

2 Governance and policy tools for Samoa's sustainable ocean economy

The Government of Samoa has crafted an integrated approach to ocean management through the development of the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) and the National Ocean Steering Committee (NOSC). This chapter explores how these elements provide a foundation for policy coherence and co-ordination in pursuit of a sustainable ocean economy. It also elucidates challenges, some stemming from pandemic-related disruptions, which hamper the potential of the SOS and the NOSC. The chapter then situates the SOS and the NOSC in Samoa's economic, social and environmental context, as well as its broader policy landscape, to assess policy alignment and identify drivers of and roadblocks to successful implementation.

Key messages

- The Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) provides the foundation for a coherent approach to ocean governance. Informed by extensive stakeholder consultation, it is an inclusive instrument and representative of the diversity of ocean uses and pressures. It also includes provisions for a co-ordinating mechanism and a marine spatial planning tool, both of which foster an integrated approach to ocean management.
- The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the roll-out of the SOS and obstructed the functioning of the National Ocean Steering Committee (NOSC). As a result, several core features of the strategy, such as costing, the timeline for delivery, monitoring and evaluation, remain undefined or underdeveloped. Rectifying these shortcomings, which can hinder implementation and effectiveness, is a key priority.
- The SOS is situated in a broader context of ocean-relevant policy frameworks in Samoa, which include the national development plans, as well as sector-specific policies. The SOS has clear implications for these instruments and vice versa. This underscores the need to strengthen the articulation between these planning instruments, which remains tenuous or ambiguous, to allow for adequate consideration of the linkages between sectors and between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of the sustainable ocean economy. Reinforcing integration across policy frameworks can also help implement SOS successfully.

A holistic approach to governing the ocean economy is essential, given its vastness and diversity.

Effective ocean governance requires managing the wide array of ocean uses – for tourism, fisheries and maritime transport in the case of Samoa – and the variety of pressures on the ocean, including climate change and marine pollution (see Section 1.3). This means that different agencies, with differing policy objectives, have mandates related to the ocean (OECD, 2020^[1]). Without proper co-ordination, ocean governance risks being ad hoc and siloed.

Ocean governance needs to account for the interlinkages between different ocean-based sectors, as well as between economic, environmental and social considerations. Cross-sectoral interactions can range from antagonistic, in which sectors have competing interests, to synergistic, in which they have mutual interests (Klinger et al., 2018^[2]). For example, in Samoa, both cruise liners and cargo vessels call at its only international port, Apia, which means that managing sectoral competition for the port's limited space and capacity is an important undertaking. Meanwhile, infrastructure improvements at the port (e.g. for climate change adaptation) can benefit both the tourism and maritime transport sectors, making such efforts a policy priority. The economic, social and environmental dimensions of the ocean economy are also closely linked. As outlined in Table 1.3 (Chapter 1), the impact of climate change, such as the deterioration of coral reefs, can diminish Samoa's tourist appeal, reflecting the inextricable link between the economic potential of marine tourism and environmental quality (Schuhmann et al., 2019^[3]). On the other hand, tourism can have adverse consequences on the marine environment, for example on coastal water quality (Kurniawan et al., 2022^[4]).

Appropriate institutional arrangements and well-designed policy frameworks are indispensable for a coherent approach to ocean governance and the successful implementation of ocean-related policies.¹ Through national strategies and plans, countries can lay out a long-term vision for a sustainable ocean economy, accounting for the aforementioned interlinkages, with clear milestones to monitor progress and adequate resources to finance the implementation (see Chapter 3). Meanwhile, appropriate institutional arrangements, such as inter-ministry co-ordination mechanisms, can help to promote coherent, integrated management of ocean resources. Given the multitude of actors involved in the use and management of oceans, including relevant stakeholders and their perspectives in the design of strategic

frameworks and institutional arrangements is crucial. Clear articulation between planning instruments, effective co-ordination across ministries and adequate stakeholder engagement can also facilitate implementation, building legitimacy and a common understanding of ocean-related policies.

2.1. The Samoa Ocean Strategy: A framework for ocean governance

Launched in October 2020, the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) is a unified vision for the management of Samoa’s ocean resources. The SOS is composed of three principal elements: prioritised thematic areas, threats and integrated management solutions (hereafter Solutions). The *six prioritised thematic areas* reflect what Samoa values in the ocean and serve as guiding principles for the SOS. Prioritised thematic areas include offshore waters, maritime safety and security, species of special interest, marine coastal ecosystems and species, food security and ocean knowledge. Factors that jeopardise the thematic areas are classified, as threats. In total, there are *13 threats*, which can be grouped into six categories (Table 2.1).

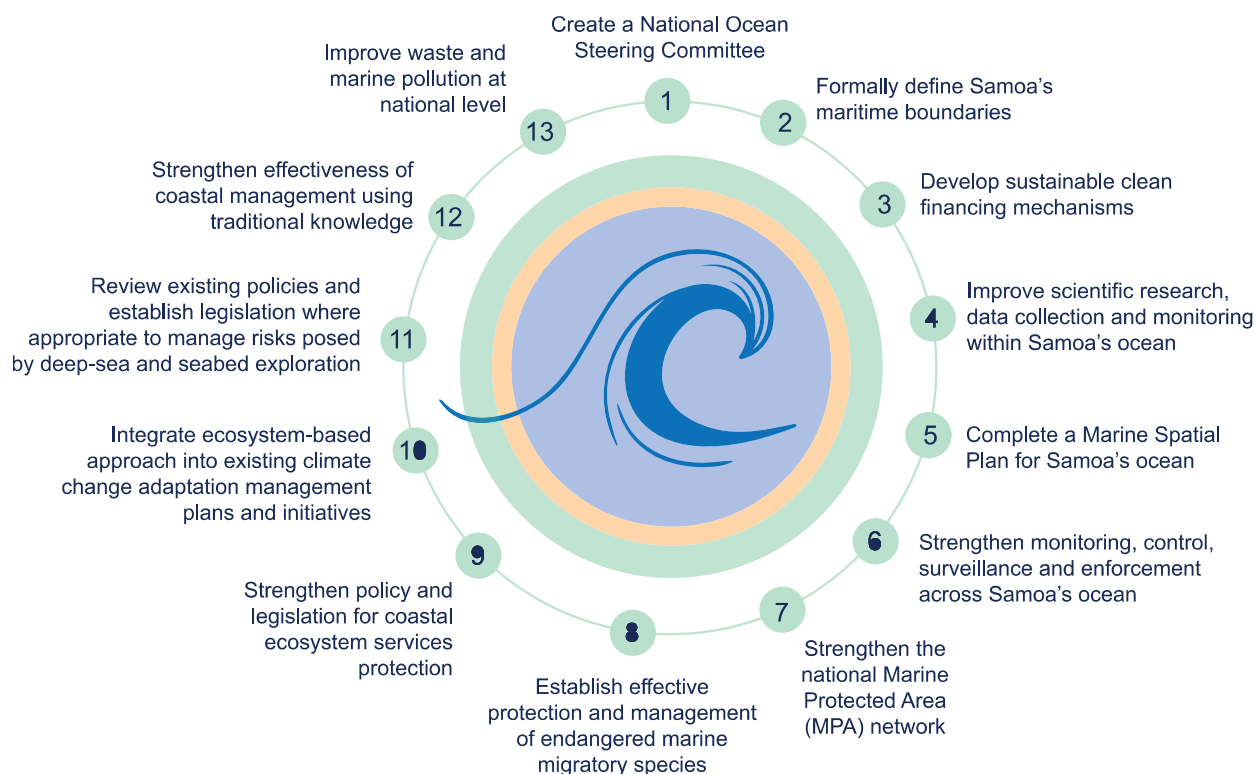
Table 2.1. The SOS lists 13 threats, in 6 categories

Category	Threats
Fishing	Unsustainable extraction, fishing equipment and methods Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activities.
Pollution	Land-based pollution Pollution from vessels, ports and dry docks
Unsustainable development	Local mangrove forest clearing Unsustainable sand mining development Unsustainable coastal development Potential for unregulated deep-sea mining
Climate change	Coastal erosion Coral bleaching
Knowledge and data	Limited integration of traditional knowledge Limited modern ocean science
Invasive species	Intentional and unintentional introduction of invasive species

Source: Government of Samoa (2020^[5]), *Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020-2030: Integrated Management for a Healthy and Abundant Future of Samoa’s Ocean*, <https://www.samoaocean.org/>.

