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Proceedings of the Meeting of Experts to Discuss the Framework for the State of the Coasts Reporting for the Seas of East Asia

15 December 2006
Haikou City, Hainan Province, PR China

The East Asian Seas Congress 2006

Global Environment Facility

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Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS TO DISCUSS THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE STATE OF THE COASTS REPORTING FOR THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA

GEF/UNDP/IMO Regional Programme on Building Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND …… 1
2. SEMINAR ON THE COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR THE STATE OF THE COASTS REPORTING…… 2
3. PROPOSED STATE OF THE COASTS REPORT FOR THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA…… 3
4. STATE OF THE COASTS REPORTING…… …… 4
5. CONCLUSIONS …… 8

ANNEX 1. Program …… 9

ANNEX 2. List of Participants…… 10

ANNEX 3. Proposed Process for SOC Reporting for the Seas of East Asia.. 13

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. PEMSEA spearheaded the development of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), with the involvement of the concerned countries and other stakeholders at all levels over a three-year period of consultation and consensus building. The SDS-SEA is now widely recognized as a regional framework for coastal and ocean governance. It contains 6 strategies, 20 action objectives and 227 programmes of action that cut across various coastal and marine related international instruments, the implementation of which shall address the concerns related to Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

1.2. The need to establish a regular reporting system to monitor the implementation of the SDS-SEA has been recognized by the participating countries, stakeholders and key partners alike. A Meeting of Experts was conducted as one of the side meetings of the East Asian Seas Congress 2006 on 15 December 2006 at the China Institute for Reform and Development in Haikou City, PR China. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the development of an efficient and cost-effective monitoring system involving stakeholders at the national and local levels, as well as the production of a State of the Coasts (SOC) report every three years. Fourteen experts representing Australia, France, PR China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Aprilani Soegiarto, Advisor, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, and Dr. Gil Jacinto, Professor, Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines. The program and list of participants are given in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

1.3. The SOC report is intended to provide information to policymakers, environment and natural resource managers and those interested in the development of the ocean and coastal resources on:

- the current conditions of the marine and coastal resources;
- the trends or changes that are occurring;
- the driving forces for these changes;

- the social, economic and environmental implications of identified changes; and
- the responses of countries and other sectors as related to the implementation of the SDS-SEA and the effectiveness of such responses.

2. SEMINAR ON THE COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR THE STATE OF THE COASTS REPORTING

2.1. The Seminar on the Common Framework for the State of the Coasts Reporting was held on 14 December 2006, as part of the Thematic Workshop on Applying Management-related Science and Technology, during the International Conference on Coastal and Ocean Governance: One Ocean, One People, One Vision of the East Asian Seas Congress 2006. The seminar was chaired by Dr. Russell Reichelt, Managing Director, Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, Townsville, Australia.

2.2. The seminar covered four marine and coastal assessment and reporting systems. These were the Global Environment Facility's Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (GEF-TDA) and Strategic Action Programme in the East Asian Seas Region, presented by Dr. Teng Seng-Keh of the Southeast Asia Regional Learning Center (SEA-RLC), Bangkok, Thailand; the Philippines' Environment Monitor with focus on coastal and marine resources, presented by Dr. Magda Lovei of The World Bank; the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), presented by Dr. Clive Wilkinson of the International Marine Project Activities Centre (IMPAC); and the Integrated Report Card System for the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, presented by Dr. Reichelt. The presentations dealt with the importance of environmental reporting in providing knowledge to policy development and implementation, the extent and scope of the reporting systems, the processes involved, the lessons learned, areas of focus for the future, and opportunities for strengthening the reporting systems. Options for integrated reporting that incorporates indicators and thresholds across ecological, social, cultural and economic interfaces were also discussed, particularly their potential roles in increasing the effectiveness of policy implementation.

2.3. The seminar highlighted that in the development of regular reporting systems and processes, a **clear purpose** and the **target audience** at the global, regional, national and sub-national levels should be primarily considered. **Clear and simple messages** or stories may be used to elicit awareness and understanding of the issues and the suggested lines and actions. A **report card** showing the "numbers" to highlight the status and trends is also useful, with the **recommendations** adopting a positive outlook. A **common framework** may not be possible as there is no such thing as a one–size-fits-all scenario in environmental assessment and reporting systems. A number of good models such as the GEF's TDA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's pressure-state-response and implications framework can serve as appropriate starting points. A few templates that work at a variety of scales, however, should be developed.

