 83 (2019) implore all Paris Agreement stakeholders to comply with the treaty's goals of reducing emissions and reducing adverse effects of climate change. The U.S. pledged its commitment to being the global leader in combating the climate crisis in the PPS. RMI believes in its motto "Accomplishment through joint effort" to combat climate change with their limited resources. The U.S. needs to be a role model to display its commitment to the Paris Agreement by showing the world through government measures that it is reducing its carbon footprint.

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, RMI has experienced rising temperatures and sea levels, both of which intensify tropical storms, typhoons, droughts, and flooding. Our research reflects a systematic examination of national policies and resolutions that address reduction of energy demand, climate change resiliency, promotion of low carbon energy supply, sustainable land use, climate-related research and development, mitigation efforts, natural disaster risk management, restricting the growth of fossil fuel-based infrastructure, low-carbon transport, and the nuclear legacy.

RMI requires the cooperation of the U.S. to mitigate climate change risk by establishing and supporting an environment to improve disaster risk management and climate change adaptation measures. We have researched RMI's executive policies and parliamentary resolutions alongside the U.S. PPS, introduced in September 2022 (See Appendix C). Our examination demonstrates the common themes within these publications that can help address the needs of the Marshall Islands. It is hoped that our recommendations can help the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command find ways to support RMI in achieving climate resiliency.

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Appendices

Appendix A: RMI Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies

Table 01. RMI Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies		
Document / Year	**Agency**	**Main Goal / Mission**
The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018, Republic of the Marshall Islands (2001)	Republic of the Marshall Islands Government	Vision 2018 "Jepilpilin Ke Ejukaan" • Operating in an interdependent world • Enhanced socio-economic self-reliance • An educated people • A healthy people • A productive people • Law-abiding people • God-loving people • Respecting individual and fundamental human rights • Environmental sustainability
National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018 (2007)	Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands	A part of the national development strategy, "Vision 2018" • Increased self-reliance • Renewed economic growth • Equitable distribution • Improved public health • Improved educational outcomes • International competitiveness • Environmental sustainability
Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Marshall Islands (2008)	Republic of the Marshall Islands Resources and Development/Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority	Establishing community-based fisheries and resource management • Managing information • Strengthening the legal framework • Strengthening coordination mechanisms • Securing sustainable financing • Building capacity • Education and awareness
National Climate Change Policy Framework (2011)	Republic of the Marshall Islands	• Strengthen the enabling environment for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including sustainable financing • Adaptation and reducing risks for a climate resilient future • Energy security and low-carbon future • Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery • Building education and awareness, and community mobilization, whilst being mindful of culture, gender, and youth

Table 01. RMI Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies (cont.)		
Document / Year	**Agency**	**Main Goal / Mission**
Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management 2014-2018 (2014)	Republic of the Marshall Islands	Establish and support an enabling environment for improved coordination of disaster risk management (DRM)/climate change adaptation (CCA) in the Marshall Islands • Public Education and awareness of effective CCA and DRM from local to national level • Enhanced emergency preparedness and response at all levels within the Marshall Islands • Improved energy security, working towards a low carbon future for the Marshall Islands • Enhanced local livelihoods and community resilience for all Marshall Islands people • Integrated approach to development planning including consideration of climate change and duster risks
National Water and Sanitation Policy (2014)	-	• Reduce the occurrence of waterborne illness • Ensure water resource sustainability • Ensure water and sanitation utilities are financially solvent • Target service improvements at the disadvantaged • Be resilient to climate variability and extreme events
National Strategic Plan 2015-2017 (2014)	Government of the Marshall Islands	• Energy security and low-carbon future • Adaptation for a climate resilient future • Disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and response capacity • Education, awareness, community mobilization, culture, and gender
Paris Agreement (2016)	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses, and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty
National Nuclear Commission Act (2017)	Republic of the Marshall Islands - Legislature	Establishes the National Nuclear Commission Establishes and defines the duties of the commission • Fund as a special revenue account • Establish the duty of the commission to develop strategy for justice with respect to the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing Program conducted from 1946 to 1958

Table 01. RMI Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies (cont.)		
Document / Year	**Agency**	**Main Goal / Mission**
Ministry of Environment Act (2018)	Republic of the Marshall Islands - Legislature	• Establishes the Ministry of Environment and the National Council on the Environment • Establishes the Role, Authority, and Functions of the Ministry of Environment • Sets policies, regulations, and strategies for Outer Islands • Defines the Climate Change Directorate • Defines and sets forth functions on policy of development and maintenance in climate-proofing • Repeals the Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination Act, 2003
Nationally Determined Contribution (2018)	Republic of the Marshall Islands - Executive	• Commits to a quantified economy-wide target to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHG) to at least 32% below 2010 levels by 2025 and to at least 45% below 2010 levels by 2030 • Communicates an indicative target to reduce its emissions of GHGs by at least 58% below 2010 levels by 2035 • Reaffirms its aspiration to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050 at the latest • Commits to producing a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) by the end of 2019 • Commits to submitting an Adaptation Communication to the UNFCCC by 2020 at the latest • Commits to a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach in all NDC-related planning, programming, and implementation • Commits to using the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines in the future
National Environment Management Strategy 2017-2022	SPREP with Republic of the Marshall Islands	• Leadership and good governance • Collective responsibility for the environment • Indigenous knowledge, practices, and innovations • Integration of the environment and development
Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy "Lighting the way"	Republic of the Marshall Islands - Executive	• Long-term low GHG emission climate-resilient development strategy under the Paris Agreement • Outline a long-term pathway for RMI to achieve its objectives for net zero emissions and 100% renewable energy, as well as to facilitate adaptation and climate resilience in a way that ensures the future protection and prosperity of the country and its women, men, and youth