To advance the prioritised thematic areas and avert the threats, the SOS proposes 13 Solutions, grouped under six strategic priorities. The Solutions, illustrated in Figure 2.1, are broken down into *objectives* and *goals*. While the Solutions indicate general aims, the objectives and goals reflect more specific aims and milestones, with the objectives covering a shorter time horizon and the goals a longer one.² For each goal, the SOS proposes indicators against which to monitor and evaluate progress. In this way, the Solutions provide a roadmap for achieving the ambitions of the SOS.

Figure 2.1. Integrated management solutions address risks to the health of Samoa's ocean



Source: Adapted from Government of Samoa (2020^[5]), *Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020-2030: Integrated Management for a Healthy and Abundant Future of Samoa's Ocean*, <https://www.samoaocean.org/>.

The SOS is well-placed to address the environmental threats and vulnerabilities affecting Samoa and to enable sustainable use of its ocean resources. As elaborated in Section 1.3, Samoa is highly exposed to natural hazards, including climate change. Meanwhile, environmental degradation (e.g. plastic pollution, overfishing and destruction of marine habitat) jeopardises its ocean resources and the potential of its ocean economy. The SOS's prioritised thematic areas and threats reflect these environmental issues. In particular, the threats identified by SOS (e.g. pollution, unsustainable development and climate change-related coastal erosion) are clearly rooted in the need to safeguard the health and resilience of Samoa's ocean and marine ecosystems). Through the Solutions, which include objectives like strengthening a national marine protected area (MPA) network and fortifying legislation for coastal ecosystem services, the SOS provides an actionable framework to address Samoa's environmental and climate-related concerns.

Although it recognises the socioeconomic value of the ocean, the SOS does not articulate a comprehensive vision of how to harness the ocean economy for resilient and inclusive long-term growth. In defining the prioritised thematic areas, the SOS acknowledges the value of the ocean to its people is dictated by the ocean's "ecological and socio-economic attributes" (Government of Samoa, 2020^[5]). One of its thematic areas, food security, is a crucial consideration for advancing Samoa's socioeconomic welfare, especially given its economic context, where reliance on food imports has left it susceptible to external shocks (see Section 1.4). However, the SOS, and in particular, the integrated management solutions, do not explicitly define a vision for ocean-led economic growth.

The early phase of implementation of the SOS was disrupted by COVID-19, delaying foundational objectives, including costing the SOS. Achieving the SOS's objectives and goals within the original timelines has been challenging, given the abrupt halt in human and economic activity during the health crisis. The SOS stipulates that a science strategy is to be developed by 2022, but work on its formulation

is only now under way. It is not clear when its objectives and goals will be completed, and a clear picture of the resource needs and possible financing sources. Estimates of the cost of implementing the SOS and a corresponding business plan were expected to be finalised by 2021, according to the document, but no such estimates or plan yet exist, presenting a bottleneck for its implementation.

Nevertheless, the SOS is an opportunity to address gaps, redundancies and contradictions in Samoa's ocean governance. In Samoa, as in the South Pacific region generally (Vince et al., 2017^[6]), sector-based silos and fragmentation have historically hampered effective governance of ocean resources and ocean-related policies. A 2009 review of ocean governance in Samoa, for example, noted that the Lands, Surveys, and Environment Act of 1989,³ its primary environmental legislation, is principally focused on terrestrial environmental law, leaving gaps in the regulation of marine resources (Solofa, 2009^[7]). Likewise, legal overlaps, for example between the Ports Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), have led to operational conflicts between government institutions (Solofa, 2009^[7]). The SOS, which acknowledges the importance of ensuring alignment and avoiding duplication (Government of Samoa, 2020^[5]), is an important step in remedying these shortfalls.

The SOS development process and the Solutions that Samoa is currently implementing constitute meaningful progress towards an integrated approach to ocean management. The development of the SOS was rooted in a “multi-stakeholder and consultative approach” (Government of Samoa, 2020^[5]), making it inclusive and reflective of diverse ocean uses and pressures. Likewise, the National Ocean Steering Committee (NOSC), which was created in 2021, represents a formal institutional set-up for policy co-ordination and implementation of the SOS (Solution 1). Meanwhile, the marine spatial plan (MSP) (Solution 5), due for completion in 2023, is commonly recognised as an effective framework for reducing sector-based silos and fragmentation (see UNESCO-IOC (2021^[8])). The sections below elaborate on stakeholder consultations during the development of the SOS, the NOSC, and the MSP.

Stakeholder consultations have been instrumental in formulating the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS).

The development of the Samoa Ocean Strategy has involved extensive stakeholder consultations. Identifying and formulating the different elements of the SOS relied on insights and perspectives from stakeholders. In total, five national consultations were carried out to inform the SOS. The first was an internal government consultation process, which brought together representatives from different line ministries. The purpose of this consultation was to inform and define the structure and scope of the SOS and its development. Thereafter, two national consultations were held not only with government stakeholders, but also with local and international non-governmental organisations, regional organisations, academia, and local civil society groups. Industry or business organisations, however, were not directly consulted. Finally, community representatives from Upolu and Savai'i were consulted to ensure that the priorities of the SOS reflected those of the different communities. Recognising the importance of continued engagement, the early stage of SOS implementation, notably the design of the MSP, has entailed additional stakeholder consultations (see below).

The consultations have been critical in fostering the broad-based support and legitimacy needed for effective implementation. Given the importance of customary land rights and village-level governance in Samoa, the consultations have been particularly important for generating buy-in from communities for the SOS. These consultations have allowed the Samoan government to navigate contentious issues such as MPAs and to balance trade-offs (e.g. food security and overfishing). The value of community engagement in Samoa is encapsulated by its climate change adaptation efforts, where village-level endorsement and ownership has facilitated effective action (Latai-Niusulu, Binns and Nel, 2019^[9]). Interviews with stakeholders revealed how initiatives to move human settlements inland were often spearheaded by communities that were witnessing the impact of climate change first-hand. As for cross-sectoral buy-in, inputs on the SOS were gathered from stakeholders operating in Samoa's key ocean-

based sectors: fisheries (e.g. the MAF), tourism (e.g. Samoa Tourism Authority), and maritime transport (e.g. Samoa Ports Authority and Samoa Shipping Co-operation). In principle, such consultations allow for attention to sector-specific concerns and the building of consensus, but in practice, fully integrating all concerns was challenging.