3. PROPOSED STATE OF THE COASTS REPORT FOR THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA

3.1. Dr. Reichelt presented the results and recommendations from the Seminar on the Common Framework on SOC Reporting, as mentioned in Section 2.3. Following Dr. Reichelt's presentation, a process for the state of the coasts reporting was presented based on some preliminary work completed by PEMSEA. Ms. Nancy Bermas-Atrigenio, PEMSEA Technical Officer, presented the proposed process.

3.2. A brief background on the SDS-SEA was provided, along with initial activities that had been undertaken for its implementation. It was emphasized that the series of national and regional consultations undertaken by PEMSEA over the past two years had identified strategic steps for the early implementation of the SDS-SEA. One of the strategic steps identified was the monitoring and measuring of outcomes and impacts of the action programmes through national and regional State of the Coasts reporting system with country and partner inputs. The SOC Report will be released on a triennial basis to coincide with the conduct of the EAS Congress. The first SOC report is being targeted for release in December 2009 during the EAS Congress in the Philippines.

3.3. Baseline information gathering had been initiated by PEMSEA based on the framework of the SDS-SEA. A draft table of contents for the baseline report was prepared, containing four major parts: i.e., I – The interconnectivity of the Seas of East Asia (SEA); II – Challenges to sustainable development of the SEA; III – Meeting regional and global sustainable development targets; and IV – Assessing the progress of implementation of the SDS-SEA. Part III, in particular, represents the major action programmes in the SDS-SEA. The list can be expanded to include the detailed requirements of each action programme. The outline can also be modified depending on available information or if a certain theme (e.g., poverty and pollution) will be adopted later on.

3.4. The proposed process, consisting of the preparation of the baseline report and the reporting framework and guide, the establishment of a regional experts group and national working groups, the conduct of regional and national consultative workshops, administrative and technical support, presentation in the EAS Congress and the EAS Partnership Council, and possible contributors was described. The proposed process is shown in Annex 3.

3.5. A number of assumptions, which are anticipated to reduce the risks and facilitate the preparation of the SOC reports, were also presented, particularly highlighting on the availability of expertise and information in the region, including possible contributions from the Integrated Information Management System (IIMS) and the risk assessment process. Furthermore, the reporting system is expected to add value to national and regional environmental monitoring and reporting as an agreed framework and methodology will be adopted allowing cross-comparison and integration.

3.6. Following Ms. Bermas-Atrigenio's presentation, some words of caution concerning the bias on information/data contained in the IIMS were conveyed

during the discussion, owing to the fact that the IIMS information are site-specific and cannot be extrapolated for the whole country. The usefulness of the system, however, particularly in linking the different demonstration and parallel sites, was recognized.

3.7. A set of recommendations was expected to be generated from the Meeting of Experts, which would serve as valuable inputs in the development of a draft design or framework for a simple yet effective reporting system, which could be later expanded and improved to monitor the implementation of the SDS-SEA.

4. STATE OF THE COASTS REPORTING

The ensuing discussion focused on linking the objectives of the Meeting with the outcomes of the SOC seminar. The Meeting benefited significantly from the knowledge, experiences and insights of the different experts in monitoring and assessment processes. The key points and recommendations arising from the discussion are presented below.

4.1. **Purpose of the report**. The significance of the SDS-SEA as a regional framework for ocean and coastal governance, as well as the need to monitor the progress of its implementation by the participating governments and partners, was well recognized. The SOC is unique since it is based on the framework of the SDS-SEA and is driven by the need to monitor progress. The SOC report will not be a compilation of statistics but would show how progress has been made. PEMSEA's strong presence in the region and the recognition of its achievements over the past decade provide a favorable setting for advancing the development of national and regional SOC reports.

