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## **Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean**

6-8 NOVEMBER 2024 • XIAMEN CITY, CHINA

# **8<sup>TH</sup> EAST ASIAN SEAS (EAS) MINISTERIAL FORUM**

PROCEEDINGS

**6 NOVEMBER 2024  
XIAMEN, CHINA**



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
EIGHTH EAST ASIAN SEAS MINISTERIAL FORUM**

**Xiamen International Convention Center  
Xiamen, PR China  
06 November 2024**

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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE EIGHTH EAST ASIAN SEAS MINISTERIAL FORUM

Xiamen International Convention Center, Xiamen, PR China

06 November 2024

## A. INTRODUCTION

- i. The Eighth East Asian Seas (EAS) Ministerial Forum was held on 06 November 2024, as a key element of the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2024<sup>1</sup> and hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of China as PEMSEA's focal agency in China.
- ii. The EAS Ministerial Forum (MF) serves as the highest platform for strategic direction within the PEMSEA mechanism, providing policy guidance and commitments to strengthen the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). Through Ministerial Declarations signed every three years, the EAS MF shapes the region's medium- and long-term course and priorities.
- iii. Aligned with the theme of the EAS Congress and WOW 2024, "*Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean*", the 8<sup>th</sup> EAS MF focused on catalyzing synergies in support of the SDS-SEA vision for Healthy Ocean, Peoples, and Economies. Key objectives included (1) advancing ocean knowledge and integrated approaches on ocean governance, (2) scaling local actions and solutions to address regional transboundary challenges, (3) strengthening evidence-based decision-making by leveraging on innovative technologies and approaches, and (4) identifying blue financing and investments. These objectives are central to achieving the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030 and the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027, while also contributing to key international and regional commitments for a Blue Economy.
- iv. Distinct from previous EAS Ministerial Forums, the 8th MF was conducted on the first day of the EAS Congress International Conference 2024. This early placement set a foundational tone for the Congress, aligning MF objectives and outcomes with the thematic sessions at the International Conference.
- v. Ten countries participated in the 8th MF, including Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. Observing the forum proceedings were members of the PEMSEA Executive Committee, representatives from PEMSEA Non-Country Partners, the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments and Learning Centers, and key PEMSEA collaborators and sponsoring agencies, such as the GEF and UNDP. The PEMSEA Resource Facility served as the Forum Secretariat. The full program and a complete list of participants for the 8th EAS Ministerial Forum are available in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

## B. SIGNING OF THE XIAMEN MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

- i. The primary outcome and commitment document of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum is the *Xiamen Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Synergies for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient East Asian Seas*. This Declaration reflects several months of comprehensive consultations, culminating

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<sup>1</sup> EAS Congress 2024 was held in conjunction with World Ocean Week in Xiamen 2024 and co-organized by PEMSEA, Ministry of Natural Resources, China and the Xiamen Municipal People's Government.

in the endorsement of the EAS Senior Government Officials' Meeting (SGOM) before its formal presentation at the 8<sup>th</sup> MF.

- ii. Prior to the opening of the EAS Congress and WOW 2024, Heads of Delegation from the ten PEMSEA Country Partners convened. During this gathering, seven Country Partners-Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, RO Korea, Singapore, and Timor-Leste- signed the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration, reaffirming their continuing commitment to PEMSEA and the objectives of the SDS-SEA. The Country Partners also noted and recognized that DPR Korea, Viet Nam, and the Philippines would complete their signatures following internal procedural requirements, with additional time needed to fulfill their respective national protocols. The host country, PR China, also expressed its intent to sign the Declaration. The Xiamen Ministerial Declaration is attached as Annex 3.

### **C. OPENING CEREMONY AND OPENING OF THE EXHIBIT**

- i. The 8th Ministerial Forum Heads of Delegation participated in the Opening Ceremony of the EAS Congress and WOW 2024, where they were warmly welcomed by Hon. Wu Bin, Mayor of Xiamen Municipal People's Government. The opening ceremony featured key addresses, including a welcome speech by H.E. Shen Yueyue, Vice Chairperson of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, who spoke as national leader. Additional messages were delivered by the EAS Partnership Council Chair, Dr. Vann Molyneath; Governor of Fujian Province, Hon. Zhao Long; and Vice Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, Hon. Sun Shuxian. The ceremony were participated by PEMSEA Executive Committee, representatives from PEMSEA country and non country partners, PEMSEA networks of local governments and learning centers, PEMSEA collaborators as well as other dignitaries from China and Small Island Developing States, and other delegates.
- ii. The ceremony highlighted Xiamen's achievements, particularly its efforts in marine ecological conservation and restoration through a keynote presentation, entitled, "Xiamen Practice of Promoting Harmony between Human and the Sea," delivered by Hon. CUI Yonghui, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and Secretary of the CPC Xiamen Municipal Committee. The event also marked the launch of China's National Bulletin on Ecological Protection and Restoration by the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the recognition of the Xiamen Municipal People's Government for its exemplary practices in marine conservation and restoration.
- iii. Following the Opening Ceremony, the MF heads of delegation together with the Opening Ceremony speakers, proceeded to the opening of the exhibit. Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility provided an overview of the exhibit. The centerpiece, symbolizing the resilient mangrove forests of East Asia, illustrates how their interconnected roots bind and protect coastlines, offering shelter and sustenance. This mirrors how the East Asian Seas partnership has forged a strong network dedicated to improving the lives of millions of people. The delegations then toured the country panels and exhibit booths, which collectively highlight the region's shared journey, showcasing initiatives supporting the SDS-SEA and Blue Economy, as well as innovations in ocean conservation.