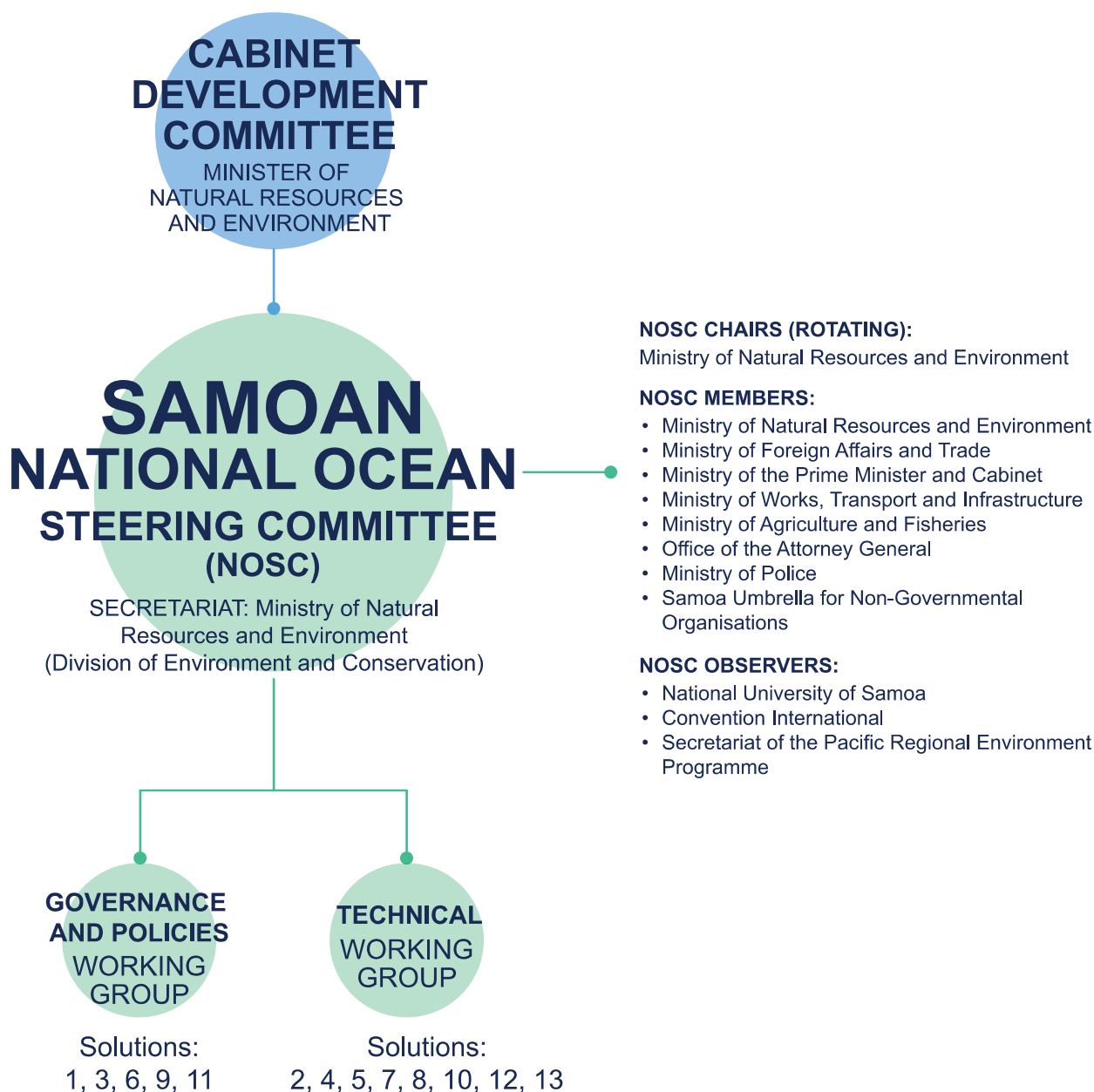
In addition to achieving buy-in, stakeholder engagement can also enhance coherence and a balanced consideration of different objectives. OECD (2016^[10]) highlights stakeholder engagement as one of the pathways for better ocean planning and management, while noting that the design and scale of stakeholder consultation, as well as the tools used, determine its success. The OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development also underscores the value of stakeholder engagement, including across different levels of government, for generating sustained support and for ensuring policy coherence at all levels of government (OECD, 2019^[11]). Stakeholder consultation is particularly suited to capturing the distributional effects of ocean-related policies and their aggregate effects on social exclusion and inequity (Cavallo, Bugeja Said and Pérez Agúndez, 2023^[12]). This is key for promoting an ocean economy that is not only economically and environmentally viable but also socially sustainable.

The National Ocean Steering Committee is an important vehicle for policy co-ordination and successful SOS delivery.

As a part of the SOS (Solution 1) and to facilitate its implementation, Samoa has established the NOSC. The committee has a high-level advisory and decision-making role in co-ordinating and implementing the SOS (Government of Samoa, 2021^[13]). It is tasked with overseeing the strategic direction of the SOS and any periodic revisions that may be warranted for policy alignment. The committee also serves to ease co-ordination challenges, by clarifying the ocean-related roles and responsibilities of different institutions, supporting the relevant agencies in implementing the SOS Solutions, and facilitating communication between relevant stakeholders. It is also within the committee's remit to monitor and evaluate the progress of the SOS, as well as to assess its financial and human resource needs.

The NOSC includes government and non-government stakeholders. The committee is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE), and the chairing responsibilities rotate every six months. The NOSC chair leads co-ordination with all national institutions on SOS-related matters and monitors and reports biannually to the Cabinet Development Committee on the progress of SOS objectives and goals. In addition to the co-chairs, the NOSC executive membership is composed of senior officials from five government entities and the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO). The NOSC also has several observers, in an advisory capacity. Internal co-ordination in the NOSC is conducted by the Division of Environment and Conservation of the MNRE, which functions as the Secretariat of the NOSC.⁴ The structure of the NOSC is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. The NOSC includes an array of members and observers



Source: Adapted from Government of Samoa (2021^[13]), Terms of Reference for the National Ocean Steering Committee.

The NOSC has set up two working groups, the Governance and Policies Working Group and the Technical Working Group. Each is involved in delivering the SOS and is mandated to provide technical support for the Solutions. Their recommendations serve as the basis for decision making by the NOSC. Table 2.2 summarises the membership of each working group and the Solutions for which each is responsible.

Table 2.2. The working groups provide technical support for implementing the Solutions

Working Group	Members	Solutions
Governance and Policies	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet; Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; Ministry of Finance; Samoa Tourism Authority; Conservation International; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Ministry of Police; Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority	Create the NOSC
		Develop sustainable ocean financing mechanisms
		Strengthen monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement across Samoa's ocean
		Strengthen policy and legislation for coastal ecosystem services protection
		Review existing policies and establish legislation where appropriate to manage risks posed by deep-sea and seabed exploration
Technical	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture; Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Communications, Information, and Technology; National University of Samoa; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Samoa Tourism Authority; Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development; Ministry of Police; Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority; Conservation International; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; SUNGO	Formally define Samoa's maritime boundaries
		Improve scientific research, data collection and monitoring within Samoa's ocean
		Complete an MSP for Samoa's ocean
		Strengthen the national MPA network
		Establish effective protection and management of endangered marine migratory species
		Integrate an ecosystem-based approach into existing climate change adaptation management plans and initiatives
		Strengthen effectiveness of coastal management using traditional knowledge, innovation and marine science
		Improve waste and marine pollution management at the national level

Source: Authors' research based on Government of Samoa (2021^[13]), Terms of Reference for the National Ocean Steering Committee.

The NOSC's operations were curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The terms of reference for the committee indicate that NOSC meetings were to be held monthly for the first six months of the SOS implementation. Thereafter, meetings were expected to be held quarterly. However, government officials indicate that the NOSC has only met four times since its inception, with no meetings in 2022, due to pandemic-related lockdowns. Meanwhile, each working group has only met twice since being established. As the NOSC meetings are intended to serve as a platform for strategic discussions, monitoring and review, and decision making, and the working group meetings are vital for technical guidance, the lack of regularity and consistency in meetings has inevitably delayed the implementation of the SOS.

Nevertheless, the NOSC has the potential to drive policy co-ordination and ensure that stakeholders work in concert towards common goals. As shown in Box 2.1, multiple actors govern or operate in ocean domains from different angles, highlighting the importance of a mechanism to promote policy coherence and co-ordination. Since its membership includes most government and non-governmental entities operating in Samoa's ocean economy, the NOSC is well-placed to function as a co-ordinating body. NOSC members include most of the ministries with a core ocean-related role, such as the MNRE, MAF, and the Ministry of Works Transport and Infrastructure (MWTI). Some ministries not within the core NOSC body are represented in the two working groups of the NOSC (e.g. the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture). The inclusion of non-governmental stakeholders (e.g. SUNGO and the National University of Samoa) in the NOSC builds co-ordination and legitimacy beyond government entities. Government entities with activities related to the ocean, such as the Ministry of Customs and Revenue and the Ports Authority, are not included in the NOSC and its technical working groups. While these bodies are not strictly necessary for NOSC's integrated ocean management, ensuring proper co-ordination with them is vital for policy coherence and successful implementation. Likewise, the NOSC does not include representatives from industry or business organisations (e.g. Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry), but its terms of reference do

specify encouraging participation from private institutions in the working groups as part of the committee's roles and responsibilities. Engaging the sector is a key element of integrated ocean management since it builds legitimacy and facilitation of good practices across ocean-related businesses (Winther et al., 2020^[14]).

