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ANNEX I

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Maldives for 2023

Action Document for Improved Biodiversity Management to Support a Blue Economy in the Maldives

ANNUAL PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and an action plan within the meaning of Article 23(2) of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Improved Biodiversity Management to Support a Blue Economy in the Maldives OPSYS number: ACT-61797 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	No
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Republic of the Maldives
4. Programming document	Multiannual indicative programme for the Maldives for the period 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	MIP Priority Area 1: Green Recovery Specific Objective 1: Enhance sustainable management of natural resources through climate change mitigation/adaptation actions promoting circularity. ER 1. Improved waste management and reduction of single use plastics. ER 3. Improved marine resource management and biodiversity protection. ER 4. Improved institutional coordination on green economic policies/issues.
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Priority Area 1: Green Recovery – DAC codes: 140, 151, 410
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: 13 Climate Action Other significant SDGs: SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Strong Institutions)
8 a) DAC code(s)	41020 – Biodiversity protection: 70%

	14050 – Waste management/disposal: 30%			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	Multilateral organisations - 40000			
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration X Climate X Social inclusion and Human Development X Gender X Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education X Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	Combat desertification @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	11. Internal markers and Tags	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective
Digitalisation @		<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital connectivity		YES X	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
digital governance		<input type="checkbox"/>	x	
digital entrepreneurship		<input type="checkbox"/>	x	
digital skills/literacy		<input type="checkbox"/>	x	
digital services		X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Connectivity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	digital connectivity	YES X	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
	energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	transport health education and research	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line: 14.020131 Total estimated cost: EUR 6 500 000 (TBD – depends on possible co-financing) Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 6 500 000 The contribution is for an amount of EUR 6 500 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2024, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial year following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.4.1.			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The Maldives is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change due to its low-lying geography resulting in constant flood risk due to sea level rise. Sea temperature rise and acidification has resulted in coral reef bleaching and migration of fish stocks, having a direct negative impact on the two main sectors of the Maldivian economy – tourism and fisheries. Geographic dispersion of islands brings its own challenges, as service delivery is difficult, and there are limited opportunities for job creation and economic diversification. The Maldives is an ally to the EU on climate action and environment protection.

EU-Maldives cooperation has intensified recently, with the first country Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) since 2007. The MIP 2021 – 2027¹ provides the EU with a more structured approach and a framework for policy and strategic dialogue with the Maldives. The MIP delineates initiatives on two priority areas 1) Green Recovery and 2) Rule of Law, Local Governance and Security.

The Overall Objective of this Action which falls under Priority 1, is to contribute to climate resilient socioeconomic development in the Maldives. The Specific Objectives are to (1) improve marine resource management and biodiversity protection in the Maldives' protected areas (2) improve waste management at island and atoll level including segregation, collection, and reduction of single-use plastics and (3) strengthen institutional coordination on green economic policies/issues.

Policy-wise, the Action aligns with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016 – 2025)² and the Strategic Action Plan (2019-2023)³ which pledges to protect at least 10% of the Maldives' coral reef areas, 20% of wetlands and mangroves and other representative reef habitats from each atoll by 2023. It also builds on the 2010 Decentralisation Act⁴ and the government's decentralisation plan from 2018, which devolves authority for sustainable

¹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-8994-maldives-annex_en.pdf

² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/mv/mv-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>

³ <https://presidency.gov.mv/SAP/>

⁴ <https://www.finance.gov.mv/decentralization-act> (full document is available only in Dhivehi); https://transparency.mv/v17/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/RDFM_ENG_FINAL-for-Website.pdf

development aspects to Island Councils, which, however, lack resources and capacity. Regarding waste management, the Action is aligned with the government's commitment to phase out of Single-Use Plastic (SUP) by 2023 as well as waste management regulations and policies.

The Action also builds on achievements of previous EU support to the conservation of the Maldives' critical coral reef biodiversity, wetlands and mangroves, which in partnership with the Climate Change Trust Fund administered by the World Bank supported capacity development in government agencies and the development of the Maldives' first nature parks – this has since been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. As a member of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the Maldives pledged to test approaches to sustainable development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. Aligning with this, the Action will establish a fund to test technological options and nature-based solutions for biodiversity conservation and waste management, thereby help combat climate change. The northern part of the Maldives will be prioritised as it has a larger population but less economic development and donor funding than other parts of the country⁵.

Finally, the Action also builds on technical assistance and on-going projects funded through the SWITCH Asia programme related to waste management (such as the PROMISE programme on marine litter)⁶. Possible collaboration with EU Member States was explored to promote a Team Europe approach, but Member States presence/funding is currently limited as confirmed during the initial feasibility study.

The proposed Action aligns with priority frameworks of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific⁷ and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁸, the EU Green Deal⁹ and Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025¹⁰, specifically the thematic area '*Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and digital transformation.*'.

The Action will contribute primarily to SDG 13 Climate Action. It also contributes significantly to SDGs 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Strong Institutions).

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

With climate change posing an existential threat, 80% of the low-lying archipelago's total land area is predicted to be submerged by 2050 due to rising sea levels. The coral reefs surrounding the Maldives (representing 3.14 per cent of the world's reef areas), and mangroves, its first line of defence against increasingly frequent storm surges, are at risk due to sea warming. Environmental degradation, with inadequate waste management is also a growing issue threatening the country's marine environment on which its two-sector economy depends. Extreme climate vulnerability has influenced the Maldives' Foreign Policy as a vocal and like-minded (in most cases) advocate at international climate change fora, and also as a member of the Alliance of Small Island States. At domestic level, however, while the current Solih administration commits to the protection and preservation of its environment through a number of policy documents - the challenge lies in implementation of pledged commitments due to a lack of technical capacity, funds, coordination vis-à-vis its economic development agenda, especially in view of the geographic dispersion of the Maldives' islands and atolls.

