

PEMSEA News

Former Philippine President to Open the East Asian Seas Congress 2009

Quezon City, Philippines – PEMSEA has announced today that former Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos will deliver the opening keynote address during East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2009 to be held in Manila, Philippines on 23-27 November. The former statesman was a keynote speaker and Honorary Advisor of the Congress in 2003 where he urged the participants "to work together on issues concerning natural resources, especially water, to ensure a better life for future generations."

Former President Ramos remains to be one of Asia's key strategic thinkers, holding important positions in prestigious advisory boards of international economic and strategic forums. As one of the co-founders of the Baoforum for Asia (BFA), the Asian equivalent of the Davos World Economic Forum, he continues to espouse his framework of governance founded on a five-point program that includes people empowerment, environmental protection and economic cooperation. Currently, he serves as chair of the BFA and pushed for environmental concerns to occupy Asia-Pacific's top agenda in the Forum's 2008 annual conference. With climate change and other "massive killers such as natural disasters, it is time for policy planners and executives to tackle the longer-term environmental challenges to sustainable development," he explained.

Together with 20 global opinion leaders, former President Ramos also provided input to the development of a long-term strategy on water and environment policy through the World Commission on Water for the 21st Century and the continuing World Water Forums under Crown Prince Willem Alexander of the Netherlands, Chairman of the UN Secretary General Advisory Board (UNSGAB). He is also the Philippine representative to the ASEAN Eminent Persons Group that is tasked to draft the Charter of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Former President Ramos is also an experienced scuba-diver and underwater photographer with hundreds of open-water dives, as well as a master paratrooper and four-star general (Retired).

The tri-annual East Asian Seas Congress features the Ministerial Forum on Implementing ICM for Climate Change Adaptation and the International Conference on Sustainable Coastal and Ocean Development, with the theme Partnerships at Work: Local Implementation and Good practices. Related activities include the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG), the 2nd EAS Youth Forum and the Exhibit on Innovative Technologies and Good Practices.

Learn more about the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2009 by visiting www.pemsea.org/eascongress

IUCN-ARO Ready to be Endorsed as a Non-Country Partner

Beijing, PR China – The Asia Regional Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-ARO) is the newest non-Country Partner of PEMSEA for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). The Executive Committee of the East Asian Seas Partnership Council recommended the application of IUCN-ARO during its meeting on 20 December for endorsement by the EAS Partnership Council.

The IUCN-ARO is one of the regional offices of the IUCN, located in Bangkok, Thailand. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network - a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and nongovernmental organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries. It supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and brings governments, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws and best practice.

The PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) and the IUCN-ARO will now identify collaborative activities in the region in support of SDS-SEA objectives and targets.

The 4th Meeting of the Executive Committee of East Asian Seas Partnership Council Concluded

Beijing, PR China – The 4th Meeting of the Executive Committee of the East Asian Seas Partnership Council was held on 20 December 2008 in Beijing, PR China. All members of the EC and officials of China's State Oceanic Administration (SOA), as the host country representatives, attended the meeting, along with a representative from Japan's Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF) as an observer.

The one-day meeting delved into several important issues including the PEMSEA Trust Fund, PEMSEA's Legal Personality, and the organization of the East Asian Seas Congress 2009 and Ministerial Forum 2009.

The Executive Committee endorsed the Agreement Recognizing the International Legal Personality of the PEMSEA as a final draft and instructed the Secretariat to pursue signature from the Country Partners. The Committee also approved the PEMSEA Trust Fund Management Guidelines.

The Executive Committee recommended that its next meeting be organized on 24-25 July 2009 in Manila, Philippines. The focus of that meeting will include final preparations for the EAS Congress. It was agreed that Country and non-Country Partners would be invited to attend the meeting.

Conservation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Featured in Tropical Coasts Issue

Quezon City, Philippines – PEMSEA announces the release of the latest issue of the Tropical Coasts which focuses on the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas, a large marine ecosystem (LME) within the Seas of East Asia. Titled Conserving the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas, the issue is a joint effort of PEMSEA and Conservation International-Philippines, a non-Country Partner of PEMSEA. The issue features articles on Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecosystem covering the management framework and governance arrangements, financing and partnerships mechanisms, and enforcement initiatives.