Box 2.1. Many government and non-government actors operate in the Samoan ocean economy

Ocean-related mandates relevant for marine spatial planning

In a recent legal and policy review of ocean governance in Samoa, Ram-Bidesi et al. (2021^[15]) noted seven ministries whose policy-making and regulating mandates have a strong ocean component, with particular relevance for marine spatial planning. They include the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Customs and Revenue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The relevant functions of these ministries are summarised in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Multiple ministries have ocean-related responsibilities and competencies

Ministry	Notable ocean-related responsibilities
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable management and development of Samoa's natural resources 2. Environmental conservation (terrestrial and marine biodiversity) 3. Technical focal point for disaster risk management and climate change 4. Sanitation and waste management
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management and development of inshore and commercial fisheries 2. Aquaculture management and development 3. Quarantine and biosafety 4. Promotion of climate and disaster resilience by developing agricultural and fisheries practices and technology
Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead implementing agency for the transport sector and focal point for the National Infrastructure and Strategic Plan 2. Ensuring the safety and security of marine transport 3. Provision of efficient and effective road and drainage network for Samoa 4. Implementing environmental safeguards through its development consent process
Ministry of Customs and Revenue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oversight of customs service (e.g. process movement of goods and people, audit international trade agreements to ensure compliance)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management of Samoa's trade and foreign relations, including cross-government co-ordination to ensure engagement and compliance with international maritime, fisheries, oceans and environmental treaties 2. Definition of maritime boundaries and administration of the Maritime Zones Act 1999
Ministry of Finance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobilisation and allocation of all government-funded agencies through annual budget cycles 2. Development planning and monitoring and evaluation, including in ocean-relevant sectors 3. Aid co-ordination, including for climate finance and climate resilience-related projects
Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Screening, co-ordinating and monitoring national policies across government 2. As Secretariat to the Cabinet, key implementing agency for the environment sector

Source: Adapted from Ram-Bidesi et al. (2021^[15]), Law and Policy Review in Support of Marine Spatial Planning in Samoa, <http://rio-samoa.mnre.gov.ws/sites/default/files/Legal%20report%2021March2022.pdf>.

Other actors involved in the Samoan ocean economy

Other line ministries also have roles in Samoa's ocean economy. The Maritime Division of the Ministry of Police, for example, carries out enforcement activities related to illegal fishing within Samoa's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture increases awareness of ocean issues by developing school curricula and promoting ocean-related cultural practices and traditions. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development approaches economic development in ocean-related sectors from the perspective of gender equality and social inclusion, by providing input in developing national policies and plans. This is especially important in the fisheries sector, where the role of women is undervalued and under-recognised (OECD, 2020^[11]). As the lead government agency for the review and redesign of district development plans, the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development has an important role in facilitating ocean action at the community level.

In addition to government ministries, the key actors in Samoa's ocean economy include state-owned enterprises, civil society and the private sector. The Samoa Ports Authority oversees port infrastructure and ensures that it meets the country's economic and social requirements (Samoa Ports Authority, 2023^[16]). Ports, and consequently the Ports Authority, occupy a central role not only in maritime transport (whether domestic or international) but also in cruise tourism and fisheries. Meanwhile, the Samoa Tourism Authority provides policy advice on sustainably developing the tourism sector and organises co-ordination and tourism promotion (Samoa Tourism Authority, 2015^[17]). Civil society actors and NGOs have a critical role in advocating for specific issue areas, marine conservation specifically (e.g. the Samoa Conservation Society) and advancing the ocean-related priorities of specific population groups. Private sector entities, for example in the tourism sector (e.g. accommodation, food and beverages), are vital in the functioning of ocean-related industries.

The NOSC's monitoring and evaluation function is also critical, but further clarification is warranted. The NOSC terms of reference explicitly charge the committee to undertake monitoring and evaluation of the SOS and also indicate that progress should be reported to the Cabinet Development Committee every six months. Meanwhile, the SOS outlines milestones and corresponding indicators for each of its goals. However, neither the NOSC terms of reference nor the SOS elaborates on the specifics of this monitoring and evaluation function. For example, monitoring is rooted in "a continual and systematic collection of data on specified indicators" (OECD, 2011^[18]); but it does not specify which ministry or agency is responsible for collecting data on which SOS indicators. Also, the terms, monitoring, evaluation, and review, are used collectively in the NOSC terms of reference, although their scopes and consequently, what they require in resources and capacity, are different (OECD, 2011^[18]). Clarifying the monitoring and evaluation framework and processes for the SOS would better equip the NOSC to support the SOS and achieve its objectives.

Marine spatial planning is a notable step towards integrated ocean management.

Marine spatial planning is an important component of the Samoa Ocean Strategy. One of the 13 Integrated Management Solutions identified by the Samoa Ocean Strategy, marine spatial planning provides a comprehensive, integrated approach to managing marine resources designed to balance ecological, economic and social objectives and minimise conflicts between different uses. Developing the MSP involves a public process combining analytical work and public consultations to map the use of marine resources and to establish permitted uses and restrictions based on a zoning of the ocean space. More than 60 countries already use a marine spatial planning approach to manage their ocean economies. In Samoa, the MSP process began in 2019, is led by the government and is supported by technical assistance and funding from the European Union Global Climate Change Alliance Initiative and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Oceania Regional Office.

The first public consultations, between August 2021 and March 2022, aimed to raise awareness of the MSP process and gather insights from ocean stakeholders. The consultation process was led by an MSP national consultation team appointed by the government of Samoa, comprised of government officials, representatives from SUNGO, Conservation International's Samoa office as well as a local MSP project co-ordinator. The first consultation process, which suffered some delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, engaged with 2 597 representatives from village communities and key national sectors. Of community representatives consulted, 96% and 78% identified subsistence and artisanal fishing for coastal marine species respectively as the most important ocean activities. Tourism and recreational activities were the second main economic activities for community and business operators. Additionally, 69% of the community groups consulted saw climate change as the greatest environmental challenge facing the sustainability of the ocean and its natural resources.

The information from communities and sectoral practitioners made it possible to spatially map human activity in Samoa's ocean, including areas for subsistence and commercial fishing, aquaculture, community swimming, sand mining and tourism. The consultations also helped identify areas of high conservation value, areas of significant economic importance and areas where conflicts between different uses could arise. Representatives of the fisheries sector expressed concern that setting up offshore ocean management areas could threaten the sustainability and vulnerability of their operations because of the loss of fishing areas. This illustrates the importance of clearly identifying and mitigating the costs and impact of MSP measures for the stakeholders in Samoa's ocean economy.

Public consultation on the draft MSP will provide further opportunity to ensure the inclusion of ocean economy stakeholders. Based on the information collected in the first consultation, a draft MSP will be developed to geolocate the potential ocean management areas, as well as other ocean areas, according to their proposed use (development, conservation, restoration, etc.) and restrictions. The draft ocean spatial plan will be reviewed by the public during the second phase of MSP national consultations. As part of the third and last stage of the national consultation process, the authorities will carry out specific activities to increase awareness among the general public of the location of the different ocean management areas and their respective uses and restrictions.

The valuation of Samoa's marine ecosystem services conducted as part of the MSP gave initial insight into the economic benefits of sustainably managing ocean resources. Small island developing states like Samoa are highly dependent on their marine ecosystems for economic and social development. These ecosystems offer numerous services, such as fisheries, tourism, carbon sequestration and protection against natural hazards. However, they face increasing pressures from climate change, overfishing, pollution and other human activities. To address such challenges, some small island developing states (SIDS) are using the valuation of marine ecosystem services as a tool to understand the economic benefits of conserving their natural resources. Table 2.4 provides a summary of the seven key marine ecosystem services evaluated in this exercise: subsistence fishing; commercial fishing; sand and aggregate mining; tourism; coastal protection; carbon sequestration; and marine research, education and management. The findings of the valuation indicate that a significant portion of Samoa's ecosystem service benefits come from international tourism (between USD 28.93 million and USD 84.54 million), subsistence and commercial fishing (over USD 40 million), costs averted related to storm flooding protection (from USD 2.85 million to USD 7.53 million) and foreign aid for ocean-related projects (approximately USD 25 million).

