



PEMSEA

Annual Report

2024

A Year of Collaboration

**Driving Blue Synergies towards Resilient Coasts
and Ocean in the East Asian Seas Region**



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and Ocean in the East Asian Seas Region**

PEMSEA Annual Report 2024:
A Year of Collaboration: Driving Blue Synergies Towards
Resilient Coasts and Ocean in the East Asian Seas Region

May 2025

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About Us

Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) is a regional coordinating mechanism for the sustainable coastal and marine development in the East Asian Seas Region.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACB	ASEAN Center for Biodiversity	ETP	Endangered, Threatened, and Protected
ALDFG	Abandoned, Lost, and Discarded Fishing Gear	FA at FVOCI	Financial Assets at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income
AMS	ASEAN Member States	FASPS	Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	GA	General Assembly
ATS	Arafura and Timor Seas	GEF	Global Environment Facility
ATSEA	Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action	GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
ATSEA-2	Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Phase II	ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
AWGCME	ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment	IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction	IKI	International Climate Initiative
CCMRS-IPB	Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies – IPB University	IMO	International Maritime Organization
CKM	Communications and Knowledge Management	IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
COM	Council of Ministers	IP	Indigenous People
COMI	Coastal and Ocean Management Institute	IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated
CY	Calendar Year	IWC10	10 th GEF International Waters Conference
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources	KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
EAFM	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management	Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
EAS	East Asian Seas	LEP	Learning Exchange Program
EMB	Environmental Management Bureau	LMEs	Large Marine Ecosystems
ENMAPS	Effectively Managing Networks of Marine Protected Areas in Large Marine Ecosystems in the ASEAN Region	MEP	Marine Environment Protector
		MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
		MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
		MPA	Marine Protected Area
		MRV	Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification

MSP	Marine Spatial Planning	RSC	Regional Steering Committee
NMHMS	National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service	RSWG	Regional Stakeholder Working Group
NPB	National Project Board	ROK	Republic of Korea
NPOA-ML	National Plan of Action on Marine Litter	SAP	Strategic Action Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
OPRI-SPF	Ocean Policy Research Institute – Sasakawa Peace Foundation	SDS-SEA	Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia
PC	Partnership Council	SEAKB	The Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank
PEMSEA	Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia	SEA-MaP	Southeast Asia Regional Program in Combatting Marine Plastics
PGENRO	Provincial Government Environment and Natural Resources Office	SGP	Small Grant Programme
PNG	Papua New Guinea	SORB	State of the River Basin
PNLC	PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers	TAO	Technical Advisory Organization
PNLG	PEMSEA Network of Local Governments	TOR	Terms of Reference
PRF	PEMSEA Resource Facility	UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
RCC	Regional Coordination Committee	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
RGM	Regional Governance Mechanism	UNOPS RISU	United Nations Office for Project Services – Regional Implementation Support Unit
RPMU	Regional Project Management Unit	WOW	World Ocean Week



About Us

Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) is a regional coordinating mechanism for the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas in the East Asian Seas EAS Region. It was created with a clear mission– to foster and sustain healthy and resilient coasts and ocean, communities, and economies across the seas of East Asia through integrated management solutions and strategic partnerships.

For more than three decades, PEMSEA through its country and non-country partners, its network of local governments and learning centers and other stakeholders such as coastal communities, international development agencies, regional programs, private sector, investors, and donors have implemented synergistic actions and solutions to effectively manage coasts and seas in the region through a shared regional strategy called the 'Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia' (SDS-SEA).

PEMSEA with the secretariat and technical support from the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) aims to proactively build effective intergovernmental and intersectoral partnerships, and expand the capacities of national and local governments, and coastal communities through the application of innovative, cross cutting policies, tools, and services on integrated coastal, river basin, and ocean management to generate and sustain healthy ocean, people, and economies.

MESSAGE

by EAS Partnership Council Chair
and PRF Executive Director



Dr. Vann Monyneath
Chair
EAS Partnership Council



Aimee T. Gonzales
Executive Director
PEMSEA Resource Facility

2024 was a landmark year for PEMSEA, notably, with the successful East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2024 held back to back with the World Ocean Week (WOW) in Xiamen in China. EAS Congress brought together over 855 delegates from 27 countries which culminated in the signing of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration by nine country partners and development of conclusions and recommendations from various partners and collaborators on the way forward for PEMSEA in the run up to 2030. EAS Congress 2024 demonstrated strengthened commitment to sustainable ocean governance and blue economy development, opened doors for more strategic partnerships and resource mobilization initiatives, harnessing innovative solutions, digital tools and deeper social inclusion.

The year saw significant expansion of PEMSEA's networks and partnerships, including new members in both the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC); strategic collaboration with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, to work on 30X30 global biodiversity targets and enhanced technical advisory roles



with major international organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations (UN) and The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Notable achievements included the launch of multistakeholder consultations on a regional protocol on blue carbon accounting methodologies, advancement of marine plastics reduction local initiatives across 10 project sites, and the development of integrated river basin management (IRBM) frameworks and tools applicable to the region with support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), and ASEAN.

These accomplishments reflect PEMSEA's steadily growing influence as a regional coordinating mechanism and its ability to mobilize diverse stakeholders to work jointly on collaborative synergistic actions toward the shared vision of HOPE - Healthy Ocean, People, and Economies in the EAS region. The organization's success in securing multi-year funding commitments and expanding its partnership base has strengthened its capacity to drive

meaningful impact in coastal and marine resource management.

We are proud of these accomplishments and we thank each of our country partners, non-country partners, local governments, learning centers, the PRF staff in Quezon City, Philippines and Bali, Indonesia, PNLC secretariat in Bogor, Indonesia and PNLG Secretariat in Xiamen, China and all our collaborators for the collective efforts which enabled PEMSEA to continue to be recognized as the 'go to' regional body for coastal and marine issues in the EAS region.

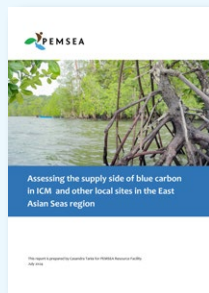
Despite the more 'frequent than usual' occurrence of natural disasters, growing political tensions and economic uncertainties, we look forward with HOPE and OPTIMISM in working closely with all of you in fulfilling our shared commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 through the implementation of our joint regional framework, the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).



Key Highlights of the Year

January

- Conducted blue carbon baseline studies on supply and demand in the East Asian Seas (EAS) region, including a comparative review of blue carbon accounting methodologies.



February

- Launched stakeholder consultations on marine plastic litter reduction in key towns and cities in Timor-Leste.

March

- Released a special bulletin for International Women's Day, highlighting women leaders in ocean sustainability, in support of the UN theme "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress."
- Held the 32nd Executive Committee (EC) Meeting of PEMSEA, with updates on EAS Congress preparations and regional issues.



Quarter 1

Quarter 2

April

- Held the East Asian Seas (EAS) Youth Forum 2024 in Ulsin, Republic of Korea (ROK), engaging young leaders on ocean governance.
- Organized the Marine Plastics Learning Exchange in Seoul, ROK, for Philippine and Timor-Leste sites.
- Conducted the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Regional State of River Basin (SORB) Workshop to review river basin monitoring across ASEAN Member States (AMS).



May

- Participated in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Blue Economy Regional Workshop to strengthen partnerships for sustainable financing.

June

- Coordinated World Ocean Day (WOD) coastal clean-up drives.
- Welcomed Dongying Huanhai Institute for Marine Conservation and Development as a new associate member of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG).





July

- Held the 16th EAS Partnership Council (PC) Meeting, admitting the National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service (NMHMS), China, as a PEMSEA Non-Country Partner.



August

- Launched Humans of EAS, featuring stories of local champions for sustainable ocean.
- Conducted a PNLG Study Tour in Batangas, Philippines, for Tangerang Regency, Indonesia officials on Integrated Coastal Management (ICM).
- Held a Regional Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in Bogor City, Indonesia, focused on mainstreaming GESI in IRBM.

September

- Participated in the International Coastal Cleanup with regional engagement. Contributed to the 10th GEF International Waters Conference (IWC10) in Montevideo and Punta del Este, Uruguay through storytelling, governance, and equity dialogues.
- Conducted Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and resilience-building workshops, aligning with Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) Targets.
- Signed a five-year Letter of Cooperation between PEMSEA and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) under the Effectively Managing Networks of Marine Protected Areas in Large Marine Ecosystems (ENMAPS) Project.
- Participated in the Workshop for North-East and South-East Asia on the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, promoting regional cooperation.



Quarter 3

Quarter 4

November

- Hosted the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China, with over 855 participants and key outcomes adopted.
- Formalized regional commitments through the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration.
- Co-hosted a Symposium on Climate Resilience and Sustainable Urbanization as part of the South-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on marine conservation, smart cities, and pollution control.



December

- Reviewed outcomes of the EAS Congress and began planning PEMSEA actions through 2030.
- Delivered training programs for women-led marine conservation efforts in Rote Ndao, Indonesia, and for women fishers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on sustainable fishing, financial literacy, and leadership.
- Signed the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) Ministerial Declaration and approved the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) 2023–2030.
- Concluded the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Phase II (ATSEA-2) Project and began the transition to the ATSEA Program.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) of PNG, PEMSEA, and Australia's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to support implementation of the ATSEA SAP 2025–2027.



1



EAS XIAMEN, CHINA
6-8 NOVEMBER
CONGRESS2024



2024厦门国际海洋周
World Ocean Week in Xiamen

East Asian Seas Congress 2024: Blue Synergy for A Shared Future



Highlights of the 8th EAS Ministerial Forum



H.E. Paris Chuop
Secretary of
State, Ministry
of Environment,
Cambodia

Policy and Integrated Management

"Despite progress, challenges remain. We must integrate planning, improve education and training, and expand job opportunities. Strengthening data collection and monitoring will support better management and decision-making."



H.E. Sun Shuxian
Vice Minister, Ministry
of Natural Resources,
China



H.E. Dasrul Chaniago
Director, Ministry of
Environment and
Forestry, Indonesia



H.E. Toru Ohno
Vice Director General,
Ministry of Land,
Infrastructure, Transport
and Tourism, Japan

Science and Technology for Marine Conservation

"Science and technology drive new industries and innovation. China is committed to sharing expertise and strengthening regional cooperation in marine science to support sustainable development."

Risk Management and Resilience

"Marine insurance and risk management are crucial for businesses in the blue economy, providing protection while promoting sustainable practices."

Regional Collaboration for Sustainability

"Collaboration is key to tackling ocean challenges. PEMSEA's work on ICM, blue carbon preservation, and partnerships can drive progress toward carbon neutrality and sustainable growth."



H.E. Chanthanet Boualapha

Vice Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR

Capacity Building and Stakeholder Engagement

“While we’ve made progress, continued capacity building is essential. Stakeholders should be more than beneficiaries; they must be active agents of change in managing our rivers, coasts, and ocean.”



H.E. Donalyn Minimo

Assistant Secretary, Department of Finance, Philippines

Blue Finance and Economic Opportunities

“There are great opportunities to mobilize blue finance across the region. By leveraging global frameworks, we can align investments in coastal tourism, marine biotechnology, renewable energy, and blue carbon with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 6, 7, 13, and 14.”



H.E. Yoon Hyunsoo

Vice Minister, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, ROK

Science and Technology for Marine Conservation

“AI and data are key to tackling marine challenges. RO Korea’s Cheollian-2B satellite provides real-time marine monitoring, and our smart aquaculture center is using AI to optimize operations and prevent issues before they arise.”



H.E. Rena Lee

Ambassador for International Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore

Capacity Building and Stakeholder Engagement

“There is a need to ensure that capacity-building meets the needs of recipients and is culturally appropriate...to address the complexities of marine conservation. Singapore remains committed to ensuring that the world’s ocean remain healthy and resilient, supporting a sustainable blue economy for future generations.”



H.E. Nguyen Duc Toan

Director, Viet Nam Sea and Islands Administration

Regional Collaboration for Sustainability

“Viet Nam is committed to working with regional partners to share best practices and drive sustainable development in the East Asian Seas.”



H.E. Domingos da Conceicao dos Santos

Secretary of State of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry, Timor-Leste

Science-Based Decisionmaking and Data-Driven Management

“Timor-Leste is strengthening science-based decision-making, capacity-building, and inclusive engagement. The State of Ocean and Coasts report has proven valuable in guiding our policies and actions.”



EAS Congress at a Glance

855 **Participants:** Representing governments, NGOs, academia, and grassroots communities.

27 **Countries:** From the EAS region and beyond.

60:40 **Gender Ratio:** Demonstrating progress in gender inclusion.

29 **Sessions:** Encompassing thematic workshops, plenary discussions, and innovative dialogues.

40 **Exhibitors:** Showcasing diverse efforts in coastal and ocean sustainability.

EAS Congress 2024 Opening Ceremony (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

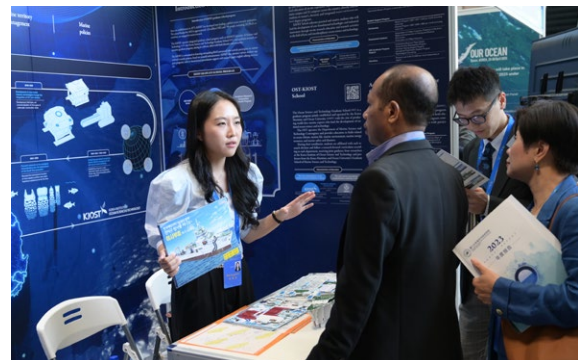
The EAS Congress 2024, held in the vibrant coastal city of Xiamen, China, from November 6-8, served as a pivotal platform for regional collaboration and innovation. Organized by PEMSEA, the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, and the Xiamen Municipal Government, the Congress was held back to back with World Ocean Week (WOW) in Xiamen.

Since its inception in 2005, WOW in Xiamen has been showcasing innovations, sharing best practices, and strengthening partnerships in marine conservation and sustainable development. By integrating with WOW in Xiamen, the Congress amplified its impact, maximizing resources, aligning with global initiatives, and reaching wider audiences.

Under the theme ***“Blue Synergy for a Shared Future: One Sustainable and Resilient Ocean,”*** the Congress convened hundreds of high-level government officials, international organizations, youth representatives, scientists, and grassroots leaders. By fostering collaboration, this triennial Congress set the stage for coherent action to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution, which are critical to the region’s sustainable future.

Advancing Regional and Global Commitments

The EAS Congress 2024 served as a critical platform for assessing and advancing progress on regional and global sustainability frameworks. As the world reaches the midpoint of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Congress assessed progress on the regional targets outlined by the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023–2027, and global commitments such as the KMGBF, and climate action commitments from COP27 and COP28.



Photos by EASC2024 Secretariat



The Congress aligned regional efforts with the following global and regional frameworks:



SDGs

Focused on SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



KMGBF

Reaffirmed commitments to ambitious biodiversity targets, particularly for marine and coastal ecosystems.



UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

Promoted innovation, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing to support sustainable ocean governance.



UNFCCC Paris Agreement

Accelerated climate action through nature-based solutions and the protection and restoration of ocean and coastal carbon sinks.



BBNJ Agreement/High Seas Treaty

Supported the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.



Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Strengthened actions to reduce disaster risks and build coastal resilience.



Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region

Advanced efforts to address marine litter and promote regional collaboration.

Through the 8th EAS Ministerial Forum, the Congress brought together stakeholders to evaluate progress and outline actionable pathways toward the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030, which focuses on achieving healthy ocean, resilient communities, and thriving economies. The Ministerial Forum likewise reaffirmed the EAS Countries' commitments towards mobilizing resources and forging strategic partnerships for SDS-SEA implementation, developing enabling regional policies aligned with national priorities, and strengthening blue synergies through a whole-of-society approach.

The Congress showcased the region's leadership in building partnerships, driving innovative solutions, and fostering collective action for sustainable ocean governance. It reinforced a shared vision of healthy, resilient, and inclusive seas while bridging science, policy, and practice.



Defining Highlights and Outcomes

1. Adoption of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration

The Declaration, signed by nine Country Partners and endorsed by others, provides a roadmap for advancing regional collaboration through 10 synergistic actions across four critical pillars:



Effective Governance

Strengthening ICM, fostering institutional collaboration, and leveraging data-driven decision-making to address transboundary challenges.



Healthy and Resilient Ocean

Scaling up ecosystem-based solutions, marine conservation, blue carbon initiatives, and disaster risk reduction measures.



Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Blue Economy

Mobilizing blue financing, expanding the ridge-to-reef approach, and promoting innovation to enhance economic resilience.



Healthy People

Improving food systems, ensuring sustainable fisheries, and addressing community vulnerabilities through inclusive practices.

[Read the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration](#)

8th East Asian Seas Ministerial Forum 2024 东亚海大会第八届部长论坛 MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE 部长对话



Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat

The Congress also highlighted the importance of intergenerational collaboration, with youth leaders contributing their perspectives and priorities through the EAS Youth Forum 2024 and the presentation of an official youth declaration during the event.

Youth Forum at a Glance



Held in Ulsin, ROK, from 15 to 19 October 2024, the Youth Forum brought together 19 youth delegates from EAS countries. Through four days of workshops, field visits, and expert exchanges, they co-created the official youth declaration, the **2024 EAS Youth Call to Action for Blue Synergy and Inclusive Ocean Governance**.

