Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth East Asian Seas Executive Committee Meeting

October 26, 2026
Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Central Office
Quezon City, Philippines
Hybrid, face-to-face and Zoom

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36th PEMSEA Executive Committee Meeting

October 26, 2026 | 1:18 – 3:25 PM (GMT+8)
Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Central Office, Philippines, and Zoom

PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION

I. The 36th PEMSEA Executive Committee (EC) Meeting was held on October 26, 2026 at the Conference Room of the Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Central Office, Quezon City, Philippines, and via Zoom.

The EC members present at the meeting were the Chair of the East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council (PC) Usec. Jonas Leones; Partnership Council Co-Chair Dr. Rasio Ridho Sani; Intergovernmental Council Chair Mr. Le Dai Thang; Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair Dr. Xinwei Yu; and Technical Session Co-Chair Dr. Kazumi Wakita. PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) Executive Director Ms. Aimee Gonzales led the Secretariat. Observers from the Philippines, Indonesia and China were also present.

II. Supporting documents may be found in the Annexes:

A. Annex 1 - Agenda

B. Annex 2 - Meeting documents

C. Annex 3 - Presentation

D. Annex 4 - Photos

E. Annex 5 - List of participants

1. OPENING OF THE 36TH PEMSEA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

1.1. Ms. April Ann Tigulo, PRF Secretariat Coordinator, welcomed the participants and explained the arrangements for the hybrid meeting. She then acknowledged the EC members, the PRF Executive Director and the observers present onsite and online.

1.2. In his opening remarks, the Council Chair Usec. Jonas R. Leones formally opened the 36th EC Meeting and thanked the members for their presence. He recalled the guidance provided during the 18th EAS PC Meeting in Singapore in terms of follow-on actions on some standing agenda items. He explained that the EC would review how the recommendations on business development and resource mobilization plan were being implemented, beginning with the proposed expansion of the Audit Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) to strengthen governance, risk oversight, and financial sustainability.

1.3. The Chair also highlighted the application of the Korea Coastal Management Association (KCMA) as Non-Country Partner, updates on the preparations for the EAS Congress 2027 in Indonesia, the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in the EAS report, and the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol (RBCAP). He encouraged focused and constructive interventions so that the items requiring PC consideration could be carried forward with clear guidance from the EC.

2. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA

2.1. Ms. Tigulo presented the provisional agenda for the EC's review and adoption.

2.2. ED Gonzales informed the body that Dr. Suk-Jae Kwon was unable to attend due to medical reasons. She added that Dr. Wakita and Ms. Maida Aguinaldo, PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program Coordinator, will present the blue carbon agenda on his behalf. The Chair expressed his wishes for Dr. Kwon's recovery.

2.3. **Decision:** The agenda was adopted.

3. EXPANSION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) OF THE PEMSEA AUDIT COMMITTEE (EC/36/DOC/01)

3.1. The Council Chair invited ED Gonzales to present the proposed expansion of the PEMSEA Audit Committee TOR. The proposal is a response to the discussion of the Business Development and Resource Mobilization (BDRM) Plan at the 18th EAS PC Meeting, which expanded the existing Audit Committee instead of establishing a separate Revenue and Risk Committee.

3.2. ED Gonzales explained that the plan set governance and accountability directions in addition to identifying ways to sustain PEMSEA financially and institutionally. At the 18th EAS PC Meeting, some Country Partners voiced concerns on the recommendation to create another committee or asking partners to volunteer to join an additional working committee, and the option of commissioning external experts was also raised. For a small organization, expanding the mandate of the existing Audit Committee to include risk and revenue review functions offered a practical way to guide resource mobilization actions of PEMSEA.

3.3. On independence and governance safeguards, the proposed changes covered conflict-of-interest declarations, limits to compensation, and access to independent authority and professional resources when needed. Internal controls, ethics and anti-fraud safeguards would encompass information technology and cyber security controls, whistleblower mechanisms and ethics oversight.

3.4. On enterprise risk management, the Audit Committee would provide oversight of material business risks, including climate and environmental factors, funding volatility, operational disruptions, regulatory compliance and cybersecurity. The expanded financial sustainability function would consider the business model, resilience and financial continuity. ED Gonzales noted that the proposed revisions were highlighted in the draft TOR circulated to the EC prior to the meeting.