4.2. **Target audience**. The target audience needs to be clearly identified to obtain maximum impact as the language and form of the SOC report may vary depending on the audience. The involvement of the target audience in the consultation process also adds value to the initiative. It promotes appreciation of the benefits of the reporting process, the information provided and the policy responses and management interventions that will be put in place. Effective means of communication with the target audience also needs to be identified.

4.3. **Timeframe**. The release of the SOC report on a triennial basis was seen as realistic and doable. Timing, however, is very important particularly in relation to the national government's budget allocation schedule to ensure that adequate funding is made available for its development through the appointed line agency that will oversee the process.

4.4. **Process**. The process described by PEMSEA was considered logical and straightforward. The SOC should add value to existing assessments and avoid overlaps and duplication. It is recommended that PEMSEA should initially liaise with institutions and agencies involved in compiling information and developing assessment and monitoring reports to learn from their experiences, determine the availability/accessibility of information, indicators, emerging issues and gaps and determine their willingness to provide advice or be part of the process. A review of the results of the survey on global and

regional marine environmental assessments conducted by UNEP and IOC-UNESCO in 2006 would be useful as the report collates information on: (a) existing regional and global marine assessments; (b) links to outputs, data and other resources; (c) analyses of thematic and geographic gaps; and (d) recommendations for further analysis.

PEMSEA's efforts in building partnerships and networks among various countries, agencies and stakeholders across and beyond the region represents an added advantage particularly in getting support for the development of the SOC report. The existing partnerships and networks which PEMSEA helped establish at the regional, national and sub-national levels should be tapped for this purpose. A bottom-up approach is regarded as a better strategy since it creates a stronger foundation for the reporting process. Working with national and local experts who are familiar with the conditions of their environment rather than with consultants from outside the region provides a better and realistic picture of the state of the coasts.

4.5. **Scope**. It is likely that there will be variability of inputs from the participating countries in terms of quality and quantity of information to be shared. Access to and availability of reliable information should be considered in determining the scope and focus of the SOC report. The process should be flexible in adjusting to the level of information available as well as the capacity of the countries to develop the SOC report. It was recognized that there is a great deal of information available in various national and sub-national line agencies that are not shared or made available. The role of focal points/coordinating agencies in facilitating data and information sharing is considered crucial. It was mentioned that the system becomes self-correcting as new data comes in.

4.6. **Thematic versus global report**. A common view was expressed over the actual impacts of global assessments such as the Global Marine Assessment, Global International Waters Assessment, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Global Environmental Outlook, etc. Since these assessments cover very broad topics, they do not hit their targets well enough. There was an agreement that thematic reports that are shorter and compact are easier to write than global reports, and are more useful at the local level. People may have report-fatigue due to inundation of assessment reports that are too broad.

The SDS-SEA's framework headings can be used as guide starting with the vision, the threats and the strategies. To determine the theme for the 2009 SOC report, for instance, the deliberations and priorities identified during the EAS Congress 2006 should be considered. Conceivably, these priorities provide an indication of which action programmes of the SDS-SEA are being addressed in the different countries. The SOC report should highlight the benefits and outcomes of actions. Case studies, where available, can be built into the report. Common issues that are of major concern in the region such as loss of inshore coastal livelihoods, decline in water quality, sewage treatment, land-based pollution, natural hazards and disaster management, sea level rise, biodiversity and marine protected areas, harmful algal blooms, etc., can easily catch the interest of policymakers and should likewise be

considered. A policy objective, such as “halt and reverse the decline of water quality by 2020,” can be used to guide the reporting process where implications to management are emphasized. Moreover, baseline information can be gathered incrementally for topics where fairly limited information is available, such as the economic contribution of the marine sector. Depending on the target audience, a tiered approach can be utilized where teams are assigned per topic.

The use of a system-oriented approach such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) model was also proposed. The IPCC model, however, was regarded as still too technical for policymakers.

4.7. **Types of report**. As the SOC reporting becomes established and regularized, a more practical option would be to tap the power of the Internet. A web-based report would allow continuous updating of information as well as linking to national reports and relevant websites. Two different reports can be generated — a short and concise management report that summarizes key management issues and is intended for policymakers, and a status report that provides numbers and figures to show the trends in environmental improvements or degradation.