### **D. 8<sup>th</sup> EAS MINISTERIAL FORUM PROPER**

## **1. Opening by the Moderator and Introduction of the Heads of Delegation**

- 1.1 The 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum adopted a new format as a moderated dialogue, departing from previous structures to encourage a more interactive exchange of information and insights among the Country Heads of Delegation.
- 1.2 The Forum was formally opened by Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility, serving as moderator of the 8<sup>th</sup> MF. On behalf of the Secretariat, she expressed appreciation to the Government of PR China, particularly to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Xiamen People’s Municipal Government for hosting the event. She then extended a warm welcome to the distinguished Heads of Delegation from the ten PEMSEA Country Partners and attendees, and subsequently introduced each of the Heads of Delegation individually.
- 1.3 Ms. Gonzales emphasized the forum’s importance in reaffirming regional commitments, facilitating exchange of insights on persistent and emerging challenges and opportunities, and sharing initiatives to translate the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration into concrete actions.

## **2. Presentation of the Key Elements of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration**

- 2.1 The first segment of the Ministerial Forum began with a presentation by Ms. Gonzales on the key elements of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration. The presentation aims to provide a foundational understanding and set the tone for the subsequent roundtable discussion. Emphasizing the Declaration’s alignment with the EAS Congress and WOW theme, “Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean,” the presentation underscored how the Xiamen Declaration builds on the commitments of previous EAS Ministerial Declarations and aims to strengthen synergies across the East Asian Seas region.
- 2.2 The presentation highlighted the following key goals of the Declaration:
  - Catalyzing Achievements: Leveraging over 30 years of PEMSEA collaboration and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) to further regional impact.
  - Reaffirming Commitments: Reinforcing regional and global commitments to sustainable development.
  - Global Alignment: Aligning with broader sustainable development and Blue Economy objectives.
  - Enhancing Capacity: Fostering collective expertise on integrative and outcome-based approaches to regional challenges.
- 2.3 In line with these objectives, the Declaration identifies ten synergistic actions across four critical areas aligned with the SDS-SEA vision:
  - Effective Ocean Governance: Calls for integrated, data-driven ocean management, joint capacity-building programs, and a balanced approach to supporting marine ecosystems, economies, and livelihoods.
  - Healthy and Resilient Oceans: Emphasizes scaling up integrated coastal management (ICM) and other PEMSEA initiatives, incorporating ocean-based climate solutions, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, and exploring the potential of blue carbon market and non-market benefits.

- Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Blue Economy: Promotes sustainable blue financing, regional and national ocean assessments, and the integration of the ridge-to-reef framework and climate-smart planning into national policies to meet global environmental targets.
- Healthy People: Advocates for incorporating blue food and health into the ICM framework, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals on zero hunger, health, and life below water.

2.4 Ms. Gonzales concluded her presentation by summarizing the following commitments of the Declaration:

- Mobilize resources and partnerships to support the SDS-SEA and the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF).
- Advance enabling policies for sustainable ocean and coastal management.
- Strengthen “Blue Synergies” through a whole-of-society approach, ensuring comprehensive and inclusive participation.

### 3. Ministerial Dialogue

3.1 The second segment of the Ministerial Forum is a roundtable dialogue centered on the theme of *Synergies*, as outlined in the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration. To guide the discussion, three key synergy themes were identified, with each theme assigned to specific Country Partners for their input. This thematic approach facilitated a structured and focused conversation, allowing the Heads of Delegation to share their respective countries’ strategies, challenges, and insights aligned with the Declaration’s goals.

#### *Topic 1: Synergy on Ensuring Inclusive Multi Stakeholder Engagement and the Science-Policy Interface*

3.2 The first topic focused on enhancing inclusive decision-making and fostering collaboration across multiple sectors to achieve sustainable blue development and strengthen the science-policy interface.

#### Cambodia

3.3 On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Environment, Hon. Paris Chuop, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment (MoE), highlighted significant the country’s progress in integrated coastal and marine governance, particularly through the full implementation of the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) framework along its 440 kilometers of coastline, with support from PEMSEA. The country is also collaborating with PEMSEA, GEF, UNDP, and ASEAN on the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project, focusing on Kampong Bay River, to improve pollution reduction, water resource management, and climate change adaptation.

Cambodia emphasized its proactive approach to climate resilience, integrating climate adaptation into local development through the Commune Investment Program (CIP), which empowers communities to address climate vulnerabilities. The establishment of the National Council for Sustainable Development, along with strategic initiatives like the National Strategic Plan for Protected Area Management and the National REDD+ Strategy, underscores Cambodia’s

commitment to sustainable development, forest conservation, and global climate change mitigation.

On environmental sustainability, Cambodia continues to promote the 4R framework (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle) to tackle plastic waste and advance the Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan, developed in collaboration with the National Council for Sustainable Development and UNDP. This plan supports Cambodia's contribution to reducing greenhouse gases as required by the Paris Agreement and the UN SDGs.

Cambodia also emphasized the integration of gender equity into its development strategy, particularly through initiatives like the IRBM project, supported by PEMSEA, to promote women's economic empowerment and ensure inclusive participation in national progress.

