



Ministry of Oceans
and Fisheries



PEMSEA

MOF/PEMSEA ODA Project

**Reducing Marine Plastics in the
East Asian Seas Region**

Interim Regional Steering Committee Meeting

**12 December 2023
via Zoom Conference**

INTERIM REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

12 December 2023 via Zoom

MEETING REPORT

BACKGROUND

1. The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting is the highest decision making body of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Project entitled “Reducing Marine Plastics in the East Asian Seas Region” comprised of the donor: the Government of Republic of Korea represented by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), and the participating countries: the Philippines, represented by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DENR) and Timor-Leste, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF) and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE). The Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) of the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) of Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) serves as the Secretariat.
2. The RSC is set to convene every year to report the progress and approve work plan and budget for the following year’s project activities. The chairmanship is assumed by both participating countries alternating basis. This inaugural RSC meeting was organized in Manila, Philippines and chaired by the Government of the Philippines, represented by H.E. Undersecretary Jonas Leones of the DENR. The 2nd RSC meeting in 2024 will be chaired by the government of Timor-Leste.
3. Prior to the 1st RSC meeting, the Government of the Philippines suggested to change the title of the 1st RSC meeting to the Interim Regional Steering Committee (Interim RSC) meeting considering the formal approval of the project in both countries have not yet been established. The signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Implementation of the ODA Project between the Government of RO Korea and the Government of Timor-Leste to formalize the ODA project in Timor-Leste was planned during this RSC meeting but did not push through. Accordingly, the members of the RSC agreed the changes in the agenda and the meeting was titled as the Interim RSC meeting until such time that the MOUs are formally signed by the donor country and both participating countries.
4. The program of the Interim RSC meeting is attached as Annex 1.

OPENING

5. The EMCEE, Ms. Rizza Dejudos, Communications Officer of PEMSEA, acknowledged the meeting participants from the Philippines, Timor-Leste, RO Korea and PEMSEA. The list of participants is attached as Annex 2.
6. The EMCEE invited the representatives of PEMSEA, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and RO Korea for messages.

Welcome message

Ms. Aimee T. Gonzales, Executive Director, PEMSEA

7. Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of PEMSEA, extended her warm welcome to the participants of the Interim RSC meeting for the RO Korea-funded ODA project, which just concluded its first year of the six-year journey to pave the groundwork for the smooth implementation of the project starting from 2024 onwards. Mentioning various heightened awareness and acknowledgements of the urgency of interconnected plastic pollution and the climatic crisis, which constitute the biggest global threats, she emphasized that plastic use is growing rapidly in emerging economies, particularly in the PEMSEA region. Its impacts include 13 million tons of plastic waste generated each year, damaging nature and ecosystems, people's health, and local economies and tourism potentials, posing both challenges and opportunities.
8. She mentioned that the opportunity brought the RO Korea-funded marine plastics project in collaboration with PEMSEA country partners, RO Korea, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste, to develop solutions and tackle plastic pollution at the local level, which we hope to replicate in other places. She stressed that the key is the wise use of resources to reduce waste, which, in turn, reduces environmental degradation, increases competitiveness, and leads to the development of a resilient and sustainable economy.
9. She hoped that the project proponents can actively work together and support each other to meet the project's objectives, contributing to the implementation of the shared regional strategy, the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), the national plans of actions on marine litter in both countries, and the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. She mentioned that this project is also aligned with the global commitment of UN SDG 14.

