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World Ocean Week in Xiamen

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

6-8 NOVEMBER 2024 • XIAMEN CITY, CHINA



SUBTHEME 2.6
GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Harmonizing Oceans: Transboundary Strategies for Climate Resilience in North-East Asia

PROCEEDINGS

CONVENERS:



中华人民共和国自然资源部
Ministry of Natural Resources of the People's Republic of China

厦门市人民政府
Xiamen Municipal People's Government



Harmonizing Oceans: Transboundary Strategies for Climate Resilience in North-East Asia

7 November 2024, 10:00-12:00

Xiamen, China

1. SESSION INFORMATION

- **Session Title:** Harmonizing Oceans: Transboundary Strategies for Climate Resilience in North-East Asia
- **Date and Time:** 7 November 2024, 10:00-12:00
- **Venue / Platform:** 2E02 VIP room / Xiamen International Conference Center
- **Convening Organization:**
 - Korea Maritime Institute (KMI)
 - ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office
- **Session Coordinator / Contact Details:**
 - Junggho Nam, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Maritime Institute (ihnam@kmi.re.kr)
 - Jiyeon Kim, Senior Researcher, Korea Maritime Institute (jiyeon9887@kmi.re.kr)
 - Mi-Jin Lee, Research Associate, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office (lee62@un.org)

2. INTRODUCTION

The East Asia region, home to a diverse array of marine ecosystems and species, faces significant challenges exacerbated by climate change. These challenges include habitat loss, biological pollution from invasive alien species and harmful algal blooms, and threats to marine species from both human and natural stressors. Effective marine conservation efforts transcend national boundaries and require robust transboundary cooperation and multi-layered stakeholder engagement, from regional, national and local governments to MPA managers, research institutions, and local communities. This holistic approach resonates with the Congress theme "Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean".

The urgent needs for climate resilience are amplified through international and regional forums. Such calls include the resolution on regional cooperation to accelerate climate action on oceans in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development¹ adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), contributing to, for example, the

¹ [ESCAP RES 79 2 E \(unescap.org\)](https://unescap.org/resolutions/2022/2022-02-01-02-02)

Sustainable Development Goal 14 (life under water) and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030.

Against this backdrop, the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) and ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia jointly organized a session titled “**Harmonizing Oceans: Transboundary Strategies for Climate Resilience in North-East Asia**”. This session highlighted the role of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) under the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) regime in North-East Asia and beyond in fostering regional resilience against climate impacts and promoting ecosystem conservation.

Key topics included:

- **Understanding Climate Change Impacts:** Examining how climate change affects marine ecosystems in this region.
- **Applying CMSP Strategies:** Sharing successful CMSP strategies and their role in climate-related conservation efforts (e.g., blue carbon, community-led habitat restoration).
- **Enhancing Transboundary Cooperation:** Discussing how multi-stakeholder engagement can strengthen regional conservation initiatives.

Additionally, the session underscored capacity building and knowledge exchange, providing a platform for member States and relevant stakeholders to share best practices and enhance skills for managing MPAs and addressing regional marine environmental challenges.

3. SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

<Opening>

The session commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Sung-Jin Cho, Director of the Marine Environmental and Spatial Research Division, Korea Maritime Institute (KMI). He outlined the critical challenges facing East Asian marine ecosystems, from habitat loss to biological pollution. Stressing that these challenges transcend borders, he emphasized the Congress's theme "Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean" and the need for transboundary collaboration. And he encouraged active participation in the session aimed to share experiences from the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network while fostering discussions on climate change impacts and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Following the opening remarks, Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head of the ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office delivered his recorded welcoming remarks. He emphasized the importance

of transboundary cooperation in addressing the climate impacts on East Asia's marine ecosystems. He also highlighted regional initiatives, including the North-East Asia Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) and the ESCAP Resolution on Ocean-Based Climate Action (OBCA), as vital frameworks for enhancing ocean resilience. He urged participants to align policies and strategies across borders to protect marine environments and support coastal communities.

<Presentations>

Moderated by Mr. Jung-ho Nam, Senior Research Fellow of KMI, the first part of the session featured four presentations.

Ms. Ji-yoon Kim, Senior Researcher of KMI, explained how climate change and biodiversity loss represent interconnected global challenges that threaten marine ecosystems. Drawing from the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024, she emphasized how these twin crises are expected to become major global risks within the next decade. She identified Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a crucial solution, noting that while 8.33% of global oceans are currently designated as MPAs, more extensive protection is needed. She showcased successful examples of transboundary cooperation, including the Coral Triangle Initiative and the Wadden Sea Protected Area, which demonstrate how international collaboration can effectively protect marine ecosystems. The presentation concluded by emphasizing the importance of clear governance, joint monitoring, data sharing, community participation, and international support in successful MPA management, particularly urging Northeast Asian countries to strengthen their cooperative efforts in marine conservation.