The Action aligns directly with the key development policy strategies of the Maldives, notably the (post-Covid) National Resilience and Recovery Plan 2020-2023, the Strategic Action Plan 2019-2023 (SAP), the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan 2016-2025 (NBSAP), the revised Nationally Determined Contributions 2020, the

⁵ Activities in central and southern islands will be included depending on needs.

⁶ <https://www.switch-asia.eu/project/promise/>

⁷ <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EU%20Indo-pacific.pdf>

⁸

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

¹⁰ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

National Solid Waste Management Policy 2015 and the Single-Use Plastic Phase-out Plan 2020-2023. The Maldives also endorsed the “Leaders pledge for Nature” in 2020. The country committed to become carbon neutral by 2030 if it receives adequate international assistance. The Maldives is critical that COP26 and COP27 did not take sufficient action towards meeting the 1.5 degree climate target, highlighting the existential importance of the 1.5 target for the country, already experiencing sea level rise, flooding, coral bleaching, and weather meteorological, hydrological and environmental hazards with 1.1 degree warming. The Maldives’ budget 2023 foresees allocations for waste management across the country as well as investments in renewable energy to reduce import dependency on fossil fuels.

The Maldives is also vocal on climate financing, appealing to international partners to redouble adaptation finance as agreed under the Glasgow Climate Pact in 2021 and on the Loss and Damage Facility in COP27. It has also presented a 10 Point Plan for Financing Biodiversity together with Ecuador, UK and Gabon and committed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (COP15). It is not anticipated that these priorities will shift significantly in the case of a change in government post-elections, in September 2023.

High indebtedness poses risks to macroeconomic stability. The Maldives is at a high risk of external debt distress and a high overall risk of debt distress. Its public debt jumped from 75% of GDP in 2019 to an estimated 125% by the end of 2021. The government continues to spend massively on infrastructure projects. Tourism in the Maldives is bouncing back faster and stronger than most other destinations, with the impact of a real GDP growth of 6% expected over 2021-2024¹¹. Yet, the annual fiscal deficit will likely remain above 10% of GDP until 2023. Public debt is expected to remain high at 120% of GDP in 2024. In October 2022 Fitch revised the Maldives outlook from ‘Stable’ to ‘Negative’, while affirming its long-term credit rating at B-.

The Action will build on the opportunities of the Decentralisation Act (2010) by working with local institutions such as island and atoll councils - including Women’s Development Committees (WDC) being a part of the Island Councils - to increase their capacity for decision-making and actions to protect and manage natural resources and engage in effective waste management. Alliances will also be built with civil society and private sector organisations, especially in the tourism sector.

The Action aligns with priority frameworks of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and more particularly the external dimension of the EU Green Deal, specifically the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and Zero Pollution Action Plan for Air, Water and Soil, and the Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025, specifically the thematic area *‘Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and digital transformation’*. This Action translates those policies into reality as the conservation of coral reef systems, mangroves, seagrass and other natural assets protects against the negative impacts of storm surges, flooding and sea level rise, and act as carbon sinks. By building local planning capacity, this Action will help build resilience to the impact of climate change. Moreover, as the Maldives’ economy – dependent on tourism and fisheries - is highly reliant on the health of its coral reefs and other ecosystems, the Action will contribute to continued sustainable and stable economic development. It is hoped that the project can help counter the increasing trend of land reclamation projects, which are driven by narrow short-term economic interests and insofar as they undermine the integrity of coral reef platforms and structures, heightening the threat of the Maldives’ survival.

2.2 Problem Analysis

The proposed Action will focus on a limited number of interconnected problems that hinder the sustainable economic development of the Maldives and its communities.

Protection of biodiversity and climate change: The Maldives is one of only four atoll island nations in the world exhibiting high marine biodiversity which is a key draw for its economy based on fisheries and tourism. The reef ecosystems are important mitigation mechanisms to the impact of climate change, protecting the extremely low-lying land from storm surge and flooding. Although the Maldives is a middle-income country, its capacity to protect these critical ecosystems is still low. Government agencies in the sector are understaffed and lack resources, including the Environment Department and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the Ministry for Environment and Climate

¹¹ <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/MDV>

Change and Technology (MoECCT), which are responsible for designating and managing protected areas. The NBSAP and SAP aim to designate at least one protected area per atoll. Currently, although 82 protected areas have been designated on paper, only five of these have a management plan. In the meantime, following the Maldives' commitment to meet the new global Biodiversity Framework targets of *30 by 30*¹², President Solih in his State of the Union Speech 2023 pledged to increase the number of protected areas to 130 prior to the end of the year. Yet even those with a management plan in place are under-resourced and often not properly implemented due to limited capacity. A mechanism to assess and monitor effectiveness of park management is under discussion to conform to the global IUCN Green List standards. In addition to the current context of decentralisation, protected areas may best be managed sustainably through a bottom-up approach with a meaningful participation of multiple stakeholders working together, including Local Councils and communities, civil society, private sector resorts and especially guesthouses, with the support of government departments such as the EPA and Environmental Department. Such an approach will help identify how communities will derive benefits and may also address other related problems such as population migration to the already overcrowded capital Malé.

Scientific evidence for the proper delineation and identification of these areas can also be strengthened. The government capacity to systematically balance the economic pressures for land reclamation against that for reef protection is not always evident; here data and clear scientific analysis coupled with local and regional dialogue on the issues, could help set local and national priorities around sustainable development of the fragile atoll systems. The development of a formal protected area system, including biosphere reserves¹³ is an important sustainable development strategy that has been supported by the EU with success in the past¹⁴, which will now be replicated in another area.

Waste management and environmental degradation: Waste management is one of the biggest environmental challenges in the Maldives. Due to increasing tourism and population, changing lifestyles, and high dependence on imports, the amount of waste continues to increase. Single-use plastic (SUP), in particular, continues to be used and disposed of in the country, despite the fact that it is known to be harmful to the environment and difficult to recycle and dispose of appropriately. The amount of waste generated in Male has increased by 155% in the last decade, while the population of the atolls has increased by 57.6% in the same period. The Maldives government has taken several measures in recent years to address these challenges. These include the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2019-2023, which focuses on guidelines for waste as a resource, the National Solid Waste Management Policy and strategy, and the Single-Use Plastic (SUP) Phase-out Plan 2020-2023, which aims to minimise the use of SUP products and thereby reduce plastic pollution in the oceans. The SUP ban is officially in place for all the addressed items, but monitoring and enforcement is currently not happening in full, with some banned items still sold on the local market.