Message

H.E. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs, DENR

10. Undersecretary Jonas Leones, on behalf of Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, warmly welcomed the participants from Timor-Leste and RO Korea to the Interim RSC meeting, expressing joy at engaging in both the interim and inaugural RSC meetings. He highlighted the collaborative spirit and success in this significant environmental initiative, emphasizing that the project not only reflects our shared commitment to environmental stewardship but also stands as a testament to the robust partnership among our nations in addressing urgent issues of marine plastic pollution.
11. He extended appreciation for the invaluable support from the RO Korea, acknowledging their generosity as a pivotal development partner instrumental in bringing the project to fruition. Undersecretary Leones also welcomed Timor-Leste's active participation, recognizing their insights

as essential in tackling the challenges posed by marine plastic pollution, which transcends borders. He mentioned that as we embark on this journey, there is a collective commitment to forging a pattern that leads to tangible actions and sustainable outcomes, contributing to the health and vitality of our marine ecosystems for both present and future generations.

12. Undersecretary Leones mentioned that this meeting will highlight the accomplishments of the first year and present the work plan and budget for 2024. He expressed wishes for a highly productive meeting, anticipating valuable contributions and perspectives from all participants.

Message

Mr. Celestino da Cunha Barreto, Director General for Fisheries, MALFF

13. Mr. Barreto, Director General of the MALFF, extended a warm welcome to participants from the Philippines and RO Korea at the meeting, expressing gratitude for organizing the session online, enabling the Timor-Leste delegation to participate in this crucial event. He regretfully apologized for the inability of the Timor-Leste delegation to attend the meeting physically, despite their best efforts until the last minutes.
14. Mr. Barreto emphasized that the Timor-Leste team is diligently working to support the project. The team comprises inter-ministerial officials from the MALFF, led by the DG for Fisheries, Mr. Barreto, and supported by numerous technical officers such as Mr. Rafael Pereira and others. Additionally, the team includes representatives from the MTE, with the National Director for Environment, Mr. Nelson Madeira. He expressed hope that the discussions and information sharing during the half-day meeting would be fruitful and constructive.

Message

Ms. Yeji Kang, Deputy Director, Marine Conservation Division, MOF

15. Ms. Yeji Kang, Deputy Director, representing the Director General of the MOF, extended a warm welcome to the meeting participants and expressed appreciation for their commitment to attending the Interim RSC despite their busy schedules. Reflecting on the year that has passed since the signing of the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the PEMSEA and MOF for the ODA project, she noted that today's meeting is an opportunity to share achievements and outline the next steps.
16. Ms. Kang commended the efforts of the RPMU for their dedication to moving the project forward under challenging circumstances. She reiterated the significance of collaboration in addressing marine debris issues, emphasizing that marine debris transcends national boundaries, posing threats to marine ecosystems and causing damage to marine industries and tourism. Stressing the need for collaboration among governments, NGOs, academics, and communities to tackle marine debris problems, she highlighted the ongoing international efforts to develop a legally binding instrument for plastic pollution, expected to conclude in 2024 in RO Korea.
17. Ms. Kang reaffirmed the commitment of the government of RO Korea to the ODA project until 2028, in collaboration with the governments of the Philippines and Timor-Leste, as well as PEMSEA. While recalling the planned signing of the MOU between Timor-Leste and RO Korea, she expressed regret that it did not occur as planned. She urged the governments of the Philippines and Timor-Leste to ensure progress on the MOU signing and expressed hope for a constructive and fruitful discussion during the meeting.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

18. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Undersecretary Jonas Leones of the DENR, who extended appreciation to the participants for dedicating their time amidst busy schedules to attend the Interim RSC meeting. He expressed gratitude to the RPMU for organizing the online meeting, marking the first year of the six-year project. The meeting was intended to inform the participants about the progress and accomplishments in 2023, considered a stakeholder consultation and preparation phase to lay the groundwork for the project.
19. Undersecretary Jonas Leones joined the participants to review the agenda and timeline. With no further suggestions, the meeting agenda was approved as presented.

PROJECT BRIEF AND ACCOMPLISHMENT OF 2023

20. The Chair invited the Regional Project Manager, Dr. Won-Tae Shin, to present the first agenda item, Project Brief and Accomplishment of 2023.