Key priorities in the youth declaration:

- Youth participation in ocean policymaking
- Access to marine education and ocean careers
- Support for youth-led conservation and innovation
- Investment in sustainable blue economies
- Stronger regional and cross-sectoral partnerships

This declaration affirmed that youth are not waiting for the future, they are leading change now.



[Watch YF Call to Action Video](#)

[Visit 2024 EAS Youth Forum webpage](#)



“During the forum, I was able to engage in spirited discussions with dedicated youth members from East Asia about what we need to do to conserve our coasts and ocean. Coming from diverse cultures, it struck me as a meaningful opportunity for us to unite for a common cause, the conservation of our shared resources.”

Minsu Yu

EAS Youth Forum 2024 Delegate from ROK

2. Innovative Partnerships and Agreements

Highlighting the transformative role of PEMSEA's networks, the Congress emphasized their impact in advancing ICM, its links with MSP and other area-based management tools and fostering collaboration among regional coastal and marine organizations, governments, local communities, and international organizations.

Key milestones from the Congress included:



A MoA between Timor-Leste and PEMSEA formalizing the implementation of the ROK-funded marine plastics project, which aims to implement innovative solutions at the local level to address one of the region's most pressing environmental challenges.



Forging a strategic partnership with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB), to implement the ENMAPS project.



Collaboration on developing a regional blue carbon accounting protocol, enhancing capacity to tackle climate change and protect critical ecosystems.



Launch of the State of the River Basin reporting guidebook, establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure effective integrated management of water resources and river basins in the region.



Expansion of PEMSEA's networks, welcoming new learning centers and local governments from China, Lao PDR, and the Philippines, thereby strengthening the reach and impact of regional- national-local collaborations.



Signing of Letter of Cooperation between PNLC and PNLG, strengthening regional cooperation for coastal resource management through shared knowledge and enhanced capacity development initiatives.

These partnerships and agreements reflect PEMSEA's commitment to collective action and innovation, laying the groundwork for more resilient and sustainable coastal and marine ecosystems across the EAS region.

3. Dynamic Sessions and Knowledge Exchange

Through plenary and parallel sessions, the EAS Congress 2024 discussed actions and provided recommendations on strengthening ocean governance through science-based policies, technological innovations, and sustainable financing. In various sessions, experts emphasized the need for stronger regional collaboration, advocating for cross-border cooperation, knowledge-sharing platforms, and multi-stakeholder partnerships to address transboundary marine challenges effectively and advance sustainable ocean management in the region.

International Conference key takeaways



Integrating Science, Indigenous Knowledge, and Partnerships

Effective coastal and marine management requires a combination of scientific expertise, indigenous knowledge, and stakeholder engagement to develop holistic and sustainable solutions. Strengthening collaborative partnerships between governments, researchers, and local communities ensures that policies are evidence-based, inclusive, and responsive to ecological challenges.



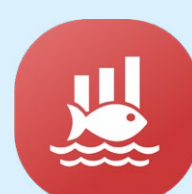
Strengthening the Global Presence of the East Asian Seas Region

To enhance global recognition and cooperation, regional mechanisms and initiatives must align and be showcased at key international fora. By demonstrating its collective efforts in ocean sustainability, the region can attract stronger partnerships and drive impactful action on transboundary marine issues.



Advancing Ocean Technologies for Sustainable Management

Innovations such as AI-driven monitoring, digital twin technologies, and underwater sensing systems are transforming ocean observation, enabling real-time ecosystem monitoring, predictive analysis, and data-driven decision-making. These technologies are critical for improving marine conservation, enhancing disaster preparedness, and supporting sustainable ocean practices.



Expanding Sustainable Ocean Financing

Financial institutions and policymakers must develop diverse financing mechanisms, including blended finance, blue bonds, and public-private partnerships, to scale up investment in marine conservation and ocean governance. Strengthening financial support for sustainable ocean initiatives will ensure long-term resilience while fostering economic growth in the blue economy.

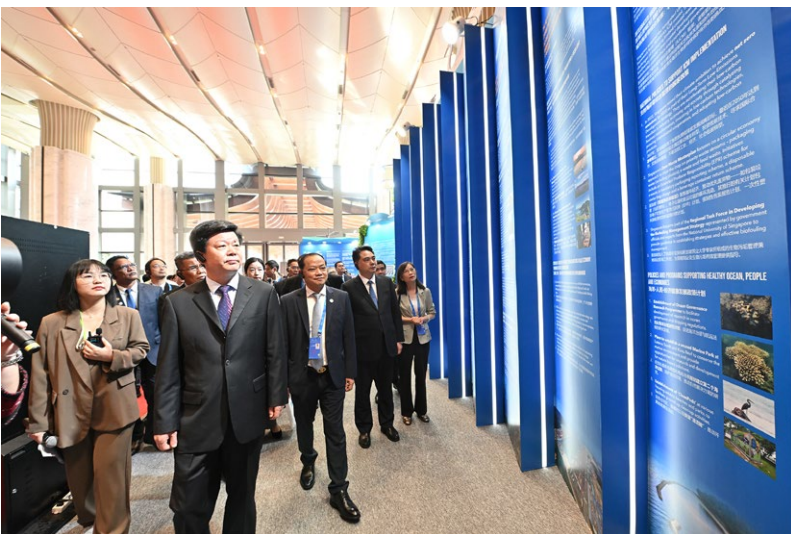
Exhibition

The EAS Congress 2024 Exhibition served as a platform for showcasing innovative technologies, solutions, and best practices in ocean sustainability. Featuring 50 booths, the exhibition brought together 40 exhibitors from international and local organizations, government agencies, academic institutions, and private sector representatives.

A key focus of the exhibition was fostering collaboration across sectors, with country panels highlighting national efforts in marine ecosystem conservation, ICM, and sustainable fisheries. The centerpiece visual displays from PEMSEA, the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, and the Xiamen Municipal Government emphasized regional cooperation in advancing a blue economy.

At the heart of the exhibition was the representation of the EAS mangrove forests, a powerful symbol of interconnectedness and resilience. Just as mangrove roots intertwine to stabilize coastlines, nurture marine life, and shield communities, the exhibition underscored the importance of regional partnerships in addressing shared challenges. This centerpiece celebrated the enduring spirit of cooperation that has defined the region's progress over three decades, showcasing how collaboration can yield results far greater than individual efforts.



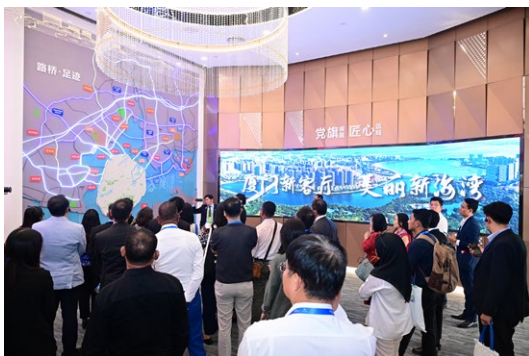




Field Visits and Practical Insights

The Field Visit to Wuyuan Bay provided delegates with a tangible example of successful coastal management in action. Participants observed China's transformation of a degraded salt site into a vibrant ecological and economic hub, showcasing the application of ICM principles. This initiative highlighted how strategic environmental rehabilitation can balance ecological preservation with economic growth, offering a replicable model for other regions.

By exploring Xiamen's efforts in marine economic development and ecological restoration, delegates gained firsthand insights into innovative, community-driven solutions that align with the Congress's broader goals of achieving healthy ocean and resilient communities. These practical lessons reinforced the Congress's overarching goal of integrating science, governance, and community-driven solutions to achieve sustainable ocean governance.



EAS Congress 2024 participants toured around Wuyuan Bay.
(Photos by EASC2024 Secretariat)

Partnership Night: Celebrating Coastal and Marine Champions

During the Congress, the **Partnership Night** showcased collective achievements and strengthened regional collaboration, while also featuring the **Humans of EAS Awards**. This special recognition honoured 30 outstanding individuals whose leadership, innovation, and commitment have driven transformational change in coastal and marine management across the EAS region.



EAS Chair Emeritus Dr. Chua Thia-Eng welcomed all the participants to the Partnership Night.



Xiamen Municipality prepared a historical musical narrative of its coastal and ocean work.



PEMSEA Executive Council representatives awarded the Humans of EAS the certificate of recognition.



Delegates from Cambodia with EAS PC Chair Mr. Vann Monyneath during the Partnership Night.

Why the EAS Congress 2024 Matters

At its core, the EAS Congress 2024 showcased the power of Blue Synergy, a unified approach to tackling interconnected challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and marine pollution. By fostering collaboration across countries, sectors, and communities, the Congress emphasized how coordinated regional actions can contribute to global goals such as the SDGs, the UN Decade of Ocean Science, and the SDS-SEA.

The adoption of the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration and formation of new partnerships laid the groundwork for scaling up regional efforts. Moving forward, key priorities include:

- Expanding Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) through the 'source to sea' approach
- Mobilizing blue financing to support sustainable ocean economies
- Strengthening regional cooperation to implement the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023–2027 and the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030.

These outcomes reflect a shared vision for **a healthy, resilient, and inclusive future**—where local innovation and joint action shape sustainable ocean governance in the EAS region.



"Golden Home" by Gao Minglei

[Visit EASC2024 microsite](#)

[Read EASC2024 Congress Report](#)

2

Humans of EAS: Celebrating Leadership in Coastal and Marine Conservation

The Humans of EAS initiative honors individuals who have championed sustainable coastal and marine management across the EAS region, driving change through leadership, innovation, and collaboration. As part of PEMSEA's 30th anniversary, the EAS PC launched the Humans of EAS initiative to honor local champions who have contributed to the region's transformational progress over the past three decades. Following a six-month open call for nominations, 30 exceptional changemakers were selected for their significant contributions to sustainable development at local, national, and regional levels.

Heru Triatmojo, SP, M.Si.

Head
Bontang City Environmental Service
INDONESIA

Nurasykin Mohamed Yusuf

Senior Assistant Town Planner
Kuala Langat Municipal Council, Selangor
MALAYSIA

Nguyen Thanh Thao

Director
Science, Technology, and International
Cooperation
Viet Nam Geological Department
VIET NAM

Kingkham Manivong

Deputy Director General
Department of Water Resources
LAO PDR



Top Three Humans of EAS



Masako Bannai Otsuka

Advancing Integrated Coastal Management in Japan



“After 30 years of [implementing ICM], my greatest lesson is that empowering communities towards meeting their unique coastal targets is key, whether through engaging the youth in seaweed bed restoration or engaging communities in mangrove protection and restoration. The future of our seas lies in recognizing these unique local solutions while embracing new approaches like blue carbon initiatives.”

As a pioneer of ICM in Japan, Masako Bannai Otsuka has dedicated over three decades to empowering communities and advancing sustainable coastal governance. Her work has bridged global and local experiences, creating inclusive platforms that engage stakeholders across sectors and geographies. Through her leadership, seven Japanese cities, including Miyako, Shima, and Taketomi, have adopted ICM approaches that balance environmental resilience with local development.

Key Milestones & Achievements:

- 2005 onward: Initiated ICM projects in seven Japanese cities, including Miyako, Shima, and Taketomi
- 2005–2013: Championed multi-stakeholder collaboration among citizens, businesses, and government
- 2013: Organized the PNLG Conference in Shima City, linking local and regional actors

Knowledge Sharing:

- 1990s–present: Authored and contributed to over 400 articles on ICM practices and local solutions
- Promoted replication of successful ICM approaches within and beyond Japan

Innovative Planning:

In 2013, guided Shima City in developing the *Sato-umi* Creation Basic Plan, under the slogan: ‘Earn, Learn, and Play: Shima, a New *Sato-umi* City.’ The initiative integrated ICM with economic development and community engagement, enhancing the city’s global visibility and coastal resilience.

Legacy & Impact:

- Strengthened coastal governance by linking traditional knowledge and new approaches
- Inspired community-driven conservation through youth engagement and blue carbon initiatives
- Continues to set an example for effective collaboration and local innovation in coastal management



Prak Visal

Pioneering Coastal Management in Cambodia



“The participation of the people and decision-makers working together to create a delicate balance between development and preservation motivated me to contribute to efforts that protect these coastal areas. It’s a unique privilege to be involved in ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same pristine environment.”

Since 2001, Prak Visal has been at the heart of Cambodia's coastal sustainability efforts. Through his leadership, Preah Sihanouk transformed into a model province for ICM, combining inclusive planning with environmental innovation. His initiatives have benefited hundreds of thousands and laid a strong foundation for long-term resilience.

Key Milestones & Achievements:

- 2001: Began leading ICM implementation in Preah Sihanouk Province
- 2003–2006: Developed the Sihanoukville Coastal Strategy
- 2007–2010: Established the Coastal Use Zoning Plan and Tourism Development Plan
- Spanning 176 km coastline and 2,397 km² land area under ICM framework

Community-Based Initiatives:

- 2000s–present: Reached over 200,000 stakeholders through:
 - Community-based solid waste management
 - Mangrove restoration in Otress and Tomnob Rolok (1,060 hectares)
 - Habitat rehabilitation on Koh Rong Island
 - Water sanitation projects in Stung Hav District

Partnership & Innovation:

- Built collaborations with UN-Habitat, IUCN, and Fisheries Action Coalition Team
- Spearheaded pioneering programs:
 - Beach zoning management
 - Establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
 - Development of Smart City Program for Preah Sihanouk

Legacy & Impact:

- Boosted eco-tourism, job creation, and political support for coastal conservation
- Fostered cross-sector partnerships between local authorities, communities, and private actors
- Advocates for inclusive, passion-driven leadership in environmental protection

**Wang Jinhe****Championing Integrated Coastal Management in China**

“Finding a balance between ecological conservation and economic development is key to a sustainable future for coastal areas.”

Balancing ecological protection with economic growth has always been a challenge for coastal cities. For Wang Jinhe, it has also been a lifelong mission. As a pioneer of ICM in Northern China, Wang has helped transform Dongying City into a national model for sustainable coastal development. His work has not only driven policy and institutional change but also inspired other cities across the EAS region.

Key Milestones & Achievements:

- 2005: Led Dongying City's application as a PEMSEA ICM Demonstration Site
- 2007: Facilitated Dongying's membership in the PNLG
- 2010: Contributed to the publication of the Dongying State of the Coast Report
- 2011: Organized the PNLG Annual Meeting in Dongying
- Outcome: Dongying Declaration on “Blue Economy” through ICM

Best Practices Documented:

- Transforming Traditional Pond Aquaculture to Modern Ecological Aquaculture
- Preparedness and Response Planning of Dongying City under the ICM Coordination Mechanism

ICM Certification Achievements:

- 2015: Awarded ICM System Level 1 Certification
- 2020: Upgraded to Level 2 Certification (among the first cities to achieve this, alongside Xiamen)
- Signifies successful balance between ecological restoration and economic growth

Notable Initiatives:

- Dongying Modern Fishery Demonstration Zone
- Promoting sustainable aquaculture
- MPA Management
- Strengthening conservation measures
- Guangli River Basin Integrated Management
- Addressing watershed and water quality issues holistically
- Coastal Vulnerability Assessments
- Identifying risks and enhancing resilience of coastal ecosystems

Legacy & Impact:

- Dongying stands as a model city for integrating ICM into development strategies
- Wang's leadership has influenced regional cooperation and inspired replication of the Dongying model across the EAS region

More Changemakers Across the Region

In addition to the top three champions, the Humans of EAS initiative celebrates 24 individuals whose work has strengthened ecosystems, empowered communities, and advanced sustainable development across the region.



Strengthening Coastal Governance and Policy



Dr. Jungho Nam: Advanced coastal planning and climate adaptation through research and policy development



Le Thi Thanh Huong: Improved coastal zoning and inter-agency collaboration in Thua Thien Hue Province



Nisakorn Wiwekwin: Established ICM systems and disaster contingency plans in Chonburi Province



Dr. Zaki Iskandar: Introduced innovative waste management and coastal restoration in Tangerang Regency



Nay Sally: Led community-based waste management and piloted sustainable tourism in Preah Sihanouk Province



Dr. Kim Kwang Ho: Oversaw marine ecological monitoring and conservation policy development



Kingkham Manivong: Drafted legal frameworks for sustainable water resource management



Conserving Ecosystems and Restoring Habitats



Yanhua Zhang: Rehabilitated degraded ecosystems through ecological restoration in Changyi City



Jimmy Masagca: Revived mangroves and promoted sustainable aquaculture in Catanduanes



Isdahartati: Reduced pollution and improved ecosystem health in Pelabuhanratu Bay



Heru Triatmojo: Advocated for mangrove planting and water quality monitoring in Bontang City








Marivic P. Esmas: Achieved ICM certification milestones through strategic environmental management in Batangas



Bounleuy Nanthavong: Fostered transboundary water resource cooperation in Sekong Province






Empowering Communities for Sustainable Practices

-  **Metri Nainatu:** Empowered women in Oeseli Village with sustainable soap production and coastal preservation
-  **Anabelle L. Cayabyab:** Spearheaded waste management and habitat restoration in Cavite Province
-  **Dr. Abilio da Fonseca:** Integrated traditional knowledge into coastal management and MPA strategies
-  **Dircia Sarmiento Belo:** Mobilized youth for climate advocacy and ecosystem restoration through the Laudato Si' Movement
-  **Dr. Nguyen Thanh Thao:** Strengthened capacity for ocean and coastal management through training and policy reform




Engaging Youth and Advancing Education

-  **Joãozinho Dedito Martins:** Inspired youth for marine conservation through programs like the Underwater Cinema
-  **Jinu Braz de Araújo:** Founded Lenuk Tasi, a youth-led sea turtle conservation initiative
-  **Dr. Qinhua Fang:** Promoted regional collaboration and education in coastal governance at Xiamen University



Driving Innovation and Sustainable Development

-  **Marius L. Panahon:** Strengthened coastal resource management through MPA plans and fisheries assessments
-  **Shouji Wu:** Improved MPA management and restored 160 hectares of mangroves in Quanzhou
-  **Chindavanh Souriyaphack:** Strengthened river basin management and community engagement in the Sedone River Basin
-  **Yun Kon Sam:** Promoted sustainable fisheries and advanced spatial planning methods for marine resources

The Humans of EAS champions show how local action can drive lasting regional impact. Their stories reflect the power of people to lead change, reminding us that every step forward begins with a human story, and **every human story has the power to change the world.**

Read the profiles of the Humans of EAS awardees [here](#).