### Lao PDR

3.4 Hon. Chanthanet Boualapha, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNREA) of Lao PDR, emphasized the critical importance of inclusive multistakeholder engagement and a strong science-policy interface in achieving the sustainable management of rivers, coasts, and marine environments.

He highlighted Lao's ongoing commitment to the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), with a focus on integrated water resource management, citing the successful demonstration project in the Sedone River Basin and a new IRBM project in the Nam Tha River Basin, supported by PEMSEA, UNDP, and GEF. This 5-year project aims to reduce pollution, improve water management, and enhance governance through local capacity building. The country also highlighted the Ma and Neun/Ca River Basins Initiative with Vietnam, supported by IUCN, GEF, and FAO, which addresses water use, climate change, and deforestation.

Lao PDR also noted the recent approval of the GEF project concept for enhancing watershed management and climate resilience in vulnerable communities in northeastern basins, with WWF's support. These projects align with the country's national development plans, including the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the National Strategy for Climate Change.

The country emphasized its collaboration with PEMSEA to develop the State of River Basin Report, which helps bridge policy and science, providing tools for monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making. Gender inclusion remains a priority in these initiatives.

As ASEAN Chair in 2024, Lao PDR is committed to enhancing connectivity and resilience under the theme "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience," which aligns with the country's goals in environmental cooperation, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. Lao PDR continues to engage actively in regional Mekong cooperation mechanisms, such as the Mekong River Commission and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.

### Timor-Leste

3.5 Hon. Domingos da Conceição dos Santos, Secretary of State for Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry of Timor-Leste, reaffirmed Timor-Leste's strong commitment to the principles of the Blue Economy, aligning these with the priorities of its 9th Constitutional Government and the National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. Through the Blue



Economy program, Timor-Leste is focusing on science-based decision-making, capacity-building, and the inclusive engagement of all sectors to ensure equitable participation and benefits.

Timor-Leste highlighted its continuing ICM initiatives in Dili, Manatuto, and Liquica, which were launched in partnership with PEMSEA. Under the GEF/UNDP/PEMSEA Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Approach Phase-2 (ATSEA-2) Project, the country has expanded ICM efforts to southern Manatuto, particularly in PA Barique, supported by a multi-agency Sub Task Team. Additionally, a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) is being established in Manufahi and Manatuto, covering 51,000 hectares, with a goal to secure a Ministerial Decree formalizing the MPA by the end of the ATSEA-2 project in December.

Inclusive coastal and marine management is also reflected in Timor-Leste's ATSEA-2 alternative livelihood projects, such as those protecting sea turtles in Com village, resilient home gardens in Aubeon and Weberek, and women-led cooperatives like the Tok Derek Cooperative in Barique.

The country is finalizing consultations on the National Action Programme (NAP) 2024-2033 and the regional Arafura and Timor Seas (ATS) Strategic Action Programme, which will guide sustainable coastal and marine development in the ATS region for the next decade. Timor-Leste is also involved in the RO Korea ODA Project with PEMSEA, which addresses marine plastic litter across four sites (Dili, Liquica, Atauro, and Manatuto) and will continue until 2028.

Timor-Leste also emphasized its ongoing commitment to science-policy integration through State of Oceans and Coasts (SOC) reporting, which supports decision-making. It recognized the continued support from PEMSEA ICM Learning Centers, such as the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) and Oriental University of Timor-Leste (UNITAL).

## *Topic 2: Synergy on Innovations in Technologies and Approaches*

- 3.6 The second topic of the Ministerial Forum centered on Synergy on Innovations in Technologies and Approaches. The discussion emphasized the role of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), in advancing coastal and ocean management. It also explored how these innovations could be tailored to align with the cultural contexts and specific needs of participating countries, ensuring they address challenges effectively.

### China

- 3.7 Representing the host country, Hon. Sun Shuxian, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Administrator of State Oceanic Administration, of China, extended his warm welcome to all the Heads of Delegation from PEMSEA Country Partners and participating partner agencies.

Vice Minister Sun reaffirmed China's commitment to advancing inter-regional marine cooperation as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development in the East Asian Seas and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In line with the SDS-SEA vision of "healthy oceans, people, and economies," China emphasized its dedication to fostering win-win collaboration with the region's countries and shared its achievements in marine economic development and environmental stewardship.

China's strategic initiatives include the implementation of comprehensive national marine policies, such as the National Marine Economic Development Plan and the Spatial Plan for

Coastal Zones and Near-shore Marine Areas, which have shifted marine management from “flat” to “three-dimensional” approaches. The country’s marine economy has flourished, with gross marine product reaching 9.9 trillion yuan in 2023, driven by innovation in fields like marine biotechnology, tidal energy, and digitalization. Groundbreaking efforts in ecological restoration have resulted in the rehabilitation of 1,680 kilometers of coastline and 750,000 acres of wetlands, with mangrove forests now covering 30,300,000 hectares, showcasing China as a global leader in mangrove conservation.

China is also at the forefront of marine science and technology innovation, with advancements such as the “Mazu” numerical ocean forecasting system and deep-sea polar exploration. Within the framework of the UN Decade for Ocean Science, the country has actively promoted cutting-edge technologies for ecological protection, launched the first marine big data service platform “Ocean Cloud,” and spearheaded international collaborations on initiatives like “Zero Ocean Emission”, “Digitization of Deep-Sea Typical Habitat”, and “Seamless Prediction of Oceans and Climate.”