4.8. **Institutional support and coordination**. A critical component of the reporting process is the availability and willingness of institutions at the national level to serve as focal points/coordinating agencies in the development of national SOCs. This necessitates establishing linkages and securing support from various line agencies responsible for coastal and marine environment-related tasks. A good example is the current set up of PEMSEA where there are designated focal points for each country responsible for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of project activities. However, an analysis of the institutional arrangements as related to SOC reporting is necessary.

4.9. **Indicators**. It was recognized that the development of an indicator framework that includes indicators that are meaningful, simple and easy to measure and are generally applicable in most countries point to the need for analyzing baselines and existing frameworks. These include the driving force-pressure-state-impact-response, GEF’s monitoring and evaluation indicators for International Waters projects, etc. Establishing criteria for selection of indicators is important to ensure that “what needs to be measured gets measured,” thus providing an efficient feedback mechanism in monitoring the effectiveness of action programme implementation.

4.10. **Consultations**. The efficiency of the SOC reporting process significantly depends on consultations at all levels of its development. A two-way consultation process helps define a clear set of objectives, refine the reporting framework, prioritize issues/themes, and identify data requirements, gaps and potential constraints, appropriate indicators and relevance to management. Consultations also help identify the target audience and entice the engagement of stakeholders, thus promoting a sense of ownership and support to the process.

4.11. **Expert/Working groups**. Efforts to identify members of the expert/working groups with diverse backgrounds should be made, in consideration of their roles in developing the national and regional SOCs and the peer review process. The basis for inclusion in the working group may include, but is not limited to, academic and professional qualifications; professional and management experience; project and/or consultancy experience in environmental assessments and reporting; membership in scientific and technical committees and linkages with PEMSEA and other relevant organizations/agencies. The expert/working group members will also be tasked to provide assistance to other countries that have no existing assessments in place.

4.12. **Vehicle for capacity building at the local level**. There are disparities among the countries in terms of technical and management capacity as well as capacity to implement action programmes. Utilizing the SOC reporting as a vehicle for capacity building at the national/sub-national levels was suggested. Thus, in addition to the five countries (e.g., Philippines, RO Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) initially identified to prepare the 2009 national SOCs, it was recommended that other countries in the region should also be considered. The reports that these countries generate may not be as comprehensive but it would provide opportunities for them to do things systematically and be part of the learning process. The reporting process should serve not only as a venue for capacity building but also for partnership creation in an informal sense, and that it should be used to produce/involve the next generation of experts.

4.13. **Linkages with demonstration sites**. The significant outputs and outcomes generated from PEMSEA ICM demonstration and parallel sites are recognized as essential starting points in the development of the SOC report. A review of PEMSEA's outputs to be synthesized with national scale statistics would be useful. A demonstration site that can show the benefits and actions for the government, for instance, in watershed management can be selected. The value of demonstration sites as venues for capacity building was also cited. Unlike other assessments where experts are brought together to meet once or twice to develop reports, demonstration sites provide long-term benefits by building the capacity of local experts and, in the process, reduces the reliance on outside expertise.

4.14. **Contributions from other networks**. The GCRMN, which periodically generates the Report on the Status of Coral Reefs of the World, will come up with a separate report for East Asia. The report's format can be adjusted to follow that of the SOC. The report can be made available in 2008 for integration in the 2009 SOC report.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) through the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) provides its member states and entities a regular overview of the status and trends of fisheries and aquaculture in the region. The advantages of linking with APFIC were cited since the member states, which report fisheries and aquaculture statistics to FAO, include all Asian countries.

4.15. **Regional SOC.** The series of national SOCs will be combined and integrated into a regional report. The scope and format will depend on the inputs from the national SOCs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. The experts agreed on several major points:

1. The recognition of the need for an SOC report to monitor the implementation of the SDS-SEA;
2. To build on existing assessments;
3. To identify common themes to plot the progress of SDS-SEA implementation;
4. To use existing partnerships that have already been forged through long years of cooperation;
5. To use the development of the SOC as a vehicle for capacity building;
6. That some degree of flexibility be considered as there is no one-size-fits-all scenario;
7. The use of case studies to highlight good results/achievements at the local level; and
8. The report should be management-oriented.