3.5. On membership and expertise, ED Gonzales reported that the Audit Committee has a minimum of three members, meeting the minimum membership requirement. The current Audit Committee has the Council Chair serving as its Chair. Members could be drawn from the EC, PEMSEA partner representatives and qualified external experts. The required expertise included accountancy, financial analysis and reporting, understanding of PEMSEA's operational business, and relevant experience within the United Nations system.

3.6. On the conduct of meetings, ED Gonzales anticipated that the expanded mandate would require meetings at least twice a year, with additional meetings to be convened as deemed necessary. PRF staff and other EC members could be invited to participate. The Secretary would document the meetings and provide copies of the records to the EC.

3.7. **Discussion highlights:**

3.8. The Council Chair asked whether the independence safeguards and the boundary between program oversight and review of proposals and recommendations on sustainability were sufficiently clear. He also invited any changes to the proposed risk and financial sustainability mandate.

3.9. Dr. Rasio Ridho Sani expressed agreement with the proposal. Mr. Le Dai Thang also supported the proposed additions, stating that a new committee did not need to be established and that the expanded TOR of the Audit Committee is acceptable.

3.10. **Decision:** The EC approved the proposed expansion of the Audit Committee TOR and endorsed the revised TOR to the PC for adoption.

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PEMSEA RESOURCE FACILITY (PRF) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (EC/36/DOC/02)

4.1. The Council Chair requested Ms. Rose Jean Manzano, PRF Human Resources and Administrative Officer, to present the process and results of the recruitment of the PRF Executive Director (ED).

4.2. Ms. Manzano shared that the international call received 79 applications, comprising 61 from outside the region and 18 from within the region. Nine applicants met the minimum criteria and four were shortlisted. Following the withdrawal of one shortlisted applicant, three candidates proceeded to the interview. The initial assessment covered six weighted dimensions.

4.3. The shortlist was endorsed to the EC on April 27, 2026, and the panel interviews were held on June 3, 2026. The panel was chaired by the EAS PC Chair Usec. Leones with the Officers of the Technical Committee and the Intergovernmental Committee as members. The panel interview employed 11 competency-based questions across five weighted domains, scored 1–5, a passing score 3.75 out of 5.00.

4.4 Atty. Rebuelta-Teh obtained the highest score of 4.56. The second-ranked candidate obtained 3.87 and the third-ranked candidate obtained 3.61.

4.5. The panel recommended Atty. Rebuelta-Teh on the basis of her long engagement with PEMSEA, standing with partner governments, and knowledge of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). She reported that Atty. Rebuelta-Teh verbally accepted the offer on September 10, following the extension of the offer in August. As of date, the Secretariat is still waiting for her written acceptance of the offer and completion of the appointment and administrative requirements.

4.6. **Discussion highlights:**

4.7. Dr. Sani requested clarification on the number of candidates considered and the identity of the selected candidate. The Secretariat confirmed that three candidates had been interviewed and that Atty. Rebuelta-Teh was the selected candidate. She reiterated the distinction between her verbal acceptance and the still-pending written acceptance.

4.8. Mr. Le Dai Thang cited Annex 4 of the PEMSEA Rules of Governance, referring to the three-year term of the Executive Director and the limit of ten years. He also recalled the agreement during the panel interview, that the alternate candidates should be considered should the preferred candidate decide not to proceed. He reiterated that the recruitment record and the Rules of Governance guide the next steps.

4.9. The Council Chair acknowledged Mr. Le's comments. He agreed that the consideration of the second- or third-ranked candidates, if the selected candidate did not accept the offer, would avoid restarting the entire selection process. He noted that administrative arrangements were being addressed and expressed optimism that the selected candidate would officially accept the position.

4.10. Dr. Wakita asked when the official announcement would be made to the PC. The Chair stated that PRF is waiting for the written response from the selected candidate within the week and the formal announcement is expected by mid-November. He explained that the transition period also needed to be considered because the candidate holds an executive position and has administrative tasks to complete before assuming the role of ED.

