



PEMSEA Meeting Report 18

PROCEEDINGS OF
THE TWELFTH EAST ASIAN SEAS
PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING

Zoom Virtual Meeting

22 July 2020



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12TH EAST ASIAN SEAS PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING
Meeting Proceedings

INTRODUCTION

- i. The 12th East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council Meeting was held virtually through a zoom video conference call on 22 July 2020.
- ii. The Meeting was attended by representatives from ten PEMSEA Country Partners namely: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Philippines, RO Korea, Singapore, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Representatives from PEMSEA Non-Country Partners were also in attendance, namely: ASEAN Biodiversity Center (ACB); International Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas Center (EMECS); International Union for Conservation of Nature – Asia Regional Office (IUCN); Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation (KOEM); Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea (MABIK); Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP); Ocean Policy Research Institute – The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF); Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL); Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML); PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development (PNLG) Secretariat; UNDP/GEF Yellow Sea LME Project II (YSLME).
- iii. Representatives from China PEMSEA Center and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Philippines participated as observers. The PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) served as the Secretariat for the meeting.
- iv. The full list of participants is found in **Annex I**.

1.0 Opening of the Meeting and Adoption of Meeting agenda

- 1.1 Mr. Arief Yuwono, the EAS Partnership Council Chair, opened the 12th EAS Partnership Council Meeting and welcomed the participants and requested the participants to introduce themselves online.
- 1.2 In his opening remarks, the Council Chair highlighted that the region continues to battle the global pandemic, along with the rest of the world. The challenges are complex and interconnected and everyone is affected, particularly those who depend on coastal and marine resources for livelihood such as the fisheries, tourism, maritime trade and transport. However, he also noted the opportunities COVID-19 global pandemic offers to rethink plans and strategies to harness the potential of the ocean to create sustainable economic growth. He further emphasized the importance of the 12th EAS Partnership Council meeting as the Partnership deliberate on the best delivery of PEMSEA’s vision and strategy in the next three years.
- 1.3 The Secretariat presented the agenda and schedule of the Council Session and Technical Session which was adopted by the Council participants.

COUNCIL SESSION

The Council Session was chaired by Mr. Arief Yuwono as the EAS Partnership Council Chair. Dr. Vann Monyneath, EAS Partnership Council Co-Chair, was unable to attend due to important duties at the Ministry of Environment, Cambodia¹.

2.0 Summary of Major Recommendations and Decisions of the 11th EAS Partnership Council (July 2019), the 23rd Executive Committee Meeting (October 2019) and the 24th Executive Committee Meeting (April 2020) and Status of Actions taken

2.1 The Council Session took note of the actions taken by PRF in response to the recommendations and decisions of the 11th EAS PC Meeting and the 23rd and 24th Executive Committee Meetings. It also recognized ongoing actions by the Secretariat which were subsequently presented and discussed under specific agenda items of the Council Meeting.

3.0 Report of the Council Chair

Discussion Highlights

3.1 On behalf of the Executive Committee (EC), Mr. Yuwono presented the Council Chair's Report on key policy issues and guidance provided by the EC pertaining to PEMSEA's Post-2020 Futures Report and Strategy and Post-2020 Plan, PEMSEA and the Decade of Ocean Science, Expanding PEMSEA's Partnerships, and PEMSEA's sustainability.

3.2 Dr. Keita Furukawa, Technical Session Co-Chair, commended the report for its clear delivery but suggested that PEMSEA carefully articulate the summary decisions of approved reports in 1-2 line texts in power point presentations (i.e., PEMSEA is not a "research and development" organization or "not a business enterprise") as they could be taken out of context and create confusion or cause a negative perception on PEMSEA's status as an intergovernmental organization.

3.3 Conclusion:

The Council Session took note of the Report of the Council Chair, acknowledging the guidance that the Executive Committee provided in undertaking PEMSEA's policy directions.

4.0 Report of the Executive Director

4.1 Ms. Aimee Gonzales reported on PEMSEA's activities in the year July 2019-June 2020. She called 2019 as the "year of expansion", compared to the previous year, which she considered as a 'year of consolidation' of the 25-year accomplishments of PEMSEA. The most significant example of this expansion is the spread of ICM coverage along the

¹ Dr. Vann Monyneath was recently promoted as Secretary General for Sustainable Development in the Ministry of Environment in Cambodia.

coastlines of East Asia. From 2 ICM sites in 1994, the coastlines of PEMSEA Country Partners covered by ICM have exponentially increased to 39%, which far exceeded the 2021 target of securing 25% ICM coastline coverage committed by country partners under the Da Nang Compact and officially reported as the region's contribution to the delivery of UN SDG 14. The ED thanked the country partners for their continued commitment to ICM and SDS-SEA implementation, and requested that they continue to validate the existing information and figures on their national ICM coverage.

4.2 Other accomplishment highlights include PEMSEA's expansion of geographic scope to include Arafura Seas beyond the current coverage of six large marine ecoregions namely, the South China Sea, the Gulf of Thailand, the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea, the Sulu-Celebes Sea, and the Indonesian Seas. The year also saw the increased number of initiatives and partners working on marine pollution reduction and solid waste management as well as the strengthening of the forms and nature of PEMSEA's science-communications outreach.

4.3 The COVID-19 global pandemic poses both challenges and at the same time opportunities on the future plans of PEMSEA. The future thrusts include a focus on (a) strengthening PEMSEA's position as a regional coordinating mechanism that promotes integrated management solutions through partnerships in the East Asian Seas region; (b) facilitating science-policy linkages on coastal and ocean governance; and (c) securing diverse and sustainable funding streams for PEMSEA's programs and projects in the East Asian Seas region.