The Government has recently passed the Waste Management Law (December 2022) with provision for more holistic waste management regulations and policies to be introduced in the future such as the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system. Together with budgetary allocations, there is currently momentum in the Maldives for innovative island and atoll-level strategies to improve waste collection, treatment, transport and disposal. As a result, communities and business see investment potential in the waste sector. There are several waste management related initiatives going on in the Maldives from international donors, ministries, businesses, and local NGOs. Despite this the coordination of all these efforts is lacking, resulting in replication of activities and not sharing of best practices and lessons learnt.

Institutional coordination and the interface between Government and other stakeholders: More governments all over the world are adopting the Blue Economy approach to create greater value for economy, societies, and environment through sustainable utilisation of ocean resources. Consequently, there is an urgent call for collaboration between multiple sectors and stakeholders to generate shared understanding of problems and agreement around aims, focus, resources and commitment. Strong women and minority-group leadership and representation in blue economy collaborations is essential to ensure that outcomes and gender-equitable and sustainable. Based on the national

¹² 30 by 30 is a worldwide initiative for governments to designate 30% of Earth's land and ocean area as protected areas by 2030.

¹³ Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. [What are Biosphere Reserves? \(unesco.org\)](https://www.unesco.org/en/biosphere-reserves/)

¹⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/stories/gcca-maldives-beyond-tourism-helping-people-and-nature-thrive_en ; <https://timesofaddu.com/2022/08/20/environmental-management-plan-being-formulated-for-addu-and-fuvahmulah/>

statistics, men make up around 90% in the tourism industry around 89% in agriculture and fisheries of the Maldives¹⁵. Therefore, the EU shall have a vested interest in more equitable and sustainable plans for economic and climate resilience, as women are worst affected by economic and climate-related crises¹⁶. The stakeholder interviews for the feasibility study of this proposed Action identified institutional coordination as a major constraint in the sectors of biodiversity conservation and waste management. Weak sectoral coordination between government, donors, researchers, private sector and civil society on both project planning and technical approaches constrains the potential impacts of investments. Examples given included criteria used for demarcating and assessing biodiversity for the establishment of parks and protected areas; technologies and approaches to coral conservation and restoration; and access to coordinated data around most sectors. Coordination between government departments at the national level is also weak, resulting in important gaps between policy, planning, budgeting and implementation on the ground. High staff turnover and unfilled positions contribute to the lack of institutional memory in public institutions, among both senior public servants and political appointees. Overall, weak governance, a lack of political will with a tendency to cater to narrow economic interests and corruption are identified as bottlenecks to sustainable development. There seems to be no clear process for public participation and stakeholder consultation when developing new policies and laws. At the same time, the 2018 implementation of the Decentralisation Act potentially confers a great deal of responsibilities to Island and Atoll Councils, but with little capacities and resources. The Strategic Action Plan section five is based on the concept that “citizens livelihoods, economies, cultural identity and well-being are derived sustainably through connectivity and management of national resources”, with targets to “increase autonomy of local council in the utilisation of resources in their jurisdiction... and support their own revenue generation”. However, these Councils have very little training and capacity around management of their natural resources, protected areas and waste management; nor how to bring these resources together to raise revenue including in partnership with the private sector, notably the significant tourism and guesthouse sector.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the Action: The primary stakeholders (rights holders) of the initiative will be Island and Atoll Councils, Women’s Development Committees (WDCs), and women and youth in all their diversity, men and women earners in fisheries and communities reliant on a biodiverse marine environment. The local Island Councils, WDCs, Atoll Councils (an administrative unit gathering geographically-related islands), civil society organisations (incl. women-led) and youth are specific rights holders of the project to be mobilised as implementation partners/service providers. Increased capacity of these stakeholders to manage assets, including natural resource assets such as coral reef, biodiversity, as well as waste management, are foreseen through capacity assessments conducted during the project. They will also be mobilised through local and nationally-networked multi-stakeholder platforms of local leaders including women and youth, civil society, private sector, and government agencies, to achieve project outcomes as well as become sustainable management institutions for biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and waste management.

Youth and Gender: Disaggregated data analysis and utilisation need to be improved for evidence-based policies and SDGs monitoring¹⁷. Women and youth in all their diversity are specific rights-holders of this Action who will be mobilised as implementation partners and service providers. Both fisheries and tourism are seasonal industries where women and men have specific tasks. Targeted vocational training programmes for young women shall equip them with job market skills and expand employment opportunities available in the identified sectors. Young women, especially in the remote islands, are primarily engaged in unpaid (at home) care and hence are found at the lowest end of the value chain¹⁸. The participation of women and youth in making decisions and practically implementing activities for marine resource protection (e.g. coral restoration including re-planting and data gathering), sustainable use (e.g. eco-tourism linked activities such as rangers in protected areas, sustainable harvesting of mangrove resources related to organic agri-business, fishing, alternative livelihoods such as handicrafts), and waste

¹⁵ National Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Maldives Population and Housing Census 2014: Statistical Release IV: Employment*. Ministry of Finance and Treasury. Accessed through <https://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/StatisticalReleaseIV-Employment.pdf>

¹⁶ UNEP & GWA (2022). *Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management: Principles, Studies and Lessons Learnt*. United Nations Environment Programme & Gender and Water Alliance. Accessed through <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/gender-mainstreaming-coastal-and-marine-ecosystems-management-principles-case>

¹⁷ UNFPA (2023). *Human Rights and Gender Equality*. United Nations Population Fund in the Maldives, accessed through <https://maldives.unfpa.org/en/topics/human-rights-and-gender-equality-1>

¹⁸ IsDB (2022). *Member Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Maldives (2022-2025). A resilient and sustainable life, and diversified economy for Maldivians*. Islamic Development Bank, accessed through https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2022-08/Maldives%20MCPS_20220603_Final.pdf

management (marketing alternatives to plastics) will be emphasised. The aim is to increase confidence, deepen experience and open more possibilities for women in all their diversity who have often been raised under a patriarchal system which excludes their leadership. WDCs are a part of the Island Councils and are one avenue to help promote women's leadership under this proposed project. As the Maldives is an increasingly youthful demographic, enhancing the ability of young people to lead is critical for the nation's future, which can be achieved through the engagement of formal and informal youth groups at the island level.