4.11. The discussion settled on the second week of November as the target for the official announcement, subject to completion of the candidate's acceptance and appointment documents.

4.12. Dr. Rasio requested for the details of the recruitment process, including the ranking and assessment process. The Secretariat responded that it would share the details after the meeting.

4.13. **Decision:** The EC noted the recruitment outcome. Formal announcement of the incoming PRF Executive Director was deferred to the second week of November, pending signing of the successful candidate's appointment documents.

5. DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 19TH EAS PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING IN JULY 2027 (EC/36/DOC/03)

5.1. Ms. Tigulo presented the draft provisional agenda for the 19th EAS PC Meeting in July 2027. The meeting is proposed to be conducted on July 21-22, 2027 subject to the host country's confirmation.

5.2. The provisional agenda for the Council Session included the admission of KCMA as a Non-Country Partner (NCP), subject to the EC's consideration of its application; the report of the Council Chair; the PRF Executive Director's report for 2026; and review and recommendations on NCP engagement in PEMSEA.

5.3. The Technical Session would discuss the updates on the EAS Congress 2027, the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan for 2027-2028, the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program, and the PEMSEA Young Leaders Program.

5.4. The Intergovernmental Session includes the Ninth Ministerial Forum and Ministerial Declaration, updates on the PEMSEA Sustainability Plan, the PRF Work Plan and Budget for 2027-2028, other business, and the summary and approval of conclusions and recommendations. A site visit is considered optional depending on the host.

5.5. **Discussion highlights:** Mr. Sayid Muhadhar of the Ministry of Environment (MOE) Indonesia expressed agreement with the proposed agenda on behalf of Indonesia as host of the EAS Congress 2027. Mr. Le Dai Thang also agreed with the provisional agenda. The Chair noted Viet Nam as the prospective host and invited any further comments.

5.6. **Decision:** The EC adopted and approved the draft provisional agenda for the 19th EAS PC Meeting in July 2027.

6. APPLICATION OF KOREA COASTAL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION FOR ADMISSION AS A NON-COUNTRY PARTNER (EC/36/DOC/04)

6.1. At the invitation of the Council Chair, Ms. Tigulo presented the KCMA application and the Secretariat's review under the PEMSEA Rules of Governance. She first outlined the current NCP partnership and the measures being taken to strengthen engagement.

6.2. Ms. Tigulo explained that NCPs collaborate with Country Partners (CPs) to implement the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan according to their mandates, capacities and resources. PEMSEA currently has 22 NCPs, comprising founding partners that signed the Haikou Partnership Agreement in 2006 and new partners that subsequently entered into formal cooperation with PEMSEA.

6.3. The Secretariat classified the NCPs into four engagement levels, of which 11 are active partners, five partially engaged partners, two requiring further engagement discussions, and four inactive partners. She clarified that the categories describe the level of engagement and does not constitute formal withdrawal from the partnership.

6.4. The Secretariat proposed legacy status for Coastal Management Center (CMC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) / Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Program (SGP), and United Nations Environment Programme / Global Programme of Action (UNEP/GPA), and proposed initiating the process for removal of Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), subject to due process.

6.5. Measures to improve NCP engagement included bilateral discussions, particularly following changes in leadership or focal persons; involving NCPs as resource persons and

exploring other forms of collaboration; renewing written agreements; and encouraging participation in PEMSEA governance and project activities.

6.6. KCMA submitted its letter of intent on September 18, 2026, together with a statement and declaration of adherence to the Haikou Partnership Agreement and commitment to the SDS-SEA. Other supporting documents include a form identifying potential areas of contribution and a certificate of approval for its establishment as a corporation. Additional documents submitted on September 30, described prior collaboration with PEMSEA and CPs, relevant projects, regional coverage, international activities and its Articles of Association.

6.7. KCMA is a nonprofit incorporated association based in Seoul, Republic of Korea, represented by Dr. Moon-Sang Kwon. Its mandates include providing advice to national and local governments on coastal management, conducting technical exchange, education and awareness, forums and other knowledge-sharing events, and implementing practical coastal management projects.