3

Driving Impact for Sustainable Development

In 2024, PEMSEA strengthened its implementation of the SDS-SEA through a number of multi-year, transboundary collaborative projects that address key environmental challenges across the region. Initiatives focused on operationalizing the 'Source to Sea' approach through IRBM, reducing marine plastic pollution through strengthening local governance, data analytics and monitoring, and enhancing transboundary ocean governance through regional action plans. These efforts demonstrate PEMSEA's commitment to science-based solutions and integrated ocean governance.





Drone shot of Sasmuan River which is part of Pasac-Guagua Watershed. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)

Sustaining Life from Source-to-Sea: Regional Efforts in Integrated River Basin Management

The IRBM Project brings together six AMS; Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, to strengthen sustainable water governance across seven priority river basins. Supported by GEF, implemented by UNDP, and executed by PRF, the project addresses marine pollution, freshwater flow, and climate resilience. In 2024, it advanced governance frameworks, community engagement, and evidence-based solutions through State of River Basin (SORB) reports, pilot pollution-reduction initiatives, and capacity-building programs. Aligned with the UN SDGs and other global and regional commitments, the project promotes inclusive and coordinated management of river basins in the region.

Project at a Glance

Countries Involved: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam

Seven priority river basins:

1. Kampong Bay River Basin (Cambodia)
2. Nam Tha River Basin (Lao PDR)
3. Pasac-Guagua River Basin (Philippines)
4. Imus Ylang-Ylang River Basin (Philippines)
5. Ciliwung River Basin (Indonesia)
6. Vu Gia Thu Bon River Basin (Viet Nam)
7. Kedah River Basin (Malaysia)

Duration: 2023–2027

Budget: USD 8.5 million (grant), USD 107 million (co-financing)

Focus Areas:

- **Reducing Pollution:** Protecting aquatic ecosystems.
- **Preserving Freshwater Flows:** Ensuring sustainable water use.
- **Adapting to Climate Change:** Building resilience in river basins.

IRBM Project Sites



Key activities conducted in 2024

Regional workshops conducted and GESI analysis publications developed supported efforts to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into water management strategies.

SORB Reports developed for the Kampong Bay River Basin in Cambodia, Nam Tha River Basin in Lao PDR, and Pasac-Guagua Watershed in the Philippines provided critical data on biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance conditions to support targeted interventions for sustainable river basin management.

Capacity-building activities conducted focused on IRBM governance, SORB reporting, and gender-sensitive approaches, strengthening regional capacity for sustainable water management.

Regional collaborations facilitated through the IRBM Forum at the EAS Congress in Xiamen, China, provided a platform for knowledge-sharing and advancing governance mechanisms among AMS.

Knowledge-sharing activities conducted through newsletters, profile stories, and learning exchanges enhanced awareness and promoted the adoption of IRBM practices across ASEAN.

Project in Numbers

3

regional workshops conducted on GESI analysis, SORB Reporting, Stakeholder Analysis Workshop.

656

participants attended regional, national, and river basin activities of which 318 (48%) are women.

4

SORB reports drafted in 2024, providing foundational data for evidence-based interventions (2 for the Philippines, 1 for Lao PDR, and 1 for Cambodia).

1

SORB Reporting Guidebook launched

4

project newsletters

1

river basin profile story published

Empowering Communities and Strengthening Governance for Resilient Water Management

In 2024, the IRBM Project advanced governance, community engagement, and science-based conservation to connect land-based management with coastal ecosystem restoration. The project focused on enhancing governance systems, restoring ecosystems, and building climate resilience, while ensuring local communities played an active role in managing river basins.

Throughout the year, 656 people, including 318 women, joined capacity-building activities on governance, monitoring, and planning. These workshops emphasized GESI, reinforcing the project's commitment to equitable water management.



RPMU staff and representatives from Pampanga PG-ENRO led the breakout session during the consultation meeting with the leaders of IP communities in Porac, Pampanga. (Photos by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



GESI consultation conducted in Cavite, Philippines. (Photo courtesy of Cavite PG-ENRO)



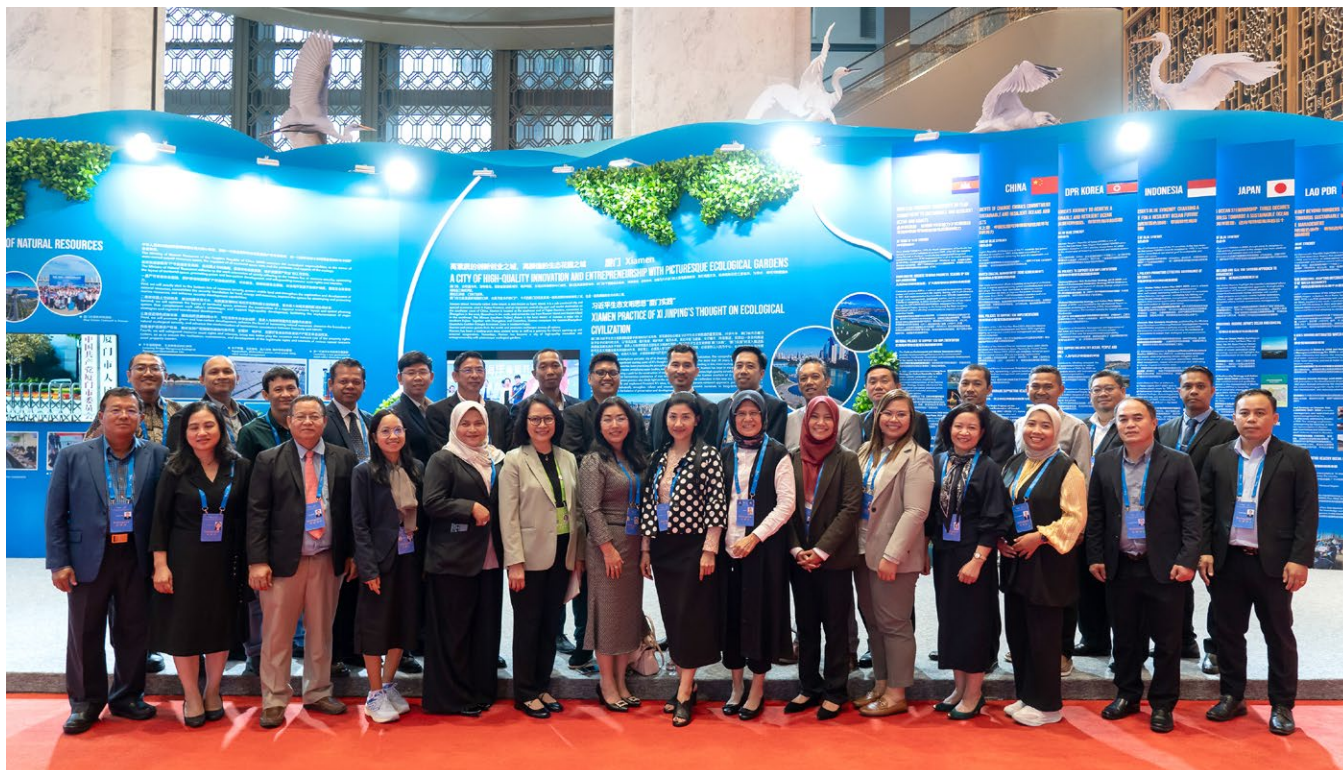
[Read the GESI Analysis Report](#)



Participants of the GESI and Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in Bogor, Indonesia. (Photos by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



Discussions on the core indicators for the SORB Reporting. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



Representatives from seven priority river basins across six ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam) participated in IRBM regional workshop held during the East Asian Seas Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)



Participants of the 1st Semester 2024 Meeting of the Subcommittee on Environment under the Sectoral Committee on Economic Development, Regional Development Council III in the Philippines. (Photo courtesy of Pampanga PG-ENRO)

A key highlight was the multi-stakeholder workshop in July 2024 in the Pasac-Guagua Watershed, Philippines that brought together local officials, fisher cooperatives, and private sector actors to align mangrove restoration with river basin management strategies. As part of this, the DELTAnim Mangrove Nursery initiative, led by local government and communities, was launched. It engaged 70 fishers to plant 30,000 mangrove propagules, restoring coastal ecosystems while offering alternative income through a cash-for-work scheme. The IRBM Project played a key role in facilitating governance dialogues and integrating these efforts into long-term river basin planning.



Fisher in Sasmuan, Pampanga involved in DELTAnim Mangrove Planting Activity. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)

"Mangrove reforestation is not just about biodiversity; it's about giving back livelihoods to fishers who depend on healthy ecosystems,"

Irene Villar

Assistant Department Head of the Provincial Government
Environment and Natural Resources Office (PGENRO)



Harnessing Science-Based Decision-Making

Scientific research and data-driven governance remained central to the IRBM Project's approach in 2024. The SORB system provided a standardized framework for monitoring and reporting on water quality, biodiversity, and governance indicators. To strengthen its application, the SORB Guidebook was officially launched at the EAS Congress 2024, equipping national and local agencies with tools to develop targeted policies for sustainable water resource management.

At the IWC10 in Uruguay in September, IRBM Regional Project Manager Nancy Bernas highlighted how the project integrates scientific research with policy-making to enhance water resource management. Speaking at the session "Achieving Policy Coherence from Source to Sea," she emphasized: *"We can only achieve sustainable water management when communities, governments, and regional platforms work together."*



UNDP's Dr. Akiko Yamamoto delivering her opening message during the launching of the IRBM SORB Reporting Guidebook. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)



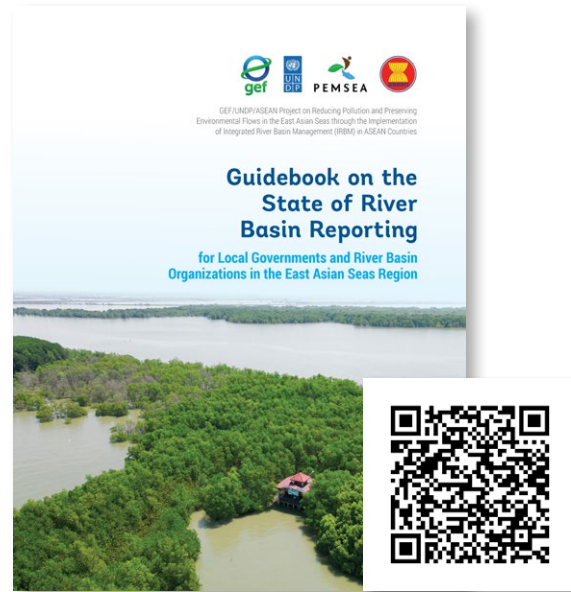
Nancy Bernas, Regional Project Manager of the IRBM Project, discussed the background of the SORB reporting system. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)



The SORB Guidebook was launched with the participation and support of the GEF, UNDP, the ASEAN Secretariat, the AWGWRM, participating ASEAN Member States, local governments from the IRBM Project's priority river basins, and other partners. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)

This approach was demonstrated in Lao PDR's Nam Tha River Basin, where stakeholder discussions helped refine and strengthen their governance strategies. *"The SORB system will guide us in improving management programs to protect and sustain our water resources,"* said Dr. Inthavy Akkharath, Director-General, Department of Water Resources, Lao PDR.

Similar reporting frameworks were developed for Kampong Bay in Cambodia and Pasac-Guagua in the Philippines, equipping local stakeholders with scientific data to inform sustainable water resource management.



[Download the SORB Reporting Guidebook](#)



IRBM Regional Project Manager, Nancy Bermas during the panel discussion on Achieving Policy Coherence from Source to Sea. (Photo by PEMSEA)

Piloting Sustainable Water Management Initiatives

The IRBM Project also advanced pollution management, water conservation, and resilience-building efforts through pilot initiatives in priority river basins. In Kampong Bay, Cambodia, the project facilitated the integration of environmental safeguards into hydropower operations, keeping renewable energy production both efficient and sustainable. Meanwhile, in Nam Tha, Lao PDR, efforts focused

on improving access to clean water, benefiting households and demonstrating how conservation initiatives can support both environmental sustainability and community well-being. Alongside these interventions, the IRBM Project also worked on strengthening regulatory frameworks, developing policy recommendations for transboundary water management and local adaptation strategies to enhance governance and ensure long-term impact.



Fisherfolk along Nam Tha River Basin.
(Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)

Next Steps

Looking ahead to 2025, the IRBM Project will scale up its efforts across ASEAN, building on early progress to strengthen data systems, launch pilot initiatives, and improve governance. These actions will further support sustainable, inclusive, and evidence-based water resource management in the region.

Strengthening Data and Planning

- Expand SORB reporting to new river basins in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam
- Finalize SORB reports for Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines
- Use findings to support national policies and improve water management strategies

Developing the The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus Toolkit

- Develop a toolkit to assess current and future water, energy, food, and ecosystem demands
- Led by FutureWater, covering six ASEAN countries
- Provide decision-makers with strategies for balancing resource use and promoting sustainability

Implementing IRBM Pilot Projects

- Launch pilot projects in seven river basins and sub-basins to address water quality, environmental flows, and climate resilience
- In Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines: finalize frameworks, identify hotspot areas, and prepare work plans, budgets, and GESI Action Plans

- In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Viet Nam: conduct national inception workshops to establish coordination mechanisms
- EnviroStrat Ltd. will guide the development of scalable and sustainable pilot interventions

Enhancing Knowledge Sharing and Accessibility

- Launch an IRBM microsite and e-portal to serve as a central hub for updates and collaboration
- Publish profile stories of key river basins, including the Imus-Ylang Ylang–Rio Grande and Ciliwung River
- Update and translate key project materials; such as the Gender Action Plan, project brochure, and GRM Helpdesk, into six ASEAN languages

Strengthening Governance and Coordination

- Conduct a mid-term review to assess progress and refine strategies
- Support the signing of MoAs with Viet Nam and potentially Malaysia
- Begin preparations for the 3rd Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting in Indonesia to strengthen regional decision-making

Through these actions, the IRBM Project aims to deepen regional cooperation and ensure that river basin management continues to serve both people and ecosystems, now and into the future.

To know more about IRBM Project, please visit the [IRBM Project microsite](#).





From Land to Sea: Regional Efforts to Reduce Marine Plastics Pollution

Marine plastic pollution remains one of the most pressing environmental challenges in the EAS region, threatening marine ecosystems, coastal economies, and human health. To address this issue, PEMSEA, in partnership with the ROK's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) under Official Development Assistance (ODA) program, are implementing a six-year initiative (2023–2028) through the MOF/PEMSEA ODA Project on Reducing Marine Plastics in the EAS Region. The project targets 10 coastal sites; six in the Philippines and four in Timor-Leste, and aims to reduce plastic waste by strengthening governance, piloting innovative waste management solutions, improving scientific monitoring, and engaging communities. In 2024, progress was made in all focus areas, contributing to a more sustainable, data-driven, and community-led response to marine plastic pollution.