Table 2.4. By assigning monetary values to ecosystem services, the valuation exercise can inform policy and planning processes for sustainably managing Samoa's oceans

Annual economic value of marine and coastal ecosystem services in Samoa in 2019 prices

Sector	Ecosystem services benefits	Net annual value 2019 adjusted (in USD million)
Fisheries	Subsistence fishing	18.30 – 19.30
	Domestic coastal fishing	19.01 – 20.68
	Sea cucumber	0.05
	Deepwater bottom fishing	0.08
	Offshore tuna	2.96 – 3.89
	Nearshore pelagic troll fishing	0.06
	Marine aquarium	n.a
	Mariculture	n.a.
Mining	Sand and aggregate	0.01
	Deep-sea minerals	n.a.
Tourism	International tourism	28.93 – 84.54
	Domestic tourism	11.29
Regulating services	Coastal protection	2.85 – 7.53
	Carbon sequestration	0.06
Foreign aid and investment	Research, education and management	24.80

Source : Ram-Bidesi et al. (2022^[19]) Samoa Marine Ecosystem Service Valuation Report, https://www.samoaocean.org/files/ugd/47d1fd_6350b34c958e4bc69ed1150b1c5b002d.pdf.

The findings of the valuation of Samoa's ecosystem services will inform the marine spatial planning process. First, the valuation provides a basis to rationalise the need to preserve important areas for ecosystem service provision. Secondly, it can help evaluate trade-offs between different uses of marine resources in the MSP, helping decision makers determine the optimal balance between different uses. This could ultimately allow for a more effective allocation of resources and ensure the most efficient use of marine resources. Thirdly, the valuation of ecosystem services could help secure funding for the MSP from various financing mechanisms, some of which require a clear understanding of the economic benefits of conservation and management actions. Up-to-date information on the valuation of its ecosystem services could help Samoa improve its access to funding and financing for implementing the MSP.

2.2. Situating the Samoa Ocean Strategy in the country's broader policy landscape

Besides the Samoa Ocean Strategy, an array of policy instruments supports the sustainable management and development of Samoa's ocean economy. The SOS serves as an overarching vision for a resilient and sustainable ocean future, but it operates within a more extensive policy landscape addressing various aspects of the ocean economy. This multi-layered policy context includes cross-sectoral planning instruments like the national and district development plans, and sector-specific policies and strategies designed to address unique challenges in specific areas of the ocean economy, like environmental protection, tourism, fisheries and maritime transport.

Aligning the SOS and development and sectoral plans is vital for policy coherence. Policy integration across sectors and different levels of governance is an important element of policy coherence⁵. The Solutions have important implications for the growth and development of Samoa's ocean-related sectors and vice versa. Increasing monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement in Samoa's oceans (Solution 6) affects the fisheries sector by curbing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; maritime

transport, through compliance obligations; and tourism through stronger coral reef protection that preserves its appeal. Capturing synergies and balancing the trade-offs between different sectoral priorities, as well as between environmental, economic and social objectives, requires clear articulation of the different planning instruments.

Better integration of the SOS and the national development and sectoral plans is essential for the success of SOS implementation. In Samoa, budgetary allocations are guided by and directly linked to the priorities set out in the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS) and sector-specific plans. Costing and budget appropriations are carried out for specific outputs at the sector/ministry level (see Government of Samoa (2022^[20])). Government officials and development partners in Samoa often cite the PDS or sector plans as being indicative of their programmes. Ensuring that the SOS is reflected in them is critical for achieving its objectives. Development partners' efforts are guided by Samoa's development and sectoral plans, and robust integration of the SOS and the planning instruments is needed to ensure that donor support is aligned with Samoa's ocean-related priorities, especially since official development assistance currently does not fully target the priorities of SOS (see Chapter 3).

Samoa's national and district development plans set out its vision for development and need to be aligned with the Samoa Ocean Strategy.

Samoa's development aspirations are captured by its national development plans and more recently, district-specific planning instruments. *Samoa 2040: Transforming Samoa to a higher growth path* outlines Samoa's long-term development vision. The PDS, meanwhile, governs its development plan in the medium term, from fiscal year 2021/2022 to fiscal year 2025/26 (see Box 2.2) (Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, 2022^[21]). The PDS and *Samoa 2040* are considered complementary, with the medium-term PDS guiding annual programmes and budgetary decisions and the longer-term vision functioning as a forward-looking strategic statement (Government of Samoa, 2019^[22]). In addition to national-level planning, the government of Samoa promotes a decentralised approach to and community-level ownership of development planning through the district development plans. This approach charges each district with identifying medium-term district-specific priorities, with an annual disbursement of 1 million Samoan talas (WST) to support them.

These planning instruments lay out Samoa's ocean-related economic ambitions. Two of the four transformative economic opportunities identified by *Samoa 2040*, tourism and fishing (and agriculture), depend on ocean resources (Government of Samoa, 2021^[23]). The PDS echoes this focus on tourism and fishing, espousing the importance of revitalising tourism (Key Priority Area 8) and improving the productivity of the fisheries and aquaculture sector (Key Priority Area 7) (Government of Samoa, 2022^[24]). The PDS also reiterates the importance of consolidated infrastructure management (Key Priority Area 21), which covers maritime transport, especially for reducing production costs, market access and domestic connectivity (Government of Samoa, 2022^[24]).

Box 2.2. Samoa's national development vision is defined by two planning instruments

Samoa 2040: Transforming Samoa to a higher growth path

Samoa 2040 charts the country's economic growth and development agenda over the next two decades. Recognising the challenges posed by its geography, as well as its vulnerability to shocks, the document identifies four transformative economic opportunities for prosperity in Samoa:

1. **Tourism:** Samoa's natural endowments (including its coastal and marine environments) and its cultural traditions are assets for its tourism sector. However, overcoming the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. border closures), as well as structural issues, such as its lack of infrastructure, is critical for realising the full potential of the tourism sector.
2. **Agriculture and fishing:** High trade costs, among other factors, have limited the export potential of Samoa's agriculture and fisheries sector. Shifting to import substitution and exploring niche export markets present viable opportunities for the future.
3. **Digital economy:** Expanding connectivity and developing the information and communications technology skills of the workforce can unlock opportunities in e-commerce and trade in services and entrepreneurship, helping Samoa to mitigate the constraints of its remote location and boost economic productivity.
4. **Labour mobility:** Given its small size, there may be an upper limit in the demand for domestic labour. Labour mobility can provide access to employment internationally, as well as to training and skills that can support the domestic economy upon their return home.

Pathway for the Development of Samoa (2021/22 to 2025/26)

The Pathway for the Development of Samoa, with a focus on human development, is organised into five key strategic outcomes (KSO). Each strategic outcome is broken down into key priority areas. The five strategic outcomes and key priority areas are synthesised below.

1. **Improved social development (KSO 1):** Key priority areas include: alleviating hardship; improved public health; quality education; people empowerment; and a skilled workforce.
2. **Diversified and sustainable economy (KSO 2):** Key priority areas include: community development; agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture productivity; tourism revitalisation; business innovation and growth; increased labour mobility; and macroeconomic stability.
3. **Security and trusted governance (KSO 3):** Key priority areas include: empowered legislation; improved accountability; dynamic global relations and partnerships.
4. **Secured environment and climate change (KSO 4):** Key priority areas include: building climate resilience; effective environmental protection and management frameworks; enhanced conservation and sustainable use of natural resources; and sustainable energy development enhanced.
5. **Structured public works and infrastructure (KSO 5):** Key priority areas include: responsive public utility services; innovative information, communication and technology use; and consolidated infrastructure management.

Source: Government of Samoa (2021^[23]), *Samoa 2040: Transforming Samoa to a Higher Growth Path*, <https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Samoa-2040-Final.pdf>; Government of Samoa (2022^[24]), *Pathway for the Development of Samoa FY2021/2022-FY2025/26*, <https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Pathway-for-the-Development-of-Samoa.pdf>.

They also reinforce the importance of ocean health, echoing the priorities of the SOS. Both *Samoa 2040* and the PDS address environmental stressors affecting the ocean (e.g. climate change, IUU) and recognise the intimate relationship between ocean health and ocean-related economic ambitions (e.g. nature's value in facilitating tourism growth). In fact, Key Priority Area 17 of the PDS (Enhanced Conservation and Sustainable Use of Resources) explicitly refers to the Samoa Ocean Strategy as the guide for the “sustainable and integrated management of [Samoa’s] ocean and its resources” (Government of Samoa, 2022^[24]), lending additional authority to the SOS.