6.8. The Secretariat found KCMA qualified for admission on three grounds: legal status, engagement in SDS-SEA implementation through prior work with PEMSEA or CPs, and international activities extending beyond the Republic of Korea. Ms. Tigulo then requested the EC to endorse the application of KCMA as NCP to the PC and authorize the Secretariat to prepare the corresponding recommendation resolution.

6.9. **Discussion highlights:** Dr. Sani expressed support to KCMA’s admission, noting that PEMSEA is a partnership and that new partners bring knowledge and networks that strengthen its work in the East Asian Seas. Mr. Le also expressed support for KCMA's admission and Dr. Wakita indicated her agreement.

6.10. **Decision:** The EC endorsed KCMA's application for admission as an NCP to the PC for its confirmation. The PRF Secretariat was authorized to prepare the documentation recommending KCMA's admission.

7. UPDATES ON EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS 2027 PREPARATIONS (EC/36/DOC/05)

7.1. The Council Chair invited Dr. Rasio Ridho Sani, Council Co-Chair representing host country Indonesia, to present the proposed theme, dates and preparations for the EAS Congress 2027. Dr. Rasio welcomed additional information from the Indonesian focal points and acknowledged the support of Tangerang Regency.

7.2. The presentation set out the theme, "Rivers to Reefs, Coastlines to Ocean: Accelerating Source-to-Sea Actions for a Shared East Asian Blue Future." Dr. Rasio explained that the Congress would help move commitments into implementation, in the context of

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its 30x30 target, and the United Nations Ocean Decade.

7.3. The regional narrative linked rivers, deltas, coastlines and the ocean. Rivers to Reefs connected river networks and deltas across mainland Asia, while Coastlines to Ocean linked continental and archipelagic areas, including Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan. The narrative was intended to bring together ecological, cultural and economic perspectives.

7.4. The objectives of the Congress are to advance policies on transboundary pollution, climate displacement and integrated basin management; translate research into practical coastal management applications; connect local and digital innovation with deployment resources; promote private-sector finance for coastal resilience, including blue bonds and blended finance; and strengthen youth and cultural participation in policy.

7.5. Four tracks were outlined: (1) source-to-sea, biodiversity and progressive policies; (2) the future blue economy, smart finance and private-sector participation; (3) research, technology and localized innovation; and (4) inclusive governance, youth aspirations and cultural integration. Dr. Rasio emphasized that sustainable finance was needed to maintain and restore biodiversity, while technology, including artificial intelligence, could support activities such as reef restoration, community water sensing and satellite monitoring.

7.6. The venue concept incorporated a zero-waste Shared Waters Pavilion, with film, live music, immersive art, virtual reality and local solution hubs combining scientific evidence with creative storytelling. The Congress would involve decision-makers, investors, financial and scientific institutions, civil society, indigenous peoples, small-scale fishing groups and youth.

7.7. The four proposed outcomes are the Tangerang Ministerial Declaration, a source-to-sea or blue economy investment pipeline, a regional breakthrough innovation network, and a Shared Waters Youth and Culture Manifesto. These outcomes are intended to translate the Congress discussions into action.

7.8. Indonesia proposed the Congress to be conducted on October 19-21, 2027 at the Atria Hotel Gading Serpong, Tangerang, Indonesia. Dr. Rasio described Tangerang's proximity to Jakarta and the airport, its advanced coastal development, and the opportunity for the Congress to contribute to national and local coastal management. The national and local focal points for the Congress would be Mr. Sayid Muhadhar of MOE and Mr. Erwin Mawandy of Tangerang Regency, respectively.

7.9. **Discussion highlights:**

7.10. Mr. Le Dai Thang thanked Indonesia for hosting the Congress and expressed support for the proposed theme and dates. Given the importance of the theme, topics and Ministerial Declaration, he requested that the PRF circulate the documents formally to CPs for review and further contributions. He also proposed including discussion of implementation of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in the region.

7.11. The Council Chair added that consistency of BBNJ commitments should also be one of the discussions during the Congress, including concerns beyond national jurisdiction.