4.4 Conclusions:

The Council Session acknowledged:

- the various efforts and achievements stated in the Executive Director's report, including the significant increase of ICM coverage in the region's coastline as well as PEMSEA's increased number of partners and initiatives over the past year, as it works towards transforming itself to become a self-sustaining organization.
- The request of the Executive Director to Country Partners to review their coastline statistics and submit updates to the Secretariat where necessary.

5.0 Inclusion of the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) as PEMSEA's New Non-Country Partner

5.1 The Secretariat presented the endorsement from the Executive Committee of the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) as a new PEMSEA Non-Country Partner, having fulfilled all the requirements of the Partnership Operating Arrangements of a Non-Country Partner.

5.2 NIVA is one of the leading institutes on fundamental and applied research on marine and freshwater globally. Its research comprises a wide array of environmental, climatic and resource-related fields. NIVA is also the lead partner agency implementing the ASEAN-

Norway Cooperation Project on Local Capacity Building from reducing plastic pollution in the ASEAN region, which aims to strengthen the knowledge-base and build local capacity to tackle plastic pollution from key industries and government sectors, providing science-based knowledge on sources, and sharing experiences and best-practices on technology, regulation and management, thereby strengthening the local and regional capability to prevent and mitigate the environmental threat posed by marine litter and microplastic pollution. PEMSEA serves as the subcontractor and implementing agency for the Philippine Component.

Discussion Highlight

5.3 Several Country and Non-Country Partners noted the significant work NIVA has been implementing in the region such as the ASEAN-Norway Cooperation Project in the Philippines and Indonesia as well as the several projects it has collaborated with PML. The inclusion of NIVA as a new Non-Country Partner is a valuable addition to the Partnership.

5.4 Decision:

The Council Session formally accepted the inclusion of the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) as PEMSEA's New Non-Country Partner.

6.0 Designation of Coastal and Ocean Management Institute (COMI) as PEMSEA Regional Center of Excellence in Sustainable Coastal Development

6.1 The Coastal and Ocean Management Institute (COMI) was established by the Xiamen University to promote interdisciplinary and cross-boundary research in coastal and ocean management.

6.2 The Secretariat informed the meeting of the PRF Panel Review's endorsement to designate the COMI as a PEMSEA Regional Center for Excellence in Sustainable Coastal Development. COMI provided the PRF Secretariat with relevant documents to establish its credentials which were circulated and evaluated by external reviewers from experts in the region and the PRF Panel Review.

6.3 The results of COMI's assessment and recommendations highlighted the following credentials:

- a) Expertise in Sustainable Coastal Development and Integrated Coastal Management;
- b) Since its establishment, nearly 690 papers and 38 books have been published by COMI faculty members on Sustainable Coastal Development and Ocean Governance;
- c) Application of research to real life policy issues such as on coastal and ocean policy legislation, ICM and marine economics which helped inform government policy briefings in China;
- d) Provision of capacity development services to the region and other developing countries globally and organizing international training courses on ICM;

- e) Extension of services to organize training workshops for coastal managers and policy makers to East Asia, including its sponsorship of the joint PNLC-PNLG forum;
- f) Recognition from the Chinese Government as the leading university in marine sciences.

Discussion Highlights:

6.4 China conveyed its support and confidence that COMI will greatly contribute to the region's coastal development and ocean governance. Several country partners and non-country partners sent endorsements through email to support COMI's designation as an RCOE.

6.5 Decision:

The Council Session formally approved the designation of the Coastal and Ocean Management Institute (COMI) as PEMSEA's Regional Center of Excellence in Sustainable Coastal Development.

TECHNICAL SESSION

The Technical Session was chaired by Dr. Keita Furukawa as the Technical Session Co-Chair. Dr. Jae Ryoung Oh was unable to participate in the meeting due to personal health concerns.

7.0 SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018 – 2022 Mid-Term Review

7.1 Ms. Nancy Bermas, the Project Manager (PM) for the SDS-SEA Project, introduced the rationale, objectives, process and proposed schedule for the conduct of the mid-term review (MTR) of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018-2022.

7.2 The Project Manager expounded on the following points for the information of the Technical Session:

- a) The consolidated Regional Review of the implementation of the SDS-SEA which summarized the status of implementation by the countries since the adoption of the Regional Strategy in 2003 covered the period 2003-2015. While the current SDS-SEA IP's start-up year is 2018, the MTR will start the review of accomplishments from 2016.
- b) The MTR process which will be undertaken in 3 phases (i.e., review, consultation and preparation) will require close coordination and cooperation with the country and non-country partners as well as other key stakeholders and selected institutions and programs focusing on sustainable development to ensure that an all-inclusive approach to conducting the MTR is pursued.
- c) The MTR process is planned to be completed in 10 months (i.e., August 2020 to May 2021). It will utilize a combination of desktop review, a survey to validate the data gathered from the desktop review and interviews with selected representatives from

the country and non-country partners and other stakeholders using available online platforms to gain additional insights on the accomplishments and proposed way forward for updating and implementing the plan until 2022.

- d) The outputs from the MTR will be crucial in ensuring that the IP remains relevant as a common regional framework for achieving sustainable development and promoting blue economy growth in the EAS region. It will also provide the necessary strategic direction for the planning of the next IP starting in 2022.
- e) The updated IP and plan for the development of the next IP will be tabled for review and approval by the 13th EAS PC meeting in 2021.

Discussion Highlights

7.3 The Technical Session Co-Chair invited the country and non-country partners to provide comments and suggestions on the rationale, objectives, expected outputs, process and proposed schedule for the conduct of the MTR.

7.4 Vietnam sought clarification on the schedule and process of the IP review. The PM mentioned that the IP in question refers to the regional SDS-SEA implementation plan, which serves as the guiding framework for the development and implementation of national level SDS-SEA or national ICM or related programs or strategies for sustainable development. The MTR will therefore review the accomplishments of Vietnam, for instance, in implementing the National ICM Strategy at the national and local levels within the agreed coverage years of the review. The Technical Session was assured that once the MTR will start, the country and non-country partners will be informed accordingly of the detailed steps, the requirements and schedule of the review.