Looking ahead, China expressed its readiness to further enhance regional partnerships in marine science and technology, fostering innovation as a driver of sustainable and high-quality development across the East Asian Seas region.

## Japan

3.8 The Vice Director-General of the Policy Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) of Japan, Mr. Toru Ono, highlighted Japan’s commitment to the goals outlined in the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration, acknowledging the increasingly complex challenges facing the marine environment in East Asia. As demands for sustainable ocean use grow, Japan stressed the importance of conserving the marine environment while expanding its economic use, aligning with PEMSEA’s principle of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM).

Japan recently mainstreamed the principle of "Sustainable Development of the Ocean" into its Fourth Basic Plan on Ocean Policy, which was adopted by the Cabinet in 2023. The country’s key objectives in achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 include expanding offshore wind energy, decarbonizing the entire supply chain (including ports and maritime transport), and protecting, restoring, and conserving the marine environment. These initiatives reflect Japan’s commitment to realizing a Healthy Ocean.

Japan also emphasized its initiatives on blue carbon, particularly in managing and conserving blue carbon ecosystems like eelgrass, wakame seaweed, and mangrove forests. In April, Japan included a part of blue carbon ecosystems and their sequestration rates in its Greenhouse Gas Inventory report and submitted the results to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC. Japan’s report on macroalgal beds is the first of its kind in the world. This includes innovative use of earth observation satellites to estimate seaweed bed distribution and improve monitoring methods.

Recognizing the potential of blue carbon ecosystems in the face of climate change, Japan stressed the need for solid monitoring data, coordinated efforts among stakeholders, and capacity building. Mr. Ono underscored the following key focus areas: technologies and frameworks for the conservation, restoration, and creation of blue carbon ecosystems and credits for carbon dioxide absorption by the ecosystems. These ecosystems offer multiple benefits that align with

PEMSEA's ICM initiatives, including preserving water quality, enhancing fishing environments, and supporting tourism. Japan is committed to accelerating coastal management through new technologies tailored to local needs, while respecting local cultures, with the goal of promoting growth in the ocean and coastal sectors across Asia.

### RO Korea

- 3.9 Hon. Yoon Hyunsoo, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MoF) of RO Korea highlighted the critical role of oceans in regulating the planet's climate and underscored the alarming signs of a deepening climate crisis, including rising sea levels, marine heatwaves, coastal erosion, declining fish stocks, and the accumulation of marine litter.

RO Korea is leveraging innovative technologies, including Big Data, AI, and IoT, to enhance marine monitoring and response efforts. Key initiatives include the use of the Cheollian-2B satellite for real-time environmental monitoring, analyzing environmental data, and responding swiftly to challenges like marine litter and red tides; the development of a smart aquaculture big data center to optimize aquaculture operations and prevent issues through AI-driven insights.

Additionally, RO Korea has introduced the "Science and Technology Workforce Development Plan" to foster talent in the marine and fisheries sectors, covering the entire career lifecycle. Educational programs are designed to help fishers transition to digital aquaculture systems, including smart farms.

To achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, Korea is reforming regulations on eco-friendly ships and marine energy. A regulatory sandbox system temporarily eases restrictions to encourage innovation, with a focus on setting safety standards for autonomous ships and contributing to international standardization.

The country is also advancing marine litter collection and eco-friendly technologies through robust public-private partnerships. Innovations include the development of eco-friendly buoys and marine litter tracking systems to combat pollution in East Asian seas.

### Singapore

- 3.9.1 Hon. Rena Lee, Ambassador for International Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore shared some of the initiatives Singapore is actively pursuing to advance innovative technologies and approaches. In particular, she highlighted the importance of the BBNJ Agreement (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) in advancing sustainable ocean governance. She noted that innovative technologies such as remote sensing, GIS, and use of machine learning are crucial for sustainable coastal and ocean management.

Ambassador Lee further stressed the role of capacity-building, calling for enhanced technical expertise and regional cooperation to drive the adoption of innovative and new technologies, through building technical skills, as well as skills for stakeholder engagement. She also stressed the need to ensure that capacity-building meets the needs of recipients and is culturally appropriate, such as through involvement of the community, to address the complexities of marine conservation. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies and fostering collaboration, through programmes such as the Integrated Urban Coastal Management framework and the Marine Climate Change Science programmes, as well as through participation in platforms such

as PEMSEA, Singapore remains committed to ensuring that the world's oceans remain healthy and resilient, supporting a sustainable Blue Economy for future generations.

### *Topic 3: Synergy on Blue Financing and Investments*

- 3.10 The third topic centered on Blue Financing and Investments, with a particular focus on the key country initiatives and the opportunities available in mobilizing diverse financing sources to support blue economy initiatives. Discussions highlighted the critical areas within coastal and ocean management that require immediate or increased investment to drive sustainable development and address pressing challenges in the East Asian Seas region.

#### Indonesia

- 3.11 Hon. Dasrul Chaniago, Director of Coastal and Marine Pollution and Degradation Control, Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) of Indonesia emphasized the country's commitment to the blue economy, which is grounded in a vision to sustainably manage its vast coastal and marine resources for socio-economic prosperity, environmental health, and resilience. As the world's largest archipelagic nation, Indonesia boasts a marine area of 2.8 million square kilometers, with an estimated oceanic resource value of USD 1,334 billion. Despite this vast potential, Indonesia faces a significant financing gap for sustainable growth in its blue economy sectors.

