



**PEMSEA partner country representatives attend the Closing Ceremony of the 2018 EAS Congress**

## 2018 East Asian Seas Congress Closing Ceremony

An atmosphere of confidence, optimism and determination marked the end of the 2018 East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress, a three-day series of events and sessions that brought together various ocean stakeholders from 19 countries across the region. The closing ceremony, held on November 29, was attended by Ministers from the PEMSEA partner countries who came together this Congress to sign the Iloilo Declaration committed to intensifying its actions to save our coasts and oceans.

The first Captain of the newly inaugurated PEMSEA Network of Young Leaders (PNYL) Council John Carl Alonsagay read a declaration that the youth delegates wrote about the role they would play in building a better future, while calling for others to join them in this mission. PNYL Council members, representing the PEMSEA country partners, each presented a letter of hope they had written to their country's respective minister.

Former PEMSEA Executive Director Stephen Adrian Ross reviewed the partnership hubs held throughout the Congress, which were a clear manifestation of the benefits to bringing people together to solve large problems. He also talked about the benefits of "disruptive technology", a new generation of research tools now used for improving marine and coastal management.



**PNYL Council Captain John Carl Alonsagay**



**Mr. Stephen Adrian Ross delivered the summary and recommendations of the Partnership Hubs**

Reminding the participants that it was “time to move forward and put into action everything that has been tackled, proposed and learned during the Congress,” PEMSEA Chair Emeritus Dr. Chua Thia-Eng also provided a summary of recommendations reached over the past three days:

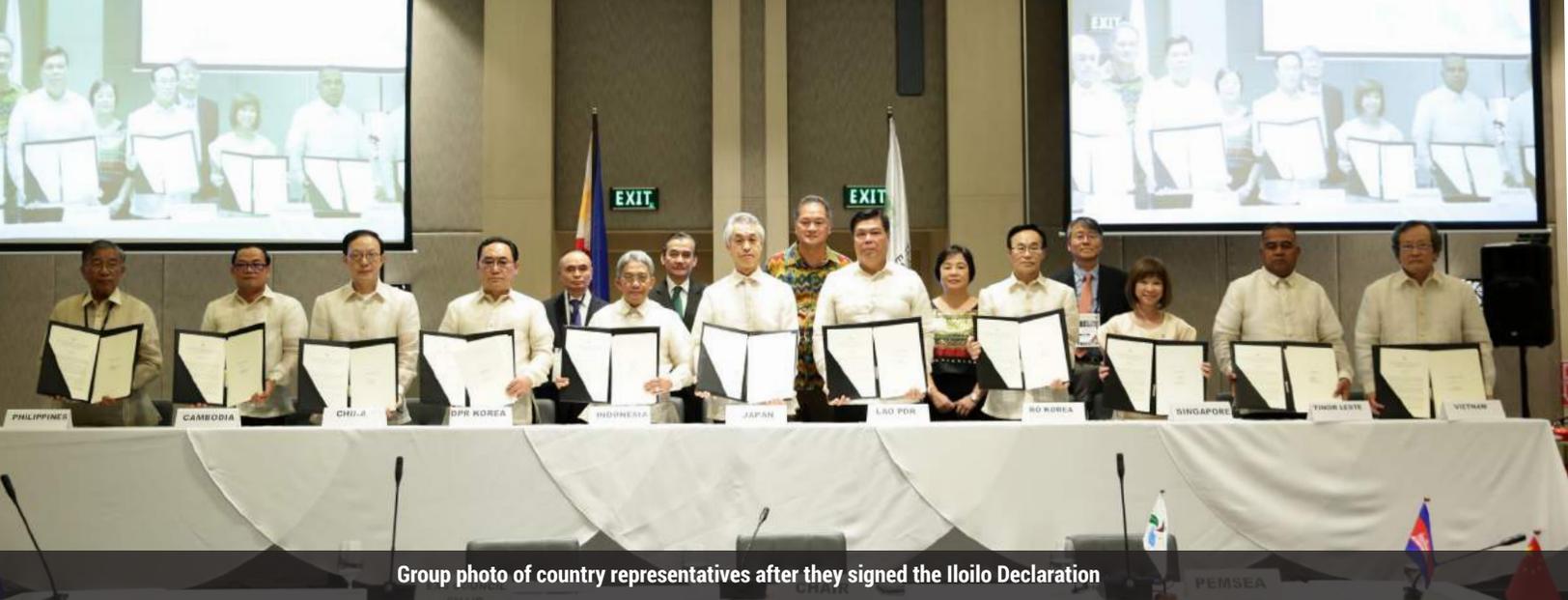
- 1) SDS-SEA provides a powerful overarching framework for approaches to address the SDGs;
- 2) Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) has been demonstrated and validated as a successful approach to sustainable coastal development over the 25 years of PEMSEA activity;
- 3) ICM is an inclusive and participatory approach for the areas it is practiced in; and
- 4) The State of the Oceans and Coasts (SOC) reporting system has been validated as a useful planning and assessment tool.