Project at a Glance

Countries Involved: Philippines, Timor-Leste

Duration: 2023–2028 (6 years)

Budget: USD 9 million, provided through ROK's MOF

Key Focus Areas:

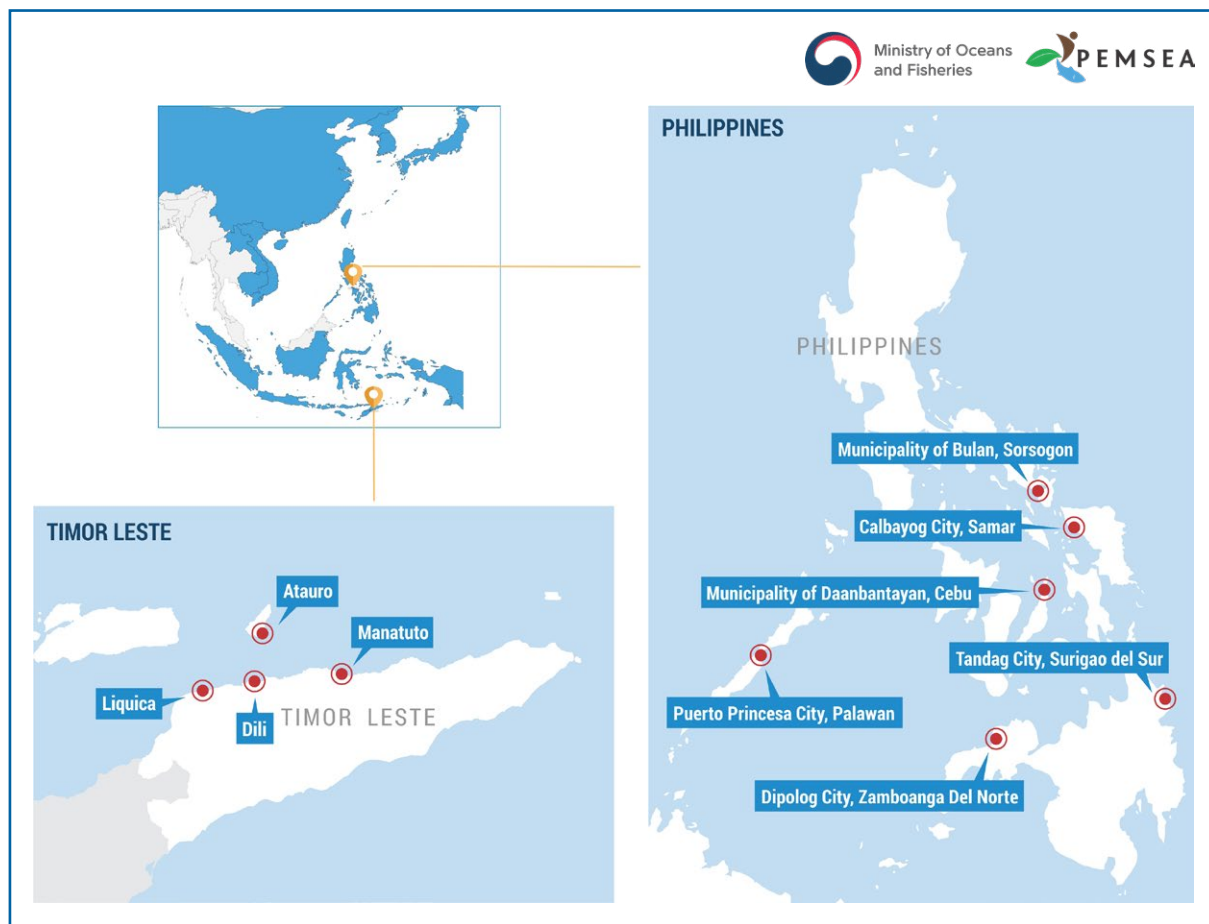
- Strengthening local governance for marine plastics management
- Demonstrating best practices and innovative solutions
- Conducting marine litter and beach monitoring
- Enhancing capacity, awareness, and communications

Key Partners:

Philippines: Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Services (FASPS)

Timor-Leste: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF), Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE), Ministry of State Administration

ODA Project Sites



Key activities conducted in 2024

A MoU between Timor-Leste and PEMSEA reaffirmed Timor-Leste's commitment in implementing ODA Project activities within its 4 project sites.

Innovative Solution workshop conducted to assist the 6 Philippines LGUs to design their initial pilot projects in their respective sites.

Beach litter monitoring data gathered in 10 project sites (6 in the Philippines, 4 in Timor-Leste) were uploaded in EAS Marine Litter Data Center.

Regional workshops facilitated at the EAS Congress in Xiamen, China, that discussed the refined innovative solutions design of each sites and discuss the project's initiatives in reducing plastics in East Asian region.

Project in Numbers

Baseline marine litter monitoring data collected from **six sites in the Philippines** and **four in Timor-Leste**

6

pilot projects identified for **innovative waste management solutions** in the Philippines

4

Marine Environment Protector (MEP) programs led by civil society groups established in the Philippines

30

participants from Timor-Leste and the Philippines national and LGU actors joined in the **first Learning Exchange Program (LEP)** in Seoul, ROK

5,241

volunteers participated in MEP activities, including **public education, coastal cleanups, and youth engagement programs**

2

regional workshops on innovative solutions and data monitoring respectively were held at the **EAS Congress 2024**

Sustainable Solutions on Marine Plastic Waste Management in the East Asian Seas

To address the growing challenge of marine plastic pollution, the Marine Plastics ODA Project is built around four components: strengthening local governance, piloting innovative waste management solutions, conducting marine litter monitoring, and enhancing capacity and awareness. These efforts combine policy reform, technology, science, and community engagement to develop long-term solutions for reducing plastic waste in the region.

Strengthening Local Governance for Marine Plastics Waste Management

Effective governance is key to managing plastic waste. In this component, the project works with national and local governments to improve policies, regulations, and institutional coordination. In 2024, a baseline assessment in the Philippines provided key insights into plastic waste composition, household waste generation, and community awareness levels in the six cities and towns participating in the project. The findings revealed that plastic waste comprises 20 to 30 percent of total waste, with daily plastic waste generation ranging from 0.05 to 0.1 kilograms per capita, exceeding national averages in some areas. At the regional level, Timor-Leste reaffirmed its commitment by signing an MoU with PEMSEA during the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. The country also held its first National Project Board (NPB) meeting in February 2024 to coordinate project implementation among national agencies, local governments, and partners.

Demonstrating Best Practices and Innovative Solutions

The second component focuses on piloting and scaling up best practices and innovative waste management solutions that support a circular economy. By working with local governments, businesses, and civil society organizations, the project promotes sustainable models for plastic waste prevention, collection, recycling, and repurposing.

In 2024, six pilot projects were designed using a life-cycle approach to plastics, covering all stages from prevention and segregation to collection, transport, and repurposing. These projects were refined through a series of stakeholder consultations, beginning with the First Consultation in July 2024 in Puerto Princesa, Philippines, where local government units (LGUs) presented their concepts. During the EAS Congress in November 2024 in Xiamen, China, regional stakeholders conducted further reviews and refinements, ensuring that the pilot projects were practical, community-driven, and scalable.



H.E. Domingos da Conceicao dos Santos and PRF Executive Director Ms. Aimee Gonzales signed the MoU between PEMSEA and Timor-Leste for the implementation of the Marine Plastics ODA Project in 4 sites in Timor-Leste. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



Participants of the Innovative Solutions Workshop for the Philippine sites held in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



Participants of the regional workshop on reducing marine plastics in the East Asian Seas Region conducted during the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

Conducting Marine Litter and Beach Monitoring

Scientific data collection is important for assessing the scale of marine plastic pollution, identifying hotspots, and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions. The third component of the project ensures that regular marine litter and beach monitoring is conducted across six sites in the Philippines and four in Timor-Leste, in collaboration with academic institutions and NGOs.

In 2024, partnerships with nine monitoring institutes were formalized through MoUs, ensuring a collaborative approach to data collection and analysis. The Q1–Q3 2024 marine litter monitoring results provided critical insights into pollution trends. A total of 10,951 litter items (852 kilograms) were collected in the Philippines, while 14,121 items (337 kilograms) were recorded in Timor-Leste. Plastic waste remained the dominant pollutant, accounting for 78 percent of marine litter in the Philippines and 87 percent in Timor-Leste.

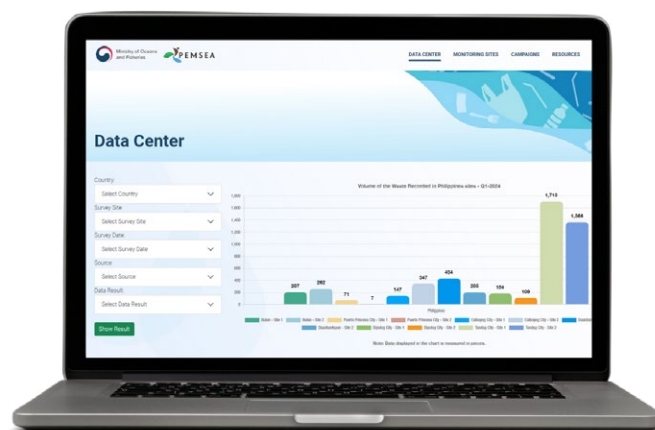
Key pollution hotspots were identified, with Tandag City in the Philippines recording 4,347 items (726 kg) of waste, while Atauro Island in Timor-Leste recorded 11,616 items (234 kg). These insights are now guiding evidence-based policymaking and targeted intervention strategies, ensuring that responses to plastic pollution are aligned with scientific data.

To support consistent and accessible monitoring, the project established the EAS Marine Plastics Data Center, a regional platform for compiling, analyzing, and sharing

marine litter data from both countries. The platform underpins the Beach Monitoring Program and applies standardized survey methods developed in the ROK.

Field surveys are conducted by university and NGO teams at each monitoring site. Following protocol, they examine four 100-meter beach transects, with plastic waste items counted, categorized, weighed, and uploaded to the Data Center for analysis. Users can filter the data by country, location, date, and waste type, enabling better tracking of pollution trends and identification of problem areas.

The Data Center supports national programs such as the Philippines' National Plan of Action on Marine Litter (NPOA-ML) and Timor-Leste's Zero Waste program, providing the infrastructure needed for science-based decision-making. As marine plastic pollution continues to impact coastal communities, the Data Center plays a central role in enabling data-driven solutions and supporting more effective, sustainable waste management in the region.



[View EAS Marine Plastics Data Center](#)



Beach monitoring activity conducted in San Agustin Sur, Tandag, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)

Enhancing Capacity, Awareness, and Communications

Community participation is essential for reducing plastic waste. This component focuses on building local capacity and raising public awareness. A major milestone in 2024 was the LEP held in Seoul, ROK in April, where 29 participants from the Philippines and Timor-Leste engaged in best-practice sharing on plastic waste management. Participants visited Seoul Upcycling Plaza, Plastic Lab Inc., and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation, gaining hands-on experience in circular economy models and innovative waste management solutions.



Participants during the 1st Learning Exchange Program of Marine Plastics ODA Project in Seoul, ROK. (Photo by Jun Dacaymat/PEMSEA)

Another key initiative was the MEP Program launched in the Philippines, which promotes community-led action. Four local NGOs were selected to lead waste segregation, recycling, and awareness campaigns.

Activities included coastal clean-ups, mural painting with youth groups, educational sessions, and advocacy promoting circular economy principles.

The project also marked World Ocean Day 2024 with a large-scale clean-up, removing 30 tons of plastic waste from coastal areas and mobilizing over 500 volunteers, a sign of growing momentum for grassroots action on marine conservation.



Coastal cleanup and installation of DIY trash trap along San Pedro Creek Poblacion in Daanbantayan, Cebu. (Photo by PEMSEA/JCastillo)



Somimbang Elementary School students received trash bins and reusable water bottles as part of Daanbantayan's awareness campaign on plastics. (Photo courtesy of Jelly Tahanlangit/BARBA)



Young volunteers joined the coastal cleanup during the World Ocean Day event and MEP launching in Dipolog, City. (Photo courtesy of Ambibo.ph)



4 barangay officials showed support during the launching of the MEP Program in Tandag City. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



IEC drives were conducted in Barangay Tiniguiban, Sicsican and Sta. Monica in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan. (Photo courtesy of Project Zacchaeus)

Next Steps

In 2025, the MOF/PEMSEA ODA Project on Reducing Marine Plastics in the East Asian Seas Region will scale up its efforts under four core components. These actions will support innovation at the community level, enhance data-driven policymaking, and strengthen regional collaboration to advance marine plastic solutions.

Strengthen Local Governance for Marine Plastics Waste Management

- Organize the Mayor's Conference on Marine Plastic Solutions to reinforce local government commitments and share best practices
- Integrate source-level waste management into pilot project designs and local action plans
- Support local strategy development through an internship program, providing youth with hands-on experience in project planning and implementation

Demonstrate Best Practices and Innovative Solutions

- Launch the Small Grant Program (SGP) to fund local businesses, NGOs, and community groups
- Develop and circulate SGP guidelines through the Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU)
- Support grassroots projects focused on recycling, upcycling, and circular economy initiatives

Conduct Marine Litter and Beach Monitoring

- Continue Phase 2 of beach monitoring at six sites in the Philippines and four in Timor-Leste, conducted quarterly by academic institutions and NGOs

- Upload data to the EAS Marine Plastics Data Center for regional synthesis and policy analysis
- Produce a regional report to inform national strategies and guide targeted plastic waste interventions

Enhance Capacity, Awareness, and Communications

- Maintain multi-stakeholder engagement and capacity-building through learning exchanges and outreach events
- Promote community-led actions through the Marine Environment Protector (MEP) program and other awareness initiatives
- Strengthen the visibility and use of the EAS Marine Plastics Data Center to support science-based decision-making
- Finalize and formalize the MoU between the Philippines and the ROK
- Engage stakeholders through the Regional Steering Committee and National Project Board to coordinate and align project implementation
- Promote science-based decision-making and awareness through community activities, stakeholder engagement, and effective use of monitoring data

Through these integrated efforts, the project remains committed to enabling local innovation, promoting data-informed governance, and advancing regional cooperation for cleaner and more sustainable seas in the EAS region.

For more information on ODA Project, visit the [Marine Plastics ODA Project microsite](#)



Regional Cooperation for the Future of the Arafura and Timor Seas Region

The shoreline of Desa Jabulengga, Aru in Indonesia. (Photo courtesy by UNDP Indonesia)

The Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Phase II (ATSEA-2) Project is a partnership aimed at addressing priority transboundary challenges in the Arafura and Timor Seas (ATS) region. Since its launch in 2019, together with UNDP and financed by GEF, ATSEA-2 has worked to combat the challenges including habitat degradation, marine pollution, unsustainable fishing, and the impacts of climate change in the region. Uniting four littoral countries; Australia, Indonesia, PNG, and Timor-Leste, the project has promoted science-based solutions, community-driven actions, and strengthened governance frameworks to conserve marine biodiversity and build socio-economic resilience.

Project at a Glance

Countries Involved: Australia, Indonesia, PNG, Timor-Leste

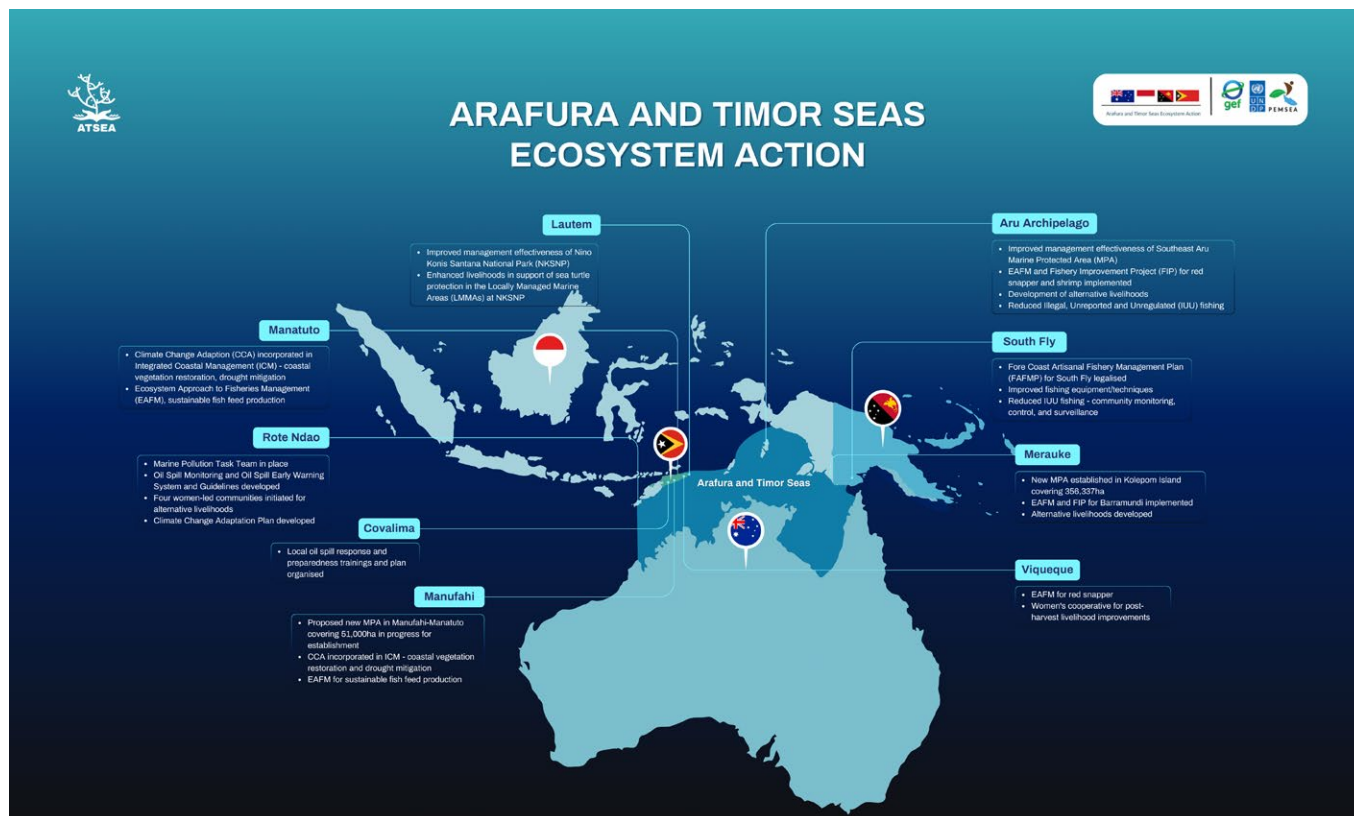
Duration: 2019–2024

Budget: USD 9.7 million (grant), USD 54.5 million (co-financing)

Focus Areas:

- **Regional, National, and Local Governance for Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) Management:** ATSEA-2 Project aimed to strengthen governance mechanisms at various levels to ensure effective management of the ATS region.
- **Improving LMEs Carrying Capacity to Sustain Provisioning, Regulating, and Supporting Ecosystem Services:** This involves enhancing the health and resilience of marine ecosystems to maintain their capacity to provide essential services.
- **Knowledge Management:** ATSEA-2 Project focused on improving the monitoring of the ATS's status and disseminating information to stakeholders, thereby facilitating informed decision-making and adaptive management.

