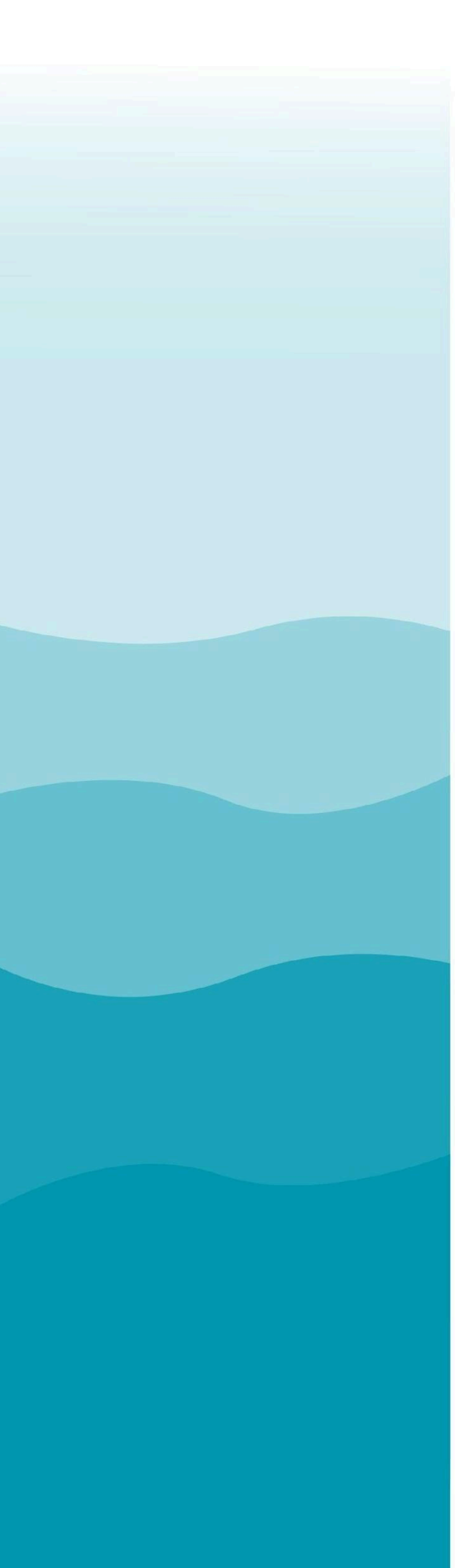




Proceedings of the Thirty-fourth Expanded East Asian Seas Executive Committee Meeting

21 October 2025
Via Zoom

Proceedings of the 34th PEMSEA Expanded Executive Committee Meeting

Online, Zoom

21 October 2025 | 9:00 - 12:00 GMT+8

Introduction

- I. The Expanded East Asian Seas (EAS) Executive Committee convened its 34th Executive Committee Meeting on 21 October 2025 online via Zoom. The meeting was attended by EAS Partnership Council Chair Attorney Jonas Leones; Intergovernmental Session Chair Mr. Le Dai Thang; Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair Dr. Xinwei Yu; Technical Session Chair Dr. Suk-Jae Kwon; and Technical Session Co-Chair Dr. Wakita Kazumi. The PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF), led by Executive Director (ED) Ms. Aimee T. Gonzales served as Secretariat to the meeting.
- II. PEMSEA Country Partners in attendance included national focal points and representatives from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. Non-Country Partners present included representatives from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Ipieca GISEA, Oil Spill Response Limited, National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service, International Center for Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas (EMECS), PEMSEA Network of Local Governments and Korea Institute of Ocean Science & Technology, among others. Online observers included staff from the PEMSEA Resource Facility and UNDP.
- III. Supporting documents may be found in the Annexes:
 - A. Annex 1 - Agenda
 - B. Annex 2 - Presentation, meeting documents, and photos
 - C. Annex 3 - List of participants

1. Opening of the 34th Expanded Executive Committee Meeting and Approval of the Agenda (EC/34/DOC/01b)

- 1.1. PRF ED Ms. Aimee Gonzales opened the 34th Executive Committee Meeting by acknowledging all participants attending both onsite and online. She then turned the floor over to USec. Jonas Leones, Chair of the EAS Partnership Council, for the opening remarks.
- 1.2. The Chair formally opened the 34th Expanded Executive Committee Meeting, highlighting that the agenda builds on discussions from the 17th Partnership Council Meeting, covering the updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan to 2030, the Organizational Capacity Assessment and associated Capacity Building Plan, the

Business Plan and Resource Mobilization Strategy, and the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol. He emphasized that these initiatives collectively aim to strengthen PEMSEA's institutional foundations, science-based action, partnerships, and sustainable financing to support healthy oceans, communities, and economies, and encouraged active participation and collaboration throughout the meeting.

- 1.3. He then invited the Secretariat to present the provisional program for the meeting.
- 1.4. Ms. Abi Cruzada, PRF Secretariat Coordinator, presented the agenda for the Expanded Executive Committee Meeting for the Executive Committee members' comments and subsequent adoption.
- 1.5. **Decision:** The agenda was adopted.

2. Updated Extended SDS-SEA IP to 2030 and Balanced Scorecard (EC/34/DOC/02)

- 2.1. USec. Leones called on the PRF Secretariat Ms. Aimee Gonzales and Ms. Kate Gallardo to present the second agenda: Updated Extended SDS-SEA IP to 2030 and Balanced Scorecard
- 2.2. Ms. Gonzales reminded the participants of the rationale and provided updates on the actions taken by the Secretariat in relation to the extension of the current implementation plan of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia to 2030. The updated actions were based on the agreements made during the 17th East Asian Seas Partnership Council Meeting in July, when the results of the mid-term review of SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 implementation and identified emerging trends and issues in the region were presented and discussed.
- 2.3. Ms. Gallardo presented the updated SDS SEA Implementation Plan for 2023–2030, noting that it built on the outcomes of the mid-term review of the 2023-2027 Implementation Plan, the research on the status and trends of coastal and ocean governance, the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA), and the feedback gathered from the workshops conducted within the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) and with PEMSEA Partners during the 17th EAS PC Meeting.
- 2.4. The updated plan forms the core of the strategic programming for PEMSEA's sustainability initiatives aligned to achieve the region's commitments to 2030. It aims to:
 - Serve as a **strategic compass** to accelerate SDS-SEA implementation and position PEMSEA for emerging challenges, opportunities, and transitions toward 2030.
 - **Position PEMSEA and the SDS-SEA** as enduring, adaptive, and effective mechanisms for regional governance of coasts, ocean, and contiguous watersheds.

- **Foster stronger multi-level and cross-sectoral partnerships** to address interconnected river, coastal and ocean challenges.
- **Strengthen alignment** with global and regional commitments and national priorities, while enhancing planning, monitoring, and performance management.
- **Build PEMSEA's long-term operational capacity and funding stability** to sustain coordination, delivery, and impact.

- 2.5. Ms. Gallardo then presented an overview of the structure and major components of the updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan. She explained that the updated plan consists of six major sections: (1) an introductory section; (2) the strategy map; (3) the balanced scorecard; (4) the strategic results framework; (5) monitoring and reporting; and (6) indicative costing.
- 2.6. The introductory section provides the background, key considerations, and alignment of the updated plan with preparatory work previously undertaken, including the findings and recommendations of the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) conducted with the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF). The plan also reflects the directions outlined in the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration 2024. Further details on the OCA would be presented by the consultant later in the session.
- 2.7. The updated plan builds on the results of the mid-term review of the 2023–2027 Implementation Plan, which found that most existing targets remain relevant. As such, these targets were largely retained, with minor refinements and the introduction of new features to align with recent global and regional commitments, as well as the results of trend analyses ([PC/17/DOC/08c](#)) which was discussed during the 17th EAS PC meeting. The updated plan thus represents both a continuation of ongoing progress and a step forward in the evolution of PEMSEA and the SDS-SEA.
- 2.8. Key new features introduced in the updated plan include the Strategy Map and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Framework. The BSC framework serves as a high-level tool for strategic planning and decision-making across PEMSEA programs and partnerships. Widely used in organizational management, the framework translates vision and strategy into measurable goals and performance indicators. Within PEMSEA, it will serve as a key reference for the Executive Committee, the Partnership Council, and the PRF to guide its implementation. The Strategy Map and BSC are supported by a detailed Strategic Results Framework, which focuses on operational-level implementation.
- 2.9. Other updates include the enhancement of the first pillar—Effective and Transformative Governance—under the Strategic Results Framework. Governance is now treated as an enabling and cross-cutting pillar, divided into two clusters: (1) PEMSEA institutional governance, focusing on improving organizational efficiency; and (2) regional coastal and ocean governance, which supports all other SDS-SEA implementation pillars.