United Nations Special Envoy for the Oceans, Ambassador Peter Thomson, sent a special video message to the conference. He underscored the importance of giving particular attention to the connection between land-based activities and that of the oceans. He also urged the participants to not be weighed down by the issues discussed, but rather energized by the solutions offered by the EAS Congress.

Meanwhile, Secretary Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic & Development Authority (NEDA) also delivered a message on behalf of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte. The President said that “given the shared and transboundary nature of our water resources, we need to be united in the conservation and sustainable use of our seas.” He added that on the part of the national government, the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 “adopts aggressive strategies to rehabilitate and restore degraded natural resources, and protect fragile ecosystems while improving the welfare of resource-dependent communities. Ensuring ecological integrity and a healthy environment remains a bedrock strategy that will also support the growth of other sectors.”

As a final act before the close of the EAS Congress 2018, the flag handover ceremony saw the EAS Congress flag passed by DENR Undersecretary Rodolfo Garcia to Hon. Vann Momyneath, Deputy Secretary General of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment. PEMSEA is glad to announce that the host of the EAS Congress to be held in 2021 will be the Government of Cambodia. Until then, may we see more progress in partnerships for our shared seas!





Group photo of country representatives after they signed the Iloilo Declaration

## Ministerial Forum and Signing of the Iloilo Declaration

Ministers and senior government officials from 11 countries in the East Asian Seas (EAS) region were on hand to attend the Ministerial Forum and sign the Iloilo Declaration at the closing of the 2018 EAS Congress. The Declaration is a key component of PEMSEA regional mechanism that provides policy direction and commitments for improving and strengthening the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).

During the Ministerial Forum, Ms. Maricor Ebarvia of PEMSEA reported on the Regional and National State of Oceans and Coasts (SOC) Reports. The reports recognize the efforts made by countries at the regional and national levels with their blue economy initiatives, as well as lessons learned. Following the report is the presentation of Ministerial Statements by representatives of each country highlighting the progress made in implementing the SDS-SEA in their respective countries.

The highlight of the Ministerial Forum was the signing of the Iloilo Declaration on “East Asian Region Moving as One to Secure Healthy Oceans, People and Economies.” The Iloilo Declaration outlines the following commitments:

- Achieve remaining targets under the Da Nang Compact by 2021
- Regular update of State of the Oceans and Coasts Report (SOC)
- Provide voluntary country contributions to PEMSEA operations beyond 2019
- Support transition to blue economy investments at the national and local level
- Reduce or prevent marine pollution of all kinds
- Implement policies and programs for the sustainable management of coastal tourism destinations
- Implement adaptation and mitigation strategies to respond to Climate Change

“These are our marching orders to implement a work plan for reporting the results of these commitments at the next EAS



Congress in 2021,” said Ms. Aimee Gonzales, PEMSEA Executive Director.

To end the night, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations proceeded to the Ministerial Banquet prepared by the Iloilo City Government. During his welcome remarks, Mayor Jose Espinosa III congratulated PEMSEA for a successful EAS Congress 2018 and Sixth Ministerial Forum.