Presentation of Accomplishment of 2023

21. Dr. Shin presented the Project Brief and Accomplishment report of 2023. The following is the summary of his presentation:
 - Since the signing of the PCA between the Government of RO Korea and PEMSEA on the project implementation, with the budget amounting to 12B Korean Won which is equivalent to US\$ 9M, the Project Document was developed from January to June 2023. The project formulation process involved consultations with the donor country (RO Korea), the national governments of the participating countries, and the identified local governments of the respective participating countries as project sites. In January 2023, the MOF provided guidelines on budget allocation for the project. The Ocean Bound Plastics (OBPs) were selected as target plastics to be addressed by the project, given their occurrence within coastal communities, waterways, and fishing activities.
 - The project consists of four (4) components: i) local governance on marine plastics management; ii) demonstration of best practices and innovative solutions for reducing marine plastics and marine plastics management; iii) beach monitoring on marine plastics and litter; and iv) capacity, awareness, and communication on marine plastics management. The RSC was established, comprised of the donor and participating countries, with the RPMU serving as the Secretariat. Hiring of the RPMU staff was completed in September 2023, with two experts seconded from RO Korea: Ms. Jessie Lee from the Marine Environment Management Corporation (KOEM) in May and Mr. Hungeun Kim from the MOF in September 2023.
 - The project site selection was conducted in collaboration with participating governments. Timor-Leste government through the MALFF and MTE selected four sites in March 2023: Dili, Liquica, Manatuto, and Atauro. While Atauro became an independent municipality in 2021 from Dili, the rest three (3) sites are PEMSEA's ICM sites. On the other hand, the DENR selected six (6) sites in the Philippines in June 2023 in coordination with the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) and its respective Regional Offices: Puerto Princesa (Region 4B), Bulacan (Region

5), Daanbantayan (Region 7), Calbayog (Region 8), Dipolog (Region 9), and Tandag (Region 13). During the consultation meetings, the local chief executives welcomed the proposed project activities to be implemented at the sites.

- Last July 2023, the Project Inception Workshop was conducted to facilitate exchanges in current practices of plastic and solid waste management at the project sites, to review the Project Document, and gather inputs and recommendations relative to the project implementation. Both National Project Teams (NPTs) from the two (2) participating countries and Local Project Teams (LPTs) at ten (10) sites attended the meeting and concurred the draft Project Document.
- Component 1 activities: The project initiated with the identification of plastics issues and occurrences at the local sites. To achieve this, the RPMU conducted a baseline assessment on marine plastics by hiring local consultants, as recommended by the LPTs, and a professional consulting firm (AMH Philippines Inc., based at the University of the Philippines-Diliman) to support the Plastics Analysis and Characterization Study (PACS) at the local sites. Local consultants are tasked with developing the baseline assessment report incorporating the results of the PACS. The PACS was conducted in October 2023 in the Philippines sites and will be conducted in Timor-Leste in the first quarter of 2024 using the standard methodology developed by the Philippines government. Local consultation meetings were also conducted to draw attention of the local chief executives, receive their support, and identify local partners for project implementation at the sites. Local partners were already identified for the Philippines sites, while the discussions and identification processes are ongoing in Timor-Leste.
- Component 2 activities: Best practices and innovative solutions are being studied and identified, with some already available in some countries and worldwide. These solutions encompass measures for prevention, collection and transport, treatment, and recycling, as well as raising awareness, as part of the life-cycle approach of plastics. The RPMU team visited the sites, gathered information on current practices of plastics management and solutions, and assessed capacities and facilities for handling waste plastics at the local sites. Various activities and facilities are available at the local sites in varying degrees, such as eco-brick making and eco-chairs from recycled plastics. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of plastics recycling and repurposing are yet to be assessed. For this reason, there is a need to find intervention options that suitable for each local setting. The process of developing the pilot demonstration project involves the conduct of the feasibility study to determine the applicable solutions per site and facilitating transfer the best practices and technologies per site. The main activities of Component 2 will occur in 2024 onwards.
- Component 3 activities: Beach monitoring of marine plastics and litters will be conducted by local partners at the project sites on a quarterly basis starting from 2024. The local partners were recommended by the NPTs and LPTs during the Inception Workshop. The RPMU conducted training for beach monitoring institutes on the beach monitoring methodology developed by MOF and being implemented by RO Korean beach monitoring NGOs bimonthly. Through the beach monitoring of 10 sites of the project, a comparison of data will be possible. The RPMU developed and circulated the draft MOU and Letter of Agreement (LOA) for contracting the nine monitoring institutes for their review and signature. The MOU and LOA will be finalized during December 2023 to January 2024 for starting beach monitoring in March 2024. The RPMU assisted in the selection of beach monitoring sites and developed a beach