The SOS Solutions could be better linked to the development plans’ socioeconomic priorities. In principle, all planning instruments should align with Samoa’s national development plans, but gaps remain in practice. The PDS was released after the SOS, and the previous development plan, the *Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2016/17-2019/2020* (SDS), was considered a point of reference for developing the SOS,⁶ and the SOS maps its Solutions to the SDS’s Priority Areas. This mapping, however, predominantly shows linkages to SDS’s Priority Area 4 (Environment). This conceals some of the fundamental interdependencies between the Solutions and the ocean-related socioeconomic ambitions of the development plans. Marine Protected Areas (SOS Solution 7), for example, can have positive outcomes of fisheries yields (Cabral et al., 2020^[25]), thus improving the performance of the fisheries sector (SDS Priority Area 1 – Economic, Key Outcome 4 – Agriculture and Fisheries Productivity Increased). The SOS, however, does not make this link explicit. Moreover, the SOS only maps the Solutions to the Priority Areas of the SDS, which are quite broad (Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Environment). Mapping to the Key Outcomes of the SDS would be a more meaningful way to highlight synergies between the two policy frameworks.

Strengthening these linkages would emphasise that the development plan and the SOS go hand in hand. This is important for policy coherence because it could encourage co-ordination between the two ministries that lead work on the different planning instruments, the MNRE for the SOS and the Ministry of Finance for the development plans. Also, as noted earlier, clearer linkages could facilitate the implementation of the SOS because the development plan plays a central role in Samoa’s policy landscape and is the basis of budgetary allocations and development partner engagement.

Sectoral plans inform granular priorities of ocean-relevant sectors and are important bases for SOS integration.

At the sector level, Samoa’s government has industry-specific strategies and policies to promote sustainable development and management of its ocean economy. Sectoral policy tools and instruments can play a crucial role in helping increase the contribution of Samoa’s blue economy to sustainable development. In the interviews conducted as part of the fact-finding mission, the country’s main development partners praised the quality and level of detail of Samoa’s sector plans and strategies. This section outlines the policy framework for Samoa’s ocean-related sectors, evaluating their alignment with the SOS.

The expiration of many of Samoa’s policy tools related to its ocean sectors at the turn of the decade offers an opportunity to incorporate lessons learned from recent crises and to align new policies with the recently launched SOS. Most sector-specific policy tools and instruments developed around that time incorporate a focus on the recovery of ocean-related sectors from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a concern for climate change and disaster preparedness. However, few explicitly refer to the SOS as a framework for alignment. This is consistent with the interviews conducted with key actors of sectors related to Samoa’s ocean economy, which showed that although most stakeholders are aware of the SOS and have been engaged during its development, they do not perceive it as a framework guiding their sector plans and strategies. Even the SOS does not make apparent its relevance for the sectoral plans: despite mapping its Solutions to the outcomes of the National Environment Sector Plan, it does not provide a reference for the other ocean-relevant sector plans, such as the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan.

While this partly reflects the SOS's focus on marine conservation and preservation, rather than the development of ocean-related economic activities, it could also hold back the implementation of the strategy in the long run. Aligning forthcoming sector policy tools with the SOS is thus crucial for achieving Samoa's sustainable development ambitions while ensuring the protection and conservation of its marine ecosystems.

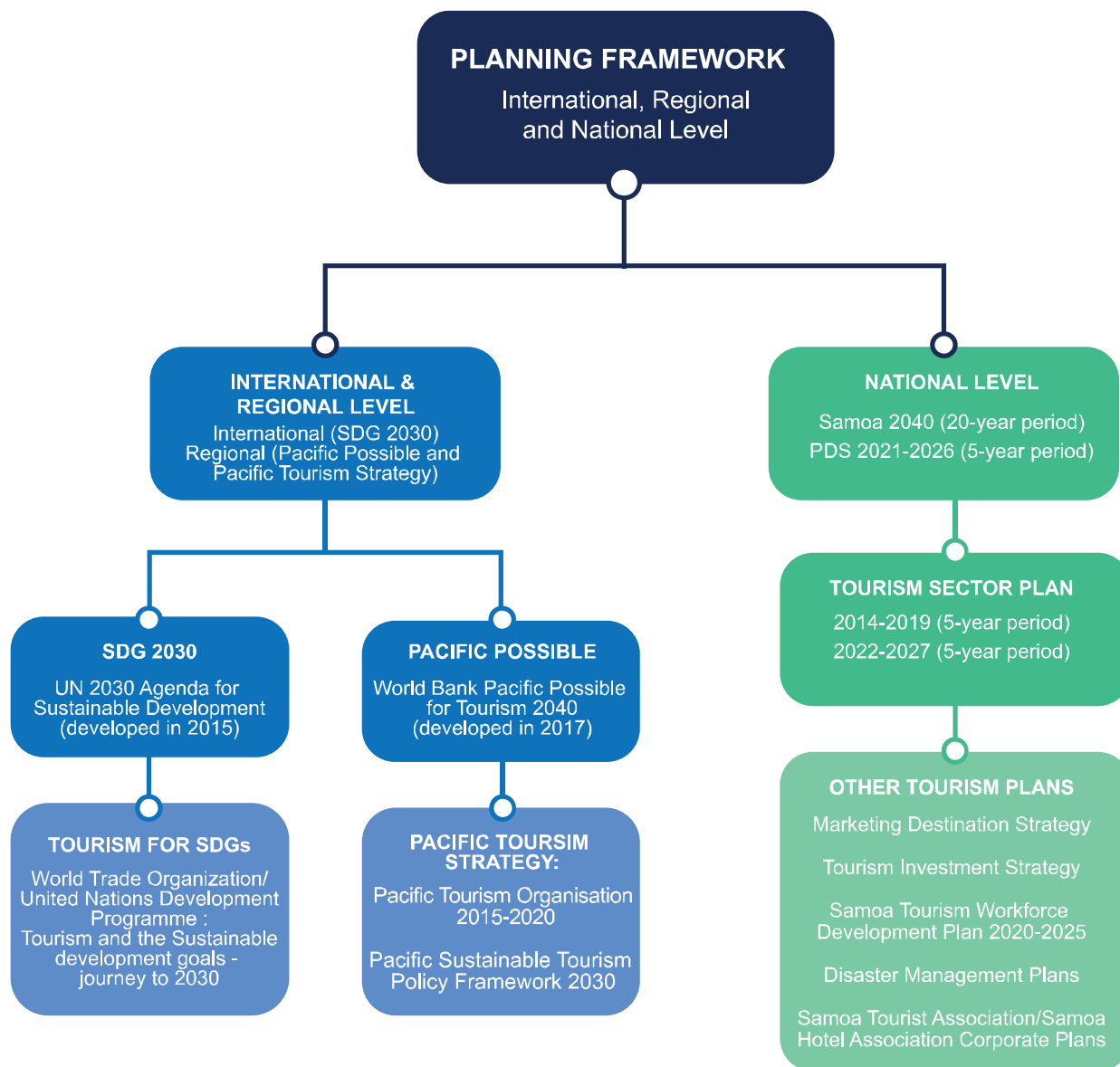
Tourism

Samoa's policy framework acknowledges the vital importance of tourism in the nation's economy, consistent with its medium- and long-term development strategies. These strategies emphasise the growth potential of the tourism sector and stress the need to maximise its contribution to Samoa's economic development. Ensuring alignment and linkages between Samoa's tourism-related policies and the SOS is key to ensuring that the tourism sector contributes to the sustainable management of ocean resources and avoids detrimental impacts that outweigh its positive contributions.

The recently launched Samoa Tourism Sector Plan (STSP) 2022-2027 outlines a pathway for the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The priorities of the STSP 2022-2027 reflect the pandemic's context and focus on restarting tourism operations and achieving resilient and sustainable growth in the tourism industry. The STSP outlines six programmatic areas: (i) marketing and research, (ii) product development, (iii) transport, infrastructure and access, (iv) investment and the business enabling environment, (v) human resource development and training and (vi) climate change and disaster preparedness. As part of efforts to revive and grow the tourism industry sustainably, the STSP 2022-2027 calls for the establishment of a Samoa Tourism Resilience Asset Protection Facility, which could provide the necessary financing and technical support for the tourism and hospitality sector. The funding requirements of the facility, amounting to WST 202.83 million, could be financed from a combination of domestic sources, aid from bilateral and multilateral development partners and direct investment from the diaspora.