## PNLG FORUM

# East Asian Seas Local Governments Reaffirm Commitment to SDGs

Over 30 local governments across nine countries in the East Asian Seas region attended the 2018 PEMSEA Network of Local Governments Forum, which serves as a venue for exchanging information and experiences in ICM practices among member local governments. The PNLG members affirmed their commitments to achieving Sustainable Development Goals through the implementation of integrated coastal management.

Guimaras Province served as the host of this year's PNLG Forum. Governor Samuel Gumarin proudly shared that Guimaras is the first province in the Philippines with an adopted ICM Ordinance and the first among the PNLG members that is able to complete the second State of the Coasts report.

Recognizing that local governments are at the forefront of coastal and marine management and conservation, the PNLG came together to discuss how they are to move forward as a network in deepening the impacts of ICM in their respective localities and beyond. A recurring point was made throughout the forum that it is not enough to simply have a system in place; each local government must also continue delivering good results from ICM.

PEMSEA presented the State of the Coasts, an indicator-based reporting system that assesses and measures the results and impacts of policy and management interventions addressing aspects of sustainable development. Similarly,

PEMSEA encouraged PNLG members to implement the ICM Code to enhance their ICM practices, which would result in improved governance and sustainable development and management of the coastal areas. The ICM System Certification was discussed as something local governments should pursue to verify that their ICM implementation meets global standards and to fulfill their objective as PNLG members.

The ICM Manager Certification Program and the Sustainable Business Award were also announced. The former invites ICM implementers to apply for certification that will validate and, at the same time, showcase their level of expertise in ICM. On the other hand, the Sustainable Business Award can be given to any business entity that has helped a local government implement ICM.

The PNLG Forum concluded with the oath-taking of new officers and the induction of new PNLG members. Noraini Binti Roslan, Kuala Selangor District Council President, was re-elected as PNLG President while Preah Sihanouk Vice Governor Kong Vitanak was elected as PNLG Vice President for the next three years. The local governments of Jinjiang, China and Bontang, Indonesia were welcomed to the PNLG, which now has 50 local government members from 10 countries.

PNLG President Ms. Roslan adjourned the meeting by congratulating members for their commitment to leave a better world for future generations. A reminder for them to be tireless in their goals: "We care, we collaborate and we act."



## FIFTH EAS YOUTH FORUM

# Youth for the Oceans

Hoping to promote awareness on coastal and ocean sustainability to young people, the delegates of the Fifth EAS Youth Forum (YF5) conducted “Dalaw-Turo,” an outreach activity. The youth visited some grade 5 and grade 6 students from the West Visayas State University (WSVU) and the Central Philippine University (CPU) at the WVSU Conference Hall.

The youth delegates facilitated a range of workshops and games, complemented by brief discussions on relevant topics such as marine biodiversity and marine litter with the local students. Ms. Antoinette Taus, founder of Planet CORA, also shared a brief lecture on plastic pollution during the activity. She emphasized, “Life in plastic, not fantastic.”

“Don’t be shy to ask, especially if it’s for a bigger purpose,” advised Ms. Taus to both the delegates and the students in pursuing their advocacies and environmental initiatives.

The day ended with the official closing ceremony of the 5th Youth Forum. Dr. Jae Ryoung Oh, PEMSEA Executive

Committee Technical Co-Chair, commended the youth’s attendance and active participation. He reminded, “This will not be the end of it. This is only the start of your new endeavor towards the sustainable development of our shared seas.”

DENR Assistant Secretary for Field Operations in Luzon Mr. Joselin Marcus Fragada and PEMSEA Executive Director Ms. Aimee Gonzales awarded the certificates to the delegates. Formally closing the event, Asec. Fragada lauded the delegates and said, “More than the learning, what is significant is the camaraderie, the network you built.”

Led by the newly elected PEMSEA Network of Young Leaders country representatives and captain, the Fifth EAS Youth delegates also joined the morning’s EAS closing ceremonies where they read the Youth Declaration and handed letters of hope to their respective ministers.

**#SeasAsOne**

# FUN AT THE CONGRESS