7.5 IUCN-ARO indicated that the MTR process is well laid out and expressed support for its implementation.

7.6 The Philippines acknowledged the importance of the MTR and conveyed the country's concurrence to the MTR process and schedule. It was further reiterated that the MTR is important to determine if the targeted deliverables within the timeframe of the IP are met such that proper corrective actions can be applied, where necessary.

7.7 The Technical Session Co-Chair thanked the Technical Session for their inputs and encouraged the partners to submit their comments to the Secretariat.

7.8 Conclusions:

The Technical Session concluded that:

- The mid-term review of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018-2022 is necessary to ensure that the plan remains relevant and 'fit for purpose' amidst the global developments on sustainable development processes and is aligned with the

sustainable recovery processes of national and local governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The mid-term review will also consolidate the recommendations made in the PEMSEA's Post-2020 Futures Strategy and the PRF's Post-2020 Operational Plan with the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan to provide an updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan for 2021-2022 and to prepare for the development of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027.

7.9 Recommendation:

The Technical Session recommended that:

- PRF proceed in coordinating the conduct of the mid-term review in accordance with the proposed process and methodology and schedule, in close coordination with the country and non-country partners.

8.0 East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2021

8.1 The Executive Director presented the updates on PEMSEA's preparations for the EAS Congress in 2021, highlighting the identified date and venue, proposed working themes and topics, and scenarios for consideration by the partners.

8.2 In March 2020, PEMSEA and the Ministry of Environment (MOE) of Cambodia recommended Sihanoukville as the venue of the EAS Congress, acknowledging its valuable experience and contributions to Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) as an ICM demonstration site and as a pioneer member of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) in Sustainable Development. Moreover, December 1-4 was identified as the date taking into account various regional and international events that have been moved and scheduled to 2021 such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (1 – 12 November 2021) and UN Convention on Biological Diversity Conference (17 – 30 May 2021).

8.3 Working themes and sub-topics have also been proposed and consolidated from PEMSEA's partners, collaborators and network of experts, taking into account the global targets on the UN sustainable development goals, the celebration of the Decade of Ocean Science in 2021, PEMSEA's Post-2020 plans, the link to human health and environmental health and other emerging trends.

8.4 As the pandemic has changed the conduct and nature of how international events are held, the PRF Secretariat prepared three scenarios to help advance the preparations for the EAS Congress:

- a) Proceed with current plans;
- b) Scale down or Streamline EAS Congress events, with the possibility of conducting some virtual sessions;
- c) Postpone EAS Congress to 2022.

- 8.5** On behalf of MOE, Mr. Long Rithirak reported on the status of the host country's preparations. A letter has been sent by MOE to the Prime Minister with a request to approve the following:
- a) Sihanoukville as the venue;
 - b) December 1-4, 2021 as the date;
 - c) Creation of National and Local organizing committees; and
 - d) Creation of a Financial Working Group.
- 8.6** Mr. Long informed the meeting that the MOE has yet to receive the Prime Minister's approval but assured the PRF Secretariat and the partners that they will provide immediate updates, once available. MOE sought the partners' understanding that there could be proposed changes from their government to the initial endorsements and arrangements as it prepares for the EAS congress while addressing the pandemic. Nevertheless, MOE reaffirmed its support to the recommendations and other considerations that the partners may raise in the session.

Discussion Highlights

- 8.7** The partners conveyed their appreciation to the PRF Secretariat and MOE for the preparations and efforts made despite the difficult situation wrought with uncertainty brought by the pandemic.
- 8.8** Although the identified scenarios present a clear direction on how PEMSEA could proceed in planning, some partners raised that it was still early and premature to decide on the format and nature of the EAS Congress, considering the rather uncertain developments of COVID-19. As such, partners requested the meeting to defer the decision on this matter until the latter part of the year and instructed PRF to further monitor the situation while maintaining consultations among members and updates from the Secretariat via email correspondence.
- 8.9** Japan proposed that a concrete plan be finalized by March 2021 to facilitate and secure the budget and preparations that would be undertaken by partners, stakeholders, and targeted participants.
- 8.10** Singapore shared valuable insights on the proposed scenarios. It considers the first scenario as ideal, but additional precautionary measures on logistics should be carried out, especially considerations that did not exist before the pandemic (i.e., physical distancing, seating arrangements, etc.) which would also likely affect the participation size. The second scenario was deemed feasible yet it would come as a compromise, by looking into the conduct of virtual sessions. Singapore agreed with the proposal to delay the decision on the way forward but highlighted that equal consideration should be given to each scenario identified.

- 8.11** Singapore mentioned that they are open to the working themes and sub-themes proposed to be considered for as long as these are not duplicative topics of international efforts, conferences, and discourses and are in line with the agreed principles and provisions in multilateral and existing frameworks. They also suggested that it would be valuable for the EAS Congress to promote topics of mutual interests of the partners rather than issues that are under negotiations on multilateral fronts.
- 8.12** Singapore also welcomes PEMSEA’s effort in promoting collaboration and dialogue on issues of mutual interest and benefit to Country Partners and this should continue so. This include technical seminars to raise awareness and build capacity. Issues that are political in nature and whose policy direction have yet to be agreed upon should be left to the relevant fora/platform to be further discussed and deliberated on. This is to ensure that PEMSEA remains a collaborative mechanism and does not turn into a contentious platform.
- 8.13** PML stressed the importance of face-to-face gatherings especially for the younger members of PEMSEA’s community in expanding their networks through this platform. PML further suggested that PEMSEA may need to prioritize some preparations and control or limit the participation to a core group of people, should a physical conference take place.
- 8.14** IUCN-ARO also underscored the EAS Congress as a highly recognized and respected event in the region for raising issues and opportunities on marine and coastal resources management. The EAS Congress has proven its value in continuing science and policy dialogues. The organization expressed its support for the EAS Congress 2021, whether it would be conducted physically, virtually or a hybrid of the two.
- 8.15** The Technical Session Co-Chair noted that partners’ firm support to hold the next EAS Congress with preference to conduct a face-to-face format, should the global situation be normalized.
- 8.16 Conclusions:**
The Technical Session concluded that:
- The EAS Congress remains a significant event in marine and coastal affairs as it provides a platform for science and policy dialogues and opportunities to build networks within and outside the region.
 - A face-to-face EAS Congress is ideal, but would require additional precautionary measures in terms of logistical and protocol arrangements.
 - While the proposed scenarios provide ideas on the way forward with the congress preparations, it is still too early to decide on concrete plans i.e., identifying a specific date or event format, considering the uncertainties created due to the lack of vaccine to control the pandemic and the restrictions imposed by governments in light of the global pandemic.