- 2.10. Another new feature is the expansion of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Priority Program under the governance pillar. The program now includes more concrete targets related to stakeholder engagement, as well as a dedicated target to strengthen youth participation in the implementation of the SDS-SEA.
- 2.11. Ms. Gallardo further reported that, since the adoption of the 2023–2027 Implementation Plan, many projects have transitioned from planning to implementation. The updated plan therefore includes more concrete targets supporting key programs and projects developed between 2023 and 2025.
- 2.12. A new emphasis has also been placed on communication, science, knowledge, and innovation systems, with strengthened attention to research and development (R&D) and the science–policy interface. This responds to findings from the status and trends assessment indicating that the region remains relatively weak in R&D and innovation capacity.
- 2.13. The updated plan also introduces a new focus on Blue Food Systems, Nutrition, and Health, aligning with the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration Action 10 and subsequent 17th EAS PC’s recommendation to support regional initiatives related to the One Health and Blue Food Systems frameworks.
- 2.14. Finally, the plan highlights efforts to strengthen blue economy programs, particularly in light of emerging blue economy sectors in the region and commitments under the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration. This includes advancing blue financing frameworks, such as blue carbon market and non-market mechanisms, and promoting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) integration.
- 2.15. Ms. Gallardo proceeded to present the Strategy Map (see Figure 1), one of the new features introduced in the updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan. She explained that the Strategy Map provides a holistic framework for achieving the SDS-SEA Vision. It identifies the four core values of PEMSEA and outlines seven high-level strategic objectives, guided by the four pillars of the SDS-SEA: Effective Governance, Healthy Ocean, Healthy People, and Healthy Economies. The expected results of these objectives are delivered across the four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard framework.

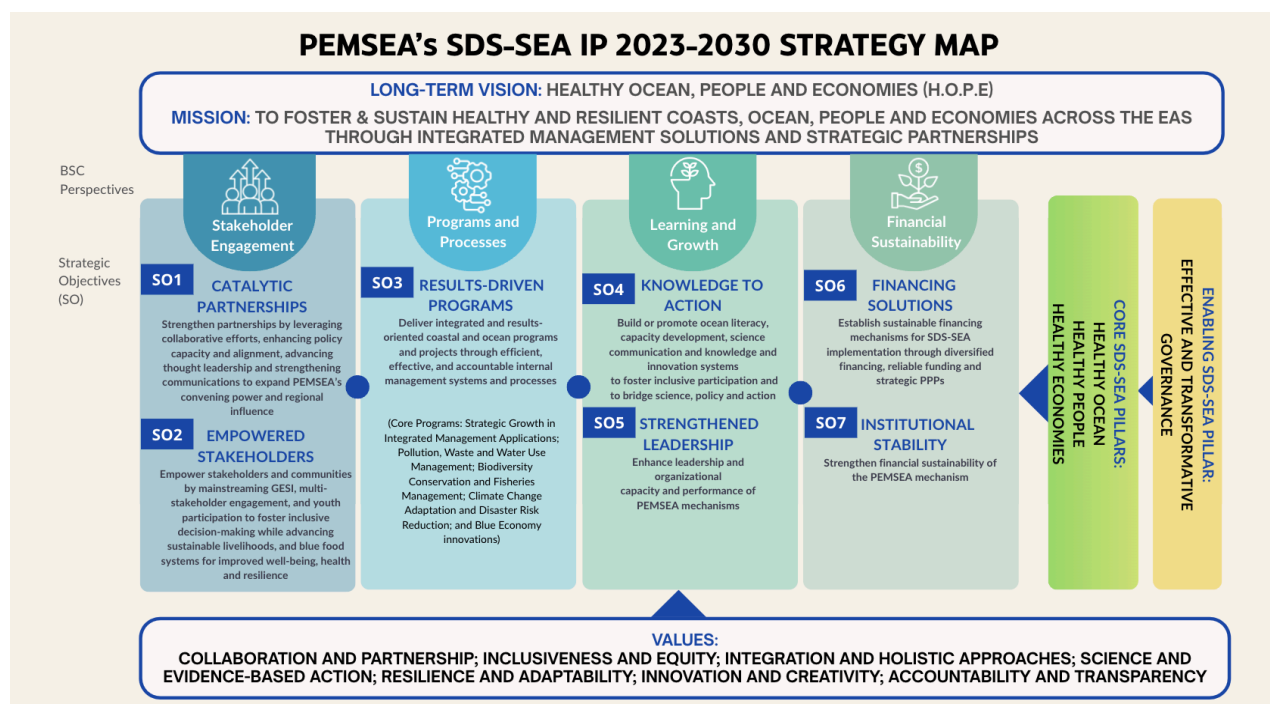


Figure 1. PEMSEA's SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030 Strategy Map

- 2.16. The Strategy Map captures the major elements of the updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan and provides a visual snapshot of PEMSEA's overall strategic direction. It serves as a useful reference for decision-makers and leaders who may not have the time to review the full plan, as it illustrates how each strategic objective contributes to the long-term vision. The map is also a practical tool for stakeholders, helping them identify where their respective initiatives can align with and contribute to the SDS-SEA objectives.
- 2.17. Under the Stakeholder Engagement perspective, the plan identifies two major strategic objectives: (1) Catalytic Partnerships and (2) Empowered Stakeholders. This perspective answers the question of how PEMSEA engages, empowers, and satisfies multi-sectoral and multi-level actors toward shared solutions and impacts.
- 2.18. The Programs and Processes perspective includes one major objective on Results-Driven Programs, which emphasizes building strengths to deliver quality programs and projects efficiently, effectively, and accountably.
- 2.19. The Learning and Growth perspective contains two strategic objectives: Knowledge-to-Action and Strengthened Leadership, focusing on how PEMSEA builds competencies and fosters a culture of innovation, learning, and agility.
- 2.20. Finally, the Financial Sustainability perspective covers financing solutions to support the implementation of the SDS-SEA and ensure the sustainable operations of PEMSEA, including institutional efficiency and resource mobilization.

- 2.21. The second new feature is the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). The BSC translates the Strategy Map into measurable indicators and targets, enabling leadership-level planning, decision-making, and monitoring. The structure of the BSC directly aligns with the four perspectives and seven strategic objectives of the Strategy Map. Building on the detailed operational plan contained in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF), the BSC identifies 18 core indicators with corresponding descriptions, baseline data, and targets to be achieved by 2030. It also includes an indicative list of partner organizations that will support the achievement of these targets.
- 2.22. Informing both the Strategy Map and the BSC is the Strategic Results Framework, which remains pillar-based and consistent with previous implementation plans. The SRF aligns with the four pillars—governance, healthy ocean, healthy people, and healthy economies—and provides operational-level detail. It includes specific targets for 2027 (the mid-term of the plan) and for 2030 (the end of the plan), alongside indicative partners and collaborators responsible for achieving the identified outputs and outcomes.
- 2.23. An updated Monitoring and Reporting Framework was developed to align with the updated IP. She emphasized the importance of monitoring as a basis for effective management, noting that “we cannot manage and improve what we do not monitor.” At the 15th EAS PC, PRF had introduced a monitoring and reporting mechanism for the 2023–2027 Implementation Plan. However, feedback from partners and network members indicated the need to simplify the system to facilitate more efficient reporting.
- 2.24. Taking these recommendations into account, the PRF developed a revised and simplified monitoring and reporting system for the updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan. The new system follows a four-step process, to be coordinated by the PRF, and will be implemented at least once annually—preferably before the annual Partnership Council Meeting.
- Initiation: The PRF will issue reminders and customized monitoring templates for Country Partners, Non-Country Partners, the PNLG, PNLC, and PRF at least two months before the Council Meeting.
 - Submission: Partners will complete their respective templates, focusing on key progress against targets, and upload supporting documents to a designated online folder.
 - Synthesis: The PRF will compile and synthesize the submitted reports, analyze progress against the Balanced Scorecard indicators, and identify key results.
 - Consolidation and Reporting: The PRF will prepare a consolidated Balanced Scorecard report for the entire PEMSEA partnership, to be presented by the Executive Director during the 18th EAS PC Meeting.

