

## Updates on the East Asian Seas Congress 2024

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 This document provides updates on the preparations for the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2024, particularly on the theme, official logo, proposed structure and subthemes for the International Conference.
- 1.2 The EAS Congress as a triennial meeting of stakeholders that serves as an intellectual marketplace to discuss current and emerging issues affecting the Seas of East Asia and monitor progress in the implementation of the joint regional strategy, the ‘Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia’ (SDS-SEA) over the preceding three years. It presents conclusions and recommendations to the EAS Partnership Council (PC) for action and implementation in the succeeding three to five years.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 The EAS Congress 2024 will be hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of PR China and the Xiamen Municipal People’s Government<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with the Xiamen World Ocean Week on **6-8 November 2024**. Congress activities will be conducted at the Xiamen International Conference Center Hotel, Xiamen, PR China.
- 1.4 The EAS Congress will be jointly conducted with the Xiamen World Ocean Week (XWOW). This historic collaboration commemorates 30 years of initiatives and partnership between PEMSEA and Xiamen. Notably, Xiamen served as one of the two initial demonstration sites for PEMSEA, and continues to serve as a leading example of the successful and progressive application of ICM s in support of the goals of the SDS-SEA. This collaboration is expected to provide an expanded platform for knowledge exchange, partnership building, and future or direction setting for a sustainable and resilient East Asian Seas.
- 1.5 The [Xiamen World Ocean Week \(XWOW\)](#), established in 2005, is a platform linking global ocean policies, technology, decision-making, and action. Activities under the XWOW include ocean forums, ocean-themed exhibitions, and cultural activities. XWOW aims to provide a cooperation and exchange platform for the governments of coastal cities, marine science and technology circles, international and intergovernmental organizations, maritime-related enterprises, and institutions around the world. It is devoted to promoting the global maritime

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<sup>1</sup> PEMSEA Rules of Governance

<sup>2</sup> See [EC/31/DOC02a](#)

industry and the sustainable utilization of marine resources expecting key outcomes such as the creation of marine culture programs and enhanced public awareness of marine culture.

- 1.6 Currently, the PEMSEA Resource Facility, together with the MNR and Xiamen Bureau of Ocean Development, who serves as the Secretariat to the XWOW are coordinating preparations for the conduct of the Congress in November.

## 2.0 Overview of the East Asia Seas Congress 2024

- 2.1 During the 31<sup>st</sup> Executive Committee meeting, the EC members initially indicated their preference on the theme “Blue Solutions for a Sustainable and Resilient Ocean” as proposed by the Secretariat, with the recommendation to review and refine the theme with the host country. Further discussions with the MNR and Xiamen indicate that the theme should:

- 2.1.1 Emphasize the need to scale up collaboration within and outside of the EAS region;
- 2.1.2 Ensure that it aligns with the objectives of the World Ocean Week as a collaborating event with the EAS Congress; and
- 2.1.3 Be meaningful and impactful when translated in Chinese;

- 2.2 Taking these considerations into account, the PRF Secretariat, MNR and Xiamen agreed to a new Congress theme: “**Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean**”.

- 2.3 The theme resonates strongly with the vision and approaches of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). Adopted in 2003, and updated in 2015 in response to the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the SDS-SEA provides an integrated framework centered on synergizing efforts across sectors and stakeholders to pursue healthy ocean, people and economies in the East Asian region. The SDS-SEA 2023-2027 Implementation Plan outlines priority actions under the four pillars of effective governance, healthy oceans, healthy people and healthy economies to be pursued through strategic partnerships and collaboration.

- 2.4 The EAS Congress 2024 theme captures this emphasis on harnessing collective synergies across governments, organizations, and local communities to secure the sustainability and resilience of our shared ocean resource. The Congress will assess progress made and challenges faced in actualizing regional targets and global commitments, as it looks ahead at pathways for building greater collective action through cooperation, coordination and knowledge exchange amongst various stakeholder groups to secure a sustainable and resilient ocean for a shared future.

2.5 Working towards 'A Shared Future' signals the desire and collective results that we want out of Congress – that through synchronizing our efforts we can find a balance between utilizing marine resources, maintaining environmental integrity, taking into account social imperatives so that it can be enjoyed by all present and future generations.

## 2.6 *Subthemes:*

The 2024 East Asian Seas Congress International Conference will build around four key subthemes that showcase various enabling conditions in which synergies can be established, maintained, or strengthened to ensure a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient ocean for the region. These subthemes will serve as the basis for PEMSEA partners and collaborators to identify potential sessions that they can organize during the International Conference.

2.6.1 ***Ocean science, policy and practice.*** Advancing ocean knowledge and governance by building on integrated approaches and collaborative measures that bridge science, policy formulation and planning, and on-the-ground implementation to secure a healthier ocean.

2.6.2 ***Global challenges, local solutions.*** Scaling local solutions and community-driven initiatives to combat transboundary and global threats such as climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable use of resources.

