

EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS 2018 AND SIXTH MINISTERIAL FORUM: RESULTS AND FOLLOW-ON ACTIONS

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2018 was held at the Iloilo Convention Center last 27-30 November 2018. Carrying the theme, “25 Years of Partnerships for Healthy Oceans, People and Economies: Moving as One with the Global Ocean Agenda”, the Sixth Ministerial Forum was hosted by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The Forum provided a platform for the region’s leaders to commit their support and endorse local and national efforts to achieve the sustainable development of the seas of East Asia through discussions and signing of the Iloilo Declaration.
- 1.2 Through the daily plenary events of Ocean Talk and Sea Exchange, the Congress featured keynote presentations from renowned speakers and experts covering key ocean issues and interactive dialogues with various stakeholders who shared their insights and perspectives on the topics of UN SDGs, climate resilience, blue economy, sustainable fisheries, ocean plastics and water security.
- 1.3 The International Conference highlighted the Partnership Hubs with sessions, organized by PEMSEA Partners and collaborating organizations. The various sessions were categorized in six thematic tracks and featured the sharing of experiences, best practices, innovative technologies, and strategic solutions, as well as identifying alternative opportunities for investment in sustainable development of oceans and coasts, in the areas of: (i) Climate and Blue Carbon; (ii) Marine Pollution and Clean Water; (iii) Blue Economy; (iv) Biodiversity and Coastal Management; (v) Governance and Partnerships; (vi) Research and Tools; and (vii) Ocean Industry and Finance.
- 1.4 The following sections provide a brief summary of the outcomes, commitments, and recommendations shared and identified in the Iloilo Ministerial Declaration and EAS Congress 2018 International Conference. The outcomes will serve as a guide to further enhance the SDS-SEA implementation as well as to address the gaps and tap new opportunities in the next three years until the next EAS Congress 2021 which will be hosted by Cambodia.

2.0 Iloilo Ministerial Declaration

- 2.1 The Iloilo Ministerial Declaration conveyed a common understanding and shared beliefs undertaken by PEMSEA Country Partners as they reaffirmed their commitments to the SDS-SEA and the remaining targets from the Da Nang Compact. The commitments include:
- a) regular update of the State of Oceans and Coasts (SOC) reports;
 - b) reduce and prevent marine pollution of all kinds;
 - c) promote sustainable coastal tourism programs;
 - d) support the development of blue economy investment projects at the national and local level;
 - e) implement adaptation and mitigation strategies to respond to Climate Change;
 - f) and support operations of PRF as a coordinating mechanism for the SDS-SEA implementation through voluntary contributions beyond 2019.
- 2.2 Senior representatives from all 11 PEMSEA Country Partners were present at the Sixth Ministerial Forum and signed the Iloilo Ministerial Declaration to formalize their commitments, particularly to implement the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018-2022 and to support PRF's sustainability beyond 2019. The declaration is attached as Annex 1.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations of EAS Congress 2018

- 3.1 Overall conclusions reached and shared during the EAS Congress were:
- a) SDS-SEA provides a powerful overarching framework for approaches to address UN SDGs;
 - b) Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) has been demonstrated and validated as a successful approach to sustainable coastal development over the 25 years of PEMSEA activities;
 - c) ICM is an inclusive and participatory approach for the areas it is practice in; and
 - d) The SOC reporting system has been validated as a useful planning and assessment tool.
- 3.2 Recommended actions on different aspects of ocean management were delivered as results of the various sessions, forums, and interactive dialogues with different stakeholders during the Congress, were presented at the Closing Ceremony. The consolidated document is attached as Annex 2.

4.0 Follow-on Actions and Challenges

- 4.1 In close collaboration with PEMSEA Partners and Collaborators, PRF will monitor the status and progress of achievements on the commitments and recommendations of the

Iloilo Ministerial Declaration and EAS Congress 2018, along with planned activities/programs and targets of SDS-SEA IP 2018-2022 as identified in Annex 3.

- 4.2 PRF will regularly report on the status and progress of implementing the above commitments during the annual Partnership Council Meeting. It will also actively seek opportunities to present and report on these achievements in international conferences (e.g. Our Ocean Conference in October 24-25, Oslo, Norway.) to present and showcase examples of good practice and collaboration at a regional scale in implementing sustainable development in marine and coastal areas.

5.0 EAS Congress 2021

- 5.1 The EAS Congress flag was turned over by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines to Hon. Vann Monyneath, Deputy Secretary General of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of the Kingdom of Cambodia, who accepted it on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
- 5.2 An initial discussion between the ED and H.E. Say Samal, Minister of the Ministry of Environment took place last 31 January 2019 on the preparations for EAS Congress 2021. The ED presented an overview on the EAS Congress, its benefits to the host country and the region.
- 5.3 Minister Samal expressed his support and stated that the “timing is right”, for his government to host the EAS Congress in 2021. However, he still needs to seek political clearance from the Prime Minister to formalize Cambodia’s commitment and create an interagency working group at the national and local level (venue of Congress). Upon the advice of MOE, PRF wrote a formal letter of request to the Government of Cambodia through Minister Samal to host the EAS Congress in 2021. PRF is waiting for their response and feedback.

6.0 Actions requested of the Executive Committee:

- 6.1 The Executive Committee is invited to provide inputs/feedback on the following:
- a) Follow-on Actions and Challenges with respect to the active engagement and collaboration of Country and Non-Country Partners on SDS-SEA Implementation ; and
 - b) Proposal to organize a PEMSEA partnership ‘event’/engagement at the international level.
 - c) Possible theme/issues to consider in preparing for the EAS Congress 2021 in Cambodia
- 6.2 The Executive Committee is also invited to provide support in implementing the recommendations and actions identified by PEMSEA Partners.