Decentralisation & local authorities: The Island and Atoll Councils are key stakeholders and rights holders of this project. The local authorities will be engaged from the outset as key partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of results of the Action at site level based on decisions set at national level and will be part of the Steering Committee that will be established. The composition of the Project Steering Committee will strive for equal representation of women and men in the Committee.

A local-level capacity focus is built on the assumption that an increase in decentralised capacities will be of value to local participation in decision-making and sustainable management of resources even if a future government moves to 're-centralise' government administration. Key national government stakeholders (duty bearers) include the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, in particular the Environment Department and the Environmental Protection Agency which are responsible for protected area management, the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture and its Marine Research Institute; and the state-owned Waste Management Company. The Local Government Authority is responsible to support local councils to implement their tasks and is thus an important stakeholder. The relationship between local authorities and national government agencies will be strengthened to work together for local biodiversity outcomes.

Civil Society: The Maldives' civil society is active in both biodiversity conservation and waste management. Organisations such as Water Solutions, Small Islands Research Group, Small Island Geographic Society work with local communities and organisations to promote sustainable resource use, biodiversity protection and expertise and data for environmental impact studies. In terms of waste management, Soneva Namoonaa is applying transformative approaches to waste management to the islands of Baa Atoll and Noonu Atoll. Parley Maldives, Zero Waste Maldives and Save the Beach are also key NGOs developing awareness and waste reduction programs on a local and national level. These organisations (incl. women-led CSOs) play key roles in helping to educate and motivate the island and atoll councils and other local partners, as well as participating in multi-stakeholder platforms.

Educational and research institutions may also be mobilised. The Marine Research and High Education Centre (MaHRE) run by the University of Milan-Bicocca could help provide and collate data regarding biodiversity, the delineation of protected areas, and coral protection or restoration, in partnership with or in support of government research agencies. Links with the Joint Research Centre tools/knowledge hubs will be explored. The Maldives National University may contribute to training and curriculum for local authorities and project beneficiaries regarding natural resource protection and waste management.

Private sector: It is estimated that, in the Maldives, biodiversity contributes towards 71% of employment, 89% of GDP and 8% of exports. Its most important economic activities are high-end tourism and fisheries, that both depend on healthy reefs and a clean environment. Private sector stakeholders focus mainly on the tourism sector with over 180 resorts and over 700 guesthouses, as well as approximately 150 safari vessels/liveaboards. The emergence of MSMEs in the tourism industry has diversified the economy catering to a different market segment than the traditional homogenous market dominated by the "one-island-one-resort" model, and enabled local ownership and local employment while mobilising a larger number of women in the workforce. However, this sharp increase has in turn contributed to negative environmental impacts including harmful tourism behaviour around iconic marine species in particular the whale shark, but also in terms of procurement of food, water and beverages which are mostly imported with a high level of single-use plastics/packaging, even while the primary draw of tourism is its pristine environment and well-managed protected areas. Through inclusion in project multi-stakeholder platforms there is potential to harness private sector resources to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of the tourism sector. In the Maldives, some resorts are already leading in this direction, but effort and value could be added to extend economic opportunities to nearby communities, reduce waste, create and manage protected areas, and share knowledge and best practices, thus also aligning with SAP targets of increased capacity development and scale-up. Developing links with the Maldives Tourism Association (MATI) and the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) could also enhance project activities in terms of capacity-building, networking and problem-solving, and perhaps setting of standards or green certification.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is: to contribute to climate resilient socioeconomic development in the Maldives.

The Specific Objectives of this action are to:

1. Improve marine resource management and biodiversity protection in the Maldives' protected areas.
2. Improve waste management at island and atoll level including segregation, collection and reduction of single-use plastics.
3. Strengthen institutional coordination on blue-green economic policies/issues.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives are

- 1.1 Increased availability of quality information on biodiversity areas for policy and regulatory frameworks' alignment with international commitments
- 1.2 Availability and implementation of conservation and natural resource management plans developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders that include innovative commercial nature-based solutions for conservation and sustainable community development/livelihoods
- 1.3 Increased availability of technological options for biodiversity protection by developing demonstration projects engaging local authorities, communities, private sector and civil society (including support to relevant local investments).
- 2.1 Increased community awareness on the environmental and economic benefit of proper waste management/ 'zero waste" mind-set,
- 2.2 Increased availability of guidelines, systems and tools for proper waste segregation, collection, processing and transport out of the island and on alternatives to single-use plastics
- 2.3 Increased community and private sector awareness on, and willingness to participate in SUP reduction and introduction of sustainable alternatives with increased technological options for waste management by developing demonstration projects engaging local authorities, communities, private sector and civil society.
- 3.1 Improved capacities of central government authorities, island and atoll councils to work with all stakeholders to address sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity conservation and blue economy.
- 3.2 Increased availability of systems and tools for improved effectiveness of inter-island and atoll-wide coordination of waste management resources linking with central government authorities.