- 2.25. The refined monitoring and reporting templates were adapted to address partners and networks' respective deliverables and were developed to simplify partner submissions and enhance annual performance tracking. A separate orientation will be conducted by the Secretariat to guide partners and network members in completing their respective reporting templates, following the approval of the updated Implementation Plan and M&E Framework.
- 2.26. Key targets for Country Partners, Non-Country Partners, the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG), and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) were presented. A separate monitoring framework will also be developed for the PEMSEA Network of Youth Leaders, once it is revitalized.
- 2.27. While the majority of targets will continue to be facilitated or led by the PRF through its managed projects, there are certain targets that will need to be specifically delivered by partners. For the Country Partners, their contributions will focus on how their national policies, plans, and programs—as well as their commitments under regional and global frameworks—will contribute to achieving the relevant targets in the SDS-SEA.
- 2.28. At the governance level, these include alignment with new or existing international instruments, as well as national priorities related to blue food and blue health. Under programs and processes, the focus is on implementing key national programs promoting integrated coastal management, continuing the implementation of national SDS-SEA initiatives on the blue economy, and developing national blue carbon plans.
- 2.29. On financial sustainability, there is emphasis on the commitment under the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration to enhance investments in both traditional and emerging blue economy sectors, including the adoption of programs on the blue carbon market and non-market mechanisms.
- 2.30. For Non-Country Partners, targets are focused on their important role in advancing innovative research, studies, and tools, technologies, and systems to address key coastal and ocean governance issues in the region. Their role in operationalizing the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration's call for cross-networking and cross-partnership initiatives would also be worth noting..
- 2.31. At the local level, the PNLG is the critical partner in implementing the SDS-SEA. The updated plan, which is fully aligned with the PNLG Strategic Action Plan for 2023–2030, emphasizes the crucial support of the PNLG in promoting livelihood management strategies, biodiversity-friendly enterprises, and the development of the Coastal Sustainable Livelihood Index. Additionally, both PNLG and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) are encouraged to engage women, youth and early career professionals to strengthen the operationalization of their SDS-SEA commitments.

- 2.32. The PNLC will continue to serve as PEMSEA's capacity-building arm, supporting research communication, science-policy interface, and awareness-building activities under the SDS-SEA. The network is envisioned to expand further, with ongoing efforts to bring in more universities as learning centers, particularly focusing on integrated river basin management.
- 2.33. With regards to resource mobilization, which aims to ensure sufficient resources for effective plan implementation, PRF has developed indicative costs aligned with existing funding commitments and PRF-managed projects. It will continue to work on costing to provide a comprehensive picture of available resources and funding gaps that need to be addressed to achieve the set targets.
- 2.34. Ms. Gallardo emphasized that collaborative projects with Country and Non-Country Partners, PNLC, PNLC, and other collaborators will play a vital role in sustaining key programs and activities. The costing exercise will also inform the development of PEMSEA's financial sustainability plan.
- 2.35. In conclusion, Ms. Gallardo noted that the indicative costing is structured around three key levels:
- Funding from PRF-managed, project-led initiatives;
 - Support for core operational requirements sourced from voluntary country contributions and project management fees; and
 - New initiatives requiring joint funding and implementation.
- 2.36. Further details on the initial results of the indicative costing exercise for an updated SDS-SEA Implementation plan was presented by the PRF ED. Based on existing funding commitments up to 2027–2028, PEMSEA currently has an estimated USD 3.1 million per year secured until 2027, and in some cases, extending to 2028.
- 2.37. PRF ED expressed appreciation to the partners—particularly the Country Partners—for their continued support on resource mobilization through cash or in kind contributions. Multilateral grants endorsed by country partners especially through the GEF and UNDP-supported projects form the largest part of PEMSEA's revenues. PRF has also steadily increased its income by providing technical and fund management services to various entities. Most importantly, she acknowledged the core operational support which has grown from USD 350,000 to USD 500,000 per year, provided by country partners as part of their sustained commitment as embodied in the triennial Ministerial Declaration.
- 2.38. Ms. Gonzales added that PEMSEA is also exploring new initiatives, engaging both Country and Non-Country Partners, with the ambition of mobilizing an additional USD 2 million per year up to 2030. While acknowledging that this target is ambitious, she affirmed PEMSEA's commitment to pursuing it.

- 2.39. Further details on the costing methodology and assumptions will be discussed in the upcoming session on the PEMSEA Business Plan. The detailed costing framework may also be provided by the Secretariat upon request.
- 2.40. At present, the focus remains on finalizing and adopting the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan. The timeline for this process includes the presentation of results and the organizational capacity assessment in October, for adoption in principle, recognizing that members may need more time to review the materials thoroughly. By November, PEMSEA aims to roll out the plan and is open to conducting a webinar orientation to guide partners through the commitments and indicators under the Strategic Results Framework.
- 2.41. Finally, Ms. Gonzales outlined the key activities for the rollout and implementation phase. These include:
- Aligning the work plans of Country and Non-Country Partners with the adopted refined Implementation Plan;
 - Conducting orientation workshops on implementation and reporting; and
 - Undertaking baseline data collection for 2026–2027 between January and April 2026.
- 2.42. She concluded by inviting members to provide their feedback and comments on the updated Implementation Plan to support its effective rollout and monitoring and actions requested by the EEC.
- 2.43. USec. Leones thanked the PRF ED and Ms. Kate Gallardo, SDS-SEA IP Consultant for their comprehensive presentation. He opened the floor for any comments and feedback.
- 2.44. Discussion:**
- 2.45. On behalf of the Government of the Philippines, Dr. Al Orolfo expressed sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for the comprehensive reports. The Philippines expressed its support for the full execution of the Implementation Plan until 2030 and emphasized the importance of tracking results through the Balanced Scorecard.
- 2.46. The Philippines also recognized that the draft extended SDS-SEA is consistent with the priority programs of the current administration, particularly the integration of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) in Local Government Units (LGUs) and the mainstreaming of ICM into City Land Use Plans (CLUPs) to promote a ridge-to-reef-to-shelf approach in coastal governance. A draft Joint Administrative Order to operationalize this approach is being facilitated by the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) and the Oceans Environment Task Force. The Philippines further observed that the Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard (BSC) presented are coherent with the synergistic actions of the Xiamen Declaration.