8.17 Recommendations:

The Technical Session recommended that:

- PRF and MOE continue to work together and monitor the COVID-19 situation and developments in Cambodia and the region;
- PRF and MOE inform and consult with partners on the development and status of preparations through email correspondence;
- PEMSEA Partners, in close coordination with PRF and MOE, decide on the date, format, and duration of the EAS Congress before the end of the year to allow sufficient time for preparation;
- PEMSEA partners give equal consideration to all scenarios and look into elements and measures that did not exist in organizing a conference before the pandemic;
- The preparation for the conference should keep in mind its importance in building connections, and capacity development and networking especially among younger generations;
- The working themes and key topics should not be duplicative of other regional and international events.

9.0 Project Updates amid COVID-19 pandemic

- 9.1** Work on ongoing projects has been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent health measures imposed throughout the region. However, PEMSEA and its partners have managed to adapt and flexibly work within the increased constraints while paying close regard to health, hygiene and safety measures.
- 9.2** The UNDP/GEF Scaling Up Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) project, which is on its final year, has had its terminal evaluation delayed by COVID-19. A request was sent to UNDP for its formal extension to facilitate the smooth completion of the project and work on adjustments needed in preparing for an online project terminal evaluation and country end of project virtual workshops.
- 9.3** The activities of GEF/UNDP Project on Implementation of Arafura and Timor Seas Regional and National Strategic Programs: Second Phase of the Arafura-Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program (ATSEA-2) were delayed by 5 months and a revised workplan and budget has been developed focusing on e-delivery of services and adapting to COVID-19 pandemic.
- 9.4** The ASEAN-Norwegian Cooperation Project on Local Capacity Building for Reducing Plastic Pollution in the ASEAN Region (ASEANO) work continued on baseline scoping, shifting to virtual meetings and work where possible as local ground work which entails household survey and stakeholder consultations became impossible due to quarantine and mobility restriction measures
- 9.5** The approval process of new projects, such as the UNDP/GEF Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN Countries (IRBM) and the IKI funded

IMO/PEMSEA project on Blue solutions for reducing maritime transport greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency of ship and port activities in East Asia have also been delayed.

Discussion Highlights

9.6 Following a request by the Executive Committee for more details on the terminal evaluation of the SDS-SEA project, UNDP Philippines representative Mr. Michael Jaldon confirmed that they expect to advertise the hiring of an international evaluator- consultant in August with the final terminal evaluation, expected to take place from September to October 2020. Under the latest GEF guidelines on COVID-19 global pandemic, terminal evaluations may be conducted virtually.

9.7 The Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of RO Korea inquired about national focal points or ministries that will be engaged in the IKI project. PRF explained that both the country focal points of IMO and PEMSEA will be contacted once the project appraisal mission will be approved by IKI. They look forward to collaborating on this project once funding and other details are confirmed.

9.8 Conclusions:

The Technical Session noted that:

- While current PEMSEA projects have suffered from delays due to travel and mobility restrictions imposed by governments amid the COVID-19 pandemic, PRF and country project implementing partners are undertaking adaptive management and continue the implementation in an effective, but safe manner.
- Project work plans and budgets have been reviewed jointly with country project partners in the case of the UNDP/GEF SDS-SEA Scaling Up Implementation of SDS-SEA, ATSEA-2 Ecosystem Action Program, and ASEAN Capacity Building Project to Reduce Marine Plastics Pollution projects.
- The approval of the UNDP/GEF Integrated River Basin Management and IKI/IMO/PEMSEA reducing greenhouse gas emissions in maritime transport projects, which was expected in the middle of 2020, have been stalled due to work slowdown caused by the global pandemic. PRF hopes to secure their approval during the last quarter of 2020;
- Consultations with national partners for the joint IMO-PEMSEA project on “Blue solutions for reducing maritime transport GHG emissions through increased energy efficiency of ship and port activities in East Asia”, have yet to be undertaken. Since the project will be jointly implemented by IMO and PEMSEA, details on implementation arrangements at the regional and national levels have yet to be discussed. PRF will notify PEMSEA focal points as soon as we received information from IKI, Ministry of Environment in Germany to proceed with the project appraisal mission.

9.9 Recommendation:

The Technical Session proposed that:

- PRF continue to update partners on the development and status of the projects particularly on key areas, such as implementation and funding arrangements as soon as they become available.