Table 01. RMI Executive Policies, Plans, and Strategies (cont.)		
Document / Year	**Agency**	**Main Goal / Mission**
Adaptation Communication (2020)	Climate Change Directorate, Republic of the Marshall Islands - Executive	Ecosystem management, protection, and conservation • Land tenure rights • Infrastructure • Governance and capacity • Social well-being • Economic development • Cultural heritage • Security
Transcript - H. E. David Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (2021)	Executive	76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, General Debate, New York, September 2021
Voluntary National Review 2021	Republic of the Marshall Islands - Executive	Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3, 8, 10, and 13) in the National Strategic Plan

TABLE 02. Nitijela Resolutions			
Bill / Resolution	**Problem Issue**	**Involved Parties**	**Petition / Resolution**
Resolution 52 (2015)	To approve RMI's ratification of the Doha Amendment of the Kyoto Protocol of the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC).	The Kyoto Protocol is an international commitment, which extends the 1992 UNFCCC that commits State Parties to reduce GHG emissions.	The RMI wishes to ratify the Doha Amendment of the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC to show its commitments to reduce GHG emissions.
Resolution 19 (2016)	Requesting the Nitijela approve the ratification by RMI of the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC.	The Paris Agreement was adopted under the UNFCCC. The Paris Agreement, in which at least 55 parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 percent of global GHG emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, or approval.	• Specific needs of the least developed countries • Climate change actions, responses, and impacts emphasize sustainable development • The creation of decent work and quality jobs • Ensuring ecosystems integrity • Educating, training, public awareness, public participation, public access • Engagements of all levels of government and actors • Recognizing sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns

TABLE 02. Nitijela Resolutions (cont.)			
Bill / Resolution	**Problem Issue**	**Involved Parties**	**Petition / Resolution**
Resolution 37 (2016)	Request the Cabinet to declare that the climate crisis is an issue of national security and an existential threat to the RMI, and should be a subject matter for discussions and negotiations in the upcoming Compact negotiations.	The Marshall Islands is very appreciative of the fact that the U.S. President has made climate change an early priority of his administration, directing the U.S. to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement on his first day in office. The Marshall Islands welcomes President Biden's declaration that climate change will be "the center of our national security and foreign policy."	The designation of climate change as a national security threat by President Biden and his commissioning of a National Intelligence Estimate from the U.S. Intelligence agencies on climate change security implications is welcomed.
Resolution 83 (2019)	Requesting the Nitijela to declare a National Climate Crisis.	The declaration of the "National Climate Crisis as a Low-Lying Coral Atoll Nation" to highlight the inadequate response thus far of the international community to respond to the global climate crisis of its own making.	The Marshall Islands' climate leadership, including its 2050 "Tile Til Eo" Climate Strategy, should stand as a rebuke to the international community for insufficient efforts to reduce GHG emissions.
Resolution 36ND1 (2021)	Request the Cabinet to convey on behalf of the people and leaders of Mili Atoll their interest to the U.S. Government, for consideration, the use of Mili Atoll, or any part of it, as an additional defense site pursuant to the COFA	The U.S. Military advancement and presence in the Republic will be of great benefit to the U.S. Government and the people and leaders of Mili Atoll.	The people and leaders of Mili Atoll through their Government conveys their interest to the Government of the U.S. should it require the use of Mili Atoll or any part of it as an additional defense site.
Resolution 45 (2021)	Requesting the Cabinet to consider, as an urgent priority project, the sewerage system in Laura.	Laura groundwater lens is a significant factor in supplying water to Majuro residents.	Rising population density of the Laura area of Majuro has long-term consequences in terms of sanitation and disposal of deceased residents as the freshwater lens is particularly susceptible to contamination. A new, modern sewerage system needs developed and built.