To address this gap, Director Chaniago shared Indonesia's blue financing initiatives under its Ocean Policy Action Plan 2021-2025 and Blue Economy Roadmap 2023-2045. These initiatives focus on improving coastal welfare, promoting marine industry growth, and ensuring environmental protection. In 2022, Indonesia introduced the Blue Financing Strategic Document, which outlines financial measures and strategies to support the sustainable development of the blue economy, estimating that an annual investment of IDR 3.64 trillion to IDR 1,392.22 trillion is needed to achieve a 15% contribution of the blue economy to GDP by 2045.

Indonesia has also developed the Blue Finance Instruments Development Guidelines, emphasizing blue bonds and blue sukuk as key financial tools to fund marine and fisheries sectors. These guidelines outline the process of issuing blue bonds and sukuk, including project eligibility criteria and associated benefits.

To scale up blue finance, Indonesia emphasizes the need for raising awareness, improving access to financing, creating thematic investment platforms, advancing marine insurance, and implementing robust impact measurement systems to track the environmental and social outcomes of investments. These efforts aim to ensure that Indonesia's blue economy continues to thrive while promoting sustainability and resilience.

#### Philippines

- 3.12 Hon. Donalyn Minimo, Assistant Secretary, Department of Finance of the Philippines, highlighted the importance of the forum's discussion on blue financing and investment, particularly in the context of the blue economy's growing contribution to global development and the UN SDGs.

The Philippines emphasized the need for innovative financing solutions to support sustainable projects, climate action, pollution management, and disaster resilience. The country is advancing its blue economy through a comprehensive legislative framework, including the ongoing

development of a Blue Economy Act, which aims to safeguard marine ecosystems, promote blue finance, and establish blue economic zones.

Asec. Minimo cited the following as some of the country's recent initiatives in support of a sustainable blue economy:

- Developing Philippine Ocean Economy Satellite Accounts and a Roadmap for Natural Capital Accounting
- Establishing a Strategic Investment Priority Plan to encourage investments in environmental friendly industries
- Issuing Guidelines on Eligible Blue Projects for Blue Bonds
- Promoting sustainability reporting for publicly listed companies
- Defining sustainable economic activities and investments through the Sustainable Finance Taxonomy Guidelines
- Allocating funds to support SDG investments

The country also emphasized the importance of targeted investments in capacity building, research, innovation, livelihood opportunities for coastal communities, and enhanced data collection to ensure sustainable marine development.

The Philippines expressed its appreciation for PEMSEA's role in advancing blue economy initiatives, particularly the Changwon Declaration, the National ICM Program, and the National State of Oceans and Coasts Report on Blue Economy, which have been instrumental in shaping some of the country's policies and programs.

Finally, the Philippines, with the leadership of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with support from UNDP Philippines and PEMSEA, shared its upcoming release of the updated National State of Oceans and Coasts Report on Blue Economy, furthering its commitment to sustainable ocean governance and management.

### Viet Nam

3.13 Hon. Nguyen Duc Toan, Director General of Viet Nam Agency of Seas and Islands (VASI), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of Viet Nam, highlighted the significance of green finance and investment, noting that with over half of its population residing in coastal areas and many employed in sea-related industries, the blue economy is vital for both regional prosperity and national development.

The country is committed to becoming a strong maritime nation with its Sustainable Development Strategy for the Ocean Economy by 2030, with a vision toward 2045, aiming for green growth and environmental protection. This strategy is supported by government-issued resolutions and master plans for sustainable marine development, including projects for 2020-2025 and 2026-2030, including Resolution No. 26/NQ-CP dated March 5, 2020 on the Government's Master Plan and Five-Year Plan.

Viet Nam has made substantial progress in institutionalizing sustainable marine economic development, with policies such as the National Marine Spatial Planning for 2021-2030, the Master Plan for coastal resource use, and strategies for protecting marine and island environments. These plans align with Viet Nam's commitment to the Sustainable Development

Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), with successful implementation of integrated coastal zone management and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms.

Despite these efforts, Viet Nam acknowledged challenges related to the lack of capital for green projects and limited implementation capacity. The country called for strengthened international cooperation, through dialogue and support from organizations like PEMSEA, to mobilize additional financial resources for the promotion of the green economy and green finance.