3.2 Indicative Activities

Activities relating to Output 1.1(defining biodiversity areas and possible innovations)

- Conduct scientific research to gather data on biodiversity and delineation of critical biodiversity areas and links with available platforms (e.g. JRC IMET) to feed into policy and regulatory frameworks aligning with international commitments
- Conduct participatory studies and capacity assessments to create socio-economic baselines for sustainable use of natural resources and identify potential economic innovations

Activities relating to Output 1.2 (participatory planning for management and innovations)

- On the basis of the participatory studies and capacity assessments, prioritise innovative nature-based solutions to natural resource management and biodiversity conservation issues for implementation
- Convene stakeholders to elaborate practical biodiversity conservation management plans (if in the context of a formal protected area) for implementation and monitoring by local communities, women and men park staff, civil society organisations (incl. women-led ones) and the private sector (incl. women-led enterprises).
- Conduct trainings for capacity-building around awareness, resource use, and protected area management

Activities relating to Output 1.3 (increase availability of technology options for demonstration projects)

- Establish and fund demonstration project (including investment), linking with Output under 1.2 and Output 2.3 with private sector (including women-led enterprises), local authorities, communities and CSOs, and a particular emphasis on women, youth and civil society.
- Monitor and adapt the demonstration project initiatives and innovations and promote for replicate where appropriate

Activities relating to Output 2.1 (Increased community awareness):

- Conduct capacity building activities among households on waste reduction and segregation at source;
- Develop campaigns on waste management in relation to public health (negative health effects of open-burning, littering, ocean-dumping, microplastics)
- Develop campaigns to increase public participation in ocean and environmental conservation.

Activities relating to Output 2.2 (Strengthened islands waste management):

- Develop tailor-made segregation guidelines for households, SMEs and utilities on proper waste segregation at the island level with community input and participation;
- Conduct capacity building activities with waste management operators and local councils on segregation, collection, transport and processing best practices with the involvement of the community to allow them to understand how segregation is connected to the waste management at the end of pipe;
- Introduce a data collection system to identify a baseline, measure waste generation, reduction and recovery, and to communicate the data to the communities.

Activities relating to Output 2.3 (Reduced use of single-use plastic products):

- Implement interventions with SMEs and local councils to reduce SUPs and introduce sustainable alternatives on the islands;
- Conduct workshops with households on reduction of SUPs and introduction of sustainable alternatives;
- Provide SUP alternatives to SMEs and households in selected islands.

Activities relating to Output 3.1 (Improved capacities of central government, island and atoll councils and multi-stakeholder platforms to work with all stakeholders to address park management, green tourism and economic innovation)

- Training of island and atoll councils in participatory methods including stakeholder analysis, outreach and decision-making
- Conduct events convening duty bearers and rights holders (stakeholders) to discuss issues and agree on approaches
- Support the biodiversity platform/multi-stakeholder management or advisory bodies with capacity building, mentoring, technical support or educational exchanges
- Creation of a local sustainable multi-stakeholder institution for inclusive natural resource management (linked to 1.3)

Activities relating to Output 3.2 (Improved effectiveness of inter-island and atoll-wide coordination of waste management resources):

- Invest in shared equipment for more efficient waste processing atoll-wise;
- Conduct trainings on collaborative equipment use, machine spares and maintenance support;
- Establish a system of inter-island and atoll-wide collaboration regarding waste management and experience sharing and linking with Central Government Authorities.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcomes of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C: and EIA is not required

Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project) The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is at no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per the OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as G1. This implies that women in all their diversity will be promoted as participants in steering committees, in stakeholder groups for planning and implementation of activities, and as rights holders (beneficiaries) of project activities and outputs as relevant. Strengthening the knowledge and decision-making role of women (in a patriarchal society), and youth (40% of the population) will be specific targets of the Action. In particular, women in all their diversity will be included in the multi-stakeholder platforms for natural resource use, protected areas and waste management, most likely working

through the WDCs. Women and youth will also be specific beneficiaries of the funds that will be made available for innovative nature-based solutions to resource use issues, and for sustainable economic development activities.

The activities are in line with the priorities identified in the Country-Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for the Maldives under the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, specifically:

Objective 02: Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are more gender-responsive, at local, national and regional and international level, taking into account the role of women in managing these natural resources. Women will participate at local level in making decisions around and benefiting from the management of natural resources and promotion of biodiversity conservation, including by capacitating WDCs, women's participation in Island and Atoll Councils, and in multi-stakeholder platforms for sustainable management of natural resources and innovative nature-based solutions for green economic development (e.g., Biodiversity Platforms).

Objective 03: Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, addressing climate change in their daily lives and preserving the natural environment are supported. The preservation of the natural environment and addressing climate change are key aspects of both Overall and Specific Objectives of the project.

Objective 04: Women in all their diversity increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities in the green economy and the circular economy.

This objective will be targeted through the Specific Objective 1. and its Output 1.2, 1.3 regarding innovative sustainable development activities.

Human Rights

The Action includes the protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights by building the capacity of duty-bearers, i.e. the local state institutions of island and atoll councils, as well as empowering rights holders, i.e. local communities, to collaborate toward project objectives through multi-stakeholder processes (See Output 1.3 as well as Specific Objective 3.). A human rights-based approach will be adopted, i.e., access to a cleaner environment with increased responsibility for the sustainable use of natural resources through participatory decision making and better public access to information.

The Action in its interventions will pay attention to the situation of persons living in the most vulnerable and marginalised situations (persons living in poverty, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, persons belonging to ethnic minorities, etc.) It shall leave no one behind throughout the programme cycle and the design process.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as D0. This implies that the Action is not considered directly relevant as regards the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Nonetheless, when possible the Action is going to invite the organisations representing persons with disabilities and the envisaged interventions will be as much as possible disability responsive and inclusive.

Reduction of inequalities

Apart from the reduction of gender inequalities described above in the document, the Action may specifically target the northern parts of the Maldives being a geographically remote and economically disadvantaged region of the island and atoll state. The geographic focus will be determined during the inception phase, and will be guided by criteria to reduce inequalities.