In addition, the issue features contributions from the Tri-National Secretariat for the Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP), (i.e., Malaysia Department of Fisheries – Sabah) and the Marine Research Foundation in Malaysia. Future initiatives planned for this large marine ecosystem are also covered.

Stakeholders of the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas have been able to share information and jointly identified priority areas for conservation to achieve a common vision, which was developed into the Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP). The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, in partnership with local governments, communities, scientific and technical institutions, international nongovernmental organizations, donors and the business sector, are now in the process of developing the required capacities to implement the ECP, including strengthening environmental law enforcement and exploring sustainable financing mechanisms geared towards making the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas one of the most advanced marine ecoregion management initiatives in the East Asian seas region.

The Sulu and Sulawesi Seas, also known as the Sulu-Celebes Sea, is a subregion inhabited by 35 million people and spans an area of nearly one million km². The seas are located within the Coral Triangle, described as the global center of marine biodiversity. It is home to the Verde Island Passage, which in turn is regarded as the center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity, based on a study conducted by Carpenter and Springer in 2005.

To download a copy of the issue in PDF, visit the PEMSEA Publications Center (<http://pemsea.org/publications>).

National Agencies Sign Covenant to Save Manila Bay

Manila, Philippines – Various government agencies have signed a declaration of commitment in support of achieving a shared vision for the Manila Bay. The signing highlighted the first Manila Bay Coordinating Committee (MBCC) Meeting held on 28 January in Pasay City. The MBCC meeting was chaired by the Honorable Jose L. Atienza Jr., Secretary of the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The covenant calls for the committed action of various agencies, local government units and stakeholders to revive the bay by addressing pollution and resource depletion in Manila Bay. Agencies' respective actions required under the covenant range from providing funds for saving Manila Bay to controlling fishing and establishing wastewater treatment facilities within the area.

These signatory agencies include the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Interior and Local Government, the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), Local Water Utilities Administration, Metro Manila Development Authority, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police - Maritime Group and the Philippine Ports Authority.

PEMSEA, represented by Prof. Raphael P.M. Lotilla, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility also signified PEMSEA's commitment to conserving the Bay.

Secretary Atienza highlighted the significance of the meeting in view of the Supreme Court's landmark decision on 28 December 2008. The Supreme Court ruled that the 12 government agencies mentioned in the petition must "devise a consolidated, coordinated and concerted scheme of action for the rehabilitation of Manila Bay." The DENR was directed to fully implement its Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy (OPMBCS) for the rehabilitation, protection and preservation of the bay. The OPMBCS is a product of the Manila Bay Environmental Management Project (MBEMP), which PEMSEA supported from 2000-2007. The OPMBCS serves as a road map for the management and protection of Manila Bay and its watershed areas.

During the meeting, Secretary Atienza presented the issues and concerns in the bay, the challenges and the need for immediate action. He emphasized the need for a concerted effort to clean and rehabilitate Manila Bay and called on the responsible government agencies as well as the various local government units surrounding the Manila Bay area to put their acts together.

The meeting also discussed the following key areas:

1. Dismantling of fish pens - The DENR ordered the dismantling of illegal structures along Manila Bay, including fish pens and fish cages that have no permits from the local governments. Dismantling operations started last year in Cavite in close coordination with Governor Erineo Maliksi, and are being expanded to cover the waters off Parañaque and Las Piñas. With the combined forces of various agencies, it is anticipated that the effort would be sustained, eventually allowing the free flow of water and prevent it from further degradation. In Laguna de Bay, it is reported that fish pens that have no permits already occupy around 40,000 hectares of the bay. The increasing number of illegal settlers occupying the west lake likewise compounds the problem.
2. Wastewater treatment facilities - Appeals were made to the two water concessionaires, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. and Manila Water Co., to accelerate the construction of wastewater treatment facilities, considering that the

pollution problem in Manila Bay can be traced to the discharges from households, factories and other business establishments that fringe the Bay. The original target of both concessionaires is to have 40 percent coverage by 2025. After recent negotiations by DENR, the two concessionaires agreed to accelerate the provision of sewerage facilities to 40 percent by 2016, five years before the concessionaire's contracts will expire.