ATSEA Project Sites



Key activities conducted in 2024

The **10-year SAP adopted for 2024–2033** provided a comprehensive framework for addressing transboundary challenges and ensuring sustainable management of the ATS region.

The **ATS region showcased at the IWC10 in Uruguay**, earned global recognition as the best project in the GEF Portfolio for its outstanding contributions to sustainable development and regional cooperation.

The **Ministerial Forum held in Sydney, Australia** affirmed ATS countries' dedication to long-term governance mechanisms and collaborative approaches for sustainable marine resource management.

The **ATSEA-2 Project presented at the EAS Congress in Xiamen, China** highlighted its achievements and progress, promoting regional knowledge exchange and shared solutions.

Project in Numbers

155,170

people benefited from various project initiatives, including 52,324 women and 60,430 men

364

kilometers of coastline covered by ICM activities

6

regulations issued in support of ICM, pollution management, MPA establishment and combating IUU fishing

25,097

square kilometers of coastline implementing the Ecosystem-based Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)

1

regional EAFM plan for red snapper fisheries developed and endorsed by 3 ATS countries.

5

EAFM plans developed; 3 EAFM Plans for Red Snapper, Shrimp, and Barramundi in Indonesia, 1 Community-based Fore Coast Artisanal Fishery Management Plan for South Fly in PNG, and 1 EAFM Plans for South Coast in Timor-Leste.

161

technical publications released

200+

events organised or co-hosted to share ATS information/initiatives and enrich learning on coastal management.

4,336

individuals trained in capacity-building activities, with 945 focused on alternative livelihoods such as seaweed farming and eco-tourism, directly impacting 5,230 individuals.

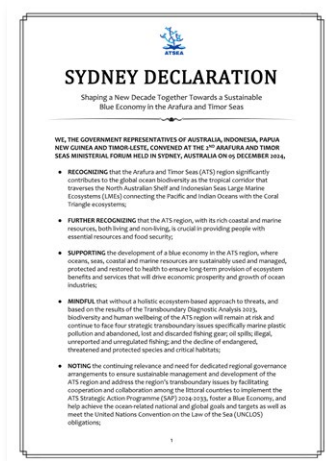
** Since the project concluded in 2024, these figures reflect its total achievements over the five-year period.*

The Journey of ATSEA-2: A Legacy of Regional Collaboration

As ATSEA-2 concludes in 2024, it completes a significant journey of regional collaboration, building on the success of ATSEA-1 (2009–2014). Over five years, ATSEA-2 united Australia, Indonesia, PNG, and Timor-Leste to address transboundary environmental challenges across the ATS region. Beyond immediate challenges, the project emphasized climate resilience, GESI, and good governance, aligning closely with global frameworks such as the SDGs, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

A major milestone was the signing of the **Sydney Declaration** at the Ministerial Forum in December 2024, formalizing the RGM. Through the RGM, consisting of the Council of Ministers (COM), Regional Coordination Committee (RCC), and Regional Stakeholder Working Group (RSWG), the ATS region

transitioned from a project-based approach to sustained regional collaboration under the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) 2024–2033. The declaration also secured financial commitments, with PNG pledging USD 65,000 annually (2025–2026) and Australia contributing AUD 620,000 to initiate SAP implementation.



[Read the Sydney Declaration](#)



The signing ceremony of Ministerial Declaration. (From left) Dr. Handoko Adi Susanto, ATSEA-2 Regional Project Manager, H.E. Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia - H.E. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment and Water, Australia - H.E. Jelta Wong, Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Papua New Guinea. (Photo by ATSEA)



Participants in the Ministerial Forum in Sydney, Australia, 5 December 2024. (Photo by ATSEA)

At the forum, H.E. Jelta Wong, PNG's Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, highlighted ATSEA-2's impact in South Fly, a remote area benefiting from the project's community-led fisheries management plan. *"This collaboration empowered artisanal fishers, promoted sustainable practices, and connected remote communities to broader regional efforts,"* he stated. The Fore Coast Artisanal Fisheries Management Plan, developed under ATSEA-2, integrates sustainable fishing, biodiversity conservation, and local monitoring to safeguard marine habitats for future generations.

Throughout its implementation, ATSEA-2 delivered measurable impacts. MPAs expanded significantly, now covering over 815,000 hectares, including Indonesia's Kolepom Island MPA. EAFM advanced sustainable practices for key species such as red snapper, shrimp, and barramundi. Community initiatives provided alternative livelihoods and resilience programs, directly benefiting over 155,000 people. ATSEA-2's innovative approach received global recognition at the IWC10, praised for combining regional governance with local solutions.



ATSEA-2 Project team with representatives from Indonesia attended the IWC10 in Montevideo and Punta del Este, Uruguay. (Photo by ATSEA)

To ensure continuity, ATSEA-2 held a series of critical governance meetings in Bali; the final RRSC, first RSWG, and first RCC meetings, to transition responsibilities smoothly and set foundations for lasting collaboration. *“The transition to a long-term RGM is crucial for sustaining these efforts beyond ATSEA-2,”* said Iwan Kurniawan, UNDP Indonesia’s Natural Resource Management Program Manager.

With stakeholders driving the transition from project to program, the ATS region moves toward a future where ecosystems and communities thrive together, setting yet another example of regional marine cooperation and sustainable development supported by PEMSEA.



Participants of the Final Regional Steering Committee Meeting of ATSEA held in Bali, Indonesia. (Photo by ATSEA)

Next Steps

Looking ahead to 2025, the ATSEA Program will enter a bridging phase to ensure the continuity and sustainability of its initiatives. This includes strengthening regional governance, implementing key SAP components, and expanding participation to deepen collaboration across the ATS region.

Operationalizing the RGM

- Activate the core elements of the ATSEA RGM, including the RCC, Regional Secretariat (RS), RSWG, national components, and strategic development partners
- Facilitate coordinated actions through regional and national-level engagements

Institutionalizing the RGM

- Confirm each country's preferred institutionalisation option for the ATSEA RGM
- Begin steps toward formalisation based on national processes and requirements

Establishing Headquarters Agreement with Indonesia

- Draft and negotiate a Headquarters Agreement in line with the selected RGM structure
- Ensure alignment with Indonesia's regulatory framework and support long-term hosting of the Regional Secretariat

Implementing ALDFG Activities under the SAP

- Conduct a baseline analysis on ALDFG
- Develop a ToC and draft a Regional Action Plan to address ALDFG, with support from Australia

Conducting Preliminary Hotspot Assessment on IUU Fishing

- Identify and assess small-scale transboundary IUU fishing hotspots
- Focus initially on key areas in Indonesia and Timor-Leste to inform future action

Engaging Timor-Leste for SAP 2024–2033 Adoption

- Continue engagement with Timor-Leste to encourage full participation in the ATSEA Program
- Support the adoption of the updated SAP 2024–2033

Through these steps, the ATSEA Program aims to strengthen its institutional foundation, implement strategic actions, and foster deeper regional cooperation for sustainable marine and coastal management in the ATS region. **With these commitments in place, the ATS region is poised for a future where marine ecosystems thrive alongside resilient coastal communities.**

For more information, visit [ATSEA Program website](https://atsea.org.au)



4

Regional Partnerships for Ocean Sustainability

Beyond implementing regional projects, PEMSEA actively contributes to key regional initiatives funded and managed by other global organizations by providing technical expertise, securing access and insights to local knowledge and providing policy inputs and support. In 2024, PEMSEA continued working with the WB/UNOPS/ ASEAN Southeast Asia Regional Program in Combatting Marine Plastics (SEA-MaP) and the GEF/UNDP/IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project. PEMSEA also operationalized the regional blue carbon roadmap by developing baseline studies and conducting consultations on supply, demand and blue carbon accounting methodologies.





Photo by Raniel Castañeda/PEMSEA

Strengthening Regional Action against Marine Plastic Pollution

Marine plastic pollution remains a critical environmental issue in Southeast Asia, threatening marine ecosystems, fisheries, coastal economies, and food security. In response, the Southeast Asia Regional Program in Combatting Marine Plastics (SEA-MaP) was launched with support from the World Bank, managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services – Regional Implementation Support Unit (UNOPS RISU), and guided by the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME). The program aims to reduce plastic consumption, improve waste management systems, and advance circular economy solutions across AMS.

In 2024, PEMSEA served as the program's Technical Advisory Organization (TAO), providing strategic technical support to UNOPS RISU. Key contributions included:

- Developing terms of reference (TORs) for nine critical knowledge products, including baseline assessments, a standardized framework for monitoring plastic pollution, waste trade standards, and a regional knowledge platform on investments and innovation.
- Evaluating technical proposals, providing detailed comments, and guiding inception reports to ensure alignment with ASEAN priorities.
- Supporting SEA-MaP's effective implementation by ensuring the initiative addressed regional needs and aligned with global marine plastic pollution frameworks.

Through these efforts, PEMSEA helped ensure SEA-MaP's successful roll-out, contributing directly to regional and global actions addressing marine plastic pollution.

Enhancing Biofouling Management to Prevent Invasive Species

Biofouling, the accumulation of aquatic organisms on ship hulls and marine structures, poses significant environmental and economic risks by facilitating the spread of invasive aquatic species (IAS). Left unmanaged, biofouling contributes to biodiversity loss, increases fuel consumption, and raises maintenance costs for the maritime industry. In response, the UNDP-GEF-IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project has been working to support the development of national biofouling management strategies, strengthen regulatory frameworks, and promote sustainable antifouling technologies across the region.

As the Regional Coordinating Organization, PEMSEA plays a key role in harmonizing policies, facilitating knowledge exchange, and strengthening biofouling governance across the region. In 2024, PEMSEA achieved key milestones:

- Endorsement of the Regional Biofouling Strategy, aligning policies and regulations among ASEAN and EAS countries.
- Finalization of national strategies and action plans in Indonesia and the Philippines, guiding coordinated action by governments, port authorities, maritime industries, and fisheries/aquaculture sectors.



Photo courtesy of Ben Vallejo



Ms. Diane Factuar of PRF during the roundtable workshop on Biofouling Management in the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China.
(Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

At the EAS Congress 2024, PEMSEA convened a roundtable, bringing together industry and scientific experts to discuss national experience with inter-agency consultations and cooperation, research and policy development, and sustainable biofouling solutions to reduce the spread of invasive aquatic species and improving the ship's operational efficiency.

To further strengthen biofouling governance, PEMSEA will continue to:

- Support capacity-building for maritime authorities, in collaboration with IMO, to widely implement best practices.
- Promote eco-friendly antifouling technologies and facilitate their adoption at scale.
- Strengthen multi-sector cooperation through existing interagency mechanisms, enhancing research, policy alignment, technology transfer, and cross-border data-sharing for early detection and monitoring of invasive species.



The Philippine delegation, led by Maritime Industry Authority Deputy Administrator for Operations Nannette Dinopol (center), presented the draft Regional Strategy on Biofouling Management.
(Photo courtesy of MARINA)

By bridging science, policy, and innovation, PEMSEA supports the region's transition toward a more sustainable maritime industry, protecting marine ecosystems and contributing to broader ocean conservation efforts.

Advancing Blue Carbon Initiatives for Climate Resilience

The EAS region hosts some of the world's most diverse coastal blue carbon ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes. These ecosystems play a critical role in capturing and storing carbon, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also protecting coastlines and supporting marine biodiversity. However, despite their ecological importance, blue carbon habitats face increasing threats from degradation, land conversion, and unsustainable practices.

In 2024, PEMSEA strengthened regional efforts in blue carbon conservation and financing through the implementation of the Blue Carbon Roadmap (2023–2030). Key activities included:

- **Regional Market Demand Study:**
Assessed private-sector investment opportunities in blue carbon initiatives, exploring how corporate engagement could support conservation.
- **Ecosystem Supply Survey**
Conducted at PEMSEA's ICM learning sites to gather data on the status, interest, and carbon storage potential of critical habitats.
- **Comparative Methodology Review:**
Completed a regional review of blue carbon accounting methods in China, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, and ROK, guiding the creation of a standardized regional measurement framework.



[Visit PEMSEA Blue Carbon webpage](#)

These findings were presented at the EAS Congress 2024, where experts discussed integrating blue carbon into regional conservation strategies and endorsed establishing a Blue Carbon Technical Working Group to guide PEMSEA's ongoing efforts. PEMSEA's blue carbon work is supported by strong partnerships, including:

- Ocean Policy Research Institute (OPRI-SPF) and NMHMS, providing essential technical and policy support.
- PNLC network members, including: Coastal and Ocean Management Institute (COMI), Xiamen University and Zhejiang University of China, University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI), and Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB University) of Indonesia.

These partners contributed guidance, baseline assessments, policy research, and training, strengthening regional expertise in blue carbon conservation.

To support policy development and science-based decision-making, PEMSEA has developed the *Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Framework*, which standardizes methodologies for carbon stock assessment, emissions monitoring, and data collection in line with global carbon market requirements. Moving forward, PEMSEA will:

- Pilot test the Framework at selected sites to demonstrate benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, and local livelihoods.

- Support the integration of blue carbon strategies into national climate plans to unlock carbon finance opportunities.
- Strengthen monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems by combining remote sensing with field-based assessments, improving the accuracy of carbon stock measurements.

By connecting science, policy, and market-based solutions, PEMSEA continues to elevate blue carbon ecosystems as critical to regional climate action.



At the Blue Carbon Seminar on Policy, Regulation and Technology in EAS Congress 2024. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

PEMSEA's work with SEA-MaP, GloFouling, and the Blue Carbon Initiative reflects its role in advancing cooperation across the region. By connecting science, policy, and practical action, PEMSEA supports efforts to reduce marine pollution, prevent invasive species, and protect coastal carbon ecosystems. Moving forward, partnerships with AMS, global institutions, and regional stakeholders will remain central to achieving shared goals for sustainable ocean management in the EAS region.

5

Bridging Local Governance and Learning for Sustainable Seas



“It is not enough for knowledge to stay within academic circles. It must reach communities and governments who can apply it to solve real challenges. That is what PNLC and PNLG are about, ensuring science supports policy and action on the ground.”

Prof. Dr. Yonvitner

President of PNLC and Director of CCMRS-IPB, during the PNLC Executive Committee Meeting, 22 July 2024, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines.



At a Glance

The PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) are essential platforms for advancing sustainable coastal and marine management across the EAS region. These networks promote regional cooperation, capacity building, and knowledge sharing, where academic institutionals (PNLC members) equip local governments (PNLG members) with the tools to implement ICM and address complex development challenges.

- **PNLG:** Established in 2001 and officially launched in 2006, PNLG empowers local governments to implement ICM, tackle coastal challenges, and promote sustainable development through leadership, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.
- **PNLC:** Created in 2015 and formalized in 2021 through a Charter, PNLC is a consortium of research and academic institutions providing training, policy guidance, and technical expertise to strengthen coastal and marine resource management especially at the local level.

Aligned with the SDS-SEA, both networks contribute to the resilience and sustainability of coastal ecosystems and communities. Since inception, efforts have continuously expanded, with 2024 marking significant progress in regional cooperation and capacity building.

Key Highlights

Membership Expansion

- PNLG added new members, including Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development and Yancheng City, China, strengthening the network's capacity to address regional challenges.
- PNLC welcomed Mindanao State University-Naawan (Philippines), Guangdong Ocean University (China), and National University of Laos, increasing its membership to 25 institutions. These additions highlight growing regional commitments to sustainable coastal management.

Formalized Collaboration and Key Events at the EAS Congress 2024

- The signing of a MoU between PNLG and PNLC during the PNLG General Assembly, a side event of the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. This agreement laid the foundation for enhanced knowledge sharing between local governments and academic institutions and comprehensive capacity-building programs to address regional marine and coastal challenges.
- A Joint Technical Session titled "*Local Practices of Marine Ecological Protection and Restoration under the ICM Framework*." The session brought together local governments, academic experts, and stakeholders to exchange best practices and develop actionable recommendations for ecosystem restoration.
- General Assemblies of PNLG and PNLC, where review of workplans and budget, admission of new members and alignment of strategies with the SDS-SEA took place.