#### **4. Closing Statements**

- 4.1 In closing, each of the country representatives was given the opportunity to share their final thoughts, reflections, and aspirations for the future of PEMSEA, offering valuable insights on how the organization can continue to advance its mission and strengthen regional cooperation in the years ahead.
- 4.2 Overall, the 8th EAS Ministerial Forum concluded on a positive note, with participants recognizing the significant progress made in blue economy initiatives across the East Asian Seas region. The Xiamen Ministerial Declaration, with its focus on synergies and integrated approaches, provides a roadmap for future collaboration and action.
- 4.3 The regional collaboration, spearheaded by PEMSEA and guided by the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), remains a crucial platform for advancing the region's collective vision, building on PEMSEA's strengths in multistakeholder engagement and integrated, ecosystem-based approaches.
- 4.4 All participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration, sharing best practices, and working together towards the common goal of sustainable development in the East Asian Seas. The importance of green growth, scientific decision-making, inclusive engagement, and capacity building was underscored, alongside the need to harness innovative technologies and pursue blue financing and investments. The countries emphasized the Blue Economy as a pathway toward a resilient East Asian Seas, committing to the implementation of the SDS-SEA Plan 2023-2027 to ensure effective governance, healthy coastal and marine ecosystems, healthy people, and thriving economies.
- 4.5 They also expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China, the Government of Fujian Province, the Xiamen Municipal People's Government, and PEMSEA for their outstanding efforts in organizing the East Asian Seas Congress 2024 and the 8th EAS Ministerial Forum.
- 4.6 As host of the Ministerial Forum, Vice Minister Sun, delivered the final closing statement. On behalf of both host and country partner, he expressed deep appreciation to the heads of delegations for their valuable contributions in the Ministerial dialogue. Highlighting the EAS Congress and Ministerial Forum's legacy since 2003 in fostering partnerships, enhancing trust, and advancing sustainable development, China emphasized the importance of continued cooperation in addressing pressing challenges in the region. The Chinese government reaffirmed its alignment with PEMSEA's mission of promoting healthy oceans, well-being, and economic development through integrated management and partnerships, echoing President Xi Jinping's vision of the oceans as a strategic platform for high-quality development and a shared destiny.

4.7 China pledged to actively implement the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027 and contribute its expertise and solutions toward achieving regional ocean governance and sustainable development. Emphasizing the importance of the Xiamen Declaration, which outlines strategic priorities, collaborative pathways, and the role of technological innovation, China called for strengthened blue partnerships and deeper cooperation to build an East Asian Seas region defined by peace, friendship, collaboration, and shared prosperity.

## 5. Conclusion of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum

5.1 Ms. Gonzales, serving as the moderator, concluded the session with heartfelt thanks to all country representatives for their valuable insights and steadfast commitment to the shared vision of the SDS-SEA for the East Asian Seas region. She emphasized the collective anticipation for countries to translate the commitments outlined in the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration into tangible and impactful actions for sustainable development. In closing, she once again extended sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Xiamen Municipal People's Government for their exceptional efforts in organizing the various activities for the Ministerial Forum delegation.

5.2 The Forum concluded with a symbolic gesture as the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources of China presented the host country's tokens of appreciation to the heads of delegation from the PEMSEA Country Partners. This was followed by a commemorative group photo, capturing the heads of delegation alongside members of PEMSEA's Executive Committee, as well as representatives from PEMSEA Non-Country Partners and collaborators.

## E. MINISTERIAL FIELD VISIT AT WUYUAN BAY

5.6 In the afternoon, the Ministerial Forum delegates visited Xiamen's Wuyuan Bay, one of China's examples of ecological transformation. Once a salt-drying site and waste dump, Wuyuan Bay has been revitalized into a flourishing habitat for nearly 90 bird species, including the Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*), celebrated as one of China's most beautiful birds, and the iconic White Dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*). Now a vibrant hub for recreational activities such as cruise tours, fishing, sailing, and yachting, Wuyuan Bay exemplifies sustainable and restorative development.

5.7 Located in the northeastern part of Xiamen Island, Wuyuan Bay spans 17.05 square kilometers with a 15.22-kilometer shoreline. Over the past two decades, the Xiamen Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government implemented a phased ecological restoration and development strategy, comprising three key stages: ecological restoration, comprehensive development, and integrated development. These efforts have transformed Wuyuan Bay into a model of ecological value realization. Recognized by the MNR as one of the first "Typical Cases of Value Realization of Ecological Products," its achievements have also been featured in the "Reform Measures and Experiences of National Ecological Civilization Pilot Zones" by China's National Development and Reform Commission.

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**ANNEX 1**  
**8<sup>th</sup> EAS MINISTERIAL FORUM PROGRAM**

**EAS MINISTERIAL FORUM PROGRAM**

TIME & VENUE	EVENT/ACTIVITY
08:10-08:30 (VIP Room)	Signing of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration
08:30 – 10:00 (2F Xiamen Hall)	Opening Ceremony & Signing of Xiamen Ministerial Declaration
10:00 – 10:30 (1F Foyer Area)	Opening of the EAS Congress Exhibition & Guided Tour of MF HODs
10:45 – 12:15 (1F Egret Hall)	<p>Ministerial Forum Proper*</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director, PEMSEA Resource Facility</p> <p>1.0 Opening by Moderator and Introduction of Ministers/HODs</p> <p>2.0 Ministerial Dialogue</p> <p>3.0 Statements on commitments and aspirations linked with the EAS Congress theme and the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration</p> <p>4.0 Conclusion by the Moderator</p>
12:30 – 13:30 (3F Jinxia Hall)	Ministerial Luncheon*
14:30 – 16:25 (Wuyuan Bay)	Ministerial Field Visit*
18:00 – 20:00 (2F Xiamen Hall)	Welcome Banquet

\*By invitation only

**ANNEX 2**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> EAS MINISTERIAL FORUM**  
**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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**ANNEX 3**  
**XIAMEN MINISTERIAL DECLARATION**  
**(With consolidated signatures from November 6, 2024)**



# XIAMEN MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

## Strengthening Synergies for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient East Asian Seas

The 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum  
East Asian Seas Congress 2024  
November 6, 2024


WE, the Official Government Representatives of PEMSEA country partners gathered this 6th day of November, 2024 in Xiamen, China to reaffirm our commitments and review the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), provide policy directions and adopt actions to accelerate the process to secure the PEMSEA 2030 Roadmap that will foster effective ocean governance and healthy seas, people and economies.