Democracy

The Action is designed to ensure meaningful and inclusive participation accessible to all of rights holders, including through governance and complaints/accountability structures, and supports local democracy.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The proposed Action aims to strengthen the resilience of households, communities and local state institutions (island and atoll councils, WDCs) to progress toward SDG goals around biodiversity conservation and waste management. The Action specifically addresses environmental and economic fragility by protecting coral reefs in a target area at an economic disadvantage because it is geographically remote, using a 'do good' approach. The planned Action is not in a conflict-affected area, though the Maldives context in general has a risk of extremism.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The Action is designed to protect coral reefs and mangroves which have some mitigating effect to climate impact of carbon sequestration, sea level rise and protection against storm surge. The Action may also help communities plan for disaster risks as a result of climate change.

Other considerations if relevant

N/A

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Category	Risks	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Impact (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
External environment	Risk 1: Changes in the political landscape and priorities (September 2023 elections)	Medium	Medium	Regular visits by the Delegation to ensure continuous policy dialogue with the Government Ministries. Close sectoral and project monitoring underpinned by sound political economy analysis and capacity to adapt (built-in project flexibility). Encourage strong ownership of the action by local public institutions including through project steering structures.
External environment	Risk 2: New wave of Covid-19 or other pandemics, delaying/restricting implementation	Low	Medium	Close monitoring underpinned by capacity to adapt (built-in project flexibility)
Institutional systems	Risk 3: Lack of effective coordination among public institutions	High	High	Involvement in project Steering Committee. Involvement where possible in Technical Committee that could be established on implementation. Awareness-raising activities; direct involvement of state and non-state actors (including at the local island level) in project activities and as beneficiaries
Planning and coordination	Risk 4. Overlap of donor efforts	Low	Medium	Use of sectoral meetings, regular and efficient communications and proactive donor coordination.
External environment	Risk 5: Environmental meteorological and hydrological hazards climate change fragility	Low	High	The Action directly targets climate change adaptation including addressing fragility. Close monitoring underpinned by sound environmental analysis and capacity to adapt (built-in project flexibility).
People and	Risk 6: Gap between the capacities and skills of	Medium	Medium	A gender sector analysis will be carried out during the inception phase and will

organisati on	women-led and men-led enterprises, risking the action targets only those who are more advanced			inform in fine-tuning project activities which will include training and capacity building.
Risks related to gender blind interventions of the Action	Risk 7: A gender-blind, neutral or negative context and problem analysis could reinforce existing gender inequalities and non-realisation of human rights in the sector, and hinder the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the Action	Medium	Medium	Use gender-sensitive monitoring, use of sex-disaggregated data, and gender-sensitive indicators. Gender mainstreaming is applied in all phases of the support services.
External environment	Risk 8: Significant degradation of the macroeconomic/fiscal situation of the country leading to major shifts in terms of priorities and budget available for environmental preservation	Medium	High	Continued support to the Maldives' economy through business roundtables for example and other measures will support awareness and commitment of all stakeholders to environmental preservation is continuously built.

Lessons Learnt:

- Political changes can affect balance of commitment to biodiversity conservation and sound natural resource management versus unsustainable resource exploitation (land reclamation). Working with the newly capacitated island councils and atoll councils can bring this debate to the island and atoll level with greater ownership by local stakeholders (i.e., those whose resources are directly affected).
- EU experience supporting the Maldives' protected areas in Addu and Fuvahmulah Atolls and waste management (administered by the World Bank), has shown that protected area establishment is a sustainable and inclusive model which can include the private sector in protecting biodiversity while building a green economy, and can be replicated in other geographic areas.
- Waste management models developed at island level together with tourist resorts have shown successful outcomes that can be more widely adapted, and would form a foundation for creation of collaboration between islands and among atolls to make more efficient use of shared resources and infrastructure

3.5 The Intervention Logic

The **overall objective** of the Action is “To improve sustainable management of biodiversity in the Maldives to support conservation of natural resources and enhance climate resilience”.

Increase of population and economic growth has intensified the demand on natural resources and over-exploitation of biodiversity. The underlying intervention logic for this Action is to increase blue economic opportunities through the development of the capacities of central and local authorities, civil society organisations, including women and youth associations, communities and the private sector in planning, budgeting and decision-making based on scientific data and research, to mobilise innovative commercial nature-based solutions to protect and manage natural resources enabling sustainable community development and effective waste management.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative Logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention. On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed Logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete Logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated Logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the Logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)

1. 2. Results	Results chain (a): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (a): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to climate resilient socioeconomic development in the Maldives	1 Decrease in the rate of loss of identified habitats (NBSAP) 2. Red List Index (SDG 15.5.1)	1 TBD during implementation and once specific areas in the Maldives is identified in consultation with Government 2 TBD	1 TBD 2 TBD	1. National Data 2. International platforms	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Improved marine resource management and biodiversity protection in the Maldives' protected areas.	1.1*Marine areas under a) protection b) sustainable management with EU support (MIP 3.1) (GERF 2.8) 1.2 Number of conservation and natural resource management plans implemented 1.3 Amount of fund budget spent for effective planning, budgeting and decision-making and innovative actions. 1.4 Number of persons benefitting from sustainable development activities (disaggregated by sex and age)	1.a TBD 1.b TBD 1.2 TBD 1.3 TBD 1.4 TBD	1.a TBD 1.b TBD 1.2 TBD 1.3 TBD 1.4 TBD	1.a Government reports, project reports 1.b Government reports, project reports 1.2 Project reports 1.3 Project reports 1.4 Project reports	Existing models of success continue to be relevant for adapting and expanding The national priorities and budget available for environmental preservation, and waste reduction remain unchanged during the