Although the STSP's vision and goals align with Samoa's main development-related policy frameworks, it does not explicitly refer to the Ocean Strategy. The STSP is closely aligned with the PDS, the Samoa 2040 strategy, and other regional and international policy frameworks (Figure 2.3). The development of the STSP also incorporated the main lessons learned from the implementation of the previous tourism sector plan (2014-2019), including the need to address gaps in human resource development, investment and business enabling environment, and marketing and research. On the other hand, the STSP does not directly link to the Samoa Ocean Strategy, and in future, clarifying the link between the STSP and the SOS could facilitate co-ordination and implementation.

Figure 2.3. The Samoa Tourism Sector Plan 2022-2027 articulates with key national, regional, and international policy frameworks



Source: Adapted from Samoa Tourism Sector Plan 2022-2027, (Government of Samoa, 2021^[26]), <https://www.mof.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Tourism-Sector-Plan-2022-2027.pdf>.

The STSP stresses the need to address the current and future effects of climate change on the tourism industry. Compared to its predecessor, the updated STSP includes climate change and disaster preparedness as an additional programmatic area, to ensure that the sector receives adequate support to prepare for emergencies including natural disasters and pandemics. One of its priorities is the development and launch of a National Tourism Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2021-2025, updating the previous plan for 2012-2017. The STSP also calls for the development of Business Continuity Plans and Disaster Response Plans in the medium to long term, to ensure the tourism industry is prepared for emergencies.

The government has also started rolling out new policy tools to promote marine-based tourism and to revive the Samoan tourism industry. In November 2022, the Samoa Tourism Authority published the Samoa Cruise Tourism Strategy 2022-2027, a five-year plan to increase cruise tourism and harness its

potential to support the recovery of the tourism industry and contribute to Samoa's economy. This focus was accompanied by broader efforts to support tourism, including the launch of a Samoa Destination Marketing Strategy in 2021 to increase visitor arrivals and spending.

Fisheries and aquaculture

Samoa has developed a set of policies to manage its fisheries resources sustainably. It also participates in regional negotiations and agreements, in particular for managing tuna stocks in the Pacific Ocean. Overall, Samoa's policy and governance framework shows a strong commitment to sustainable management of fisheries, protection of the maritime environment and community involvement. The sector faces major challenges, however, including limited resources to implement and enforce policies, for example, to counter IUU fishing and address climate change.

The 2016 Fisheries Management Act lays out the foundations for governance of the fisheries sector. A key objective of the Fisheries Management Act is to regulate and control the conservation, sustainable management and development of fisheries, as well as the licensing of Samoan and foreign fishing vessels. It also defines the functions of the MAF and its Fisheries Division, which include: liaising with communities and sector stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels on issues affecting fisheries resources; advising government agencies and communities on sustainable management of coastal fisheries; establishing, operating and maintaining government facilities for fishing and related activities; and monitoring the impact of initiatives in other sectors and their impact on fisheries. The SOS acknowledges the foundational nature of the Fisheries Management Act and specifies that it shares the same precautionary approach and values for the sustainable management of fisheries resources.

The government recently launched an Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan (AFSP) for 2022-2027, which provides strategic direction to the efforts of the government in the sector. The drafting of the AFSP to replace the previous one (covering 2016-2020) was carried out in consultation with farmers and fishermen, the private sector and civil society organisations, and with technical and financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank. Launched in January 2023, the new AFSP aims to provide all stakeholders in the agriculture and fisheries sectors with a clear vision of the government's agenda in the next five years. It recognises the importance of agriculture and fisheries for both livelihoods and economic development and defines five strategic focus areas: (i) resilient and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture systems; (ii) food and nutritional security; (iii) rural transformation; (iv) private sector capacity and export contributions; and (v) the enabling environment for the development of the sector. The AFSP also acknowledges that the development of agriculture and fisheries is supported by a variety of intersecting national policies, including the SOS.

The Samoa Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy 2022-2032 aims to translate the strategic directions laid out in the AFSP into a roadmap with concrete action points. This new policy tool, launched in October 2022, outlines a series of actionable goals directly relevant to the sustainable management of Samoa's ocean, including: promoting sustainable practices for the management of coastal fisheries; securing a fair share of benefits from offshore fisheries; increasing aquaculture production; enhancing the evidence base for the management of marine resources; improving monitoring, surveillance and enforcement; and developing the necessary policy and governance framework. A key objective of the new policy is to enhance the management of the Samoa EEZ fishery resources with more efficient measures for controlling the harvesting, processing and marketing or exporting of fish caught within the zone. The Samoa Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy acknowledges the important role played by community-based fisheries management approaches, which are used by more than 120 coastal villages throughout the country (of a total of 360 villages) and commits to continuing efforts on stock enhancement of key species.

In addition to these sector-wide policy instruments, the MAF has initiated the development of several issue-specific policies related to Samoa's fisheries. With support from the Food and

Agriculture Organization, the MAF held the first workshop of the Samoa Agriculture and Fisheries Climate Change Policy in March 2023, to address the impact of climate change on the fisheries sector. Once finalised, the policy will provide a framework for climate-resilient and sustainable management of the sector. Meanwhile, the MAF is also collaborating with the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency to update the Samoa Tuna Fisheries National Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Strategy, which expired in 2020. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that Samoa has adequate monitoring, control and surveillance capacity to prevent and eradicate IUU fishing activity. In both cases, the development of these policy instruments is conducted in close consultation with relevant stakeholders, in particular fishing communities, industry representatives, government agencies and relevant regional co-ordination bodies.

Beyond its national policy framework, Samoa is an active member of, and party to, several regional bodies and agreements dealing with coastal and offshore fisheries management. These include the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, which manages the tuna stocks in the Pacific Ocean and allows countries in the region to negotiate catch limits and other conservation measures for tuna. Samoa is also a member of the Forum Fisheries Agency, which provides a platform for Pacific Island countries to collaborate on offshore fisheries management issues, including in such areas as policy co-ordination, legislative harmonisation, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement. Furthermore, as a member of the Pacific Community, Samoa benefits from the activities and support of its Secretariat in areas such as fisheries stock assessments, information-sharing, monitoring, research and technical advice.

Maritime transport

The government of Samoa recognises the importance of maritime transport for the country's economic development and has drafted a policy framework to promote the sector's growth. Maritime transport is a critical enabler of Samoa's blue economy, connecting it to global markets, and is thus also crucial for the development of its other ocean-related industries, such as fisheries and tourism.

The MWTI has the mandate to ensure safe, secure and viable transport modes and infrastructure assets in Samoa. The functions of the MWTI are set out in the 1977 Ministry of Transport Act, which gives MWTI the functions to: advise the minister on the development of an efficient transport policy for Samoa; undertake research into all aspects of transport, including the economics of transport; and advise the minister on investment in transport. The MWTI also administers the Shipping Act of 1998, which regulates shipping in Samoa's national waters and enforces various international maritime conventions. The portfolio of the MWTI also includes several ocean-relevant state-owned enterprises, such as the Samoa Ports Authority, established by the 1998 Port Authority Act to declare, control and regulate activities within ports and approaches to ports; the Samoa Shipping Corporation, which provides freight and passenger services between Samoa's two main islands, Savai'i and Upolu, and American Samoa; and Samoa Shipping Services, whose main purpose is to place Samoan seafarers on foreign vessels.

The government is in the process of finalising its new five-year Transport Sector Plan, which will replace the one for 2014-2019. The new sector plan seeks to establish a sector-wide approach for co-ordinated and cohesive planning framework for all aspects of transport, including maritime transport. It will serve as a roadmap for the government's pipeline of transport projects, focusing on sustainable development of the transport sector, improving connectivity, enhancing safety and security and promoting economic growth.

Maritime transport is only mentioned by the SOS as part of environment-related considerations. The SOS signals maritime transport as an area that needs enhanced monitoring and surveillance to control the spread of invasive or alien species in Samoa's ocean and reduce pollution from vessels. It also calls for the decarbonisation of maritime shipping as a priority for Samoa to deliver its nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement.