Contributions to the Blue Economy

- Both networks actively engaged in discussions on blue financing and carbon markets, emphasizing innovative financial mechanisms to support sustainable coastal development.

Recognition of Excellence

- During the EAS Congress, the Xiamen Municipal People's Government, which hosts the PNLG Secretariat, was recognized for their significant contribution to regional collaboration and sustainable development. Their initiative in bridging local governance and academic expertise were highlighted as models for scaling up ICM implementation.
- Changyi City and Quanzhou City, China, were awarded ICM Level 1 and Level 2 certifications, respectively, reinforcing the network's role in strengthening coastal governance, accountability, transparency and sustainability.

PNLG and PNLC in Numbers

- A study tour was conducted in Batangas, Philippines for Tangerang Regency, Indonesia
- PNLG welcomed 2 new members and increasing its total network to 59 local government members; Yancheng City, China (Regular Member) Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development (Associate Member)
- PNLC welcomed 4 new members; Mindanao State University-Naawan (Philippines), National University of Laos (Lao PDR), Guangdong Ocean University (China), and Fujian Institute for Sustainable Oceans (China)
- 21 local government officials, 5 associate PNLG members and 5 PNLC members joined the PNLG-PNLC learning event in November 2024

PNLG: Strengthening Local Governance for Coastal Resilience

Throughout 2024, local governments across the EAS region intensified efforts to advance ICM and sustainable ocean governance. The EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China, served as a key platform for PNLG to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable coastal development, bringing together leaders, experts, and policymakers to share experiences, recognize achievements, and plan for the future.

At the PNLG Annual Forum, representatives from 21 local governments, associate members, and experts from eight countries discussed ways to strengthen local governance and link policies with science and research. During the PNLG General Assembly on 7 November, members reaffirmed their commitment to regional cooperation. Dr. Le Quang Nam, President of PNLG and Vice Chairman

of Da Nang City, Viet Nam, highlighted the value of partnerships, stating: *"The power of collaboration among local governments is evident in our expanding membership. Knowledge sharing and capacity-building remain the cornerstones of PNLG's strength, making it a dedicated and committed network."*

A highlight of the congress was the 15th PNLG Executive Committee Meeting on 7 November, where PNLG members reviewed progress, discussed new initiatives, and reaffirmed their strategic direction. Prof. Fang Qinhua, Deputy Secretary-General of the PNLG Secretariat, summarized key accomplishments, including the expansion of PNLG membership from 18 to 59, the organization of capacity-building activities, and technical exchanges. Discussions also focused on strengthening leadership training for local decision-makers and integrating innovative financing strategies.



Presentations during the PNLG General Assembly. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

A key milestone was the formalization of PNLG's collaboration with PNLCD, established through a Letter of Cooperation signed at the PNLG General Assembly. This agreement strengthened technical cooperation, policy alignment, and joint capacity-building programs, reinforcing the connection between local governance structures and academic institutions.

At the EAS Congress, PNLG also participated in discussions on coastal resilience and sustainable development, with local leaders contributing to dialogues on ICM implementation, regional policy integration, and financing mechanisms for sustainable coastal initiatives.



Representatives from Yancheng City and Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development signed the PNLG Charter. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

Beyond discussions, tangible progress was recognized. Changyi City and Quanzhou City, China, were awarded ICM Certifications (Level 1 and Level 2, respectively) for their leadership in coastal governance and environmental management. Meanwhile, PNLG welcomed two new members, bringing its total to 59 local governments including Yancheng City, China as regular member and Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development, China as associate member.



Participants of the PNLG General Assembly during the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)



"The steady expansion of PNLG membership since its establishment is a testament to the region's recognition of ICM and the power of collaboration among local governments. Knowledge sharing and capacity-building have been the cornerstones of PNLG's strength, making it a dedicated and committed network."

Dr. Le Quang Nam

President of PNLG and Vice Chairman of People's Committee of Da Nang City, Viet Nam (PNLG General Assembly, EAS Congress 2024, Xiamen, China)



Participants of the PNLC General Assembly during the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

PNLC: Bridging Science and Policy for Sustainable Coastal Management

In parallel with PNLC's progress, PNLC continued its work in 2024 to strengthen research-policy integration, enhancing regional collaboration, capacity-building, and technical support for coastal and marine sustainability. Through training programs, expanded partnerships, and strengthened institutional engagement, academic institutions and research organizations provided critical insights to help decision-makers navigate environmental and socio-economic challenges.

A key highlight for the year was the formal turnover of the PNLC Secretariat to the Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies of IPB University (CCMRS-IPB) in Indonesia. This transition, solidified through

a MoA, underscored PNLC's commitment to integrating research, education, and policy development within the region.

On 22 July 2024, during the PNLC Executive Committee Meeting in Puerto Princesa, Philippines, key discussions centered on the progress of PNLC's workplan, with 18 out of 22 planned action points successfully completed.

The meeting brought together PNLC President Prof. Dr. Yonvitner (CCMRS-IPB), PNLC Vice President Dr. Fang Qinhua (Xiamen University), and PRF Executive Director, Aimee Gonzales. Discussions also highlighted financial sustainability, emphasizing the need for diverse funding sources to support the PNLC Secretariat's operations.

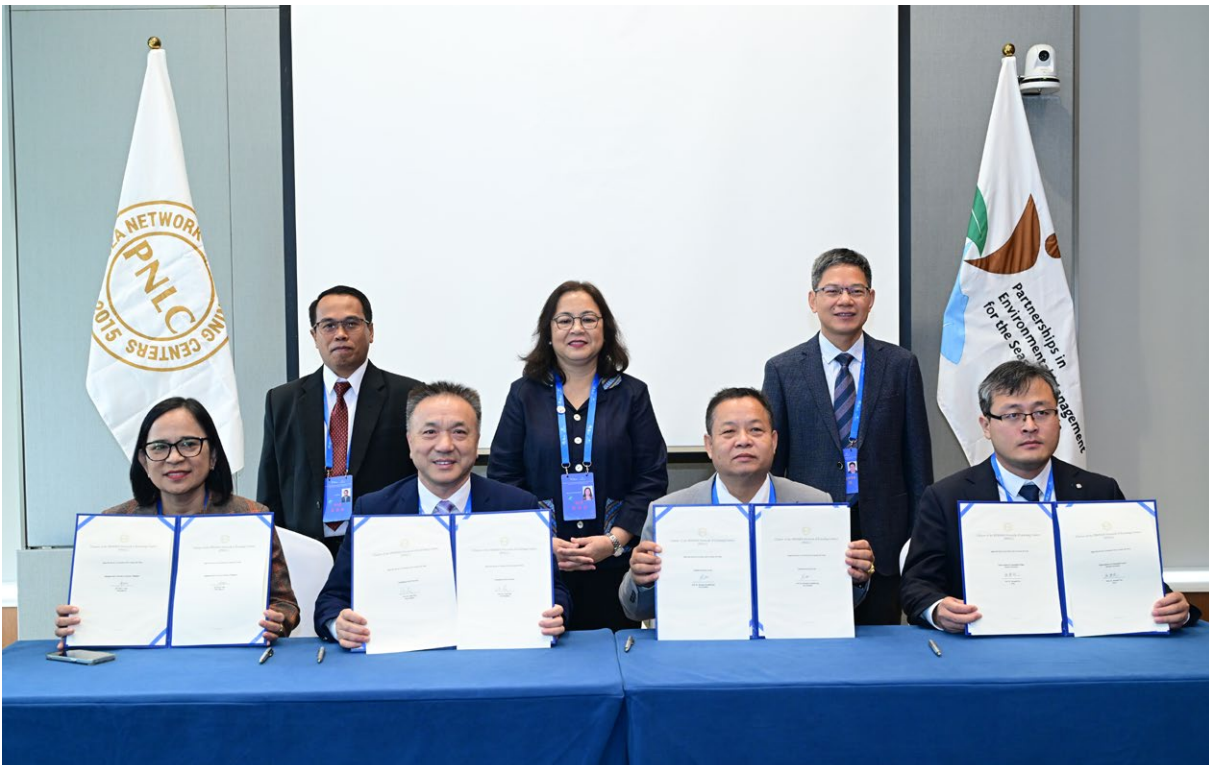


PNLC Executive Committee meeting held in Puerto Princesa, Philippines. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)

At the EAS Congress 2024, PNLC co-organized the PNLC-PNLG Joint Learning Forum which provided an opportunity for scientists, policymakers, and local government representatives to exchange knowledge and explore science-driven solutions for ICM. Discussions focused on

marine ecological protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation, showcasing case studies from China, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Indonesia on how research can directly inform governance and conservation strategies.

PNLC also expanded its academic network, welcoming four new institutions during the PNLC General Assembly; Mindanao State University-Naawan (Philippines), National University of Laos (Lao PDR), Guangdong Ocean University (China), and Fujian Institute of Sustainable Oceans, Xiamen University (China). This expansion strengthens PNLC's ability to support local governments with research-driven decision-making, ensuring that scientific expertise is embedded in coastal governance frameworks.



Representatives from Mindanao State University-Naawan (Philippines), National University of Laos (Lao PDR), Guangdong Ocean University (China), and Fujian Institute of Sustainable Oceans, Xiamen University (China) signed the PNLC Charter.

(Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

The Letter of Cooperation signed with PNLG, while reinforcing broader collaboration, also plays a crucial role in bridging research and governance. With stronger ties between academic institutions and local governments, PNLC's research outputs and technical expertise are now more systematically integrated into ICM planning and policy implementation. Dr. Akhmad Solihin, representing PNLC Secretariat (CCMRS-IPB, Indonesia), emphasized: *"This collaboration will help translate scientific insights into practical governance strategies, particularly in climate adaptation, marine conservation, and sustainable development."*

The Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) was agreed to be the central

repository for knowledge-sharing, ensuring that scientific research and best practices are easily accessible to decision-makers across the region.



PNLG and PNLC representatives signed the Letter of Cooperation during the Joint PNLG-PNLC Forum. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)

Next Steps

Moving forward, the PNLG will focus on strengthening its role as a platform for empowering local governments in coastal and marine management. It aims to broaden the scope of its leadership training programs to equip more local leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary for implementing ICM effectively.

By forging stronger partnerships with local governments, PNLG seeks to scale up the integration of ICM practices into regional and local policies, ensuring their long-term sustainability. Additionally, PNLG plans to deepen cross-border collaboration among its members, addressing shared challenges such as marine pollution and climate change adaptation through regional cooperation and collective action.

Meanwhile, the PNLC will continue to drive the science-policy interface through empirical research and science-informed policies and actions in local coastal and marine resource management. To achieve this, PNLC plans to enhance its academic training programs, expanding their reach to include a broader audience of practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders.

The network will prioritize fostering joint research collaborations with its member institutions, aiming to develop innovative solutions that support sustainable coastal and marine development in the region. Furthermore, PNLC will explore opportunities to leverage innovative financial mechanisms, such as blue financing and carbon credit markets, to help its members secure funding for conservation and restoration initiatives.

6

PEMSEA in Global Fora: Bridging Governance, Collaboration, and Local Action

In 2024, PEMSEA actively participated in high-profile global and regional fora, contributing to critical discussions on marine conservation, blue economy development, and ocean governance frameworks. While focusing on preparations for the EAS Congress and WOW in Xiamen 2024, PEMSEA strategically engaged in selected international events, providing insights on ICM, sustainable financing, and policy advancements for ocean sustainability.



These engagements reinforced PEMSEA's role as a leading regional organization, amplified its influence in global dialogues, and strengthened strategic partnerships, ensuring global commitments translate into meaningful local actions.

Key International Events



13-14 May 2024

UNDP Blue Economy Regional Workshop Maldives

Contribution and Objectives

Panelist in the session on 'Ocean Governance and the Blue Economy,' presenting PEMSEA's experience in applying ICM to support sustainable and resilient blue economies. Engaged in discussions on innovative financing mechanisms, private sector roles, and investment opportunities.

Outcome

Strengthened PEMSEA's position as a thought leader in promoting ICM & MSP as critical tools to strengthen blue economy programs governance. Expanded partnerships with key UN agencies and financial institutions, fostering collaboration on coastal resilience initiatives.



16-20 September 2024

Workshop for North-East and South-East Asia on the BBNJ Agreement Seoul, ROK

Contribution and Objectives

Panelist in the discussion on regional and sub-regional International Frameworks and Bodies (IFBs) under the topic of "Overview of Ocean Governance Frameworks and Challenges in North-East and South-East Asia, with a Focus on the BBNJ Agreement." The workshop aimed to enhance understanding of the BBNJ Agreement, including legal rights, obligations, and procedural steps for implementation. PEMSEA contributed insights on strengthening legal and institutional frameworks.

Outcome

Increased PEMSEA's visibility as a regional governance expert. Established connections with legal and policy experts, reinforcing the organization's advocacy for transboundary marine biodiversity conservation.



22-26 September 2024

10th GEF International Waters Conference (IWC10) Montevideo and Punta del Este, Uruguay

Contribution and Objectives

Presenter in a number of sessions on policy coherence, social and economic equity in LME & MPA management, and strategic communications for international waters projects. The conference provided a platform for sharing best practices and innovative solutions for improving transboundary water governance and sustainability. PEMSEA shared lessons learned and engaged in cross-sectoral collaboration discussions.

Outcome

Positioned PEMSEA as a key contributor to global discussions on LMEs and transboundary water governance. Strengthened networks with donors and project implementers, enhancing future funding opportunities.

PEMSEA's engagement in these key events reflects its expanding role in shaping the regional and global ocean agenda. Moving forward, the organization will continue to leverage these platforms to drive policy alignment, secure strategic partnerships, and showcase the tangible impact of its initiatives across the EAS region.



25 September 2024

MSP Cooperation Workshop of Maritime Silk Road Partner Countries

Beijing, China

Contribution and Objectives

Presenter in the Parallel Session on ICM. The workshop focused on boosting the blue economy through MSP, ecosystem-based fisheries management, and cross-border collaboration. PEMSEA highlighted the role of ICM in strengthening spatial planning and sustainable coastal management.

Outcome

Strengthened PEMSEA's role in regional knowledge exchange on spatial planning. Opened potential for cross-border projects and technical cooperation.

8-10 October 2024

Global Nature Positive Summit (GNPS)

Sydney, Australia

Contribution and Objectives

Speaker in the Ocean Dialogue session. The summit aimed to promote nature-positive solutions for conservation and sustainable ocean governance. PEMSEA presented case studies from ATSEA-2 on regional collaboration for sustainable ocean management and blue carbon initiatives, while engaging in high-level discussions on conservation financing.

Outcome

Enhanced PEMSEA's influence in shaping regional ocean policy. Strengthened relationships with stakeholders, leading to funding discussions for ATSEA Program.

11-14 November 2024

Eighth South-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the SDGs

Bangkok, Thailand

Contribution and Objectives

Panelist in Session on 'SDG 14: Sustainable Coastal Development: Balancing Livelihoods with Marine Conservation and Pollution Control.' The forum provided a platform for reviewing progress on SDGs and discussing strategies for sustainable development in Southeast Asia. PEMSEA shared insights on integrating SDG 14 into national and regional policies.

Outcome

Reinforced PEMSEA's leadership in sustainable coastal management. Strengthened engagement with ASEAN policymakers and regional SDG implementation strategies.



25 Nov - 1 Dec 2024

5th Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the UN Convention on Plastic Pollution (INC-5)

Busan, ROK

Contribution and Objectives

Participant in INC-5 negotiations. The primary objective of INC-5 is to finalize and approve the text of a legally binding international treaty on plastic pollution while identifying key issues requiring preparatory work before the Diplomatic Conference and the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP). At the meeting, PEMSEA actively engaged in treaty discussions by sharing experience and early lessons of addressing marine plastic pollution at the local level. PEMSEA also highlighted progress on the ROK ODA project, which focuses on reducing marine plastic waste in 10 pilot cities across the Philippines and Timor-Leste.

Outcome

Reinforced PEMSEA's position as a key player in marine plastic pollution mitigation initiatives. Showcased real-life examples of on-the-ground marine plastic pollution initiatives to help inform global policymaking and ensure alignment from local to global levels.

From Global Commitments to Local Impact

PEMSEA's impact in 2024 is measured not only in involvement in the regional and global policy arena, but in the coastal communities where international commitments take shape as tangible solutions. By combining policy advocacy, technical support, and hands-on implementation, PEMSEA works alongside governments, local stakeholders, and grassroots organizations to strengthen coastal resilience, enhance livelihoods, and protect marine and coastal ecosystems. What sets PEMSEA apart is its ability to bridge high-level commitments with real, on-the-ground impact, translating global agreements, partnerships, and policy advancements into practical, community-led solutions that empower those who depend most on marine resources.

What sets PEMSEA apart is its ability to connect global commitments with local action, ensuring policies translate into

practical, community-led solutions. Coastal communities are not just beneficiaries of conservation. They play a key role in sustainable ocean governance. In 2024, local communities, authorities, and fishers actively contributed to marine ecosystem restoration, sustainable fisheries, and community-led resource management, showing that conservation can support both the environment and livelihoods.