monitoring manual. The data center for beach monitoring is being developed at the Sea Knowledge bank of PEMSEA, with expected completion in January 2024.

- Component 4 activities: Awareness-building activities on marine plastics issues will be carried out by local partners at the sites under the Marine Environment Protectors (MEPs) program of the project. The RPMU is in the process of receiving nominations for the MEPs at the sites from the LPTs in collaboration with the NPTs. The RPMU requested the LPTs to recommend local NGOs as their MEPs, experienced in environmental awareness-building activities and closely collaborating with local governments. The local MEPs will conduct activities such as regular coastal clean-ups, participating in school programs, incentive-based campaigns on plastic segregation and repurposing, and youth engagement, etc. The RPMU will organize a planning meeting in the 1st Quarter of 2024 to lay out the work program of the MEPs to ensure that the proposed activities will be innovative and impactful, while maximizing resources.

22. As challenges and lesson-learned, Dr. Shin presented the following:

- Limited budget and human resources for managing plastic wastes in LGUs
- Difficulty in the coordination of activities at the local level due to geographical locations, language barriers, cultural differences between and among countries/government institutions/agencies
- Challenges in securing national governments' approval for project document from the recipient countries
- Challenges in coordination with government entities and departments
- Need to designate national coordinators for implementing the project effectively
- Need to increase awareness and participation of local communities in addressing marine plastic pollution

Discussions

23. The major discussion points are as follows:

Philippines

- It was suggested to review the list of MEPs to ensure they are capable of conducting awareness-building activities at the sites in collaboration with the LPTs. The RPMU responded that the MEPs were recommended by the LPTs, which are comprised of LGUs and EMB Regional Offices representatives, in the Philippines' case. The RPMU is carefully reviewing the qualifications, legality, including registration and organizational structure, etc. It was also suggested that the MEPs' activities be directly related to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), so LGUs can identify and engage champions of the industry at the local sites listed in the EPR companies. EPR-registered companies can provide additional funding for LGUs because the private sector is required to collect 20% of plastics in 2023 through plastics conversion and diversion. It was also suggested that the RPMU provide the criteria on how the MEPs for LGUs are selected.
- It was suggested to develop a clear structure of a coordinating mechanism for the national government to ensure smooth coordination among national governments. The RPMU responded that the Project Document identified a coordinating mechanism but lacks details. Therefore, during the intersessional period, the project's coordinating mechanism will be revisited, and the roles and responsibilities of national and local governments will be redefined. A clear and specific structure for the coordinating mechanism will be developed.

- It was suggested to increase efforts for information sharing and complementation on awareness-building activities with the Enhancement of Marine Litter Management in Manila Bay Project and other marine litter related projects.
- It was suggested that the project will be closely monitored to ensure consistency and coherence with other similar projects being implemented at the local sites to avoid overlapping of activities and resources.
- It was suggested that the project will make use of existing data and information when developing innovative solutions since EMB's Solid Waste Management Division has a wealth of data and information on solutions in formulating the solid waste management plans. The RPMU responded that the project is analyzing the existing solid waste management plans of LGUs to identify possible gaps and challenges, as well as situation on plastic wastes management. Also, it was recommended that the EPR program of EMB is an important reference to consider.