Outcome 2	Improved waste management at island and atoll level including segregation, collection and reduction of single-use plastics	2.1 * Number of integrated waste management systems developed with EU assistance (MIP 1.4)	2.1 TBD	2.1 TBD	2.1 Project reports	<p>Action's duration</p> <p>Local councils continue to be politically empowered.</p> <p>Research able to be conducted and public discussion enabled.</p> <p>Sufficient technical capacity of stakeholders to comprehend and adopt learnings</p>
		2.2*Number of women-led and men-led MSMEs applying Sustainable Consumption and Production practices with EU support (MIP 1.1) (GERF 2.6) OR *Share of plastic <i>bottles</i> in total packaging with a reduction target of 80% (adapted from MIP 1.5) 2.3 Amount of waste collected and processed 2.4. Amount of waste transported outside the island	2.2 TBD	2.2 TBD	2.2 Project reports, surveys (budgeted in the Action)	
Outcome 3	Strengthened institutional coordination on blue-green economic policies/issues.	2.3 TBD	2.3 TBD	2.3 TBD	2.3 Internal monitoring recording documents and tools on waste collection and process	
		2.4 TBD	2.4 TBD	2.4 TBD	2.4 Shipping documents for handover of waste for treatment/recycling	
Outcome 3	Strengthened institutional coordination on blue-green economic policies/issues.	3.1 *Number of a) dialogue mechanisms on Inclusive Green/Blue Economy supported by the project and b) participants attending them (disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and type of stakeholder and role – participant/speaker) (MIP 4.2), GAP III Indicator	3.1 a,b) TBD	3.1 a,b) TBD	3.1 a,b) Project reports	
		3.2 Number of research reports, issues briefs and social media documentation created with EU support	3.2 TBD	3.2 TBD	3.2 Project reports	
		3.3 Number of systems/ platforms developed by the Action, which are used for participatory planning, exchange and coordination	3.3 TBD	3.3 TBD	3.3 Project reports	

Output 1.1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1 Increased availability of quality information on biodiversity areas for policy and regulatory frameworks' alignment with international commitments	1.1.1 Number of studies and assessments conducted	1.1.1 TBD	1.1.1 TBD	1.1.1 Studies and assessments, project reports	Research able to be conducted. Government priorities remain unchanged.
Output 1.2 relating to Outcome 1	1.2 Availability and implementation of conservation and natural resource management plans developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders that include innovative commercial nature-based solutions for conservation and sustainable community development/livelihoods.	1.2.1 Number and type of innovative and effective solutions developed; 1.2.2 Number of persons with enhanced capacity on resource use and protected area management as a result of the EU support (disaggregated by sex, age and type of stakeholder) 1.2.3 Number of management plans created 1.2.4 Quality of effectiveness of plan implementation	1.2.1 TBD 1.2.2 TBD 1.2.3 TBD 1.2.4 TBD	1.2.1 TBD 1.2.2 TBD 1.2.3 TBD 1.2.4 TBD	1.2.1 Meeting reports, project reports 1.2.2 Post-training evaluation 1.2.3-4 Project reports, evaluation	Public discussions enabled. Local councils continue to be politically empowered to take forward plans
Output 1.3 relating to Outcome 1	1.3 Increased availability of technological options for biodiversity protection by developing demonstration projects engaging local authorities, communities, private sector and civil society (including support to relevant local investments).	1.3.1 Number of agencies actively participating in investment/sub-grant scheme activities (disaggregated by stakeholder type) 1.3.2 Number of innovations funded under the fund, OR number of projects/activities	1.3.1 TBD 1.3.2 TBD	1.3.1 TBD 1.3.2 TBD	Project reports, evaluation	Wide stakeholder interest and uptake of tools created (particularly among females).

Output 2.1 relating to Outcome 2	2.1 Increased community awareness on the environmental and economic benefits of proper waste management/’zero waste’ mind-set	2.1.1 Number of individuals reached through events and campaigns (disaggregated by sex and age)	2.1.1 TBD	2.1.1 TBD	2.1.1 Event and campaigns attendance sheets, Web stats and social networks followers	Communicati on products are updated and used for wider reach.
		2.1.2 Number of households capacitated on waste reduction and segregation at source (disaggregated by sex and age of the Head of household)	2.1.2 TBD	2.1.2 TBD	2.1.2 Project reports	
Output 2.2 relating to Outcome 2	2.2 Increased availability of guidelines, systems and tools for proper waste segregation, collection, processing and transport out of the island and on alternatives to single-use to SUPs	2.2.1 Number of households incl. female-headed) provided with waste segregation kit (disaggregated by sex and age of the Head of household)	2.2.1 TBD	2.2.1 TBD	2.2.1 Signed document from households	Government priorities remain unchanged and waste management is facilitated.
		2.2.2 Number of stakeholders capacitated on segregation, collection, transport and processing best practices (disaggregated by type of stakeholder)	2.2.2 TBD	2.2.2 TBD	2.2.2 Post-training evaluation	
Output 2.3	2.3 Increased community and private sector awareness and willingness to participate in SUP reduction and introduction of sustainable alternatives with increased technological options for waste management by developing demonstration projects engaging local authorities, communities, private sector and civil society.	2.3.1 Number of SMEs (incl. female-headed) replacing Single-use water bottles with refillable ones	2.3.1 TBD	2.3.1 TBD	2.3.1 Signed commitment documents from SMEs; summary reports	SUP phase- out is implemented.
		2.3.2 Number of demonstration projects/innovation (by type of stakeholders) participating in investments/sub-grant scheme	2.3.2 TBD	2.3.2 TBD	2.3.2 Summary reports	