10.0 Other Business

10.1 The Technical Session Co-Chair opened the floor to provide an opportunity for PEMSEA Non-Country Partners to share announcements and statements from their respective organizations:

10.2 The International EMECS Center invited the meeting to EMECS13, an international conference co-organized with the Estuarine & Coastal Sciences Association (ECSA), which will convene experts and institutes around the globe in addressing issues on the management of estuaries and coastal seas. This event will be held in September 2021 at the University of Hull, United Kingdom. The conference is accepting abstracts till April 2021. Moreover, EMECS shared that they have published several newsletters and materials reporting on their various activities and programmes contributing to their commitments under SDG 14. For more information, the partners may visit their website at <https://www.emecs.or.jp/en/>

10.3 YSLME reported that the Phase II of their project is on its last year of implementation. Although the terminal evaluation is ongoing, YSLME has been making good progress in the regional ocean governance, particularly in the update of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and the Strategic Action Programme for 2020-2030 and the discussions on establishing a Post-YSLME Regional Coordinating Mechanism. YSLME has also generated a number of knowledge products related to marine microplastic, networking biophysical connectivity, and sustainable marine culture practice on integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, in which they are exploring to share with PEMSEA through the SEA Knowledge Bank to benefit the partners and its concrete application to Blue Economy. Apart from this, YSLME promoted its knowledge product on the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis as a useful input to the region's ongoing exercise of the regional State of the Coasts. YSLME conveyed its hope to maintain its close collaboration with PEMSEA.

10.4 ACB highlighted several activities and projects they are undertaking, particularly its partnership with PEMSEA on the development of the joint-project proposal for GEF-7 "Effectively managing an ecological network of marine protected areas in large marine ecosystems in the ASEAN region" that envisages to improve governance and management of ecological networks of MPAs and looking at the global significance of biodiversity in these large marine ecosystems and the ASEAN Norway Project that aims to establish enabling conditions to facilitate strong links at the science management policy nexus through harmonized access to data and information on coastal and marine environment. In addition to this, ACB embarked on a regional cooperation project in 2017 on improving biodiversity

conservation of wetlands and migratory water birds in the ASEAN region. ACB expressed its hope to further enhance its strategic partnerships on ocean governance and conservation in the region.

- 10.5** MABIK shared that it has been actively participating in the bi-annual international conference organized by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat and the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of RO Korea on bridging the gap between regional fisheries and seas organizations since 2016. Although this year's event has been postponed to 2021, MABIK is committed to promote its work in conservation and managing the ocean sustainably for the purpose of protecting biodiversity. MABIK has extended the invitation to PEMSEA Partners on this significant and informative event.
- 10.6** KOEM noted PEMSEA's projects in the pipeline and inquired about the funding allocation that PEMSEA will receive from IKI, IRBM, and ASEANO. This would provide them a better understanding on the kind of project funding PEMSEA will be expecting in the coming years. In response to this question, the ED clarified that the budget presented for ASEANO is PEMSEA's portion while negotiations on country/regional budgets are still ongoing for IRBM and IKI.
- 10.7** OPRI informed the meeting on its work on large scale marine protected areas (MPAs) which involves the studying of cost-benefit and trade-offs of fisheries and marine conservations and efforts on a policy science interface to expand its networks among research institutes and experts in promoting a sustainable ocean. Furthermore, OPRI announced its webinar series that will commence on 23 July 2020, 5PM Tokyo time, on the COVID-19 Blue Recovery which aims to explore on policy options for revitalizing the socioeconomic situation by sustainably using marine resources in the region.
- 10.8** PML apprised that it has been actively working within the region and with some of the PEMSEA Partners till March. Given the pandemic situation, there have been delays but PML looks forward to re-establish working relationships with the region as they seek to continue their work online.
- 10.9** NOWPAP updated the meeting on the four areas it will focus on for the next two years: a) Support Ecosystem-Based Integrated Coastal and River Basin Management (ICARM); b) Assess the status of the marine and coastal environment; c) Prevent and Reduce Land- and Sea-Based Pollution; and d) Conserve Marine and Coastal Biodiversity. NOWPAP looks forward to working with PEMSEA in these fields, especially in supporting the ecosystem-based integrated coastal and river basin management.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL SESSION

The Intergovernmental Session was chaired by Dr. Vu Thanh Ca as the Intergovernmental Session Chair, while Mrs. Chen Yue served as the co-chair as the Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair.

11.0 Opening of the Intergovernmental Session

11.1 The Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair presented the agenda and schedule of the Intergovernmental Session which was adopted by the meeting.

12.0 COVID-19 and its implications on PEMSEA's Post-2020 Sustainability Plans

12.1 The ED provided an update on PEMSEA's monitoring and response to COVID-19. PEMSEA continues to monitor the status of the pandemic and the response and mitigative measures adopted by PEMSEA Country Partners and around the world. PEMSEA is monitoring not just the impact of the pandemic on the activities of the PRF, but also on national and local governments' implementation of coastal and marine initiatives as well as those of other partners and collaborators throughout the region.

12.2 The PRF switched to virtual work mode in response to COVID-19 regulations in the Philippines. PEMSEA's ongoing projects were quickly adjusted and various scenarios for the future were thought through. While projects were on schedule during the first quarter of 2020, they were greatly delayed in the second quarter. It is expected that the third and fourth quarter of 2020 will see a return to limited operations, keeping in mind the potential for further developments and evaluation of COVID-19 outbreak.

12.3 Activities going forward will be subject to social distancing and hygiene measures. Travel and mobility remain limited and is expected to remain an area of restriction for a significant period. Current project work plans and budgets have to be adjusted and calibrated. The review and processing of new projects will experience some delays. A prolonged delay would greatly affect staff and operational costs from 2021 onwards, hence the country partners were strongly encouraged to continue to support PEMSEA through the country contributions and work with PRF in identifying new funding opportunities during the pandemic and post pandemic period.

12.4 The post-pandemic strategy being developed within PEMSEA seeks to build upon opportunities emerging through the pandemic period, such as emphasizing the link between human and environmental health. There is a need to persuade governments to allocate resources and investments to protect, transform and restore nature. Opportunities exist to work on preventative action on climate change and biodiversity loss; address the relationship between human health and biodiversity; invest in local waste management and recycling value chains, sustainable fisheries, seaweed production and on new plastics packaging models. These opportunities and considerations can guide the

drafting of the Ministerial Declaration for the EAS Congress 2021, as well as in identifying action plans in other aspects of the Congress activities.