These efforts go beyond plans and policies, they are driving real change. Case studies from strengthening MPAs to restoring river basins, advancing sustainable fisheries, and supporting community-led conservation show how PEMSEA puts communities at the center of conservation. By ensuring that local stakeholders actively protect resources while benefiting from sustainable livelihoods, PEMSEA's work continues to bridge global commitments with real, lasting impact on the ground.





Aerial shot of Nino Konis Santana National Park (Photo courtesy of UNDP Timor-Leste)

Strengthening Marine Conservation in the Arafura and Timor Seas

MPAs are essential for preserving biodiversity, supporting sustainable fisheries, and protecting coastal livelihoods. However, their success depends not only on designating conservation zones but also on ensuring that local communities are directly engaged in their management and benefit from marine conservation efforts. Through the ATSEA-2 Project, significant progress has been made in 2024 to strengthen MPAs in the ATS region, ensuring they contribute to global conservation targets while enhancing economic resilience for coastal communities. These efforts align with the KMGBF Target 3, which calls for protecting 30% of the world's land and ocean areas by 2030.

In Timor-Leste, ATSEA-2 addressed management gaps at Nino Konis Santana National Park (NKSNP). After a 2023 assessment, representatives from 14 organizations developed an action plan to strengthen enforcement and community participation, including engaging local women

“During the forum, I was able to engage in spirited discussions with dedicated youth members from East Asia about what we need to do to conserve our coasts and ocean. Coming from diverse cultures, it struck me as a meaningful opportunity for us to unite for a common cause, the conservation of our shared resources.”

Julio Franco Sarmento

fisher from Aubeon Village, speaking at the Public Consultation for the New Management Plan of the Manufahi-Manatuto MPA, in Dili, Timor-Leste, on 10 July 2024.



in marine resource management. ATSEA-2 also supported public consultations for the Manufahi-Manatuto MPA, involving fishers and local authorities to shape management strategies that balance conservation with economic needs.

In Indonesia, the ATSEA-2 Project strengthened community-led conservation in Southeast Aru and Kolepom MPAs by promoting sustainable fishing, alternative livelihoods, and stronger enforcement. In Southeast Aru, the project worked with local communities to align MPA management with customary marine protection areas, ensuring that conservation efforts were both culturally relevant and locally supported.

During an exit strategy workshop in Dobo, Aru Islands, local government and community representatives reviewed progress and outlined steps to sustain these efforts. Community involvement was highlighted as essential to long-term success.

“The management of the MPA in Southeast Aru should continue to involve local communities, especially to harmonise with community protection areas to strengthen their conservation efforts.”

Dr. Johan Gongga

District Head of the Aru Archipelago, speaking during the Exit Strategy Workshop for the Aru Islands, held in Dobo, Indonesia, on 15 March 2024.



Participants at the exit strategy workshop in Dobo, Aru Archipelago, Indonesia. (Photo by ATSEA)



Participants of the technical consultation workshop on the exit strategy in Merauke, South Papua. (Photo by ATSEA)

In Kolepom, South Papua, ATSEA-2 supported the establishment of a new MPA through biodiversity assessments, stakeholder consultations, and the creation of community-based surveillance groups (Pokmaswas) to tackle illegal fishing. These combined efforts not only improved marine protection but also supported sustainable livelihoods for local fishers and their families.

At the regional scale, ATSEA-2 facilitated cooperation among Australia, Indonesia, PNG, and Timor-Leste to create a regional MPA network, protecting critical habitats, fisheries, and livelihoods.

For more information:

[Public Consultation for the New Management Plan of Manufahi-Manatuto MPA in Timor-Leste](#)
[Ensuring Sustainability of ATS Region through Exit Strategy Workshops in Indonesia](#)



Women fishers harvesting shrimp in Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. (Photo by ATSEA)



Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA

Restoring River Basins for People and Nature in Southeast Asia

River basins sustain communities in Southeast Asia but face threats from pollution, urbanization, and weak governance. In 2024, the IRBM Project empowered communities in the Pasac-Guagua Watershed (Philippines) and Kampong Bay River Basin (Cambodia) to lead conservation efforts.

In the Pasac-Guagua Watershed, rapid urbanization and floods severely impacted fishers. IRBM introduced the community-based SORB Reporting system to monitor water quality and led mangrove restoration at the Sasmuan Bangkung Malapad Ecotourism Area.

Additionally, DELTAnim mangrove nursery provided alternative income for 70 local fishers under a cash-for-work scheme. The project also facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues to ensure community-driven watershed governance.

“Since the mangroves were restored, fish catch increased, and storms no longer bring devastating floods.”

Edgardo Tungcab
fisher from Sasmuan,
Pampanga



In Cambodia's Kampong Bay River Basin, IRBM partnered with local fishing communities on waste management, water quality monitoring, and sustainable fishing. A regional event in July 2024 allowed fishers and local authorities to share knowledge, sparking initiatives in homestay tourism and plastic recycling.

Both watersheds demonstrate that community-led conservation efforts directly enhance environmental resilience and local livelihoods, highlighting the critical role of communities as conservation leaders.

Explore more: [Magazines and Newsletters | PEMSEA](#)

"If we allow our river to be polluted, fish stocks will disappear, and our families will suffer."

SOK Kao

Kampong Samaki
Fishery Community



Fishing boats along Kampong Bay River Basin in Kampot Province, Cambodia. (Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)



7

Communications and Knowledge Management

In 2024, PEMSEA's Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) efforts played a pivotal role in amplifying the organization's visibility, facilitating knowledge exchange, and strengthening regional partnerships. Through a dynamic blend of digital engagement, strategic media outreach, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, CKM helped PEMSEA maintain its position as a leader in sustainable coastal and ocean governance.

WAVES OF PROGRESS: CAMBODIA'S 30-YEAR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COASTS

进步的浪潮：柬埔寨30年致力于实现海洋海岸带的可持续和韧性发展的努力

30 YEARS OF BLUE SYNERGY

30年蓝色协作

By joining PEMSEA in 1993, the Royal Government of Cambodia has fully partnered in initiatives to protect 100% of its 435 km coastline through Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) implementation in all of its coastal provinces. Over 30 years, Cambodia has achieved full ICM implementation in all of its coastal provinces, protecting a coastline of 435 km. Cambodia has been a pioneer in implementing ICM, and its success has been recognized internationally.

COASTAL SUCCESS TO RIVER PROGRESS: SCALING UP ICM IMPLEMENTATION

从成功到河流治理：扩大海岸带综合管理的实施范围

Cambodia promotes ICM as a national approach to sustainably manage land and marine resources in the country. Starting with Preah Sihanoukville mangroves, ICM implementation has benefited over 200,000 stakeholders through the GEF/UNDP/ASEAN/PEMSEA Integrated River Basin Management Project, focusing on the Kampong Bay River to reduce pollution affecting coastal waters to improve overall coastal health.

Coastal zone management as a national strategy, with sustainable management of coastal and marine resources as a focus, has been implemented since 2001. The success of ICM implementation in Cambodia has been recognized internationally, and its success has been recognized internationally.

LEGAL POLICIES TO SUPPORT ICM IMPLEMENTATION

支持海岸带综合管理实施的国家政策

The National Plan on Environment and Natural Resources (2023), the National Strategy on Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development (2023), and the National Strategy on Land Use and Sustainable Development (2023) provide a legal framework for environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development for coastal areas.

Cambodia submitted its Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality by 2050, outlining Cambodia's path to a neutral future, emphasizing the implementation of the National Strategy, forestry reforms and the promotion of low-carbon practices across agricultural, industrial and waste management sectors.

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CHINA

CHINA'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT OCEANS AND COASTS

中国实现可持续和韧性海洋与海岸带的努力

China is one of the 11 countries in the East Asian Seas Region that joined PEMSEA since its inception in 1993. It has been committed to achieving the goal of a sustainable and resilient ocean and coast.

ICM ACHIEVEMENTS

海岸带综合管理取得的成就

China has accelerated efforts in building an ecological civilization. Measures have been taken to delineate marine protection red lines to improve the system of marine areas. Since 2016, 1,680 kilometers of coastline and over 1,680 square kilometers of coastal wetlands have been restored.

POLICIES TO SUPPORT ICM IMPLEMENTATION

支持海岸带综合管理实施的国家政策

The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 highlights the importance of coastal zone management and coastal protection.

The National Plan on Territorial Space (2021-2035) and the Outline on Space Planning for Coastal Zones and Waters (2021-2035) were completed. Territorial space in coastal areas at all levels are being implemented.

The National Marine Environment Protection Law comes into force in 2024, representing a systemic transformation in coastal zone management and overall governance of the environment.

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PR KOREA

PR KOREA'S JOURNEY TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT OCEAN

韩国的可持续和韧性海洋之旅

PR Korea is one of the 11 countries in the East Asian Seas Region that joined PEMSEA since its inception in 1993. It has been committed to achieving the goal of a sustainable and resilient ocean and coast.

ICM ACHIEVEMENTS

海岸带综合管理取得的成就

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INDONESIA

INDONESIA'S JOURNEY TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT OCEAN

印度尼西亚实现可持续和韧性海洋之旅

Indonesia is one of the 11 countries in the East Asian Seas Region that joined PEMSEA since its inception in 1993. It has been committed to achieving the goal of a sustainable and resilient ocean and coast.

ICM ACHIEVEMENTS

海岸带综合管理取得的成就

POLICIES TO SUPPORT ICM IMPLEMENTATION

支持海岸带综合管理实施的国家政策

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JAPAN

JAPAN'S JOURNEY TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT OCEAN

日本的可持续和韧性海洋之旅

Japan is one of the 11 countries in the East Asian Seas Region that joined PEMSEA since its inception in 1993. It has been committed to achieving the goal of a sustainable and resilient ocean and coast.

ICM ACHIEVEMENTS

海岸带综合管理取得的成就

POLICIES TO SUPPORT ICM IMPLEMENTATION

支持海岸带综合管理实施的国家政策

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PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINES' JOURNEY TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT OCEAN

菲律宾实现可持续和韧性海洋之旅

Philippines is one of the 11 countries in the East Asian Seas Region that joined PEMSEA since its inception in 1993. It has been committed to achieving the goal of a sustainable and resilient ocean and coast.

ICM ACHIEVEMENTS

海岸带综合管理取得的成就

POLICIES TO SUPPORT ICM IMPLEMENTATION

支持海岸带综合管理实施的国家政策

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From expanding its online presence to organizing flagship events like the **EAS Congress 2024**, CKM drove collaboration across sectors, ensuring that PEMSEA's achievements reached a diverse and global audience.

CKM in Numbers: Expanding Reach and Engagement



Digital Engagement & Online Presence

- 34,000** active users on www.pemsea.org
- 13,468** active users on the ATSEA website
- 3,500** active users on the SEAKB
- 118** social media posts across major platforms
- 93.5K** visits (a 108.7% increase from 2023)
- 1.1K** new followers (a 106.3% growth)



Media Outreach & Publications

- 62** media hits
- 38** mentions on EAS Congress 2024
- 24** features on the ODA Project
- 46** publications released (reports, newsletters, technical documents)
- 53** news articles published:
 - 22** on PEMSEA.org
 - 31** on the ATSEA website



Events & Exhibitions

3 major exhibitions attended:

- Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
- EAS Congress 2024
- UNEP INC-5 (Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution)

EAS Congress 2024:

- Full branding strategy and guidelines developed
- EASC2024 website launched (including registration and digital payment integration)
- Exhibition design and execution led by PEMSEA CKM
- Post-conference report published

At the EAS Congress 2024, CKM developed the branding strategy, launched the Congress website (with registration/payment features), led the exhibition design, and published the Post-Conference Report.



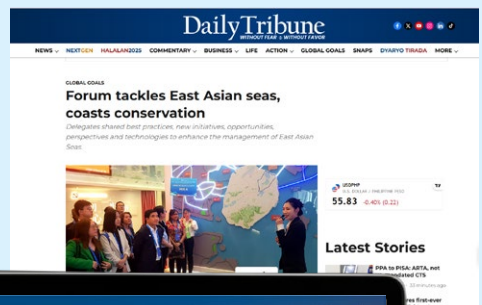
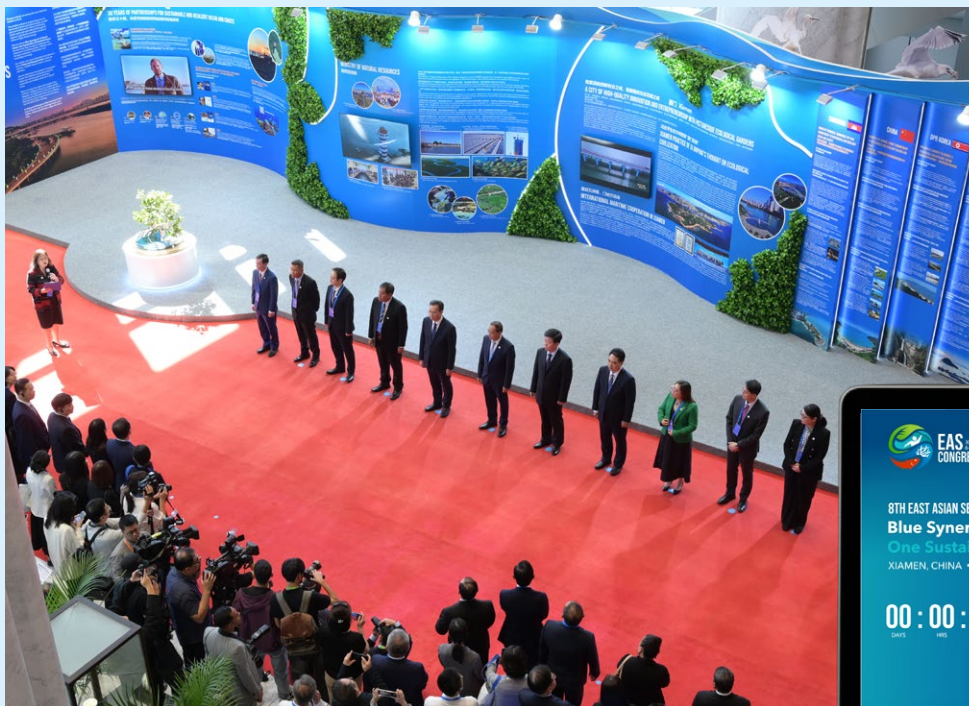
SEA Knowledge Bank

Revamped SEA Knowledge Bank is now LIVE!

You can now access PEMSEA's improved knowledge sharing platform with additional features for easier navigation of PEMSEA networks and available information of its projects.

- ✓ User-friendly EAS Library
- ✓ PEMSEA Project e-Portals
- ✓ PNLC webpage

seaknowledgebank.net



Strengthening Identity and Knowledge Exchange

CKM's contributions to EAS Congress 2024 were pivotal. A cohesive branding and digital strategy ensured consistency across materials and platforms. The Congress website functioned as a central hub for registration and updates. The Congress Exhibition brought together 50 exhibitors, showcasing innovations in integrated coastal management, blue economy, and ocean sustainability. A curated tour for ministers and delegates encouraged dialogue, partnerships, and investment opportunities.

Real-Time Engagement and Long-Term Impact

Live coverage and digital storytelling kept audiences engaged throughout the Congress. Real-time updates, interviews, and session highlights boosted interaction, with data confirming a spike in engagement. CKM also

ensured lasting impact through the Post-Conference Report, which captured key takeaways, commitments, and solutions, serving as a reference for regional ocean governance stakeholders.

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Looking Ahead

Moving forward, PEMSEA will:

- Connect local and international narratives
- Expand digital platforms using AI, interactive tools, and data visualization
- Translate communication materials into local languages
- Share more case studies to inspire collaboration and attract funding

By strengthening its CKM approach, PEMSEA aims to enhance regional cooperation and accelerate progress toward sustainable ocean governance.