Appendix B: Strategy Plans

TABLE 01. U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy	
U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy 2022	**Mission**
1. A Strong U.S. - Pacific Islands Partnership	Requesting the Nitijela to declare a National Climate Crisis.
2. A United Pacific Island Region Connected with the World	Strengthening ties with allies and partners to bolster Pacific Regional Institutions and elevate the Pacific in regional architecture.
3. A Resilient Pacific Islands Region Prepared for the Climate Crisis and Other 21st Century Challenges	Helping the Pacific to combat climate change and build climate resiliency by supporting marine conversation, maritime security, sovereign rights, and improving infrastructure.
4. Empowered and Prosperous Pacific Islanders	Empower Pacific Islanders by creating partnerships to create economic opportunities and forge connectivity.

TABLE 02. RMI - National Environmental Management Strategy 2017-2022		
Environment Theme	**Strategic Focus Area**	**Link to SDGs, Aichi targets, SAMOA Pathway, and Framework for Pacific Regions**
1. Atmosphere and Climate	1. Committed to reduction in GHGs and reduction in fossil fuel purchase. 2. Reduction in use of Ozone Depletion Substances. 3. Provide an enabling environment for the protection and management of the physical environment. 4. Ensure RMI commitment to Climate Change Adaptation	• SDG 7, SDG 13. • Sustainable Energy and Climate Change. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing and use the environment sustainably.
2. Land	1. Ensure protection of existing vegetation, coconuts, breadfruit and pandanus. 2. Promote sustainable agricultural practices and cultivated land, with more focus on traditional practices. 3. Committed to protection of wetlands.	• SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 15. • Economic growth and Food security. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing. • Aichi targets 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 18.
3. Marine	Helping the Pacific to combat climate change and build climate resiliency by supporting marine conversation, maritime security, sovereign rights, and improving infrastructure.	• SDG 14 • Biodiversity and Oceans management. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing. • Aichi Targets 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 18.

TABLE 02. RMI - National Environmental Management Strategy 2017-2022 (cont.)		
Environment Theme	**Strategic Focus Area**	**Link to SDGs, Aichi targets, SAMOA Pathway, and Framework for Pacific Regions**
4. Biodiversity	1. Protect special ecosystems, sites, traditions, languages, and species. 2. Foster longer term protection and maintenance of biodiversity within RMI.	• SDG 14, SDG 15. • Oceans and Sea. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing. • Aichi Targets 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 18.
5. Culture and Heritage	1. To conserve historical sites. 2. To preserve the native Marshallese language. 3. 3. Maintain traditional consumption and production of food and medicine.	• SDG 10. • Social development. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing.
6. Built Environment	1. To provide efficient, sustainable and accessible energy. 2. To provide proper waste management services. 3. Proper management of hazardous waste. 4. Maintain and provide proper water resources. 5. Deliver sound sewage and sanitation management.	• SDG 1, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12. • Sustainable growth and inclusive and equitable growth and decent work for all; water and sanitation; sustainable energy; consumption and production. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing; economic growth that is inclusive and equitable
7. Nuclear Legacy	1. Improve governance support to nuclear affected Marshallese for better livelihoods.	• SDG 1, 2, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17. • Sustained and sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic growth; Disaster risk reduction. • Improve livelihoods and wellbeing.

Appendix C: PPS & RMI Resolution and Policy Crosswalk

Table 1. PPS & RMI Resolutions Crosswalk			
Pacific Partnership Strategy 2022			
1) A Strong U.S. - Pacific Islands Partnership	**2) A United Pacific Island Region Connected with the World**	**3) A Resilient Pacific Islands Region Prepared for the Climate Crisis and Other 21st Century Challenges**	**4) Empowered and Prosperous Pacific Islanders**
RMI Resolutions			
Resolution 52 - 2015 Kyoto Protocol / Doha Amendment parties to commit to reduce greenhouse emissions		**Resolution 52 - 2015** Kyoto Protocol / Doha Amendment parties to commit to reduce greenhouse emissions	**Resolution 19** - 2016 Ensure integrity of all ecosystems
Resolution 37 - 2016 Declare that the climate crisis is an issue of national security and threat		**Resolution 19 - 2016** Ensure integrity of all ecosystems	**Resolution 36ND1 - 2021** Consideration for the U.S. to use the Mili Atoll as an additional defense site
		Resolution 37 - 2016 Declare that the climate crisis is an issue of national security and threat	
		Resolution 83 - 2019 To be consistent with keeping temperature increases within 1.5 °C	
		Resolution 45 - 2021 Requesting as an urgent priority to install a proper sewerage system in their community	

Table 2. PPS & RMI Executive Policies Crosswalk			
Pacific Partnership Strategy 2022			
1) A Strong U.S. - Pacific Islands Partnership	**2) A United Pacific Island Region Connected with the World**	**3) A Resilient Pacific Islands Region Prepared for the Climate Crisis and Other 21st Century Challenges**	**4) Empowered and Prosperous Pacific Islanders**
RMI Executive Policies			
The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018	The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018		The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018
National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018	National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018	National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018	National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018
			Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Marshall Islands
			National Climate Change Policy Framework
Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014-2018	Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014-2018	Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014-2018	Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014-2018
The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018	The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018		The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003 - 2018



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