Discussion Highlights:

12.5 The Country Partners were requested to provide feedback on the ED's report on PEMSEA's sustainability:

- a) China remains committed to supporting and enabling the work of PEMSEA, and will maintain the same level of funding as in the past.
- b) Cambodia highlighted that the country is currently instituting a variety of hygiene and social distancing measures, including temperature checks and providing alcohol for hand washing. With Cambodia selected as the next country to host the EAS Congress, it is expected that similar measures may be required for that event. Cambodia has contributed USD 10,000 to PEMSEA, and is currently focused on preparing for the EAS Congress. A complete package regarding the Congress has been prepared for discussion within the national government.
- c) Indonesia reconfirmed its support to PEMSEA and will continue to work with PEMSEA on joint projects, especially those involving ASEAN. The MOEF is in the process of finalizing the ratification of documents within the government that would formalize the contribution process of the ministry towards PEMSEA.
- a) Japan reaffirmed its commitment towards PEMSEA, and expressed its hope that the region will be able to return to normal operation soon. They requested that the PRF provides regular updates towards this topic, and report to Country Partners over the status of the work plan and budget.
- d) Lao PDR stated that it will continue to provide in-kind contributions to PEMSEA and support its activities. They are especially interested in the commencement of the IRBM project, and look forward to discussing it as it moves forward.
- e) The Philippines expressed its appreciation for the actions and activities of PEMSEA, and pledged to continue to support its work and fulfil its responsibilities as host to the PEMSEA Resource Facility. They highlighted the importance of Country Partners in providing resources towards PEMSEA activities, and the role they play in achieving the mutually agreed goals of PEMSEA through the SDS-SEA.
- f) RO Korea underscored the importance of cooperation between partners during this time and for the purposes of achieving joint projects. RO Korea conveyed its continuous support for PEMSEA. They noted the value of voluntary contributions not only in supporting the work of PEMSEA towards shared goals within the region, but also in their demonstration of ownership of the goals and progress of PEMSEA. They

are a vital component of the identity and financial sustainability of PEMSEA. RO Korea asked the support of Country Partners towards acquiring further voluntary contributions for PEMSEA.

- b) Singapore believes PEMSEA should continue to seek further partnerships and increase recognition of their contributions to various aspects of ocean management, and Singapore itself remains committed to supporting PEMSEA's goals and operations. Furthermore, Singapore provided detailed feedback on a number of issues: for the upcoming EAS Congress, Singapore would be very interested in a further exploration of ICM, or Integrated Urban Coastal Management (IUCM) as it is adapted in Singapore. Another area that should be under serious consideration is marine litter, due to its increasing relevance in the international space, as well as related concepts such as the circular economy. The topic of biodiversity may be a useful area to prioritize given 2020 was assigned to be the year of biodiversity.
- g) Singapore asked the PRF to prepare a skeletal ministerial declaration which can be developed and reviewed while the EAS Congress format and details will still need to be resolved. For the purposes of the congress, Singapore requested the PRF and partners to wait to determine final dates, and see how the situation evolves, although they recognize that waiting too long will cause issues on the preparation.
- h) Timor-Leste noted the activities PEMSEA had taken towards ICM and supports its work. They will continue to support PEMSEA's activities, reaffirming a commitment towards their pending contributions from 2019, with a target of beginning contributions in the next year.
- i) Viet Nam expressed its wish to continue supporting PEMSEA. They note that such support is currently undergoing an internal approval process, and that VASI will continue to report on PEMSEA's activities to the Viet Nam government and confirm their support as soon as possible.

12.6 The Chair of the Intergovernmental Session recommended that further discussions should take place between PEMSEA country partners to discuss continued support for PEMSEA. Support for PEMSEA should not be limited to providing funds, but should include active national and local implementation of the SDS-SEA and the promotion of ICM. While many activities that include travel and face to face gatherings have been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair is pleased to note that many activities have continued through alternative, creative and e-delivery of services throughout the region during this time.

12.7 Conclusions:

The Intergovernmental Session noted that:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the operations and activities of Country Partners and PRF. Further work by all partners related to ongoing and future projects have taken into account relevant health and safety considerations;

- Country Partners reaffirmed their commitment to support PEMSEA’s operations through in-kind and voluntary contributions;
- In-kind and voluntary contributions show the commitment and ownership of Countries to the partnership and are a vital component in achieving financial sustainability of PEMSEA.

12.8 Recommendations:

The Intergovernmental Session recommended that:

- PRF continue to provide updates to Country Partners on the 2020-2021 PEMSEA/PRF Work Plan and Budget;
- PRF continue to work on expanding membership of non-country members of PEMSEA;
- PRF, in coordination with the Country Partners, develop an outline of the Ministerial Declaration, whilst monitoring and planning for the EAS Congress;
- PRF to consider the growing importance of ICM as a key theme or topic for the EAS Congress 2021, especially its links to emerging trends such as marine litter and waste management.

12.9 Decision:

The Intergovernmental Session approved the endorsement of the Partnership Council Chair, on behalf of the EAS Partnership Council, to write a letter to UNDP seeking immediate approval of the UNDP/GEF IRBM project.

13.0 Selection and Appointment of PRF Executive Director 2021 – 2023

13.1 On behalf of the PRF Selection Committee, the Council Chair reported the committee’s process on the Selection and Appointment of the PRF Executive Director for 2021-2023.

13.2 At the 9th EAS Partnership Council Meeting, the Council appointed Ms. Aimee Gonzales as the PRF Executive Director to a fixed term of three years from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020. Since the current ED’s term is about to end by December, the Selection Committee looked into two options in filling the post:

- a) Renew and extend the contract of Ms. Gonzales from 2021 – 2023; or
- b) Start a new recruitment and selection process.