- 2.47. Ms. Xiaotong Zhu, on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, thanked the PRF for the thoughtful work that went into the extended IP, especially the strategic map, which clearly lays out PEMSEA's key priorities through 2030, and hopes that the extended IP can be rolled out soon to guide the coastal and marine sustainable development in the region.
- 2.48. Mr. Le Dai Thang, Intergovernmental Session Chair, expressed appreciation for the well-prepared draft updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan and noted its continued alignment with the key pillars of the SDS-SEA. He acknowledged the inclusion of the draft monitoring and reporting template and encouraged all relevant reporting entities to provide feedback on its feasibility.
- 2.49. Furthermore, he underscored that effective tracking of progress is closely tied to the availability of resources and suggested further discussion on sustaining implementation and reporting efforts. Mr. Le also sought clarification on the process for submitting the finalized Plan for Partnership Council approval, including the responsible party, method, and timeline. He encouraged partners to review the relevant documents more closely and to submit consolidated comments to the PRF, including on the timing and synchronization of annual reporting and on approval and funding arrangements among Country Partners.
- 2.50. In response, Ms. Kate Gallardo clarified that the action requested regarding the submission of the formal approval via email is meant to ensure that, at the minimum, the proposed updated SDS SEA Implementation Plan is adopted in principle during the meeting. She noted, however, that the Secretariat recognizes that some partners were unable to attend the meeting. As such, a copy of the updated plan will also be circulated to all partners after the meeting to secure their confirmation or concurrence by correspondence, allowing for a more formal adoption process.
- 2.51. Ms. Gallardo emphasized that the SDS SEA Implementation Plan is a living document intended for continuous refinement and implementation. Annual planning and consultations will be conducted in line with the agreed plan to identify concrete and joint initiatives with partners toward achieving the identified targets.
- 2.52. With regard to the frequency of reporting, Ms. Gallardo explained that reports will be submitted at least once a year, preferably before the annual Partnership Council Meeting in July. The process will commence as early as April to allow partners sufficient time to complete their respective reporting templates. The Secretariat will then consolidate the reports, ideally one month prior to the Council Meeting, using the balanced scorecard framework. The resulting balanced scorecard report will be presented by the PRF ED during the annual Partnership Council Meeting held every July.

- 2.53. Dr. Kazumi Wakita, Technical Session Co-Chair, expressed concern regarding the proposed timeline for the submission of monitoring and evaluation reports. She sought clarification on whether all Country Partners were agreeable to the two-month timeframe—specifically, as mentioned by Ms. Gallardo, that the reporting template would be provided to partners two months prior to the submission deadline, leaving only one month for Country Partners to prepare and submit their reports to the PRF.
- 2.54. Dr. Wakita noted that the PEMSEA reporting process typically involves coordination and consultation among various ministries within each country. She therefore expressed concern that one month may not be sufficient for Country Partners to secure the necessary inputs and consensus across the relevant ministries.
- 2.55. Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Hoan of Vietnam also noted that additional time is needed for internal consultations, as the implementation plan involves coordination with multiple ministries in the country. She emphasized that at least one month would be required to conduct consultations with the concerned ministries. She also suggested that the Secretariat send an official letter to facilitate the process, allowing each country to provide its comments and formal confirmation.
- 2.56. Ms. Gallardo explained that the proposed process is designed to start as early as April each year, with the aim of having the consolidated report ready by June. This timeline aligns with the one-month rule for circulating documents to the Partnership Council prior to the annual July meeting.
- 2.57. Furthermore, the expectation is for Country Partners to complete their respective reports between April and May, after which the Secretariat will consolidate the submissions from May to June. However, acknowledging the Technical Session-Co-Chair and Vietnam's concerns, Ms. Gallardo noted that the timeline could be adjusted to begin earlier, particularly to accommodate countries that require additional time for internal consultations with other ministries or supporting agencies. She added that, should the partners support this suggestion, the Secretariat would modify the timeline accordingly in the monitoring and reporting process.
- 2.58. With no other comments, the Chair closed the session and moved to the next agenda item.
- 2.59. Conclusion:**
- 2.60. The EEC recognized that the Updated SDS-SEA IP 2023–2030, including the Strategy Map, Balanced Scorecard, Strategic Results Framework, and monitoring elements, provides a clearer and more coherent framework for operational planning and regional cooperation.
- 2.61. The EEC noted Member concerns on accomplishing progress monitoring of the updated IP regarding: (i) the need for official communication to facilitate internal

coordination, and (ii) adequate lead time for reporting and consolidation across ministries.

2.62. Recommendations:

- The EEC requested reporting entities (i.e., Country and Non-Country Partners, PNLG, and PNLC) to provide comments on the feasibility of the updated targets.
- The EEC recommended the Secretariat and PEMSEA partners and networks to discuss budgetary and resource requirements to sustain SDS-SEA IP monitoring.
- The EEC advised the Secretariat to reconsider the timeframe for annual reporting. Specifically, the EEC requested the secretariat to review whether two months is sufficient preparation time for accomplishing the M&E template, given the need for Country Focal Points to have at least one month of internal consultations with other ministries.
- The EEC requested for an official letter from the EAS PC Chair to urge countries to conduct timely interagency coordination and consultations at the national level.

2.63. Decision:

- 2.64. The Expanded EC confirmed the Updated SDS-SEA IP and endorsed its adoption by correspondence, noting that the plan was circulated prior to the Meeting. The EC agreed to provide one month for any additional comments from the EAS Partnership Council, particularly on feasibility of targets for relevant stakeholders. If no further inputs are received within this period, the Updated SDS-SEA IP shall be considered adopted, with the adoption process completed by the first week of December.

3. Organizational Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building Plan (EC/34/DOC/03)

- 3.1. Mr. Adonis Socalit, Organization Development Consultant presented the results of the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) of the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF). He explained that the OCA process was undertaken in parallel with the review of the Implementation Plan and the introduction of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology. Due to time limitations, the OCA was conducted initially with the PRF Secretariat to test the tool, but the plan is to subsequently roll it out to the network.
- 3.2. The PRF assessment involved 27 staff members and utilized a co-created OCA tool, which is now owned and applied internally by PRF. The tool covers four capacity domains—leadership and governance, management, adaptation and innovation, and operational capacity—comprising 27 elements in total.
- 3.3. Mr. Socalit noted that while the process provided valuable insights, it had limitations, such as potential bias, limited participation, and varied interpretation of rating scales. The assessment focused solely on the PRF Secretariat as a starting point for evaluating organizational capacity. He emphasized that the OCA complements the Balanced

Scorecard: while the BSC measures organizational performance against strategic objectives, the OCA assesses the institution's capacity to achieve those objectives.

- 3.4. In terms of results, the overall OCA score was **2.04 out of 4**, indicating a *fair* level of capacity—where basic systems exist but require more consistent implementation and strengthening. The strongest capacity domain was on **management**, followed by **operational capacity**, while **adaptation and innovation**, and **leadership and governance** were identified as areas that needed improvement. Notable strengths included strong internal controls, compliance mechanisms, and sound financial and administrative systems. However, there is a need to periodically review and where appropriate, update and consistently apply existing policies and procedures.
- 3.5. The OCA findings were aligned with the four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard of the updated SDS-SEA Implementation plan. Under the *stakeholder engagement perspective*, results showed the need to enhance policy development, communication, and advocacy to strengthen leadership and stakeholder trust. Under *internal processes*, the importance of institutionalizing risk management, digitizing operations, and improving ICT and knowledge management systems was highlighted. Under *learning and growth*, structured learning systems, leadership development, and succession planning needed improvement within the PRF. Under the *financial perspective*, the necessity of developing a more proactive resource mobilization and sustainability strategy was identified.
- 3.6. Despite its limitations, the OCA provides a clear roadmap for capacity building and strategic investments to strengthen PRF's institutional resilience and regional leadership. The five-year capacity development priorities toward 2030 include progressive capacity development, resource mobilization, integrated risk management, change leadership, and succession planning.
- 3.7. Mr. Socalit recommended that PRF undertake the OCA as a recurring assessment, ideally on an annual or biennial basis, to track progress, measure improvements, and guide continuous organizational strengthening. He then turned the floor to Ms. Aimee Gonzales for further discussion.
- 3.8. Ms. Gonzales expressed that the Secretariat would like to seek suggestions and guidance from Country and Non-Country Partners on how they could help address the identified gaps in capacity development, particularly as PEMSEA moves forward with a refined strategy and sustained fundraising efforts.
- 3.9. She also invited feedback on specific areas where the Secretariat's capacity could be further strengthened to provide greater value and support for national and local implementation. In addition, she proposed considering the possibility of undertaking similar capacity assessments at the country level, noting that such initiatives could facilitate better coordination and enhancement of skills and institutional capacities.