WE launched the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) Implementation Plan (IP) 2023-2027 as PEMSEA's medium term plan for the sustainable use and management of the ocean, seas, river and coastal and marine resources, aligned with national priorities and consensus generated in the past Ministerial Declarations and relevant international and global commitments.

WE recognize the progress made in executing the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 and strengthening PEMSEA as a competent regional platform towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global goals.

WE affirm our commitments to relevant and interlinked regional and global instruments and initiatives, including the Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), United Nations Environment Assembly Ministerial Declarations, United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), reinforcing our collaborative and synergistic actions to meet our international obligations and to ensure a sustainable, inclusive and resilient East Asian Seas.

WE acknowledge the adoption on 19 June 2023 of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine and Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long-term, while respecting the individual timelines and processes of countries in the review, signing, or ratification of the BBNJ Agreement.



WE are deeply concerned with the findings of the World Ocean Assessment II, that the state of the ocean has not improved, and many of the ocean benefits are increasingly being undermined by the impact of climate change, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution caused by unsustainable human and economic activities, resulting in disproportionate impacts to many countries and communities.

WE underscore the fact that climate change exacerbates the negative impact of human and economic activities on the coastal and marine ecosystems; and undermines the capacity of these resources to promote nature-based solutions and services.

WE emphasize the need for improved data, information and knowledge for science-based decision-making, as well as strengthened capacity to access and apply best available technologies and innovations for good ocean governance at the local, national and regional levels.

WE recognize that blue economy contributes significantly to economic growth, employment and meeting the aspirations of all peoples in the region; and acknowledge that realizing the full potential of the ocean will require responsible and sustainable resource utilization, as well as scaled-up financing and investments to support the conservation and equitable growth of healthy, productive, and resilient East Asian Seas.

WE are convinced of the urgent need to engage and forge partnerships with international financial institutions, public as well as private sector and other donor organizations to adopt innovative financing mechanisms to shift capital flows towards supporting integrated and nature-positive ocean planning, conservation, and climate adaptation.

WE recognize that reducing pressures from man-made activities and moving towards sustainable production and consumption patterns and behavior require major improvements in ocean literacy through formal and informal education, awareness raising, citizen empowerment and capacity development.

WE are convinced, with the urgent need to address the above interlocking pressures and fulfill the regional commitments not in silos, but through leveraging synergies anchored on integrative and outcome-based approaches.

## SYNERGISTIC ACTIONS

Synergistic implementation of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027 and advancing the PEMSEA 2030 Roadmap embody outcome-based integrated approaches and priority actions identified below.

### 1. Effective Governance

The regional coordinating mechanism for SDS-SEA and the necessary national enabling mechanisms will be strengthened by, but not limited to, the following new actions:

**Action 1.** Promote vertical, horizontal and spatial integration to support effective ocean governance and strengthen policy coherence across sectors with full recognition of the land-sea interface and the connectivity of ecosystems from 'ridge to reef' that require integrated management approaches.





**Action 2.** Consider science-based data and information to support planning, policy development, and investment decision-making; measure the effectiveness of integrated coastal management and expand its scope and linkages to marine spatial planning and other area-based management approaches; mainstream ocean accounting and valuation of marine ecosystem goods and services; promote inclusive digitalization and innovative technology to support ocean monitoring, as well as generate smart data-driven maps to better understand and protect the ocean from overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

**Action 3.** Build synergistic approaches in the application of integrated coastal and/or river basin management, integrated pollution reduction and management, marine and coastal ecosystem conservation and restoration, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction programs; develop joint research, training and capacity development programs; measure and monitor impacts; and share knowledge, lessons, and good practices, among others.

## **2. Healthy and Resilient Ocean**

Ocean-Climate Synergy will be strengthened through protecting and strengthening climate-resilience of ocean resources in support of countries in achieving their respective Nationally Determined Contributions and climate goals under SDG 13, 14.1 and 14.2. Specific actions could include:

**Action 4.** Adopt ocean-based climate solutions, including innovative technologies and strategies to harness renewable and clean energy that will mitigate greenhouse gas emissions while addressing ocean pressures from biodiversity loss, eutrophication, marine plastic pollution, hypoxia, and acidification to be achieved through scaled-up ICM programs that leverage innovative technologies for protecting ocean health and ecosystem supported by PEMSEA's established monitoring and evaluation framework.

**Action 5.** Apply ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) as part of integrated coastal management to contribute to synergistic implementation of the goals and objectives of global instruments and initiatives and national priorities, taking into account socio-economic imperatives including community engagement, community-based monitoring and participatory processes, strengthening policy and technical capacity; and disseminating good practices of Eco-DRR with scientific evidence of co-benefits to coastal communities.


**Action 6.** Tap the potential of blue carbon market and non-market benefits supported by a regional certification scheme based on the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Roadmap.

## **3. Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Blue Economy**

Building on the call for a Blue Economy in the 2012 Changwon Ministerial Declaration, it is timely to review the pathways, taxonomy and criteria of ocean-based economic activities that contribute to sustainable, inclusive and resilient blue economy, and create enabling framework and incentives that will facilitate the integration of blue economy in national and local development plans and investment priorities.

**Action 7.** Engage financial and related non-financial institutions to apply Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and Sustainable Blue Financing frameworks and principles to manage risks and opportunities and as a criterion for unlocking capital so as to promote environmentally and socially responsible ocean industries and advance the sustainable growth of the blue economy.