Mr. Zhao-hui Zhang, Research Professor of the First Institute of Oceanography, Ministry of Natural Resources of China, provided an overview of the progress in marine protected areas (MPAs) in China since the 2018 organizational reform. He highlighted updates on the new MPA definition and classification, laws, regulations, management agencies, policies, technical guidance, spatial planning, and measures for marine conservation. He also addressed challenges such as limited scientific research, infrastructure, professional personnel, and significant gaps in marine biodiversity conservation. He noted China's plans to expand marine conservation areas, improve protection for endangered marine species, enhance capabilities, and strengthen cooperation domestically and internationally. He stressed the importance of regional collaboration on migratory species like spotted seals, setting clear Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) targets, and sharing experiences and innovative practices in MPAs to support marine conservation both in China and the region.

Ms. Mi-Jin Lee, Research Associate of ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, emphasized the critical role of NEAMPAN in addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution by enhancing MPA management and fostering regional cooperation among North-East Asian countries. She highlighted NEAMPAN's initiatives, including capacity-building workshops, research on MPAs and climate change, and collaboration with other regional MPA networks. Using Suncheon Bay, a NEAMPAN site, as a case study, she demonstrated how MPAs can deliver multiple benefits, such as carbon absorption, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable eco-tourism. She stressed the importance of strengthening NEAMPAN's efforts to expand MPAs, connect ecological networks, and engage diverse stakeholders in building a resilient marine environment and tackling climate challenges.

Ms. Maeve Nightingale, Senior Programme Officer of IUCN Asia, shared insights on IUCN's work in marine conservation and its relevance to the Asia region, emphasizing the importance of transboundary partnerships and ecosystem connectivity. She provided an overview of IUCN's mandate, highlighting its role as a global leader in biodiversity knowledge, with initiatives such as the Red List for species and ecosystems and the Green List for effective MPA management. She discussed challenges in achieving 30x30 targets in Asia, where less than 5% of marine areas are currently protected, and stressed the potentials of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to complement MPAs. Using examples like the Coral Triangle and Bay of Bengal, she showcased regional efforts in marine biodiversity conservation, small-scale fisheries management, and pollution control. She concluded by underscoring the need for effective management, sound governance, and inclusive participation to achieve sustainable and impactful marine conservation.

<Panel discussion>

Followed by four presentations, three panelists were invited to share their experiences.

Ms. Margarita Victoria Caballa, Technical Specialist of UNEP/GEF SCS-SAP and Programme Lead on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems of UNEP-COBSEA, shared insights on regional efforts in MPA networking and transboundary collaboration under the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, highlighting COBSEA's role as one of 18 regional seas programmes worldwide. She emphasized the importance of partnerships in developing MPA networks and addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. COBSEA's new strategic direction focuses on enhancing collaboration with entities such as ESCAP and other regional seas programmes to integrate ocean-based climate action into its work. She acknowledged ongoing challenges in defining concrete steps for collaboration, such as

financing and leadership, and stressed the need to link East Asian MPA networks with global initiatives such as the Blue Nature Alliance.

Ms. Casandra Tania, UNDP/GEF ATSEA-2's Regional Biodiversity Specialist, shared updates on the second phase of the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) programme, focusing on transboundary challenges such as climate change. She highlighted efforts to create a climate-resilient regional MPA network, strengthen governance, and develop a 10-year strategic action plan, addressing marine plastics, oil spills, illegal fishing, and habitat conservation. Emphasizing the need for integrating climate concerns into local planning and decision-making she underscored the programme's commitment to regional collaboration, capacity building, and research advancement.

Lastly, Mr. Xinping Chen, Senior Researcher, Marine Ecosystem Conservation and Restoration, National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources, China, emphasized the growing challenges in coastal regions from disasters like typhoons, coastal storms, erosion, and sea level rise, exacerbated by climate change. Highlighting the protective role of natural infrastructure, he noted that 100 meters of mangroves can reduce wave height by 67%, and reefs safeguard over 400 million people from storms globally. He stressed the importance of building hazard-resilient communities and showcased China's Coastal Protection and Restoration Projects over the past decade as effective examples of ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction.

