

# KEY MESSAGES

## INTRODUCTION

“The Palau Government’s overarching priority is “A Kot a Rechad er Belau” (Palauan People First), “Our Palauan people will have improved quality of life; are motivated and able to pursue their happiness; and will be the driving force behind the development and progress of our country.”

## PROGRESSING TOWARD THE SDGs

In charting progress 2015-2024, there is much to celebrate. Likewise, there remain shortfalls, many a legacy of COVID-19. Despite its devastating economic and social impacts, COVID-19 created new opportunities to “build back better”, a key message in Palau’s VNR-24 together with culture as a means of SDG implementation, resilience in the face of climate change, and leaving no one behind.

Palau’s VNR-24 is organized around five pillars - culture, people, economy, environment, and partnerships.

### **Pillar 1 – Sustaining Our Cultural Heritage**

#### **SDGs 1-17**

Palau’s culture has evolved over the millennia shaped by, and shaping, the natural environment and forging a harmonious society. Independent Palau has crafted a modern governance system while safeguarding traditional governance and culture. Nurturing a vibrant culture for future generations is a priority goal, a means of SDG implementation, and a strategy for “building back better”. Cultural practices supporting SDG implementation are showcased throughout the VNR.

### **Pillar 2 – Empowering Our People**

#### **SDGs 1,2,3,4,5,16**

Palau is “building back better” by expanding social protections for vulnerable populations, enhancing food security, harnessing technology to expend basic services to all, ensuring equitable participation of men and women in development, and investing in a future without violence. Nonetheless, Palau faces challenges in achieving food security and reducing non-communicable diseases and mental health.

### **Pillar 3 – Growing Our Economy While Leaving No One Behind**

#### **SDGs 8,9,10**

Due to COVID-19, economic growth regressed between 2020 and 2023. To restore growth, Palau “builds back better” while “leaving no one behind” through climate-resilient economic diversification, entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, and harnessing new opportunities fueled by information technology. The National Infrastructure Investment Plan prioritizes climate-resilient infrastructure. The National Youth Policy seeks to leave no young person behind, and a forthcoming Labor Policy will improve the quality of work and slow out-migration.

### **Pillar 4 – Protecting Our Home from Ridge to Reef and Beyond**

#### **SDGs 6,7,12,13,14,15**

Today as in the past, culture, people, economy, and environment are inextricably linked. At home, Palau manages 100% of its marine area and 20% of its terrestrial area while implementing its Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity strategy. Globally and regionally, Palau advocates for a moratorium on deep-sea mining and a plastics treaty that limits production.

Looking beyond the EEZ, Palau hosted the Our Ocean Conference in 2022 and in 2023, was the first to ratify the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ) treaty. Recognizing the existential threat posed by climate change to culture, environment, livelihoods, and health, Palau celebrates the climate/biodiversity/oceans nexus and in 2024 launched the second edition of its climate change policy and plan.

Palau maintains universal access to clean water, sanitation, and energy with life-line utility subsidies that ensure low-income households are not left behind. Despite progress in sustainability, new consumer products and lifestyles far removed from nature pose additional challenges as do transboundary threats including, but not limited to, climate change.

**Pillar 5 – Sustaining Lasting Partnerships**  
**SDGs 11,17**

To realize the promise of the SDGs, the government works in partnership with

traditional leaders, subnational governments, the private sector, and civil society. Internationally, Palau celebrates partnerships with like-minded multilateral, bilateral, and private partners and seeks to expand these partnerships for the benefit of all.

**PATHWAYS TO 2030 AND BEYOND**

Palauans have called our islands home for generations, adapting to change, and evolving values and traditions that are foundations for sustainability. As Palauans progress in this Era of Sustainable Development, we look to our past to guide our future and commit to “building back better” while leaving no one behind. We seek partnerships with the global community to access technologies, develop innovations, and secure financing for a resilient, sustainable, and equitable future for today and future generations.