- 3.10. Ms. Gonzales further observed that the need for capacity development extends beyond the Secretariat, as many countries are also facing challenges related to talent gaps in coastal and marine management. She emphasized the importance of collective efforts to build and strengthen the next generation of coastal and marine managers.
- 3.11. USec. Leones sought clarification before opening the floor for comments on the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) applied to the PRF. He inquired whether the parameters used in the assessment were generic or customized, noting that each organization has its own distinct mandates and missions. He asked how the parameters were determined to ensure their appropriateness in assessing the capacity of the PRF.
- 3.12. He further requested clarification on how the OCA used for PRF differs from similar frameworks or scorecards being applied by other organizations, such as the UNDP or the World Bank, which use comparable assessment tools under different names.
- 3.13. In response, Mr. Adonis Socalit clarified that the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool was co-created and specifically developed for the PRF Secretariat. He explained that in April, a one-day workshop was conducted with PRF staff to review existing OCA frameworks used by other organizations and, through a collaborative process, co-design a customized tool suited to PRF's context. The staff themselves contributed to defining the capacity domains and elements, ensuring that the framework reflected the organization's specific functions and priorities. He emphasized that the OCA tool is therefore owned by the PRF and can be continuously used and refined moving forward.
- 3.14. Mr. Socalit further explained that while the OCA framework is globally recognized and applied across multilateral and development organizations—including NGOs, UNDP, and the World Bank—it serves as an organizational development (OD) tool that enables institutions to assess and strengthen their capacity to achieve strategic objectives.
- 3.15. He added that the OCA and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) are complementary frameworks, both of which can be cascaded across levels—from the PEMSEA regional mechanism to Country and Non-Country Partners, and Learning Centers. However, he noted that applying the OCA at these levels may require certain adjustments to ensure relevance to each entity's context.
- 3.16. Discussion:**
- 3.17. Undersecretary Analiza Teh of the Philippines sought clarification on the presentation, particularly on the statement in the first slide referring to the PRF as a subset of PEMSEA. She inquired what was specifically meant by "subset" in this context, noting that based on PEMSEA's governing instruments, the PRF is not considered as such. She asked if the terminology was used solely for the purposes of the tool.

- 3.18. Mr. Sucalit responded that when the tool was being developed around late March to early April, the team agreed to initially focus the assessment on the PRF Secretariat, noting that while the intent was for the tool to eventually apply to PEMSEA as a whole, starting with all partners would have significantly prolonged and complicated the process.
- 3.19. He explained that, conceptually, PEMSEA was represented as a larger circle, with the PRF positioned as a subset within it. This framing was not meant to redefine institutional relationships but rather to manage the development process pragmatically, given the scope, inclusivity, and practical limitations of what could be effectively assessed and influenced at this stage.
- 3.20. He emphasized that positioning the PRF as the initial entry point was a practical approach to support the broader PEMSEA strategy development process, without altering existing institutional relationships.
- 3.21. Ms. Gonzales explained that the phased approach was adopted to support overall strategy development, noting that “PEMSEA as a whole” refers to the full partnership—PRF, Country and Non-Country Partners, PNLG, PNLC, and youth networks. Applying the four OCA domains across all components simultaneously would have been complex; therefore, the tool was first piloted with the PRF Secretariat, given its role in servicing the wider network.
- 3.22. Ms. Gonzales emphasized that the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool is ultimately intended to be applied across the whole PEMSEA network, but its application would need to be tailored to each component, focusing on the domains most relevant at that level—for instance, leadership and adaptation at the country or network level. She added that this could be further developed if there is interest from partners to design a version suitable for the wider PEMSEA.
- 3.23. She further noted that the purpose of this exercise was to gain a snapshot of capacity issues, since while PEMSEA had often refined its strategies, it had not yet systematically assessed the complementary organizational capacities required to support those strategies. Finally, she highlighted that PEMSEA is moving from a project-driven mode of operation toward a more proactive and strategic approach—identifying priority areas such as blue food, blue finance, and other emerging initiatives—and aligning both financial and technical resources to better support partners in strategy implementation and operationalization.
- 3.24. The Philippines thanked the presenters and acknowledged the rationale for initially focusing the OCA on the PRF Secretariat, but emphasized the need to revise language in the document referring to the PRF as a “subset” of PEMSEA, to ensure consistency with existing legal and governance instruments, i.e, the PEMSEA Rules of Governance.

- 3.25. Furthermore, the Philippines expressed support for the capacity development plan and recommended that the next phase of assessment prioritize PEMSEA national focal points, given that they serve as the main drivers of the partnership at the country level.
- 3.26. The Philippines elaborated that while the PRF serves as the regional platform providing support to the partnership, the national focal points play a critical role in representing and operationalizing PEMSEA at the national level. Assessing the capacity of focal points, therefore, would offer a clearer picture of how effectively the partnership is functioning across governance levels. This approach could subsequently guide assessments of other mechanisms, including the PNLG, PNLC, and youth network, in a phased and resource-efficient manner.
- 3.27. Another representative from the Philippines echoed appreciation for the PRF's technical leadership and emphasized that extending the OCA to include Country Partner focal points would help strengthen shared capacity and collective action across the partnership.
- 3.28. Mr. Le Dai Thang, Intergovernmental Session Chair underscored that effective implementation of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan (2023–2030) requires strengthening capacities, not only within the PRF Secretariat but also among Country and Non-Country Partners. He noted that the current capacity development plan does not yet clearly define measures for these partners and recommended expanding the plan to explicitly include capacity-building components for all key actors.
- 3.29. The Secretariat affirmed that capacity strengthening across all partners—including the PRF, country partners, and non-country partners—remains a core objective of PEMSEA. Likewise, the updated implementation plan includes several specific targets related to leadership and capacity development. These include the conduct of leadership training and leadership-level fora for both country and non-country partners, as well as for members of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG). Initiatives to strengthen youth leadership, aimed at engaging and developing emerging leaders who can contribute to future coastal and ocean governance efforts are also included.
- 3.30. These targets are designed to align with and respond to the recommendations arising from the Organizational Performance Assessment (OPA), thereby ensuring that capacity-building efforts directly support the implementation of the SDS SEA Plan (2023–2030).
- 3.31. With no other recommendations, the Chair closed the discussion and proceeded to the next agenda item.
- 3.32. Conclusion:**

3.33. The EEC acknowledged the OCA findings and recognized the need to strengthen Secretariat capacities in ICT, risk management, resource mobilization, and institutional learning. The EEC noted the need to clarify the scope of the OCA and its alignment with existing PEMSEA's existing policies, structures and roles, as well as to consider a phased expansion involving Partners.

3.34. Recommendation/s:

- The EEC recommended that the OCA and its implementation be made consistent with existing PEMSEA policies, structures, and governance arrangements and that the document clearly articulate its scope, purpose, and intended application within the PEMSEA Partnership.
- The EEC recommended that the Capacity Building Plan address the capacity needs of the PRF Secretariat, Country Partners, Non-Country Partners, and other relevant partners, and clearly indicate its relevance and benefits for CPs and NCPs.
- The EEC recommended that, following capacity improvements within the Secretariat, subsequent focus be placed on strengthening the capacities of PEMSEA National Focal Points, in recognition of their central role in internal coordination and regional representation. Specifically, the EEC recommended that the Secretariat assess how National Focal Points can be further supported to effectively represent and advance partnership priorities at the regional level.

3.35. Decision:

3.36. The EEC **endorsed** the OCA and phased Capacity Building Plan, subject to the incorporation of comments raised during the Meeting, especially on rolling out OCA to other parts of the network and the prioritization of actions that enable National Focal Points, CPs, and NCPs to fulfill their roles effectively under the Updated SDS-SEA IP.

4. Updates on PEMSEA Business Plan (EC/34/DOC/04)

- 4.1. Ms. Aimee Gonzales presented updates on the ongoing work to develop the PEMSEA business plan, noting that the process is being undertaken through a modular approach as the recruitment of a business development specialist is still ongoing.
- 4.2. She explained that the timing of the business plan's development aligns well with the recent completion of the SDS SEA Implementation Plan (2023–2030) and the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA), which together provide a strong foundation for the business planning process.
- 4.3. The development of the PEMSEA business plan forms part of the broader PEMSEA Sustainability Plan, which integrates elements of strategic programming, resource mobilization, and institutional capacity strengthening—not only for the PRF Secretariat, but also for country partner focal points, as previously suggested during discussions.