3. Ban on commercial fishing - In response to a resolution from the Regional Development Council regarding banning commercial fishing in Manila Bay, BFAR committed to the enforcement of a five-year closed season for commercial fishing in Manila through an Administrative Order. The closing of Manila Bay to commercial fishing is anticipated to revive the fish stocks contributing to an increase in food availability.

DENR will be calling for regular coordination meetings with the concerned agencies to ensure that the plan of action is implemented in accordance with the agreed targets and timeline.

Manila Bay has a surface area of about 1,800 km² and a coastline of around 190 km running along parts of National Capital Region, the country's leading urban hub, as well as the provinces of Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan and Cavite.

Manila Bay's Operational Plan Set in Action

Manila, Philippines – The Operational Plan of the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy (OPMBCS) will serve as the roadmap in the management and protection of the Manila Bay as promulgated in the Philippine Supreme Court ruling "to clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay." The milestone decision, released in December 2008, tasked 12 government agencies and local governments of Metro Manila and the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Bataan, Bulacan and Pampanga with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as lead agency. The ruling includes a continuing mandate that requires all concerned to "submit to the Court a quarterly progressive report of the activities undertaken in accordance with this Decision."

The Operational Plan was a product of a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, and multi-stakeholder approach to ensure broad ownership and acceptance. It was developed in 2005 by the Manila Bay Environmental Management Project (MBEMP), which PEMSEA supported from 2000-2007. The Plan identified three areas of concern with its sets of goals and objectives. Under each objective, the Plan defines the specific activities to be undertaken, the indicators to be used for measuring progress, the timetable for implementation, the responsible agencies, and the supporting policies and laws.

Two of the major environmental problems identified are water pollution and overexploitation of resources. Waste that gets dumped directly to rivers and waterways that eventually discharge into Manila Bay significantly affects the health of the Bay. The Pasig River basin alone accounts for 60 percent of the organic pollution load to Manila Bay. Cleanup efforts must therefore include the Laguna de Bay-Pasig River-Manila Bay watershed and the seven major rivers which drain into Manila Bay.

Partnership and governance are two of the most important issues which need to be immediately tackled to put the operational plan into action. The problems of Manila Bay cut across ecosystems, sectors and several political regions in Luzon. The recent conduct of the first Manila Bay Coordinating Committee (MBCC) Meeting convened by DENR Secretary Jose L. Atienza, Jr. and attended by the various government agencies concerned led to the signing of a declaration of commitment in support of achieving the shared vision for the bay.

The Manila Bay initiative is not without its inspirations. Among PEMSEA's sites in the developing countries of the East Asian Seas region, Xiamen in China and Danang in Vietnam can be cited as examples of successful rehabilitation programs.

When Xiamen experienced considerable economic growth as one of the four Special Economic Zones established by China in 1980, its newly found affluence led to the deterioration of its environment. Its surrounding waters became extremely polluted, in particular, the Yuandang Lake became biologically dead. The municipal government took action and institutionalized a multi-sectoral, inter-agency coordinating mechanism for integrated coastal management (ICM) that prepared the functional sea-use scheme, enacted the needed local legislation for the coast and sea areas, protected and managed the marine environment, jointly enforced marine regulations, secured scientific and technical support, and provided funding for the various clean-up activities needed.

A 10-year program for the rehabilitation of the Yuandang Lake resulted in the improvement in environmental quality and land prices in the surrounding area increased almost by 300%. Xiamen became an attractive area for investments and the revenues of the economic sectors increased.

Danang, in line with its ICM program, introduced coastal and sea-use zoning, and imposed a 20-meter mandatory setback from the shoreline as a protection from storm surges and sea-level rise. This required the relocation of vulnerable fishing communities along the coast. The river banks have been rehabilitated, with protective embankments also serving as recreational areas for residents.