2.6.3 ***Innovation and Digitizing Ocean Action.*** Harnessing emerging technologies and innovative approaches such as AI, big data, and online knowledge sharing, among others, to accelerate evidence-based decision-making on sustainable coastal and ocean development.

2.6.4 ***Blue Financing and Investments.*** Mobilizing public and private financing mechanisms to support long-term blue economy growth, marine conservation, and sustainable ocean industries across and beyond the region.

2.7 The EAS Congress 2024 aims to:

2.7.1 Showcase positive results and outcomes for replication and scaling up integrated coastal management (ICM) across the region - whether local blue economy entrepreneurship programs, solid waste management, Eco-DRR, blue carbon, community-led habitat restoration projects or policy instruments like payments for ecosystem services, among others;

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- 2.7.2 Facilitate knowledge exchange between multiple stakeholders pursuing cutting-edge advancements in areas like renewable ocean energy, utilizing AI-powered solid waste systems, crowdsourced monitoring using smartphones and drones, climate adaptive infrastructure designs, blockchain-enabled traceability for responsible fisheries, innovative measures to mitigate marine debris, among others, to promote their wider application in the region utilizing existing partnerships, collaborative arrangements and networks; and
- 2.7.3 Quantify and consolidate the progress achieved over the past 3 years of implementing SDS-SEA in line with the indicator framework outlined in the 2023-2027 Implementation Plan- while also pinpointing specific actions to be elevated moving forward to fine-tune plans of action under the 2030 Roadmap.
- 2.8 Expected outcomes of the EAS Congress 2024 include:
- 2.8.1 Validated and/or novel best practice models and locally optimized solutions for sustaining the ocean while enabling prosperity, with such innovations amplified through regional knowledge sharing;
- 2.8.2 Expanded connections between innovators across borders to accelerate the development application of technologies and approaches that drive “triple wins” - environment, social, and economic gains; and
- 2.8.3 Renewed momentum and mobilization of partnerships and resources to fulfill the collectively endorsed SDS-SEA vision, with progress gaps overcome through the recalibration of plans and programs based on lessons learned and good practices, and directions outlined through the 8th Ministerial Declaration and other Congress commitments.
- 2.9 Target participants of the EAS Congress 2024 include representatives from PEMSEA Country and Non-Country Partners, other non-PEMSEA countries, the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLC), PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC), academia and research, international organizations, UN agencies, civil society organizations, youth organizations and the private sector, among others.
- 2.10 The PEMSEA Resource Facility, with the guidance of the host country, designed the EAS Congress 2024 logo based on the theme. Figure 1 shows the standalone logo and the Congress logo presentation when placed side-by-side with the WOW logo.

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Figure 1. EAS Congress 2024 Logo



### 3.0 Pre-Congress Events and Provisional Structure of the EAS Congress 2024

3.1 Previous face-to-face EAS Congresses (e.g. 2018 and 2015) followed the order of activities below:

- 3.1.1 Day 1: Opening Ceremony of the EAS Congress, International Conference and Congress Exhibit
- 3.1.2 Day 2 -3: International Conference plenary and parallel sessions, EAS Youth Forum, Partnership Night
- 3.1.3 Day 3: Ministerial Forum and General Assemblies of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) and PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC), Field trip

3.2 The Ministerial Forum serves as the culminating activity of the EAS Congress, where a summary of the results and outcomes of the International Conference will be presented to the Ministers and will contribute to the directions outlined by the Ministerial Declaration.

3.3 The current structure deviates from the usual structure of the EAS Congress given the following considerations:

- 3.3.1 The Opening Ceremony of the EAS Congress and Xiamen World Ocean Week will be combined;
- 3.3.2 The Congress will be streamlined into three days instead of four to five days; therefore, some activities will be conducted as pre-Congress activities (i.e., EAS Youth Forum, 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting).

3.4 The provisional structure of the EAS Congress, including pre-Congress events, is shown in Annex 1 of this document (EC/32/DOC/02a).

#### 4.0 Ministerial Forum

4.1 The East Asian Seas (EAS) Ministerial Forum (MF) serves as the highest platform for strategic direction within the PEMSEA mechanism. Held every three (3) years alongside the East Asian Seas Congress (EASC), the EAS MF shapes the region's medium- and long-term course and priorities. In particular, it provides policy directions and commitments for improving and strengthening the implementation of the Strategic Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) (PEMSEA Rules of Governance, Rule 17, Sec. 17.2).

4.2 Unlike previous EAS Ministerial Forums, the 8<sup>th</sup> MF, including the signing of the Ministerial Declaration will be undertaken as part of the Opening Ceremony and Day 1 of the EAS Congress 2024. This program design aims to highlight the significant commitments to be made by the EAS countries and set the overarching tone for the ensuing International Conference of the EAS Congress.

4.3 The 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum shall be composed of two parts:

4.3.1 *Opening Ceremony*. This event is open to all registered participants, including the EAS Ministers and their respective country delegation. Expected number of participants are expected to be around 800-1000 pax.