Output 3.1	3.1 Improved capacities of central government authorities, island and atoll councils to work with all stakeholders to address sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity conservation and blue/green economy	<p>3.1.1 Number of island and atoll councils actively working with stakeholders to better manage resources, parks and tourism impacts</p> <p>3.1.2 Number of people directly benefiting from EU-supported interventions that aim to reduce social and economic inequality (disaggregated by sex and age) (GERF 2.39)</p> <p>3.1.3 *Number of women councillors benefiting from EU support (MIP 2.1.2.1)</p> <p>3.1.4 *Level of confidence of women councillors on their capacities to carry out their mandates (MIP 2.1.2.2)</p>	<p>3.1.1 TBD</p> <p>3.1.2 TBD</p> <p>3.1.3 TBD</p> <p>3.1.4 TBD</p>	<p>3.1.1 TBD</p> <p>3.1.2 TBD</p> <p>3.1.3 TBD</p> <p>3.1.4 at least 75% report increased level of confidence</p>	<p>3.1.1. Meeting minutes; project reports</p> <p>3.1.2 Project reports</p> <p>3.1.3 Training reports, event minutes,</p> <p>3.1.4 follow up survey,</p>	Central Government and Local Authorities continue to prioritise the sustainable management of natural resources/biodiversity and possesses necessary resources.
Output 3.2	3.2 Increased availability of systems and tools for improved effectiveness of inter-island and atoll-wide coordination of waste management resources linking with central government	<p>3.3.1 Number of islands councils participating in coordinated waste management activities</p> <p>3.3.2 Amount of waste processed via shared resources between islands</p> <p>3.3.3 Number of persons that acquired capacity in the use and maintenance of shared equipment (gender and age disaggregated)</p>	<p>3.3.1 TBD</p> <p>3.3.2 TBD</p> <p>3.3.3 TBD</p>	<p>3.3.1 TBD</p> <p>3.3.2 TBD</p> <p>3.3.3 TBD</p>	<p>3.2.1. Meeting minutes with islands councils, signed collaboration agreement documents</p> <p>3.2.2 Waste processed for treatment/recycling recording documents</p> <p>3.2.3 Post-training evaluation</p>	Central Government and Local Authorities continue to prioritise waste management and has the required fund allocations.

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the Republic of the Maldives.

4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this Action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3 Implementation of the Budget Support Component - N/A

4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹⁹.

4.4.1 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

This Action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- proven in-country experience as well as Asia-wide experience with biodiversity protection, but also on waste management and climate resilience,
- proven quality of technical back-stopping expertise in the above fields,
- existing working relationships with key stakeholder will be considered an added value,
- proven experience in scientific research (data gathering, analysis) in the relevant fields, and specifically on biodiversity protection and conservation,
- proven experience in managing sub-grant fund/facility to engage a wide range of stakeholders,
- proven ability to conduct strategic policy dialogue (also linking with international commitments related to biodiversity and climate change where EU leadership prevalent) and promotion of normative and standard setting mandates,
- implementation/absorption capacity,
- willingness to operate in a Team Europe spirit by mobilising links with EU institutions where appropriate and provide adequate visibility to the EU.

The implementation by this entity entails the results under Outcome 1 – 3.

4.4.2 Changes from indirect to direct management mode due to exceptional circumstances

If negotiations with the selected entity under indirect management fail the whole Action may be implemented in direct management through procurement of services and supplies.

¹⁹ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.5 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third Party Contributions in currency identified
Indirect management with an entrusted entity – cf 4.3.1	6 500 000	TBC
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	Covered by another Decision	N.A.
Totals	6 500 000	TBC

4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be established and will be co-chaired by the Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, relevant Maldivian counterpart and be composed of key local stakeholders (incl. women's human rights organisations and if possible, those representing persons with disabilities - DPOs) in government (local and national), representatives from civil society and the private sector incl. women-led enterprises) who will support the achievement of the Action's objectives. Particular attention will be paid to equal and meaningful participation of women and youth, in all their diversity, in this committee. The PSC will meet twice a year (unless there is a specific need for additional meetings), and will be instrumental both in ensuring policy dialogue and strategic direction. The Implementing Partner will function as Secretariat and will be responsible for preparing and convening the PSC. Technical committees maybe set up as required to ensure efficient implementation and monitoring of the Project, striving for equal representation of women and men, including those living with disabilities. An Advisory Board to meet annually may also be established to widen the net of stakeholders engaged and providing inputs critical to achievement of results and smooth implementation.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action and may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action and ensuring effective coordination.

4.8 Pre-conditions

N/A

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this Action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators (disaggregated by sex, age and disability status if

possible), , using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

A baseline study will be conducted by the implementing partner in the first quarter of the project, against funds as stipulated in the detailed project budget. The baseline study will determine the baseline and targets to be monitored in the logical framework. Depending on the nature of the indicator, it may be counted/compiled annually or at project end. The entrusted entity will be responsible for monitoring and reporting progress, and for formulation of workplans that will be reviewed on a semi-annual and annual basis by the PSC. The semi-annual reports will focus on processes, including challenges and approaches, while the annual reports focus on progress against indicators and toward the three key outcomes. The implementing partner will conduct a follow-up to the baseline study for final reporting at project end.

Data will be collected by the entrusted entity as well as from different sources (at global level by external parties as well as through a Team Europe approach). A more detailed assessment in terms of data availability and needs will be defined during the inception phase. Local stakeholders will be part of the project planning and participate in data collection for relevant indicators. Accountability will be ensured by the inclusion of key duty bearers (stakeholders) in the Steering Committee, by regular convening of stakeholder meetings, and through accountability mechanisms to be determined for example through the implanting partner establishing an anonymous complaints mechanisms for due diligence.

All monitoring and evaluation systems will include a gender-performance component based on indicators that are disaggregated by sex, age and disability status when applicable. The Action will be subject to ROM missions.

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the Action, a mid-term review and/or final evaluation may be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission or through a joint mission via the implementing partner.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to the continued relevance of the local island and atoll councils role in a dynamic political environment, the effectiveness of multiple stakeholder groups in cooperating toward desired outcomes of a blue economy. The evaluation could assist in the preparation of new complementary interventions and more particularly relate to mobilising financing under EFSD+ to support access to sustainable finance.

A final evaluation if envisaged will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that local stakeholders are collaboratively managing for results in biodiversity conservation and waste management, and that the Action should have a leverage effect by supporting the mobilisation of private investment and/or other sources of funding.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this Action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, it will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary Intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

Articulating Actions or Contracts according to an expected chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure efficient monitoring and reporting of performance;

Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);

Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.

The intervention level for the present Action identifies as (tick one of the 4 following options);

Action level (i.e. Budget Support, blending)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e. top-up cases, different phases of a single programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): N/A
Contract level		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	
Group of contracts level (i.e. series of programme estimates, cases in which an Action includes for example four contracts and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts 1	