The Manila Bay is an important historical, cultural and economic resource of the Philippines. An economic valuation study done in 2005 of the uses of Manila Bay's resources and benefits derived from key habitats amount to a total value of 8 billion pesos a year at the minimum. However, damages to the ecosystems of the Bay and the resulting social and economic impacts account to about half of the economic benefits contributed by the Bay.

PEMSEA Shares Experience in Responsible Ocean Governance at the Commemorative Session of the 1998 Lisbon Declaration

Lisbon, Portugal – Dr. Mario Soares, former President of Portugal, in his capacity as the former President of the World Independent Commission on the Oceans, convened on 12-13 December 2008 a commemorative meeting of the 10th anniversary of the 1998 report of the Commission.

The Lisbon Declaration of 1998 states "If the ocean is to be governed in a democratic spirit, we must overcome the limitation of the present legal and institutional framework, in order to permit it to respond to changing conditions."

Ten years since the "International Year of the Ocean" in 1998, various environmental and socioeconomic as well as geopolitical events have provided greater urgency and created new challenges to ocean governance. These challenges call for innovative approaches to address responsible ocean governance.

Dr. Chua Thia-Eng, Chair of the East Asian Seas Partnership Council, PEMSEA, in his statement shared the issues and experiences of the East Asian Region on ocean governance. Dr. Chua also mentioned that the Partnership Council will table the Lisbon Statement for consideration at its next meeting and for transmission to the third Ministerial conference during the East Asian Seas Congress in 2009.

The Commemorative Session was convened with a view to contributing to the 2009 World Ocean Conference in Manado, Indonesia, as well as to the 2012 Yaeso EXPO in RO Korea. Hopefully, these events may lead towards the greater involvement of civil society, paving the way to enhancing the consideration of the ocean by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2014.

Press Release

An Urgent Call for Ocean Governance in the XXI Century

Lack of political will was identified as one of the main causes of an increasingly deteriorating state of many ocean resources and ecosystems putting at risk essential ecological and socio-economic services the oceans provide to society, concluded he participant in the Commemorative Session of the tenth Anniversary of the Lisbon Declaration, yesterday December 12 in Lisbon. The urgent appeal issued in Lisbon in 1998 for improving Ocean Governance was "like a message in a bottle, thrown to the sea, that nobody picked up", declared Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares from Brazil and former member of the Independent World Commission of the Oceans participating in the event.

Ten years ago the Lisbon Declaration was issued at the end of three years of work by the Independent World Commission on the Ocean chaired by the former President of Portugal Dr. Mário Soares. In his own words, "Given the scientific assessments of anthropogenic impacts on the environment, one of the most worrying of which is Climate Change, it is vital for us to move as fast as possible from talking to action, abandoning political rhetoric, which has frozen action in recent years, to adopt concrete measures." According to the Nobel awarded Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 82% of the total additional energy accumulated in the planet has been taken by the ocean that also absorbs annually 2.1 billion Tons of man-made CO₂. As a consequence the ocean is turning more acid, posing a huge threat to organisms with calcareous structures like coral reefs.

In this Commemorative Session a group of distinguished experts and high level representatives of Governments and International Institutions expressed a unanimous agreement with the principles contained in the Lisbon Declaration that called for Governance in the ocean that is democratic, participatory with the aim of securing an equitable access to the services and resources it provides. The Ocean remains a unique international space under existing international law the international community bears responsibility in regulating its uses and cooperating for preserving its benefits for future generations.

Despite hundreds of international agreements unanimously adopted, enforcement of these regulations is ineffective and wrong-doing is a prevalent behavior in many regions and activities, within areas under natural jurisdiction and beyond, in the high seas. Fishing is in critical conditions in many regions of the world, special natural habitats are being altered in an irreversible way, the current rate of biodiversity loss is not being abated, piracy and other types of organized crime like the illegal shipping of drugs, arms and people are increasing in the high seas.