13.3 The Council Chair also informed the meeting that the incumbent ED had expressed her interest in a contract renewal which was taken under consideration and further discussion by the Selection Committee during their meeting last 15 June 2020. As a result, the Selection Committee formally endorsed the extension of Ms. Aimee Gonzales as PRF Executive Director for 2021-2023.

13.4 The Philippine and Cambodian Government sent a letter to the PRF Secretariat dated 23 June 2020 and 2 July 2020 respectively, conveying their support for the ED's term extension.

Discussion Highlights

13.5 The Philippines reconfirmed their support for Ms. Gonzales, commending her steady and dedicated leadership in continuing to promote PEMSEA's legacy of implementing ICM and ocean management solutions through the SDS-SEA. PRF has been working together with the Philippines to push a legislative bill to mainstream ICM and ensure that the learnings from the partnership will be sustained. The Philippines also underscored the work that the government has started with the ED and expressed its hope that there would be a continuation of her essential services especially during this period of pandemic.

13.6 Cambodia also reaffirmed their endorsement and acknowledged the good experience and work that the ED has served in the region through her leadership. It was also stated that there was insufficient time to conduct a selection process for a new ED for 2021-2023.

13.7 On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Intergovernmental Session Chair conveyed their appreciation in delivering the organization's function as PEMSEA's work is more recognized and featured in various publications and events in the international community.

13.8 Conclusion

The Intergovernmental Session recognized and appreciated the work and leadership that Ms. Gonzales has provided to PEMSEA in the past three years.

13.9 Decision:

The Intergovernmental Session approved the endorsement of the PRF Selection Committee to extend the term of Ms. Aimee Gonzales as PRF's Executive Director from 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2023.

14.0 Annual Work Plan and Budget 2020 – 2021

14.1 Prior to the ED's introduction of the Annual Work Plan and Budget for 2020-2021, the ED referred the session to PRF's secretariat services and key activities for 2020-2021.

14.2 The ED explained that the Annual Work Plan and Budget 2020-2021 is based on the best-case scenario. Depending on the development of the COVID-19 crisis and new projects, the 2021 work plan and budget may still be subject to further revisions. The final revised work plan and budget will be presented no later than the 25th Executive Committee meeting scheduled on October 2020

Discussion Highlights

- 14.3** Japan reiterated their advice at the previous Partnership Council meeting that PEMSEA should focus and concentrate on specific priority areas given that its finance and human resources are limited.
- 14.4** Furthermore, Japan suggested that the reduction of marine plastic litter could be one of the most important and urgent issues PEMSEA could prioritize on. Clarifications were sought that although PRF has been putting effort on this area, this issue has not been clearly stated in the documents and work plan. In general, Japan expressed its support to the proposed work plan and budget but requested the PRF ED to explain the assumptions behind the budget table presented.
- 14.5** The ED clarified that the work plan and budget was developed based on the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018 - 2021. There are six priority programs in the Implementation Plan including marine pollution reduction. While marine pollution has attracted attention globally in recent years, PEMSEA has been undertaking activities in relation to this as well as solid waste management since 1994. Recently, in light of the global attention on the need to address marine litter in the region, PEMSEA has expanded its marine pollution reduction work focused on solid waste management, technical assistance, strengthening governance, facilitating investments and capacity building.
- 14.6** RO Korea acknowledged the ED for reaching out to partners virtually in order to discuss PEMSEA's future in line with the COVID-19 implications and raised the following comments on the agenda item:
- a) Although securing external funding resources from international organizations by linking various projects with government issues such as COVID-19 might be a good approach, focusing on PEMSEA's services that could deliver actual results is the optimal way forward; and
 - b) Requested PRF to reflect the current changes of actual costs given the reduced expenditures implications of the COVID-19 situation. For example, they pointed the need to consider the transition from office to work from home arrangements, travel and meeting restrictions as well as streamlined EAS Congress 2021 preparation activities.
- 14.7** The ED thanked RO Korea for their feedback and explained that the projections on operation costs may still change, i.e., reductions from travel and meeting expenditures, in view of the ongoing revisions of project work plans and budgets from project partners. The ED proposed two solutions to address the inquiry:
- a) PRF to report on the contributions from the Cost-Sharing Agreements (CSA);
 - b) PRF to report on the overall funds it has received (including both CSA and project funds), as requested by partners last year.
- 14.8** The ED assured that a report on the CSA contributions can immediately be prepared. On the other hand, the meeting was informed that PRF is still waiting for UNDP's approval of

the no-cost extension of the SDS-SEA project. The overall report of PEMSEA's funds would be circulated to the partners once this extension has been approved.

Secretariat Note: The extension of the SDS-SEA project was formally approved by UNDP last 30 July 2020.

14.9 RO Korea agreed with the proposed solution for PRF to report on the updated CSA contributions and committed to provide its written comments upon receiving the report by the deadline provided by the Secretariat.

14.10 China conveyed its appreciation to the ED for affirming the support on the use of its CSA in linking work with Chinese institutes such as the China-PEMSEA Center. China has no objection and expressed its support to approve the work plan and budget.

14.11 Recommendation:

The Intergovernmental Session recommended that PEMSEA focus on PEMSEA's strength and services in developing its projects responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

14.12 Decision:

The Intergovernmental Session decided that the Work Plan and Budget for 2020-2021 as presented be adopted, taking into consideration the request from RO Korea to provide an updated 2020 budget focused on country contributions.

15.0 Other Business

15.1 Cambodia's Request on the EAS Congress 2021 Preparations

- a) The PEMSEA Focal Point from Cambodia requested the Intergovernmental Session to decide on the nature, form and date of EAS Congress 2021 before the end of the year.
- b) The Intergovernmental Session noted that though the necessary decision will be taken by the country partners, the matter will be discussed during the 25th Executive Committee Meeting in October to provide clearer and timely guidance on the same.