Timor-Leste

- Timor-Leste acknowledged the hard work of the RPMU on the project activities of 2023 and noted the challenges and lessons-learned from the project. Timor-Leste will conduct inter-ministerial discussion to address the challenges.
- It was suggested that many recycling activities through handicraft are being implemented aside from the Caltech facility. The MEPs of four local governments were selected based on the RPMU guidelines and the names of the MEPs will be provided to the RPMU.

RO Korea

- RO Korea acknowledged the importance of communication with local governments for developing pilot project (component 2) and requested the RPMU to share the process of developing feasibility studies with RO Korea. Ms. Kang also suggested the local government to draft possible ideas and proposals of innovative solutions of their own and submit them to the RPMU.
- RO Korea stressed the importance of signing the MOU between the donor country and the participating countries to gain momentum for ODA funding and expressed concern about the delayed signing of the MOU due to difficulties in the national process. RO Korea is hoping that the MOU would be officially signed in 2024 to secure the smooth implementation of the project.

Actions of the Interim RSC

24. On behalf of the Interim RSC, the Chair endorsed the Accomplishment Report of 2023 in the interim.

WORK PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2024

25. The Chair invited Dr. Shin to present the 2nd agenda item, Work Plan and Budget for 2024.

Presentation of Work Plan and Budget for 2024

26. Dr. Shin presented the Work Plan and Budget for 2024. The following is the summary of his presentation:

Component 1 Local governance on marine plastics

- Baseline assessment reports:
 - Philippines baseline reports submitted (Jan-Feb)
 - Plastics Analysis and Characterization Study (PACS) for Timor-Leste conducted (Mar)
 - Baseline assessment report for Timor-Leste submitted (May)
 - Regional synthesis report developed (June)
 - Baseline assessment of the 10 sites presented at the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, PR China (Nov)
- 10-year marine plastics management strategy:
 - Local consultant hired to draft the strategy for both the Philippines and Timor-Leste (Aug)

Component 2 Good practices and innovative solutions

- Best practices and innovative solutions identified:
 - Local consultant hired to draft the Pilot project for both the Philippines and Timor-Leste (Jul)
 - National consultation meeting held for both the Philippines and Timor-Leste (Jul)
 - Best practices and innovative solutions report on marine plastics developed (Aug)
 - Regional consultation meeting held at the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, PR China (Nov)
- Detailed feasibility studies on Pilot projects conducted:
 - Feasibility studies conducted for selected Pilot project (Sep)
- local business climate and potential identified:
 - List of local businesses on plastics recycling and upcycling published for both the Philippines and Timor-Leste (May)
 - Regional report on business climate for marine plastics recycling and upcycling published (Dec)
- Small Grant Program (SGP):
 - Small Grant Program (SGP) guidelines developed (Aug)
 - SGP eligible local entities identified (Sep)

Component 3 Beach monitoring on marine plastics and litter

- Beach monitoring sites selected and data card developed:
 - Beach monitoring site selected at 6 sites in the Philippines (Jan) and 4 sites in Timor-Leste (Jan)
 - Regional seminar on beach monitoring organized at the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, PR China (Nov)
- beach monitoring conducted:
 - Beach monitoring conducted at quarterly basis at 6 sites in the Philippines and 4 sites in Timor-Leste (Jan-Dec)
 - Beach monitoring data card uploaded to PEMSEA site (Jan-Dec)
 - Regional synthesis report published (Dec)
- A data center established: Beach monitoring data center established (Jan)