- 4.4. Several modular activities, aligned with the development of the plan are currently in progress, including:
- Conducting **high-level costing** to establish baseline investment needs and potential financing pathways;
 - Finalizing a **draft resource mobilization strategy** and **donor engagement package** (see EC/34/DOC/04a) aimed at diversifying and expanding PEMSEA's funding sources; and
 - Establishing a **Fundraising and Marketing Committee**, for which the Secretariat has invited **Partnership Council members** to nominate representatives.
- 4.5. The Secretariat noted that only one country partner had so far expressed interest in joining the committee and encouraged others to do the same, emphasizing that the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the committee clearly outline its role in supporting the design and preparation of the business plan.
- 4.6. The recruitment of a Business Development and Resource Mobilization Specialist had recently closed, and applications are currently under review. Additionally, the Secretariat has circulated an updated list of ongoing and pipeline projects (see EC/34/DOC/04c) to serve as a reference for targeted resource mobilization efforts. Work on the business plan remains a continuing process, with the goal of completing a full draft of the business plan by early next year, in time for the Executive Committee (EC) meeting.
- 4.7. In closing, Ms. Gonzales sought the Council's feedback and endorsement of the draft resource mobilization plan, as well as further suggestions on additional fundraising initiatives. She also reiterated the request for nominations to the Fundraising and Marketing Committee, to ensure inclusive and balanced representation across the PEMSEA Partnership.
- 4.8. USec. Leones thanked Ms. Gonzales for the presentation and sought comments and feedback from the council.
- 4.9. Discussion:**
- 4.10. The Philippines recalled that PEMSEA had previously developed a business plan, which extended up to 2020 and inquired whether an assessment had been conducted to determine the extent of the accomplishments under that earlier plan, noting that such a review would be important to establish a clear starting point for the development of the new business plan.
- 4.11. They emphasized the need to understand accomplishments and gaps, including lessons from the earlier consultant-supported process, to avoid repeating general strategies and to ensure the new business plan proposes more specific and innovative financing mechanisms.

- 4.12. The Philippines further recommended that, should PEMSEA proceed with the engagement of a consultant for the new business plan, the terms of reference (TOR) should include a stocktaking or assessment of the previous plan. This would enable the consultant to focus on concrete, targeted, and results-oriented strategies for resource mobilization and financial sustainability.
- 4.13. Ms. Aimee Gonzales clarified that the previous plan referred to was the Third-Party Assessment for Achieving Self-Sufficiency of PEMSEA, which was conducted in 2017. She explained that, building on this, PEMSEA developed the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) Sustainability Plan, which incorporated recommendations from previous initiatives such as the Re-engineering Plan and the Third-Party Assessment.
- 4.14. She noted that this plan has been updated regularly to reflect progress, including actions such as separating project and core trust fund accounts and expanding resource mobilization to include private sector engagement. She acknowledged that this background was not reflected in the document and confirmed that the Secretariat can provide a summary of achievements to date.
- 4.15. Ms. Gonzales highlighted that one of the recurring gaps identified throughout these reviews was the absence of a dedicated fundraising or marketing function within PEMSEA. This gap has limited the organization's ability to proactively pursue resource mobilization opportunities beyond developing plans or strategies.
- 4.16. She explained that the terms of reference (TOR) for the new business development and resource mobilization specialist explicitly aim to address this gap—not only by providing high-level strategic inputs but also by engaging in the practical aspects of fundraising, such as developing concept notes and pursuing specific funding opportunities.
- 4.17. As examples, she cited the Green Climate Fund (GCF)—including PEMSEA's potential regional accreditation—and targeted initiatives such as the Blue Carbon Program and the funding opportunity through GEF 9 Replenishment Fund. She emphasized that the new business plan will therefore move beyond general identification of funding sources to also focus on specific, actionable financing modalities and partnerships.
- 4.18. The Philippines agreed with the points raised and linked the discussion to the earlier capacity assessment, stressing the need to align PEMSEA's institutional and technical capacities with its role in project development and implementation beyond GEF-supported initiatives.
- 4.19. They noted that the GEF-9 replenishment process is already being finalized and is expected to conclude by March. Beyond GEF, she mentioned several other potential funding mechanisms, including the Blue Carbon Fund, the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, and the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) mechanism, which also designates GEF as its funding mechanism.

- 4.20. The Philippines stressed the importance of linking these opportunities with the results of the capacity assessment, particularly in determining whether PEMSEA currently has a sufficient pool of personnel to accelerate the development of a strong project pipeline—both at the regional and national levels. Additionally, the integrated program approach adopted by GEF provides a good opportunity for PEMSEA to expand its access to financing, provided that institutional and technical capacities are further strengthened.
- 4.21. Ms. Joo-Won Lee, on behalf of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea (MOF, ROK), inquired about the engagement of private donors and sponsors under the proposed resource mobilization approach. She requested clarification on whether contributions from private entities would be treated as unconditional—similar to member country contributions—or if separate conditions, arrangements, or reporting requirements would apply.
- 4.22. Ms. Aimee Gonzales responded that PEMSEA welcomes financial support from both country and non-country partners, including private sector entities, but emphasized that the terms of such contributions would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure alignment with PEMSEA's mandate and values.
- 4.23. She noted that contributions tied to specific activities may require further consideration by the Executive Committee or the Partnership Council, depending on the nature and scale of support. She added that while direct private sector contributions have been limited to date, the planned recruitment of a Business Development and Resource Mobilization Specialist is expected to help identify and evaluate suitable partnership opportunities moving forward.
- 4.24. ROK expressed concern about how potential risks would be managed in cases where the expected outcomes are not fully achieved, noting that this could place additional burdens on PEMSEA partners. The representative inquired how PEMSEA intends to manage or mitigate such risks moving forward.
- 4.25. The Secretariat emphasized the importance of establishing clear criteria for private sector and philanthropic engagement to ensure that contributions align with PEMSEA's values and objectives, and to avoid partnerships that could be perceived as greenwashing. They noted that the business plan and resource mobilization strategy will include steps toward operationalizing such a framework as PEMSEA explores broader funding sources.
- 4.26. The Technical Session Co-Chair expressed support for the points raised and echoed the concerns of the Republic of Korea. She emphasized the need to ensure that PEMSEA's reputation and partnership platform are not misused by private entities,

recommending that the Finance or Fundraising Committee develop clear guidelines for assessing and accepting private sector contributions.

4.27. She underscored that any future decisions or recommendations by the committee should not impose financial or operational obligations on country or non-country partners. Dr. Wakita reiterated that PEMSEA's partnership framework is based on voluntary contributions and mutual cooperation, and this principle should continue to guide future resource mobilization efforts.

4.28. The Ministry of Natural Resources, China, also echoed Dr. Kazumi and ROK on the Financial Committee's mandate, which should always align with PEMSEA's rules of governance.

4.29. The PRF ED acknowledged and affirmed the concerns raised, noting that the Secretariat is aligned in ensuring that private sector engagement will be guided by a clear framework to prevent any potential misuse of PEMSEA's platform. She reiterated that PEMSEA serves the Country Partners, and any co-financing or collaborative arrangements would be undertaken on a voluntary and consultative basis, with no obligations imposed.

4.30. Conclusion:

4.31. The EC noted updates on the Resource Mobilization Strategy and indicative costing. The EC further noted the importance of building on previous strategies, maintaining safeguards in private sector engagement, and preserving the essence of voluntary nature of country contributions.

4.32. Recommendation/s:

- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat develop a framework for engaging private and philanthropic funding sources, ensuring transparency, alignment with PEMSEA values, and safeguards against greenwashing.
- The EEC reaffirmed that PEMSEA's resource mobilization efforts shall build on voluntary contributions, and that financing arrangements shall not create additional obligations for CPs and NCPs without their consent.
- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat pursue opportunities for PEMSEA to pursue access to global financing windows, explore the role of becoming an Implementing Agency and/or strengthen current executing agency or delivery partner role for multilateral and other global funding mechanisms, including but not limited to GEF and GCF.
- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat undertake an updated stocktaking exercise of past resource mobilization and sustainability plans, summarizing accomplishments, lessons, and gaps to guide the development of the updated Business Plan.

- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat consider establishing a dedicated function or mechanism for marketing and partnership development, recognizing the recurring institutional gap identified.

4.33. Decision:

- 4.34. The EEC **requested** members to submit comments on the Strategy and to nominate representatives to the Fundraising and Marketing Committee.

5. Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol (EC/34/DOC/05)

- 5.1. Ms. Abigail Cruzada of PRF and Ms. Kristina Di Ticman, BCAP Consultant presented key updates on the development of the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol (RBCAP), which was initially introduced during the 17th Partnership Council Meeting held in July.
- 5.2. As a brief recap, Ms. Cruzada explained that the accounting protocol forms part of the Blue Carbon Ecosystem Services Management Mechanism and is intended to provide a harmonized methodology for coastal blue carbon accounting across East and Southeast Asia. Its primary objective is to support regional comparability of blue carbon ecosystems, establish credibility, and enhance future crediting readiness for blue carbon initiatives in the region.
- 5.3. The protocol was developed through an iterative review process undertaken by the Blue Carbon Technical Working Group (TWG), composed of nominated representatives from country partners, non-country partners, and selected members of the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers. The document integrates national experiences and draws from local and international technical standards.
- 5.4. Based on feedback received from the Blue Carbon TWG and the Partnership Council (PC) in June and July, respectively, several areas for refinement were identified. These include:
- Clarifying eligible activities and pathways;
 - Strengthening long-term sustainability measures and ensuring checks on MRV permanence and risks of blue carbon ecosystem loss;
 - Enhancing the usability and accessibility of the protocol by adopting a more practical “cookbook” format with clear definitions, diagrams, and step-by-step methods for practitioners, particularly beginners;
 - Aligning with existing international standards and country-level best practices; and
 - Expanding the scope of ecosystems to include additional types such as tidal flats and seaweeds.
- 5.5. Key revisions to the RBCAP include a streamlined and reorganized structure divided into two main parts:

- The Main Manual, which covers general guidance, project boundaries, baseline and project scenarios, the proposed tiering system, MRV, permanence, and verification; and
 - The Annexes, which detail ecosystem-specific methodologies.
- 5.6. To date, Ms. Cruzada reported that two ecosystem methodologies—for mangroves and seagrasses—have been completed, while the methodology for salt marshes is currently being finalized. As of October 20, the revised main manual was endorsed by the Blue Carbon Technical Working Group (BCTWG) during its third meeting on 12 September.
- 5.7. Further refinements to the annexes were conducted through four group meetings from September to October, and the team has also initiated the collection of case studies to strengthen the protocol and provide real-life examples for practitioners. The finalization of the annexes is ongoing based on recent feedback.
- 5.8. Ms. Kristina Di Ticman presented the key updates and highlights on the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol, beginning with revisions to the main text. She noted that the main text provides guidance on the governance of the Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol, including references and definitions, project scope and eligibility, estimation methods, management of uncertainties, proposed tiering systems, and the identification of baseline and project scenarios. The main text also provides guidance on additionality, ensuring that Blue Carbon projects demonstrate measurable contributions to carbon sequestration beyond business-as-usual scenarios.
- 5.9. Further, the text defines key concepts such as leakage, permanence, and risk, and includes guidance on monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV), with linkages to PEMSEA's broader certification protocols. The structure and presentation follow the format of international standards such as Verra, employing a modular approach that includes a comprehensive main text supported by technical annexes.
- 5.10. Ms. Di Ticman then presented updates on the Mangrove Annex, which has undergone significant revisions. The annex now contains step-by-step field and laboratory procedures for each carbon pool, accompanied by graphics to guide practitioners, especially beginners. It also includes tier tables for method selection, reference equations, and sample calculations. The structure of the annex covers identification of carbon pools, project and sampling design, data collection and analysis procedures, estimation of carbon stock and sequestration potential, and recommendations on reducing uncertainties through quality assurance and quality control measures. Regional parameters were also included for use in carbon stock and sequestration computations.
- 5.11. The mangrove stock assessment framework involves field data collection for trees, soils, litter, and deadwood, followed by conversions to carbon stock and scaling from

plot to project level, including quantification of uncertainty. Updated graphics have been incorporated to better illustrate field methods.

- 5.12. Following carbon stock assessment, the annex also addresses carbon sequestration potential, which measures carbon storage at different points over time using the stock difference and gain-loss methods. In line with recommendations from the Technical Working Group, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission measurements—particularly for carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane—were added using gas flux measurement techniques.
- 5.13. Ms. Di Ticman emphasized the importance of the tiering tables, which provide methodological guidance for practitioners. The tables define three tiers—from basic to advanced—offering options suited to varying technical capacities. While higher-tier methods do not automatically reduce uncertainty, they support improved precision in measurement and reporting.
- 5.14. The Seagrass Annex has also been completed and presented to the Technical Working Group, adopting a similar structure to the Mangrove Annex. Revisions include additional technical details, such as compaction correction for core sampling, streamlined laboratory procedures, and refined tier tables. The annex also integrates graphical guides illustrating the field methods used in seagrass assessments.
- 5.15. For the next steps, Ms. Di Ticman reported that the team is elaborating on the carbon sequestration and sink estimation methods, refining tiering systems, and incorporating case studies from participating countries into the annexes. The aim is to harmonize the methodologies for mangrove, seagrass, and tidal marsh ecosystems.
- 5.16. She added that the upcoming Technical Working Group meeting will focus on the Tidal Marsh Annex, for which case studies, methods, and feedback will be solicited. Lessons and comments from the mangrove and seagrass annex revisions are being integrated to streamline the tidal marsh annex’s development and minimize the need for major revisions.
- 5.17. Ms. Di Ticman concluded her presentation by expressing appreciation to the technical working group for their contributions and highlighting the collaborative process in refining and standardizing the regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocols.
- 5.18. Usec. Leones thanked the Secretariat for the updates and opened the floor for discussion.
- 5.19. Discussion:**
- 5.20. The Philippines asked whether other Country Partners have developed their own Blue Carbon Roadmaps, noting that this should be an important early step for those

interested in advancing blue carbon initiatives. They shared that, through support under the National Blue Carbon Action Partnership, the Philippines was able to formulate its draft national Blue Carbon Roadmap.

- 5.21. The Philippines encouraged other partners to consider a similar approach, emphasizing that establishing a clear long-term national strategy on blue carbon would help ensure that the application of the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol is aligned with national priorities and designed for practical and purposeful use.
- 5.22. The Philippines further expressed appreciation for the progress made in consolidating the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol (RBCAP). The Philippines emphasized the importance of testing and validating the protocol's methodologies, noting that Blue Carbon ecosystems include both mangroves and seagrasses, which may also offer opportunities for financing and support coastal governance efforts. It highlighted ongoing national work on geospatial assessment of mangrove and seagrass extent as part of the Natural Resources Geospatial Database and Natural Capital Accounting System. The Philippines noted that it will coordinate with the BCTWG in identifying a suitable site for the testing and validation of the RBCAP.
- 5.23. Mr. Yinfeng Guo of the National Marine Hazard Mitigation Services of MNR, China (NMHMS), extended his congratulations to the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF), the Blue Carbon Technical Working Group (BCTWG), and the consultants for the remarkable progress achieved in developing the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol. He noted that while the protocol represents an important milestone, it cannot function effectively in isolation.
- 5.24. NMHMS provided the following recommendations:
 - the piloting of the Blue Carbon Protocol should be guided by clear Terms of Reference (TOR) and that the PRF issue an official notification to Country and Non-Country Partners regarding pilot site identification, accompanied by the TOR and a capacity development plan to be developed by core BCTWG members, including the PNLC Chair;
 - PRF may engage the PNLC Secretariat in the process, encouraging it to circulate similar notifications to PNLC members to solicit expressions of interest for participation to facilitate local government participation and identify capacity needs;
 - The TOR should define the objectives, requirements, and pathways leading toward future monitoring and certification, and conveyed NMHMS's willingness to support the development of the TOR and capacity plan, as well as to co-organize a regional Blue Carbon training workshop next year; and
 - The focus and scope of such a training workshop could be discussed further within the framework and work plan of the BCTWG, taking into consideration the specific

needs of the identified pilot sites. He looked forward to the Partnership Council's consideration of this proposal to advance certification through structured and guided piloting.