Marine protection and sustainable management

Marine protection and sustainable management are crucial for the ocean economy of Samoa and other Pacific SIDS. The ocean provides numerous benefits to the economy and livelihoods of Samoans, including food, tourism and transport. Unsustainable exploitation of marine resources can cause long-term damage to marine ecosystems and threaten the ocean economy. Protecting and sustainably managing marine resources can help ensure their availability in the long term and maintain the ocean's ecological integrity.

Samoa has taken significant steps towards marine protection and sustainable management in its ocean strategy and the current marine spatial planning. As discussed in Section 2.1, the SOS recognises the need for integrated, ecosystem-based approaches to marine management and outlines a vision for the conservation, protection and sustainable management of the ocean's resources. The MSP process aims to provide clarity on the use of marine resources and facilitate their sustainable management. The SOS and MSP complement the existing framework of laws and regulations directly relevant to Samoa's ocean economy and marine protection efforts, as described in the MSP law and policy review (Rose, 2022^[27]).

The Lands, Surveys and Environment Act of 1989 makes provision for the conservation and protection of the environment, including establishing National Parks and other protected areas. The act is directly relevant to marine protection and sustainable management, providing a legal framework for the establishment of marine protected areas in Samoa's marine environment. Key stakeholders have sought for some years to replace and repeal the aspects of the act most relevant to MSP by passing the Environmental Management and Conservation Bill.

The prevention of pollution to the marine environment is governed by the Marine Pollution Prevention Act 2008. It also defines the responses to marine pollution incidents emanating from vessels, and other matters related to international marine pollution conventions. Preventing and responding to marine pollution, especially from shipping, is a key element of sustainable marine governance and is essential to the success of marine protection efforts in Samoa.

The Marine Wildlife Protection Regulations 2009, amended in 2018 by the Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations, support the conservation of Samoa's marine biodiversity. They provide protection specifically for threatened and endangered marine species. The 2018 amendment also added a National Marine Sanctuary. The regulations are an important component of Samoa's marine legislation, particularly for the protection of threatened and endangered marine species, such as marine mammals, sharks, turtles and spawning aggregations.

The Waste Management Act 2010 provides the institutional and governance arrangements for general and hazardous waste management in Samoa, as well as the implementation of international conventions in national law. Preventing degradation of marine environments caused by waste and pollution, whether from on-island or other sources, is a key element of sustainable marine governance and thus an important aspect of marine protection and sustainable management.

An Environmental Management and Conservation Bill, still awaiting a parliamentary vote, would represent a major reform in Samoan environmental law. Plans to develop and pass the new bill to update Samoa's current environmental policy framework date back several years. If passed, it would complete the existing policy framework on key aspects of marine protection and sustainable management, helping to increase the number of protected area categories and establishing categories specific to local marine contexts. This includes high-value ecological zones such as mangroves, and categories that allow for co-management and decentralised governance of marine coastal and offshore protected areas. The Environmental Management and Conservation Bill would also implement commitments made under the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols on biosafety and biosecurity. It would also repeal the

National Parks and Reserves Act 1974, which currently enables the creation of various types of protected areas, and most of the environmental aspects of the Lands, Survey, and Environment Act 1989.

The government is also updating its National Environment Sector Plan (NESP), which expired in 2021. The NESP is a critical framework guiding Samoa's environmental management efforts. The update will be assisted by the drafting of a State of Environment report, led by the MNRE, with support from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The State of Environment report will provide an overview of the status of Samoa's environment, including climate and disaster risk reduction, culture and heritage, built environment, environment governance and natural environment. The report's key recommendations will form the basis for the NESP update.

In general, the SOS is aligned with Samoa's broader environment and climate policy landscape. The strategy explicitly maps its Solutions to relevant national plans, such as the NESP, as well as international commitments (Aichi Targets, voluntary commitments to Sustainable Development Goal, or SDG, 14). The SOS also incorporates action items from the country's Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement. Since adaptation planning in Samoa is decentralised and conducted at the sector and community level, no up-to-date national planning instrument for adaptation is available as a point of reference for the SOS.⁷ However, it does recognise the importance of marine ecosystems for climate change adaptation (e.g. Solution 10: Integrate Ecosystem-Based Approach into existing climate change adaptation plans and initiatives). Any future changes in the environment and climate change policy landscape (e.g. development of a national adaptation strategy) should remain consistent with the SOS.

Mineral and non-living marine resources

The Pacific SIDS are home to some of the world's most biodiverse and fragile marine ecosystems. These are not only vital for supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities but play a crucial role in the economies of these island states. With increasing global demand for critical metals and minerals used in technologies like batteries and wind turbines, interest in exploring and exploiting deep-sea mineral and non-living resources has grown. The potential environmental and social impacts of such activities have sparked concern among Pacific SIDS, Samoa included.

Samoa's ocean economy is reliant on its marine resources. As the SOS notes, mineral resources have been located in the seabed of Samoa's EEZ in the past, although studies done in the 1990s concluded that seabed mining was not economically viable. While exploitation of mineral and non-living resources in the deep-seabed is sometimes mentioned as a potential source of revenue for Pacific SIDS, Samoa has been careful to consider the potential impact on the marine environment, and its far-reaching implications for Samoa's ocean economy and coastal communities. Deep-sea mining in recent years has been recognised as presenting significant risks to marine ecosystems, including the destruction of seafloor habitats and the discharge of toxic chemicals.

To address such concerns, Samoa has established a policy framework that prioritises the sustainable management and conservation of its marine resources. The SOS identified unregulated deep-sea mining as a potential threat and emphasised the need for the country to follow best practices for seabed exploration and ensure policies are developed to preserve the biodiversity of deep-sea ecosystems. In this sense, the SOS aligns with Samoa's international obligations, such as those under the 2012 Noumea Convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Among its numerous objectives, the SOS expects all the seafloor and seamounts in Samoa's EEZ to be mapped by 2024, and their ecology to be understood and integrated by 2027 into decision making on the management of Samoa's ocean. Samoa has also recognised the importance of engaging in international discussions on the governance of deep-sea mining to ensure that the potential benefits are weighed against the risks.

At the 2022 United Nations Oceans Conference, Samoa and several other Pacific SIDS called for a moratorium on deep-seabed mining, citing the need for further scientific research on their potential

environmental and social impact. Samoa's decision is consistent with the precautionary principle outlined in its ocean strategy, which recognises the need for caution in the face of uncertainty about the potential impact of new activities, particularly those that could have significant and irreversible consequences. One of the key challenges in assessing the potential impacts of deep-sea mining is the lack of scientific knowledge about the deep-sea ecosystem. The deep sea is one of the least explored and understood environments on Earth, and the potential impacts of deep-sea mining activities are largely unknown. This uncertainty has led to concerns about the potential long-term impact of such activities on the marine ecosystem and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

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Notes

¹ This reflects the literature on integrated ocean management (see OECD (2016_[10]), Winther et al. (2020_[14])), as well as guidelines for promoting policy coherence (see e.g. OECD (2019_[11])).

² Solution 6, for example, calls for strengthening monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement across Samoa’s ocean. One of its objectives is, “By 2022, key government officers and community members are identified and trained in monitoring and enforcement (Government of Samoa, 2020_[5])”. Another of its goals is, “By 2030, effective monitoring is in place to reduce IUU occurrence in Samoa’s Ocean by 50% compared to 2020 levels (including all coastal, offshore and migratory species)” (Government of Samoa, 2020_[5]).

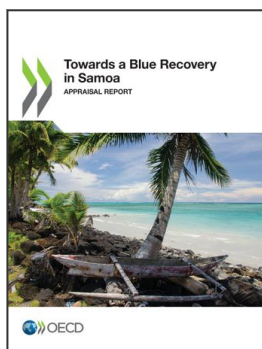
³ See Section 3.2 for additional details on this legislation.

⁴ Unlike the charring responsibilities, the role of Secretariat is not rotated between MNRE and MFAT.

⁵ See OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2019_[11]).

⁶ As there is no shift in policy priorities between the SDS and the PDS, alignment with one should, in principle, imply alignment with the other.

⁷ Samoa published a National Adaptation Programme of Action in 2005, but has since adopted a bottom-up approach to adaptation planning, with priorities embedded in sectoral plans rather than in an updated national adaptation plan (Kinoshita et al., 2022_[28]).



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