**Action 8.** Refine and update the regional and national state of the ocean and coasts reports and/or similar country reports every 5 years to demonstrate the value add of blue economy through monitoring of impacts and progress made towards reducing pollution, GHG emissions, and biodiversity loss while building innovative, climate-smart, socially inclusive, and resource efficient ocean economies.

**Action 9.** Strengthen ICM by incorporating in national and local development and investment plans and priorities the ‘ridge-to-reef’ framework for ecosystem conservation and restoration as well as the climate-smart and inclusive planning approach to support the actions agenda for the blue economy and the SDS-SEA and KMGBF targets

#### 4. Healthy People

Blue foods have yet to play a prominent role in food and health discussions, which remain largely focused on agriculture, terrestrial crops, and livestock. To ensure food security and advance blue food systems, it is crucial to integrate ecosystem-based river basin management and promote sustainable fisheries, aquaculture value chains, and marine biotechnology. Specific action could include:

**Action 10.** Integrate blue food and health in the ICM framework as a pathway to blue economy, and mainstream blue food systems in the regional, national, and local planning agenda as concrete solutions to SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, SDG 3 on Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 14 on Life Below Water.

### COMMITMENTS

**WE** call on all Country Partners, Non-Country Partners, PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG), PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC), to:

- a. mobilize resources and forge strategic partnerships for the collective implementation of the priority programs under the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 and the identified synergistic actions;
- b. contribute to attaining the goals of the SDS-SEA by putting in place enabling policies, where relevant and implementing activities in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities; and
- c. strengthen existing and/or establish new blue synergies by adopting a whole-of-society approach, and engaging the public and private sectors, non-government organizations, international development agencies, youth, women, local communities, vulnerable groups and other relevant stakeholders in implementing the SDS-SEA.

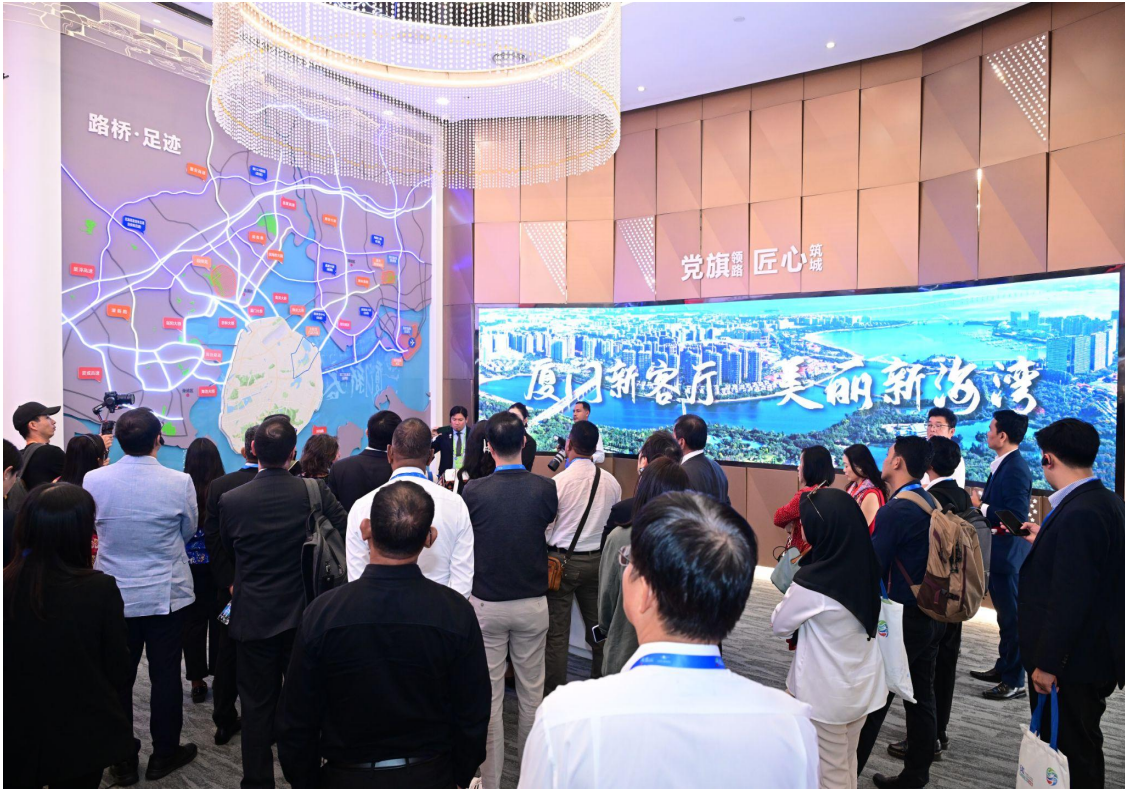
**WE** affirm our commitment to continue to provide voluntary contributions to enable the PEMSEA Resource Facility to deliver the necessary technical, facilitation and secretariat services, in coordinating the implementation of the SDS-SEA through synergistic actions, and reporting the progress to the next East Asian Seas Congress.

**WE** extend our appreciation to the government of PR China for hosting the 2024 East Asian Seas Congress, the Xiamen World Ocean Week, and the 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum in Xiamen, PR China.

ANNEX 4  
8<sup>TH</sup> EAS MINISTERIAL FORUM PHOTOS







You may access the other photos [here](#).