Component 4 Capacity, awareness, and communication on marine plastics management

- Capacity building activities conducted:
 - Learning exchange to RO Korea on plastics recycling and upcycling (April)
 - A session on marine plastics and litter organized at the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, PR China (Nov)
 - National Project Team and Local Project Team of the Philippines and Timor-Leste participated in the learning exchange (Apr) and the EAS Congress 2024 in the marine plastics and litter session (Nov)
- Awareness activities conducted:
 - MEPs identified and work plan developed (Jan)
 - A regional consultation meeting organized to develop work plan for the Marine Environment Protectors (MEPs) (Mar)
- Stakeholders at the local sites identified and mobilized:
 - MEPs identified and contracted for 2024 activities for the Philippines and Timor-Leste (Feb)
- Regional knowledge and communication platform:
 - Upload data and information to the website (Jan-Dec)
 - Marine Plastics website opened at the Sea knowledge Bank of PEMSEA (Jan)
 - Newsletters issues quarterly (Q1-Q4)
- Project governance:
 - National MOU signing ceremony organized (Jul)
 - Mayors' Conference organized to signify the participation and support of the LGUs to the project (Jul) 2nd Project Steering Committee meeting organized (Dec)
 - NPT participate in the PSC meeting (Dec)

Major events of 2024

- Learning Exchange to Seoul and Busan, particularly Seoul Upcycling Plaza (April 2024) where NPTs and LPTs of the Philippines and Timor-Leste will be invited. The purpose of this learning exchange is to introduce and learn the best practices and recycling technologies being practiced in RO Korea.
- Mayors' Conference in Puerto Princesa, Palawan (July 2024) where Mayors' Compact and MOU (National and Local) signing for the project implementation will be featured.
- EAS Congress 2024 Xiamen, the People's Republic of China, 6-8 November 2024 where NPT, LPT, monitoring institutes and MEPs will be attending to share the project outputs (e.g., baseline assessments) and learn from other leading institutes on marine plastics issues. Meeting noted that there will be a session jointly organized by PEMSEA and Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) on marine plastics and litter pollution where the project stakeholders are expected to participate in.

27. Dr. Shin presented the budget management, including 2023 expenditure and budget planned for 2024. The details of budget expenditure and budget plan for 2024 are shown below:

Budget Management for 2023

- Project budget planning is governed by the replenishment of annual ODA fund from the RO Korean government, following the schedule outlined in the PCA between PEMSEA and RO Korea, as follows:
 - 10% of US\$9M for 2023

- 10% for 2024
- 20% for 2025
- 20% for 2026
- 20% for 2027
- 20% for 2028
- The budget allocation for project activities was approved by the RO Korean government as follows:
 - Component 1: 10%
 - Component 2: 50%
 - Component 3: 10%
 - Component 4: 25%
 - Project Management: 5%
- The budget planned in the Project Document considered the two requirements: yearly replenishment and allocation by components, as well as the preparatory phase of 2023.
- Therefore, the budget for 2023 was planned for US\$752,125 which is around 81% of the US\$900,000 (10% of total project budget). The anticipated savings of 19% (around US\$177,404) will be carried over to 2024.
- As of mid-November 2023, the total budget expenditure is about US\$521,647 (approximately 69% of the planned 2023 budget). The balance as of mid-November 2023 is about US\$232,303.
- The project activities are continuously incurring expenditures as of the meeting. Considering the committed expenditures, the total expenditure would reach to 80% (around US\$603,000) by the end of December 2023. The remaining balance of US\$409,707 (as of mid-November 2023) will be carried over to 2024 and beyond.

2024 budget proposed

- Considering many activities planned in the Project Document and as presented at the work plan, the budget for 2024 activities is proposed at US\$1,043,741.
- It is expected that the replenishment from the RO Korean government for 2024 (January 2024) would be around US\$909,000, reflecting the current exchange rate (US1\$ = 1,320).
- The deficit of US\$134,651 from the replenishment (US\$909,000) and planned budget (US\$1,043,741) will be covered from the carried-over budget of 2023 (around \$409,707 as of mid-November 2023). The remnant will be carried over to 2025.
- The proposed budget for 2024 is attached as Annex 3.