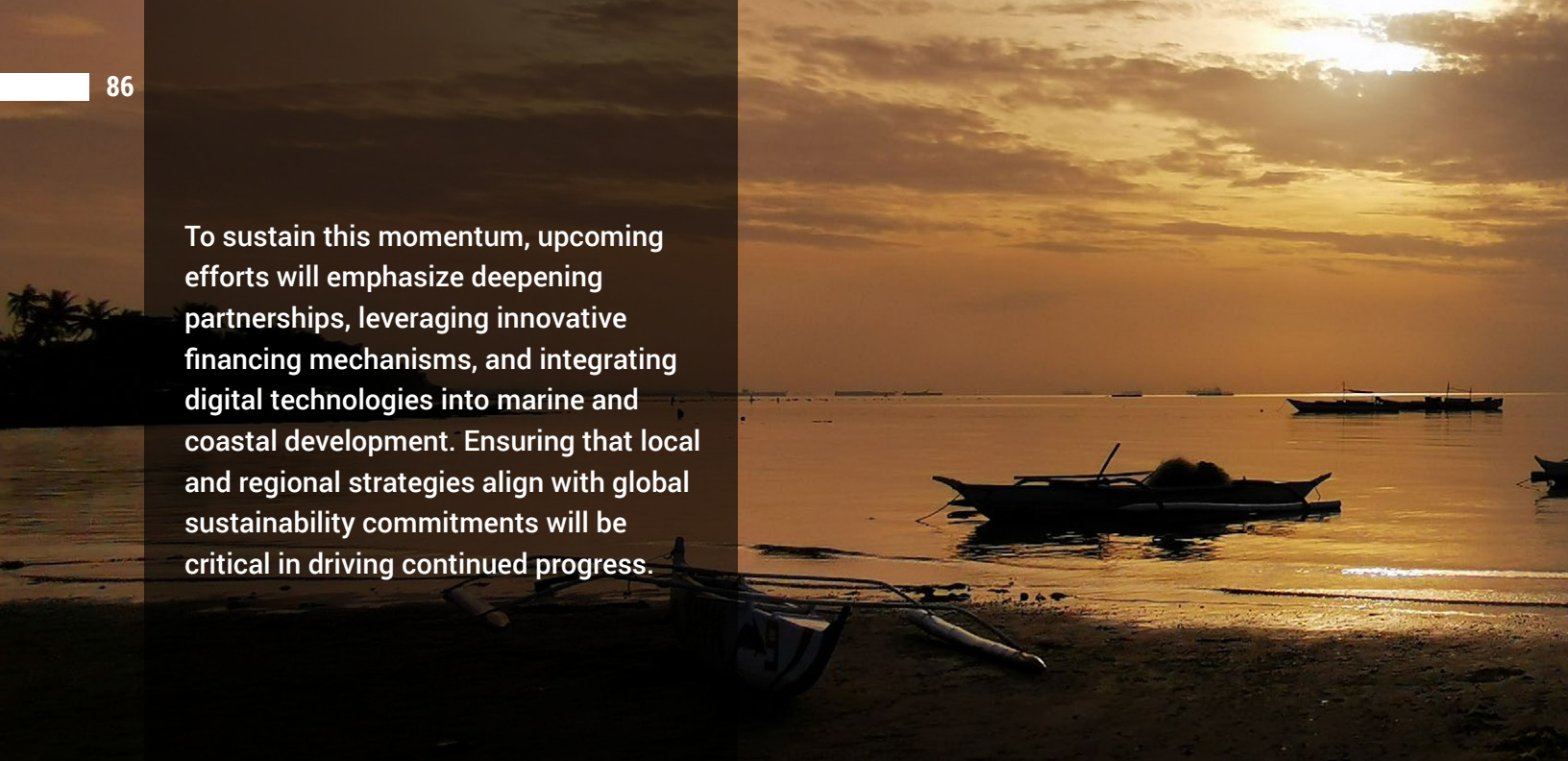


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Looking Ahead: Building on Progress, Strengthening Future Commitments

Reflecting on the progress made in 2024, strengthening regional governance, expanding partnerships, and advancing sustainable ocean management remain our top priorities. Over the past year, significant strides were made in institutionalizing governance frameworks, enhancing leadership in the blue economy, and promoting data-driven decision-making. These efforts have laid a strong foundation for the next phase, which will focus on scaling up ICM and strengthening its links with other area-based management tools, securing long-term financial sustainability, and strengthening the links between local solutions, highlighting regional actions and expanding engagement in global policy dialogues.





To sustain this momentum, upcoming efforts will emphasize deepening partnerships, leveraging innovative financing mechanisms, and integrating digital technologies into marine and coastal development. Ensuring that local and regional strategies align with global sustainability commitments will be critical in driving continued progress.

Strategic Priorities for 2025

As PEMSEA moves into the next phase, efforts will focus on scaling up successful models, strengthening financial sustainability, integrating science-based solutions, and enhancing policy engagement at regional and global levels. These priorities will support a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future for the EAS region.

Scaling Up Integrated Coastal and Marine Management

Expanding the implementation of ICM and MSP across partner countries remains a top priority. Strengthening policy coherence and strategic alignment between regional and national levels will ensure a more integrated approach to ocean and coastal governance.

Key actions include:

- Enhancing technical capacity and governance mechanisms to support wider adoption of ICM and MSP.

- Strengthening the role of learning centers and local government networks to scale up best practices and tailor governance models to country-specific needs.
- Encouraging transboundary cooperation in coastal and marine management, particularly in shared waters and critical ecosystems.

Strengthening Financial Sustainability and Blue Economy Investments

Securing long-term financial sustainability is essential to maintaining PEMSEA's initiatives beyond the current project cycle. By expanding financing options and mobilizing investments, stronger blue economy strategies can be developed to support sustainable coastal development.

Planned initiatives include:

- Expanding public-private-philanthropic partnerships to attract investment in blue carbon, nature-based solutions, and coastal resilience initiatives.



Photo by PEMSEA/Meg Torralba

- Exploring blue bonds, impact investments, and blended finance mechanisms to support sustainable development efforts.
- Engaging with regional financial institutions and development banks to ensure that blue economy financing is integrated into national economic strategies.

Advancing Science-Based Solutions and Digital Innovation

To support evidence-based policymaking, PEMSEA will focus on leveraging emerging technologies and data-driven solutions for coastal and marine management. Enhancing scientific collaboration and technological integration will improve monitoring, assessment, and decision-making processes.

Priority areas include:

- Strengthening real-time environmental monitoring through innovative tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), remote sensing, and digital twin technologies.

- Enhancing marine plastic tracking and pollution control strategies, leveraging new methodologies to address marine debris hotspots.
- Supporting regional research collaborations to improve knowledge on blue carbon sequestration, coastal adaptation, and biodiversity resilience.

Enhancing Global and Regional Policy Advocacy

Ensuring that regional priorities are well-represented in global policy discussions will strengthen PEMSEA's role as a key advocate for sustainable ocean governance. Increased engagement in multilateral agreements and high-level dialogues will help align regional efforts with global commitments.

Key priorities include:

- Increasing participation in ASEAN, UNFCCC, CBD, and SDG 14 policy dialogues to advocate for regional interests.

- Aligning PEMSEA's work with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Decade of Ocean Science to support global conservation goals.
- Strengthening cross-border collaboration on marine pollution reduction, transboundary fisheries governance, and climate resilience strategies.

Expanding Regional Partnerships and Emerging Initiatives

Sustaining PEMSEA's momentum requires stronger collaboration with research institutions, the private sector, and non-governmental actors. Formalizing new partnerships and scaling up ongoing projects will be essential in expanding the impact of ocean governance efforts.

Upcoming initiatives include:

- Strengthening regional partnerships through new MoUs and strategic agreements to expand cooperation across sectors.
- Providing technical services to key projects:
 - 1. Blue Solutions** – a project under the International Climate Initiative (IKI) that focuses on sustainable marine and coastal management.
 - 2. IMO Glofouling Capacity Development Project for ASEAN** – PEMSEA will provide support on training, technical support, and awareness-raising materials, accessible at the regional level through multi-stakeholder Regional Task Forces (RTFs) in strategic regions.
- Expanding capacity-building efforts with a focus on community-led conservation, youth leadership, and gender-inclusive governance.

A Vision for 2025 and Beyond

Looking ahead, PEMSEA remains committed to bridging high-level governance with local action, ensuring that policies translate into real-world impact in the new world filled with political and economic uncertainty. The next phase of work will emphasize financial sustainability, technological innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, reinforcing PEMSEA's leadership in the sustainable development of the EAS region.

By integrating science, governance, and community-driven action, PEMSEA will continue to build resilient coastal ecosystems, support inclusive economic growth, and strengthen regional cooperation, ensuring a healthy and sustainable future for the region.

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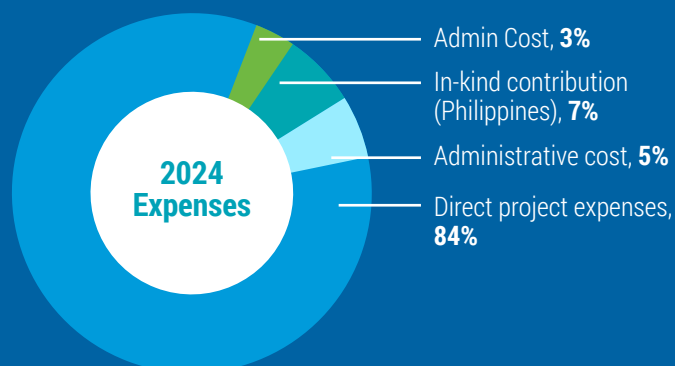
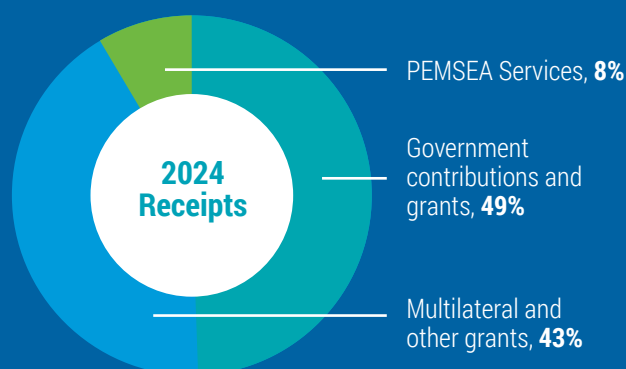
Financial Overview

Multilateral grants represented 42.73% of the total receipts in Calendar Year (CY) 2024 which was predominantly sourced from GEF funds for the ATSEA-2 and IRBM projects. Bilateral grants and contributions from country partners comprised 49.47% of the total receipts.

Expenses in CY 2024 totaled \$3.5M, which indicated a 16% increase from CY 2023.

To support participating countries in implementing the deliverables of the various projects, external service providers were hired as agreed in the projects' respective workplans and budgets. Personnel and consultancy services expenses from various projects constituted 49% of the total expenses.

CY 2024 breakdown of expenses are as follows: (i) Project Expenses (direct and indirect) was \$3.1M equivalent to 89% of the total expenses, of which \$2.9M were direct project expenses; (ii) Administrative Expenses amounted to 10% of the total expenses; 7% of which was the in-kind contribution provided by the Philippine Government for PEMSEA Resource Facility's office space and utilities.



PEMSEA's total assets increased by 12% which was mainly attributed to the increase in cash and receivables. Commitments by countries under deferred grants was 27%. We remain grateful to our partners' continuing funding support to effectively implement the SDS-SEA and work together towards the sustainable development of our shared Seas of East Asia.

* International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) require us to record receipts in the year the funds are designated for use.

Statement of Financial Position (in US\$)

ASSETS	31 December	
	2024	2023
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	3,695,516	3,359,740
Receivable	114,133	26,353
Total current assets	3,809,649	3,386,093
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
FA at Fair value	49,703	52,197
Property & Equipment - net	17,926	25,669
Other non-current assets	42,144	27,422
Total non-current assets	109,773	105,288
TOTAL ASSETS	3,919,422	3,491,381

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE

CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	283,997	343,399
Deferred Grant	1,755,827	1,381,556
Total current liabilities	2,039,824	1,724,955
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Defined contribution liability	173,909	179,870
Retirement benefit obligation	64,239	49,146
Total non-current liabilities	238,148	229,016
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,277,972	1,953,971
EQUITY		
Fund Balance	1,626,419	1,515,016
Employee benefit reserve	35,762	40,631
Fair value reserve	(20,731)	(18,237)
Total equity	1,641,450	1,537,410
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	3,919,422	3,491,381

Statement of Receipts and Expenses (in US\$)

ASSETS	31 December	
	2024	2023
RECEIPTS		
Government Contributions and grants	1,813,874	1,384,682
Multilaterals and other grants	1,566,838	1,582,622
Interest Income from deposits	1,765	2,015
PEMSEA services	284,018	167,821
TOTAL RECEIPTS	3,666,494	3,137,140
EXPENSES		
DIRECT PROJECT EXPENSES		
Personnel	1,138,677	989,991
Consultancy	368,408	280,966
Subcontract	534,697	519,123
Travel and meeting	149,826	169,388
Training	687,863	489,198
Other direct costs	119,024	147,857
Total direct project expenses	2,998,495	2,596,523
INDIRECT PROJECT EXPENSES		
Personnel	137,363	122,996
Travel and meeting	14,480	12,928
Depreciation	-	2,848
Overhead	25,421	43,417
Total indirect project expenses	177,264	182,189
ADMINISTRATIVE COST		
Personnel	80,043	64,641
Consultancy	19,427	18,974
Travel and meeting	-	
Depreciation	9,349	1,549
Overhead	270,513	201,039
Total administrative cost	379,332	286,203
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,555,091	3,064,915
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES	111,403	72,225
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE LOSS		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to receipts or expenses		
Remeasurements gain/loss on retirement benefit obligation	(4,869)	(13,898)
Fair value loss on FA at FVOCI	(2,494)	(4,414)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	104,040	53,913

The PEMSEA Family in 2024

PEMSEA Executive Committee



Dr. Vann Monyneath
Council Chair, EAS PC



Atty. Jonas Leones
Co-Chair, EAS PC



Ms. Chen Danhong
Chair, Intergovernmental
Session, EAS PC



Mr. Le Dai Thang
Co-Chair, Intergovernmental
Session, EAS PC



Dr. Keita Furukawa
Chair, Technical Session Chair,
EAS PC



Dr. Suk-jae Kwon
Co-Chair, Technical Session,
EAS PC



Country Partners



Cambodia

H.E. Thay Chantha, Deputy Secretary General of the National Committee for Cambodian Coastal Management and Development and Concurrent Deputy Director General of the General Directorate of Protected Areas in the Ministry of Environment (MoE)



China

Ms. CHEN Danhong, Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Natural Resources



DPR Korea

Mr. Kwang-Jin Jong, Deputy Director-General, General Bureau for Cooperation with International Organizations



Indonesia

Ir. Sigit Reliantoro, Acting Director-General for Environmental Pollution and Damage Control, Ministry of Environment and Forestry



Japan

Mr. Toru Ohno, Vice Director-General, Policy Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT)



Lao PDR

Ms. Keodokmay Phouipaseuth, Deputy Director, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment



Philippines

Atty. Analiza Rebuelta-Teh, Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change, Department of Environment and Natural Resources



RO Korea

Ms. Eun Jeong Seo, Director, Marine Climate and Environment Strategy Team, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF)



Singapore

Mr. Ranjeet Singh, Divisional Director (International Policy), Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations Environment Programme



Timor-Leste

Mr. Acacio Guterres, Director-General of Fishery, Aquaculture and Marine Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries



Viet Nam

Ms. Hang Pham Thu, Deputy Director-General, Viet Nam Administration of Seas and Islands (VASI), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE)

Non-Country Partners



ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)



Coastal Management Center (CMC)



Conservation International (CI) Philippines Foundation, Inc.



International Center for Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas (EMECS)



International Ocean Institute (IOI)



Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission–Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC-WESTPAC)



International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)–Asia Regional Office (ARO)



IPIECA



Korea Environment Institute (KEI)



Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST)



Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation (KOEM)



Korea Maritime Institute (KMI)



Marine Biodiversity Institute of Korea (MABIK)



National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service (NMHMS), China



Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA)



Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)



Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF)



Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL)



PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development (PNLG)



Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML)



UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)



UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA)





PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG)



CAMBODIA

1. Kampot
2. Kep
3. Koh Kong
4. Preah Sihanouk



CHINA

5. Beihai
6. Changyi
7. Dongying
8. Fangchenggang
9. Haikou
10. Haiyang
11. Jinjiang
12. Laoting
13. Lianyungang
14. Pingtan
15. Qinzhou
16. Quanzhou
17. Sanya
18. Xiamen
19. Yancheng
20. Wenzhou



INDONESIA

21. Badung
22. Bali
23. Bontang
24. Buleleng
25. Denpasar
26. Gianyar
27. Gorontalo
28. Jakarta
29. Jembana
30. Karangasem
31. Klungkung
32. South Bangka
33. Sukabumi Regency
34. Tabanan Regency
35. Tangerang



JAPAN

36. Shima



MALAYSIA

37. Port Klang
38. Nothern Selangor
39. Sepang



PHILIPPINES

40. Bataan
41. Batangas
42. Cavite
43. Guimaras



RO KOREA

44. Ansan
45. Busan
46. Changwon
47. Shihwa



THAILAND

48. Chonburi



TIMOR-LESTE

49. Dili
50. Liquica
51. Manatuto

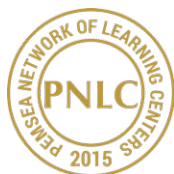


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52. Da Nang
53. Quang Nam
54. Thua Thien Hue

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3. Fujian Institute for Sustainable Oceans (FISO), China
4. National Ocean Technology Center, Ministry of Natural Resources, China
5. Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development



PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC)

CAMBODIA



Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)

CHINA



Fujian Institute for Sustainable Oceans (FISO), Xiamen University



Guangdong Ocean University



Ocean College, Zhejiang University (ZJU)

DPR KOREA



Kim Il Sung University (KISU)

INDONESIA



Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies (CCMRS), IPB University



Diponegoro University (UNDIP)



Udayana University (UNUD)

LAO PDR



National University of Laos

PHILIPPINES



Catanduanes State University (CatSU)



Cavite State University (CvSU)



De La Salle Lipa (DLSL)



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University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV)



Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan

THAILAND



Burapha University (BUU)



Prince of Songkla University (PSU)

TIMOR-LESTE



Oriental University of Timor Leste (UNITAL)



Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)

VIET NAM



University of Danang

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Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES)



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