

Global trends and opportunities impacting the EAS region and how to deepen engagement

1.0 Background

1.1 This document discusses emerging issues and global trends that may impact the East Asian Seas (EAS) region and identifies opportunities for PEMSEA and its Partners to deepen their engagement towards promoting sustainable coastal and ocean development.

1.2 As PEMSEA starts its 31st year, it is important to reflect on how far the EAS region has come together to promote the sustainable development of its coasts and seas. Most importantly, it should check on emerging trends and opportunities that will impact the region's implementation of its joint regional strategy, the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).

1.3 The Partnership has made significant contributions towards raising the visibility and important role of the ocean at the regional and global level, while also placing importance on the interlinkages between climate, biodiversity, economy, and communities and their impact on coastal and ocean development. In 2023, country partners contributed to major advancements in the field of coasts and ocean, with the adoption of various global treaties, negotiations, and discussions. These include the:

- 1.3.1 Adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework, with 196 governments, including PEMSEA country partners committing to a nature-positive future
- 1.3.2 Adoption of the Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction that will help secure the protection and effective management of the high seas, including new networks of marine protected areas
- 1.3.3 Important progress on a global plastic pollution treaty
- 1.3.4 Progress toward national ratification and effective implementation of the WTO fisheries subsidies agreement
- 1.3.5 Increasing recognition of the role of ocean-climate action and solutions for mitigation and adaptation

1.4 In the EAS region, the East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council (PC) approved the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027 which has incorporated national and regional actions to meet the targets of the global commitments listed above. Furthermore, countries have also adopted national blue economy policies or plans.

- 1.5 Despite all these achievements, the challenges the region collectively face continue to persist, underscoring the urgency of our work. Global commitments alone are insufficient to make lasting and impactful progress. In a region with diverse cultures and varied political, economic and technological capacities, substantial implementation of these commitments need to be accompanied with access to technical and financial resources to enable countries and stakeholders to undertake tangible actions and operationalize such commitments.
- 1.6 Emerging issues around ocean and health continue to percolate in the global scientific community. One such issue that has gained increasing attention is how marine and freshwater systems can help address hunger and malnutrition and complement the overall food system. As populations increase and as environmental changes lead to greater droughts, greater freshwater scarcity, greater soil nutrient depletion, countries are running out of space on land to grow an adequate amount of food.
- 1.7 Blue foods or aquatic foods include not only fin fish like tuna and swordfish, but also include invertebrates or mollusks such as clams, mussels, oysters, octopus, squid and aquatic plants like seaweed and different types of algae. In the EAS region, blue foods have been part of people's diets and have been a source of food and livelihood security for many coastal communities and the poor and marginalized sector of the population.
- 1.8 Scientists argue that blue foods can play a critical role in building healthy and sustainable diets and can assist to achieve UM SDG 2, which is aimed at zero hunger to promote nutritional security and well being. With this increasing attention that has captured political and trade agenda of countries around the world, EAS countries need to learn from past lessons of the impacts of overfishing/overharvesting and destructive practices and ensure sustainable production and trade balanced with habitat restoration.
- 1.9 Tackling the issue of blue foods is one concrete way to implement the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach under SDS-SEA Component of Healthy Peoples objective to provide food and livelihood security. It also aligns with GESI and biodiversity and fisheries programs of the SDS-SEA.
- 1.10 In addition to the above global policy developments and emerging issue, there has been increasing reliance on digital technology that has opened access to data/information and enabled greater connectivity amongst people, There is also an increased focus on building trust, accountability and transparency as they relate to ocean issues, starting with the need but not limited to enabling gender equality and social inclusion. Specifically, there is a greater emphasis on accountability and transparency as mechanisms for trust-building across stakeholder groups involved with oceans, recognizing how gender and inclusion interplay with equitably managing ocean resources and ecosystem services. Unprecedented advances

in digital platforms and tools have enabled more open access to relevant data and information to help inform and connect these groups.

2.0 Opportunities for resource mobilization and strategic partnerships

2.1 With the signing of global agreements, new finance commitments to drive ocean conservation and resilience have been created, thus providing opportunities for the region to fulfill its commitments and accelerate progress towards achieving the UNSDGs and promoting blue economy pathway. These include:

| Funds | Brief Description | Actions for PEMSEA |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Global Biodiversity Fund | Status: 2024 discussion will focus on eligibility and methodology for access | Exploring potential accreditation as an implementing agency for coastal GBF |
| Loss and Damage Fund | First board meeting may take place in the Philippines- focus on administrative concerns | Conduct Baseline report on loss and damage on coastal ecosystems in EAS region/ASEAN? |
| Natural Capital Accounting | USAID/World Bank regional or bilateral funding | Continue RSOC/NSOC every 3-5 years |
| Climate Adaptation Fund | Country partner route | Work with other actors to conduct research on climate analytics impact of extreme weather events (more intense typhoons, rainfall variability, increasing temperatures, flooding, etc.) and slow-onset events (sea-level rise) on coastal resources and how to develop and implement critical adaptation strategies |
| Green Climate Fund | | Follow up on regional accreditation application started in 2019 |

2.2 The PEMSEA Resource Facility continues to develop innovative program ideas on sustainable ocean and coastal development that align with funder priorities. Through a diverse funding structure including committed country contributions, external grants, multilateral partnerships like GEF, and potential opportunities in emerging areas, the PRF has strived to

maintain essential operations and projects for regional stakeholders. However, as a non-profit organization, the 8% execution fee from existing projects covers only a modest portion of core organizational costs. Supplementing reliable unrestricted funding remains an ongoing need, especially with the increasing operational costs due to impacts of global events on the economy (i.e., inflation due to ongoing wars in Europe and the Middle East, lingering impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, etc.)

2.3 Another option to secure resources is through the provision of services, apart from project management. Among those that PEMSEA Resource Facility has started include:

| Nature of Service | Provided to |
|---|---|
| Technical advisory services | World Bank/ UNOPs/ ASEAN through the South East Asia Marine Pollution project |
| Regional coordination/facilitation services | KIOST/ROK/IMO GloFouling Partnerships |
| Regional coordination/facilitation services | Regional Blue Carbon Program (certification) |
| Technical assistance services* | ASEANo Capacity Development for LGUs on marine pollution |
| Certification services on Extended Producers Responsibility* | WB-Phil government |
| Technical assistance services* | ACB – ICM/MSP training & capacity development under the Ecological Network of MPAs in large marine ecoregions |
| Financial and procurement services* | CI-GEF |

*Under discussion among parties

3.0 Avenues for Further Discussion

3.1 The above funding opportunities will require significant technical expertise in PEMSEA. This is where the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centres and Regional Centres of Excellence can play a role. PEMSEA’s Training and Capacity Development Manager conducted a survey in 2023 on expertise and interests of learning centres to work together or be deployed in providing such services. The plan this year is to conduct a similar survey with non-country partners to gauge expertise, interest and availability and develop collaborative projects to implement the SDS-SEA.

3.2 The survey will be undertaken starting next month and results can be discussed and amplified during the 16th EAS PC meeting in July and around the EAS Congress 2024.

4.0 Actions requested from the Executive Committee

- 4.1 Provide insights on how PEMSEA can deepen regional cooperation related to the latest developments and emerging trends and opportunities presented.
- 4.2 Provide recommendations on the fundraising opportunities identified and identify additional opportunities, if any.
- 4.3 Recommend options for joint engagement with the PEMSEA network (NCPs, PNLG, PNLC)
- 4.4 Provide suggestions on how to enhance engagement with the private sector.
- 4.5 Provide other strategic directions that PRF can pursue.