28. After the presentation, Dr. Shin requested the Interim RSC meeting to:

- a. Review the work plan and budget for 2024;
- b. Approve the work plan for 2024;
- c. Approve the planned budget of \$1,043,741 for 2024;
- d. Expedite the process of securing the formal project implementing arrangement among the national governments, i.e., Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the participating governments and the government of RO Korea.
- e. Support the organization of the Mayor's Conference where the formal project implementing arrangement between PEMSEA and LGUs will be signed; and

- f. Support the organization of and participate in the EAS Congress 2024 to be held in Xiamen, PR China on 6-8 November 2024.

Discussion

29. The major discussion points are as follows:

Philippines

- It was suggested that the term “repurposing” be incorporated in the plastic waste management measures in addition to recycling and upcycling, as advocated by the DENR Secretary Loyzaga. The RPMU agreed to include “repurposing” in the Project Document.
- There is a bill drafted by a legislator in Congress for incentivizing the recycling business in the Philippines. The RPMU will track the development of the proposed bill.
- Philippines delegation had internal discussion on the preparation of the Special Presidential Authority (SPA) from the Office of the President, which will enable the DENR Secretary to sign the MOU with donor country. It was concluded that the Project Document will be endorsed by the EMB Director to the FASPS to facilitate the SPA process within the year. The RPMU requested the governments of the Philippine and Timor-Leste to complete an internal review process on the draft MOU by April 2024 in order to prepare a signing ceremony in July 2024. The governments of Philippine and Timor-Leste duly acknowledge and consider this request.
- It was inquired that multi-year budget allocation can be changed since the budget allocation should look like a Gaussian distribution but the project budget ends with large amount in the last year. The RPMU answered that the multi-year budget was already set by the Korean government and it cannot be changed. This is the reason that careful budget planning and spending should be exercised to discharge all the activities with the allocated budget within the project duration.
- It was also inquired that the unspent budget of 2023 will be added to the 2024 budget. The RPMU clarified that the budget for 2024 is set at US\$1,043,741, and the deficit from the 2024 replenishment will be covered by the unspent budget of 2023, but the remainder will be carried over to 2025.
- It was suggested that local chief executives (LCEs) should participate in the EAS Congress 2024 since the LCEs are decision makers and champions of the project, and need to learn from various information and lessons of other countries during the Congress. The RPMU takes note of the suggestion.

Timor-Leste

- Timor-Leste government agrees in principle on the work plan and budget for 2024. However, the Timor-Leste government will provide their feedbacks within 2 weeks if there is any.
- It was suggested that the recruitment of local consultant will be reviewed by the National and Local Project Teams of Timor-Leste. The RPMU responded that the local consultants will be recommended by the local governments following the Terms of Reference (TOR) provided by the RPMU, which is the same as the Philippines. Since the recommendation is not completed yet, the RPMU will be waiting for the internal consultation results on the hiring of local consultants from Timor-Leste government.

30. After discussion, the Chair approved and endorsed the action items as requested by the RPMU.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. The Chair summarized the Interim RSC meeting with the following conclusions:
- The meeting commends the activities undertaken on the various components coordinated by the RPMU on the accomplishments of the project during the preparatory phase of 2023.
 - The meeting commends the active participation of the Local Government Units and local stakeholders to the project activities.
 - The meeting acknowledges the challenges of coordination and the processes needed to secure clearances especially at the National Project Teams in both the Philippines and Timor-Leste.
 - The meeting recognizes the upcoming critical project activities of the 2024 such as the Mayor's Conference and EAS Congress 2024.
32. The Chair summarized the recommendations of the Interim RSC meeting as follows:
- The meeting endorses the 2023 Accomplishment Report of the RPMU.
 - The meeting approves the Work Plan and Budget for 2024, subject to any inputs from Timor-Leste government, as presented to the Interim RSC meeting.
 - The meeting recommends the RPMU to review the project implementing mechanism at the National and Local levels in both the Philippines and Timor-Leste. In coordination with the National Project Teams and PEMSEA National Focal Points, the RPMU will begin the process of hiring the National Project Coordinators in both countries.
 - The governments of the Philippines and Timor-Leste agree to expedite the national process of approval of the Project through the signing of the MOU between the recipient governments, the governments of the Philippines and Timor-Leste, and the donor, the government of RO Korea.
33. The Chair requested the RPMU to circulate the draft meeting report to the participants within two weeks. The Chair thanked all the participants for the active participation and extended holiday wishes.
34. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12:30pm.