5.25. Conclusion:

5.26. The EEC noted the progress of the BC TWG in developing the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting protocol and recognized the value of pilot-testing, national integration and training and capacity development. The EC noted inputs on the need for TORs for pilot activities, the inclusion of multiple ecosystem types, and issuance of official communication to support coordination.

5.27. Recommendation/s:

- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat review the status of Country Partners' Blue Carbon Roadmaps to gauge country priorities and explore how the Blue Carbon Program can encourage Country Partners to develop or strengthen national blue carbon roadmaps to support coherent implementation of the RBCAP at the country level.
- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat identify pilot sites for RBCAP testing and capacity-building, and ensure that piloting procedures and TORs include clear objectives, requirements, guidance, and pathways for future monitoring.
- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat issue official communication to relevant agencies and networks, including the PNLG Secretariat, to support national coordination and participation in pilot testing and monitoring activities.
- The EEC recommended that the Secretariat engage with technical partners, including NMHMS and other relevant institutions, in developing TORs, identifying capacity needs, and conducting capacity-building activities on blue carbon monitoring.

5.28. Decision:

5.29. The EEC **approved** the RBCAP Main Manual for pilot-testing and supported the refinement of annexes and identification of pilot sites.

6. 18th EAS Partnership Council (EC/34/DOC/06)

- 6.1. Usec. Leones called on Ms. Abigail Cruzada to present the provisional agenda for the 18th EAS Partnership Council Meeting for July 2026.
- 6.2. For the 18th East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council Meeting, the Secretariat has proposed the dates of 21–23 July 2026, based on the next calendar year's schedule. The venue is yet to be confirmed, pending bilateral consultations with interested Country Partners.

- 6.3. The proposed provisional agenda for the Partnership Council Meeting will include the regular agenda items under the Council Session, such as the reports of the Chair and the Executive Director. One of the key agenda items will be the discussion on the selection process and results of the search for the next PRF Executive Director.
- 6.4. Under the Technical Session, updates will be provided on ongoing PRF projects, the Blue Carbon Program, and the Year One reporting of the updated SDS-SEA. Since 2026 precedes the next triennial EAS Congress in 2027, updates will also be provided on preparations for the Congress.
- 6.5. For the Intergovernmental Session, the agenda will include regular items, particularly the approval of the Work Plan and Budget, and updates on the Sustainability Plan, among others.
- 6.6. The Secretariat, therefore, requests the Expanded Executive Committee to review and approve the proposed dates for the 18th Partnership Council Meeting and to take note of the proposed provisional agenda (see EC/34/DOC/06).
- 6.7. Conclusion:**
- 6.8. The EEC reviewed the proposed agenda and of the 18th EAS Partnership Council Meeting and agreed on its conduct on 21-23 July 2026, with a recommendation to provide initial invitations to the EAS PC as early as possible, once the venue is confirmed.
- 6.9. Decision:**
- 6.10. The EEC approved the dates and agenda of the 18th EAS Partnership Council Meeting.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1. For this agenda, Ms. Cruzada presented the upcoming Blue Wave Conference for the information of the Expanded Executive Committee Members. For the information of the Executive Committee and the Partnership Council, the Secretariat informed that the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) will be participating as a co-organizer of the upcoming Blue Wave Conference, to be held from 30–31 October 2025 at the Shenzhen World Exhibition and Convention Center.
- 7.2. The event is being organized in collaboration with the Advanced Institute for Ocean Research of the Southern University of Science and Technology, the Shenzhen Ocean University, and the Shenzhen Institute of Guangdong University.
- 7.3. The Blue Wave Conference is a youth-focused event that aims to advance the implementation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, support the outcomes of the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), and provide an interdisciplinary dialogue platform for early-career ocean professionals from the East

Asian Seas region and beyond, including participants from India and other countries. The event will feature partner organizations such as COBSI, Global Youth Philanthropy, and IMBIR, among others.

- 7.4. The Secretariat will be organizing a side event together with selected youth representatives from ASEAN country partners, who will share their insights and initiatives in addressing key ocean and environmental issues.
- 7.5. Regarding the schedule of review and publication of the proceedings of the 34th Executive Committee (EC) Meeting, the Secretariat will disseminate the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations for the review of the Expanded EC by 22 October 2025. Members will have until 25 October 2025 to review and approve the document.
- 7.6. In parallel, the draft proceedings will be prepared from 22 October to 7 November 2025, to be circulated for review from 10–14 November 2025, with the target approval by 14 November 2025. Following this, and in the absence of further corrections, the final proceedings will be uploaded and disseminated by 17 November 2025 (Monday).
- 7.7. **Conclusion:**
- 7.8. The EEC took note of the update on the PEMSEA Resource Facility's participation in the Blue Wave Conference held on 30–31 October in Shenzhen, China, and its relevance to strengthening youth engagement in the region. The EC also noted the schedule for the review and publication of the 34th EC Meeting Proceedings.
- 7.9. **Recommendation/s:**
- 7.10. The EEC recommended the Secretariat to remind the EAS PC to submit their nominations for Council Co-Chair.
- 7.11. **Decision:**
- 7.12. The EEC took note of the information provided.

8. Closing of the 34th Expanded Executive Committee Meeting

- 8.1. The Chair thanked members for their constructive inputs on the updated SDS-SEA IP to 2030, capacity development measures, resource mobilization direction, and the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol, noting that these advances strengthen ICM implementation, coastal resilience, blue carbon accounting, and financing for ocean and climate action.
- 8.2. He encouraged continued collaboration as the documents move toward Partnership Council consideration and subsequent implementation. Before closing, the Chair reminded Country Partners to submit nominations for the EAS PC Co-Chair, as agreed at the 17th Partnership Council Meeting, to ensure continuity in leadership and governance.

8.3. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am, UTC+8.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Provisional Agenda

October 21, 2025, 9:00 - 12:10 GMT+8

DENR, Philippines and Zoom (Hybrid)

Time	No	Agenda	Presenter	Action Requested
		Arrival of Executive Committee Members		
Expanded Executive Committee (EC) Meeting				
9:00 - 9:10	1.0	Opening of the Meeting and Approval of the Meeting Agenda The Council Chair will open the 34th Executive Committee meeting and request the secretariat to present the Meeting Agenda for review/approval of the Executive Committee (EC) and Partnership Council (CP)	USec. Jonas Leones East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council (PC) Chair	
9:10 - 9:50	2.0	Draft Extended SDS-SEA IP to 2030 and Balanced Scorecard The Secretariat will present and discuss the extended SDS-SEA IP to 2030 and the Balanced Scorecard	Ms. Kate Aguilung Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant Ms. Aimee Gonzales PRF Executive Director	For Approval
9:50 - 10:20	3.0	Organizational Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building Plan The Secretariat will discuss the plans and progress on the PEMSEA Organizational Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building Plan	Ms. Adonis Sucalit PRF Consultant	For Approval
10:20 - 10:40	4.0	Updates on PEMSEA Business Plan PRF will present updates on the status of the PEMSEA Business Plan	Ms. Aimee Gonzales PRF Executive Director	

10:40 -11:20	5.0	Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol PRF will present updates on the Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol.	Ms. Abigail Fiona Cruzada PRF Secretariat Coordinator	For Approval
11:20 - 11:35	6.0	18th EAS Partnership Council PRF will present updates on the preparations for the 18th EAS PC Meeting.	Ms. Aimee Gonzales PRF Executive Director	For Information
11:35 - 11:50	7.0	Any Other Business		
11:50- 11:55		Closing of the 34th Expanded Executive Committee Meeting	USec. Jonas Leones East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council (PC) Chair	
12:00 - 13:00		Lunch		

Annex 2 - [Presentation, meeting documents, and photos](#)

Annex 3 - [List of participants](#)