15.2 Expanded Executive Committee Meeting

The PRF Secretariat will inform the Country Partners should an expanded EC be convened in October-November 2020 to discuss EAS Congress 2021, for example. One possibility will be to conduct an expanded EC back-to-back with the final project steering committee of the UNDP/GEF SDS-SEA Scaling Up project.

16.0 Closing of the Intergovernmental Session

16.1 Closing Remarks

The EAS Partnership Council Chair thanked for the partners' active participation in PEMSEA's first virtual Partnership Council Meeting. Underscoring the value of PEMSEA's

vision of Healthy Oceans, People and Economies, he urged the need for a more united, mutually supportive and active partnership in adapting and implementing sustainable solutions. The Chair also summarized the highlights of the meeting including the review of the SDS-SEA implementation plan as a means to help countries fulfil international commitments in the next decade; engagement in new strategic partnerships with NIVA and COMI; and the renewal of PEMSEA's Executive Director for the next three years. In closing, the Chair encouraged the members of the meeting to work together to strengthen PEMSEA's capacity and resources as it transforms itself into a self-sustaining organization.

- 16.2** The Intergovernmental Session Chair declared the Meeting closed on 22 July 2020 at 4:00 PM, Manila Time.

**ANNEX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**ANNEX II
MEETING AGENDA**

**AGENDA OF THE 12TH EAS PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING
July 22, 2020 (Wednesday, Manila Time)**

COUNCIL SESSION

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|---|
| 09:00 – 09:10 | 1.0 | Opening of the 12th EAS Partnership Council Meeting and Adoption of the Meeting Agenda |
| 09:10 – 09:20 | 2.0 | Summary of Major Recommendations and Decisions of the 11th EAS Partnership Council (July 2010), the 23rd Executive Committee Meeting (October 2019) and the 24th Executive Committee Meeting (April 2020) and Status of Actions taken |
| 09:20 – 09:40 | 3.0 | Report of the Council Chair |
| 09:40 – 10:00 | 4.0 | Report of the Executive Director |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | 5.0 | New PEMSEA Non-Country Partner: Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) |
| 10:20 – 10:40 | 6.0 | Designation of Coastal and Ocean Management Institute (COMI) as PEMSEA Regional Center for Excellence |

TECHNICAL SESSION

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--|
| 10:40 – 11:10 | 7.0 | SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018 – 2022 Mid-Term Review |
| 11:10 – 11:30 | 8.0 | East Asian Seas Congress 2021 |
| 11:30 – 11:50 | 9.0 | PEMSEA Project Updates |
| 11:50 – 12:00 | 10.0 | Other Business |
| 12:00 | 11.0 | Closing of the Council and Technical Sessions |

INTERGOVERNMENTAL SESSION

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|--|
| 14:00 – 14:10 | 1.0 | Opening of the Intergovernmental Session and Adoption of the Meeting Agenda |
|---------------|------------|--|

| | | |
|---------------|------------|---|
| 14:10 – 14:40 | 2.0 | COVID-19 and its implications on PEMSEA's Post-2020 Sustainability Plans |
| 14:40 – 15:10 | 3.0 | Selection and Appointment of PRF Executive Director 2021-2023 |
| 15:10 – 15:40 | 4.0 | Annual Work Plan and Budget 2020 – 2021 |
| 15:40 – 15:50 | 5.0 | Other Business |
| 15:50 – 16:00 | 6.0 | PRF Secretariat Announcements |
| 16:00 | 7.0 | Closing of Intergovernmental Session |

**ANNEX III
SPEECHES**

OPENING REMARKS
Mr. Arief Yuwono
EAS Partnership Council Chair

Our region continues to battle the global pandemic, along with the rest of the world albeit in varying degrees. The challenges are complex and interconnected and everyone is affected, particularly those who depend on natural resources, especially coastal and marine for livelihoods- fisheries, tourism, maritime trade and transport etc. But there are rays of hope offered with the potential of the ocean to create sustainable economic growth.

Today is an important meeting as we deliberate on the best delivery of PEMSEA's vision, strategy and operations in the next two -three years.

Please note that we have streamlined the meeting agenda so we can make the best use of our time.

I hope our technology will allow us to stay connected for the entire duration of the meeting.

Everyone is adjusting to online meeting as the new normal so please be patient should there be connection glitches.

CLOSING REMARKS
Mr. Arief Yuwono
EAS Partnership Council Chair

Thank everyone for your active participation in a virtual meeting, the first for PC.

PEMSEA is facing unprecedented time with the global pandemic, the start of a new decade which holds both a promise and challenges for people's relationship with each other and with nature.

The Partnership is called upon more than ever to be united, mutually supportive and active in adapting and implementing sustainable solutions to realize our shared vision of 'healthy oceans, peoples, and economies.

We have discussed so many topics.

The review of our SDS-SEA Implementation Plan to ensure it is updated and proactive in helping countries fulfill existing and new international commitments in the coming decade;

Engagement in new strategic partnerships with NIVA on marine pollution and COMI on capacity building to develop new generation of coastal managers;

The renewal the ED's term for another three years;

Guidance and support to the PEMSEA Resource Facility as it transitions and transforms itself into a self-sustaining organization, including joint fundraising, availing of their technical, knowledge management and capacity development services;

We also need to continue to monitor and manage such as the nature and form of the EAS Congress, timing of approval of new grants and finalization of country contributions, but with everyone working together, we should not only be able manage to adapt to the new normal, but also strengthen PEMSEA's capacity and resilience to transform itself into a self-sustaining organization. We count on everyone's support to make this a reality.

* * *

ANNEX IV
MEETING DOCUMENTS, PRESENTATIONS, AND VIDEO RECORDING

ANNEX IV. MEETING DOCUMENTS, PRESENTATIONS, AND VIDEO RECORDING

The Meeting documents and presentations are accessible via this link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/14HYBJmYcyfhiitnvr9FZcHnTHPtZ2POh>