4.3.2 *Ministerial Forum proper*. This event is by invitation only, with an expected 100-120 participants composed of

- Head of Country Delegation: Ministers from PEMSEA's 11 Country Partners (If the Minister is unable to attend, alternative representative **must be at Vice Minister level**)
- Observers: PEMSEA Executive Committee Members, 1-2 Senior Government Officials from PEMSEA Country Partners,, Heads of PEMSEA Non-Country Partners, Executive Committee members and heads of delegation from PEMSEA Network of Local Government and PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers, development partners, and other key collaborators To foster a more interactive exchange of insights from the Ministers, the MF proper will take the form of a moderated roundtable/dialogue. This format or approach allows the Ministers to deliver their country statements or perspectives in a more engaging manner by responding to pre-selected key questions. Answers to questions shall be developed beforehand by Country Senior Government Officials (SGOs) with the support of PRF. The proposed theme of the Ministerial Dialogue shall be "From

Declaration to Delivery: Innovations, Opportunities and Prospects for the EAS Region”.

### 5.0 Budget for the EAS Congress 2024

5.1 The PRF, MNR and Xiamen has allocated respective budgets to cover the requirements on logistics, manpower, promotions and other concerns to successfully conduct the EAS Congress. Budget requirements covered by the PRF shall initially be charged to the EAS Congress Trust Fund, and will be recovered through the collection of registration fees and partnership package fees from Congress participants, convenors and exhibitors.

### 6.0 Registration and submission of Expressions of Interest as Convenor and Exhibitor

6.1 PEMSEA shall open an online registration for the EAS Congress 2024 from 28 February 2024 to 15 October 2024. Rates are shown in the table below.

Type	Early Bird Rate (February - June 2024)	Regular Rate (July - November 2024)
Standard	USD 400.00	USD 450.00
Student Rate	USD 250.00	USD 300.00

6.2 In consideration of the expenses covered by the host country, registration of participants from PR China shall be waived.

6.3 The Secretariat has also commenced the distribution of invitation letters to collaborate with the EAS Congress 2024 and submit Expressions of Interest (EOI) as convenor or exhibitor for the International Conference to the EAS Country and Non-Country Partners, PNLG, PNLC, and other potential collaborators and organizations.

6.4 The Call for EOIs shall be open from 28 February to 15 May 2024. Submission of EOIs shall be done through the EAS Congress website.

### 7.0 Proposed roles of the PEMSEA Executive Committee

7.1 The Secretariat proposes the following roles for the Executive Committee Members, based on the provisional structure of the EAS Congress:

Executive Committee	Potential Role in EAS Congress
EAS PC Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Chair the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li><li>● Provide Welcome message during the EAS Congress Opening Ceremony</li><li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li></ul>

<p><b>EAS PC Co-Chair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Co-Chair the Council Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li> <li>● Participate in the Opening Ceremony</li> <li>● Provide the Closing Remarks during the closing</li> <li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intergovernmental Session Chair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chair the Intergovernmental Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li> <li>● Chair the Senior Government Officials Meeting</li> <li>● Present the Ministerial Declaration during the Opening Ceremony (tbc)</li> <li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li> <li>● Provide opening remarks during the PNLG 2024 Forum</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Co-Chair the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li> <li>● <b>Chair one of the plenary sessions</b></li> <li>● Participate in the Opening Ceremony</li> <li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technical Session Chair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chair the Technical Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li> <li>● Provide guidance on development of the agenda of the International Conference as part of the International Advisory Committee</li> <li>● Serve as Theme Chair<sup>3</sup> under a subtheme</li> <li>● Participate in the Opening Ceremony</li> <li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li> <li>● Provide opening remarks during the PNLG General Assembly</li> </ul>

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<sup>3</sup> The Theme Chair shall provide guidance on the conduct of sessions under their respective subtheme and shall present a summary of the recommendations and outcomes of the sessions during the closing plenary of the International Conference



<b>Technical Session Co-Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Co-Chair the Technical Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting</li><li>● Participate in the Opening Ceremony</li><li>● Participate in the Ministerial Forum</li><li>● Provide remarks during the PNLG-PNLC joint learning session</li></ul>
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**\* we envisage additional roles for the EC members as we develop the International Conference as speakers, moderators, facilitators, etc**

### **8.0 Other key steps**

8.1 PRF, MNR and Xiamen have begun identifying the members and focal points of their respective organizing subcommittees for the EAS Congress. All parties have also agreed to conduct monthly alignment meetings to discuss the progress of preparations. The frequency of the meetings will increase, as necessary.

8.2 The PRF Secretariat prepared an indicative budget for the EAS Congress 2024 f sourced from the EAS Congress which will be replenished from collection of registration fees and sponsorship packages for approval by EC.

8.3 Ministerial Forum consultations shall be conducted both in-person and online to refine the contents of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial declaration.

### **9.0 Actions requested from the Executive Committee**

9.1 Provide recommendations on the provisional structure of the EAS Congress, particularly on the Opening Ceremony.

9.2 Provide recommendations on potential speakers for the opening Ceremony, keynote speakers and Theme Chairs for the International conference (based on the subthemes).