<Q&A / DISCUSSIONS>

The panel discussion primarily focused on practical cooperation measures to strengthen Marine Protected Area (MPA) networks. The discussion revolved around three core themes: enhancing network cooperation effectiveness, strengthening MPA networks, and promoting international cooperation.

First, regarding the establishment of practical cooperative relationships, an ecosystem connectivity-based approach was emphasized. Given the transboundary nature of marine ecosystems, it was noted that while respecting each country's sovereignty in resource management, developing a shared vision is crucial. Local government-level cooperation was highlighted as particularly effective, as departmental boundaries tend to be less rigid at the regional level, facilitating practical collaboration.

Regarding the Northeast Asian MPA network, two main challenges were discussed. One is the lack of shared resources among the five member countries, and the other is the network's

stagnation at 12 sites over the past decade. To address these issues, it was suggested to share and learn from global MPA network experiences. Particularly for expanding participation from North Korea, Japan, and Russia, an indirect approach through international organizations like IUCN was proposed.

To enhance international cooperation, the importance of improving mutual understanding of activities and plans between institutions was emphasized. Specifically, the establishment of an information-sharing platform was proposed to prevent duplicate activities and ensure efficient resource utilization. Expanding direct participation opportunities for local communities and field practitioners was also discussed as a crucial task.

The discussion also highlighted the need for long-term sustained efforts and establishing clear governance systems, with particular emphasis on data sharing and joint monitoring mechanisms for successful transboundary cooperation in marine conservation.

4. KEY OUTCOMES

The session produced significant outcomes for strengthening marine conservation efforts in East Asia. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were confirmed as essential tools for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, with participants acknowledging the need to expand beyond the current 8.33% global coverage to meet international targets.

Regional collaboration emerged as a central theme, with participants agreeing to strengthen NEAMPAN's role and develop more effective cooperation mechanisms at both national and local levels. A notable development was the identification of alternative channels for North Korean participation through international organizations like IUCN and Ramsar Convention, demonstrating progress in addressing regional inclusivity challenges.

The participants committed to establishing an integrated information-sharing platform to enhance resource efficiency and prevent duplication of efforts. This commitment includes improving data-sharing systems, developing joint monitoring programs, and increasing local government engagement. Follow-up activities were outlined, including capacity-building workshops and collaborative research initiatives, with a particular emphasis on strengthening community-level stakeholder involvement in marine conservation efforts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

The session identified critical steps needed to strengthen marine conservation and climate resilience in North-East Asia. First, regional coordination mechanisms need reinforcement through enhanced funding and institutional support for networks like NEAMPAN, alongside the development of standardized monitoring systems for transboundary MPAs. Knowledge sharing and capacity building should be prioritized through regular training programs and the establishment of a regional database for best practices.

To improve management effectiveness, climate change considerations must be better integrated into MPA planning, supported by clear governance frameworks and stronger enforcement mechanisms. Stakeholder engagement should be broadened by fostering partnerships with local communities and the private sector, while strengthening the science-policy interface.

Implementation should focus on accelerating progress toward the 30x30 target through coordinated regional action, securing sustainable financing mechanisms, and adapting successful models like the Coral Triangle Initiative to the regional context. These efforts should be underpinned by regular evaluation and adaptation of strategies based on emerging challenges and opportunities in marine conservation.

6. ANNEX

Annex 1. Programme

Time	Agenda
10:00-10:10	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remarks<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Sung-Jin Cho, Director of Marine Environmental and Spatial Research Division, Korea Maritime Institute○ Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head of the ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office (video)• Group photo
10:10-11:00	Presentations Moderator: Mr. Jungho Nam, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Maritime Institute

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Jiyeon Kim, Senior Researcher, Korea Maritime Institute • Mr. Zhaohui Zhang, Research Professor, First Institute of Oceanography, China • Ms. Mi-Jin Lee, Research Associate, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office • Ms. Maeve Nightingale, Senior Programme Officer, IUCN Asia
11:00-11:50	<p>Panel Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Margarita Victoria Caballa, Technical Specialist / Programme Lead on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, UNEP/GEF SCS-SAP / UNEP-COBSEA • Ms. Casandra Tania, UNDP/GEF ATSEA-2's Regional Biodiversity Specialist • Mr. Xinpeng Chen, Senior Researcher, Marine Ecosystem Conservation and Restoration Division, National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service of Ministry of Natural Resources, China
11:50-12:00	Closing

Annex 2. Presentation materials

- Links to the presentation materials can be found [here](#).