

Overview of Regional Transboundary Initiatives, Projects and Programmes for the Seas of East Asia: Status and Funding Opportunities

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The seas of East Asia are comprised of six sub-regional seas that over the past few decades have been the focus of numerous regional and transboundary initiatives with sometimes overlapping geographical coverage and competing objectives. The most significant initiatives include the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), which is implementing the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) through integrated coastal management (ICM) with local governments in its member countries; and two UNEP Regional Seas Intergovernmental Programmes that operate under their respective Action Plans - the COBSEA (the Coordinating Body on the Seas of South Asia) which operates the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas Region; and - NOWPAP that operates the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment for the Northwest Pacific Region.

Nested under these regional platforms are a number of transboundary projects for the sub-regional seas and/or large marine ecosystems (LMEs). This includes GEF-funded projects for the South China Sea, Yellow Sea, Sulu-Celebes/Sulawesi Sea and the adjacent Arafura-Timor Seas. These projects have adopted a common science-based approach and methodology, which involves the conducting of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) followed by the development of a Strategic Action Programme to agree on future investment priorities in ICM and protection of the marine environment.

The region also recently saw the launch of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) and the rolling out of the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) initiative to the East Asia Sea region. The goals of the Regional Plan of Action of the CTI cover priority seascapes, ecosystem approach to management of fisheries and other marine resources, marine protected areas, climate change adaptation and threatened species. The goal of the MFF is to conserve and restore coastal ecosystems as key



assets which support human well-being and security. The emergence of these new regional initiatives further emphasizes the need for coordination and collaboration among different actors in order to maximize positive impacts on the marine and coastal environment and coastal communities and to avoid wasteful duplication.

Major donors that have provided support to transboundary initiatives in the Seas of East Asia include the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which has supported PEMSEA, the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and projects linked to the CTI; Development Banks; UN agencies; Bilateral donors and NGOs. However, the challenges posed by climate change to the region necessitates that new sources of funding be accessed from market-based mechanisms, and other new and innovative sources of funding for climate change adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer.

It is suggested that countries in the EAS region enhance efforts to work together to reduce the vulnerability to climate change of coastal communities and the impacts of climate hazards on the coastal and marine environment applying ecosystem-based management and making the best use of existing mechanisms for regional collaboration.