ANNEX 1. PROGRAM

MOF/PEMSEA ODA PROJECT ON REDUCING MARINE PLASTICS IN THE EAST ASIAN SEAS REGION

INTERIM REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

12 December 2023 via Zoom Conference

Provisional Program

Time	Activity	Note
09:00-09:30	Messages <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome remarks• Message• Message• Message	PEMSEA Philippines Timor-Leste RO Korea
09:30-09:40	Adoption of agenda	Chairperson
09:40-11:00	i) Project Brief and Accomplishment in CY 2023 ii) Work plan and budget for 2024 iii) Discussion	Dr. Won-Tae Shin, Regional Project Manager, RPMU
11:00-11:30	Conclusions and recommendation	Chairperson
11:30-11:40	Closing message	Chairperson

ANNEX 2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

List of Participants

PHILIPPINES

Hon. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Mr. Gilbert Gonzales, Director, Environment Management Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Mr. Isagani Potes, Head of Executive Assistant, Environment Management Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Ms. Consolacion P. Crisostomo, Chief, Policy, Planning and Program Development Division, Environment Management Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Dr. Al Orolfo, Director, FASPS, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Mr. Conrado Bravante, Jr. Chief of PPD, FASPS, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Ms. Marilou T. Calado, PPD, FASPS, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

Mr. John Darren Chua, PPD, FASPS, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

RO KOREA

Mr. Sunhyung Ryu, Director, Marine Conservation Division, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF)

Ms. Yeji Kang, Deputy Director, Marine Conservation Division, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF)

Ms. Jiyeon Kim, Assistant Director, Marine Conservation Division, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF)

TIMOR-LESTE

Mr. Celestino da Cunha Barreto, Director General for Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF)

Mr. Nelson Madeira, National Director, Directorate for Environment, Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE)

Mr. Rafael Goncalves Pereira, Advisor to the Secretary of State for Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF)

Mr. Akasio dos Santos, National Director for Marine Spatial Planning, Capture, and Aquatic resources Management, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF)

Mr. Timotio Alves, Technical Staff, Fisheries Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF)

Mr. Bemvindo de Jesus Mesquita, Technical Staff, Fisheries Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF)

Mr. Arlindo Silveira, Technical staff for Solid Waste Management, Directorate for Environment, Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE)

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Ms. Aimee T. Gonzales, Executive Director, PEMSEA

Ms. Shinji Kim, Head of Planning and Partnership, PEMSEA

Dr. Won-Tae Shin, Regional Project Manager, RPMU, PEMSEA

Mr. Hungeun Kim, Senior Manager, RPMU, PEMSEA

Ms. Gusung Lee, Technical Advisor, RPMU, PEMSEA

Ms. Rizza Sacra-Dejucos, Communications Officer, PEMSEA

Mr. John Christian Castillo, Publication Officer, PEMSEA

Ms. Elsie Merina, Admin Officer, PEMSEA

Mr. Jun Dacaymat, IT Assistant, PEMSEA

ANNEX 3. PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2024

Proposed budget for 2024 by Component

Component	Total	%
Component 1	185,321	17.8
Component 2	283,212	27.1
Component 3	151,577	14.5
Component 4	348,443	33.4
Project management	75,189	7.2
Total	1,043,741	100

Proposed budget for 2024 by ATLAS Code