5.2. It was recommended that PEMSEA conduct a more in-depth analysis of the issues raised to streamline the proposed reporting process. It was also recommended that PEMSEA initiate the consultation process to get the consensus of countries.

ANNEX 1

PROGRAM

Time	Activity/Presentation
Chair: Dr. Aprilani Soegiarto, Indonesian Institute of Sciences Co-chair: Dr. Gil Jacinto, Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines	
0830 – 0840	**Chair's Introduction** Dr. Aprilani Soegiarto
0840 – 0850	**Results/Recommendations from the Seminar on the Common Framework for the State of the Coasts Reporting** Dr. Russell Reichelt, Reef and Rainforest Research Centre
0850 – 0900	**Background on the Proposed State of the Coasts Report for the Seas of East Asia** Ms. Nancy Bermas-Atrigenio, PEMSEA
0900 – 1000	Discussion
1000 – 1030	Coffee/Tea Break
1030 – 1150	Continuation of discussion
1150 – 1200	Wrap up
1200	Lunch

ANNEX 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Russell Reichelt
Reef and Rainforest Research Centre
PO Box 772, Townsville 4810
Australia
Email: r.reichelt@bigpond.com
Russell.reichelt@rrrc.org.au

Dr. Clive Wilkinson
International Marine Project Activities Centre Ltd (IMPAC)
PO Box 772, Townsville 4810
Australia
Email: clive.wilkinson@impac.org.au

Dr. Meryl Williams
Australian Center for International Agricultural Research
17 Agnew Street, Aspley
Queensland 4034
Australia
Email: scylla@myjaring.net

Mr. Huasheng Hong
Coastal and Ocean Development Institute
Xiamen University, Xiamen 361005
China
Email: hshong@xmu.edu.cn

Dr. Gunnar Kullenberg
Place De L'orme
Seillons S. D' Argens 83470
France
gkullenberg@hotmail.com

Dr. Aprilani Soegiarto
Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)
Jl. Gatot Subroto 10
Jakarta 12710
Indonesia
Email: mulyati@lipi.go.id

Dr. Tong Soo Long
Enviro-Lift Services Sdn Bhd
No. 6B, Jalan Astaka L U8/L
Bukit Jelutong, Shah Alam
Selangor 40150
Malaysia
Email: sltong@pd.jaring.my

Mr. Tan Kim Hooi
Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA)
Unit B-06-08, Megan Avenue II
12 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng, Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
Email: khtan@mima.gov.my

Dr. Gil Jacinto
Marine Science Institute
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines
Email: gilj@upmsi.ph

Dr. Kim Jong-Deog
Korea Maritime Institute (KMI)
1027-4 Bangbae 3-dong, Seocho-gu
Seoul 137-851
RO Korea
Email: jdkim65@kmi.re.kr

Dr. Chou Loke Ming
Department of Biological Sciences
National University Singapore 14
Science Drive 4
Singapore 117543
Singapore
Email: dbsclm@nus.edu.sg

Dr. Teng Seng-Keh
Block 7, Toh Yi Drive, #06-281
Singapore 590007
Singapore
Email: tkwy@cyberway.com.sg

Dr. Charoen Nitithamyong
Marine Science, Faculty of Science
Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok 10330
Thailand
Email: C_nitithamyong@yahoo.com

Dr. Nguyen Minh Son
Institute of Environmental Technology
No. 264 Doi Can, Hanoi
Vietnam
Email: nminhson05@gmail.com

PEMSEA SECRETARIAT

Ms. Nancy Bermas-Atrigenio
Technical Officer
Email: nbermas@pemsea.org

Ms. Cristine Ingrid Narcise
Technical Assistant
Email: cinarcise@pemsea.org

Ms. Daisy Padayao
Technical Assistant
Email: dpadayao@pemsea.org

GEF/UNDP/IMO Regional Programme on Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
DENR Compound
Visayas Avenue, Quezon City 1100
Philippines
Tel: +63 2 920 2211 to 14
Fax: +63 2 926 9712

Participants of the Meeting of Experts.

ANNEX 3

PROPOSED PROCESS FOR SOC REPORTING FOR THE SEA.