Participants highlighted the need for National Governments to create and empower a single authority with sufficient powers to oversee the management of economic activities in the maritime spaces that were put under national jurisdiction by the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. The meeting endorsed the Lisbon Statement for Oceans Governance on the XXI Century, calling for renewed efforts in this crucial area where the international community has special responsibility.

Stressing the importance of institutional reform to the highly fragmented system of national and international institutions that try to regulate activities in the Ocean, Mário Soares expressed: "the conclusions drawn by the Report of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans on institutional aspects, are still standing still, floating on the doldrums of political will, despite the appeal made ten years ago to go forward with the process of reform and innovation and innovation in the UN system".

Representing the Prime Minister of Portugal José Sócrates, who could not attend the event since he participated in the summit of the European Union discussion the financial crisis and common energy policies, the Minister of National Defense and Ocean Affairs, Mr. Nuno Severiano Teixeira, closed the event reaffirming the will of the Portuguese Government to work together with other members of the international community and international organizations in this direction, avoiding that Ocean Governance, a crucial issue for the future for humanity drops between the cracks of the ongoing financial crisis for the negotiations on climate change.

Lisbon, 12 December 2008, Mário Soares Foundation

Youth, Oceans and Climate Change

The issue of climate change is real and will impact all sectors of society. It is an urgent issue that many people care about, but the youth, as the next generation have the most at stake.

The 2nd East Asian Seas (EAS) Youth Forum, one of the major side events of the EAS Congress 2009, is the second convening of young participants from countries in the EAS Region, the first of which was during the 2006 EAS Congress. The Forum is a venue for young people in the region to learn more about pressing concerns in the marine and coastal areas, including climate change. It also hopes to strengthen the role of the youth in addressing these issues by providing them with some practical skills that they can apply when they go back to their own countries.

The 2nd EAS Youth Forum will be divided into four major sub-themes: inform, inspire, involve, empower; adopted from the past YF's core principle, I3 = E. The Forum consists of exciting outdoor activities and workshops, lectures and discussions from climate change experts and authorities in marine and coastal management, and a chance to speak with Ministers and executives from international organizations.

Apart from the knowledge and skills that youth participants will gain individually from the Forum, the friendship and network of empowered and committed youth will make a lasting impact in the overall goal of achieving better quality of life for future generations.

Three years after the forum, the youth participants continue to make their contributions in caring and protecting the environment in their own country in their own ways. Through the use of advanced technology, they constantly communicate to inspire each other through stories of their activities. In Malaysia, for example, the "White Coffin" movement initiated by two Malaysian participants of the 1st YF had been recognized for its innovativeness and strong impact in banning the use of polystyrene food containers. The other YF participants also have their own stories to tell and contributions for the environment.

The 2nd YF looks forward to a new addition to the network of empowered youth in the Region with strong commitment to make their share in caring for the marine and coastal environment.

For participation details to the 2nd EAS Youth Forum, visit <http://pemsea.org/eascongress/youthforum>.

NOWPAP Recent developments

In accordance to the decision of the 12th Northwest Pacific Action Plan Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM), the NOWPAP Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator between Toyama and Busan RCU offices have now relocated in December 2008. Both offices are now fully operational. After the relocation, a courtesy call has been paid respectively by the Coordinator and the Deputy Coordinator to Seoul and Tokyo.

The 2nd NOWPAP BRAVO exercise has been conducted successfully in January 2009 by NOWPAP member countries under the coordination of the Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre (MERRAC). This exercise aimed at testing the communication between among NOWPAP members in response to oil spill incident.

A process for conducting Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) performance review has been started. According to the member countries' suggestion and with the help from the UNEP Headquarters, a consultant is being hired to implement the review. Consultations on the dates and the agenda of the 14th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting are also on the way.

NOWPAP and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) are strengthening cooperation, with both parties planning a joint session during the 2009 annual PICES meeting on marine spatial planning in support of integrated management - tools, methods, and approaches. In addition, NOWPAP is considering contribution to the PICES North Pacific Ecosystem Status Report and the Satellite Oceanography Summer School through providing experts for a relevant workshop and lecturer and materials for the summer school.