7.12. Dr. Rasio welcomed the proposal and emphasized that the Ministerial Declaration should demonstrate political commitment. He described Tangerang as an actively developing coastal area with nearby small islands and expressed the hope that the Congress would provide useful inputs on management of mangrove, reef and seagrass ecosystems.

7.13 Dr. Wakita thanked Indonesia and asked whether the proposed dates had been checked against national events in the partner countries. Dr. Rasio referred the detailed date discussion to the Indonesian focal points. Dr. Sayid invited Ms. Aditya Yuniarti to provide the clarification.

7.14. Ms. Yuniarti explained that October and November windows had been considered. She favored the October dates because of the expected November Conference of Parties (COP) schedule and referred to prior consultations with the PRF and Singapore as the incoming ASEAN Chair.

7.15. ED Gonzales explained that the PRF maintained a global calendar of national holidays, festivals, international and Philippine events. The dates sought to avoid the first week of October, associated with holidays in China, and major International Maritime Organization meetings in the following week. Early announcement would also allow other regional organizations to reserve the Congress dates.

7.16. Dr. Xinwei Yu expressed appreciation to Indonesia and looked forward to the Congress. She encouraged the PRF and the Government of Indonesia to release information early so that the participation of ministers could be secured.

7.17. **Decision:** The EC endorsed the proposed EAS Congress 2027 theme and dates for PC consideration. The Congress dates would be October 19-21, 2027, with the venue at Atria Hotel Gading Serpong, Tangerang. The PRF and the Government of Indonesia would work toward formal announcement of the Congress dates and theme in November 2026.

8. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPA) IN THE EAST ASIAN SEAS REPORT (EC/36/DOC/06)

8.1. ED Gonzales presented the status of the MPA report. She recalled that the report aimed to consolidate evidence on MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), strengthen effective conservation, and support the 30x30 target of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It is intended as a technical resource and living document that could also inform resource mobilization.

8.2. The report comprised a regional overview and MPA profiles for 14 countries, a section on the Regional Collaborative Network on East Asian Seas MPAs involving nine regional organizations, and a section on recommendations. Lao PDR was not included among the country MPA profiles because it is landlocked.

8.3. The principal recommendations are to adopt a seascape approach, align regional initiatives to minimize duplication and improve efficiency, improve MPA quality and effectiveness, strengthen OECMs, promote integrated governance, and mobilize sustainable financing. Supporting approaches include integrated coastal management, marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based fisheries management, including for large marine ecoregions and transboundary MPAs.

8.4. ED Gonzales reported on the feedback received after the July PC meeting. Timor-Leste had asked that the report be aligned with the Coral Triangle Initiative, which is already part of the collaborative network. Countries' recommendations on content and terminology had been taken into account. She also pointed to four opportunities: COBSEA's GEF-9 proposal, presenting the report at Asia-Pacific Ocean Week in Bangkok, the Republic of Korea's pilot registration of marine OECMs, and technical expertise from IUCN.

8.5. Comments had been consolidated and sent to CPs and selected NCPs together with the near-final report. Partners were also asked to confirm their names and organizations for the acknowledgements. ED Gonzales noted responses from Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam, and clarified during the presentation that China had also responded.

8.6. The initial actions requested were to (a) endorse the release of the report by the end of October, (b) endorse the report to the PC as a technical resource rather than an official PEMSEA position paper, and (c) note the planned presentation at Asia-Pacific Ocean Week. ED Gonzales clarified that the presentation is intended to share the work and support its use, rather than constitute a major formal launch.

8.7. **Discussion highlights:**

8.8. Dr. Xinwei Yu expressed appreciation for the work undertaken but noted that some Country Partners had raised concerns about the report. She asked PRF whether the CPs' previous comments had been reflected in the latest version, and recalled that country confirmation had been required because of conflicting data and other issues. She questioned presenting the report as final before those concerns had been addressed. She stressed that, in the interest of PEMSEA and its goal of uniting efforts in the region, the MPA report should not contain conflicting data that could imply sovereignty disputes, and that its release should be subject to no objection, if not confirmation, from the CPs, even if the report is presented as a living document or technical guide. She stated that she could not endorse the release without this condition.

8.9. ED Gonzales responded that the comments received had been taken into account and that the Secretariat had prepared a record showing the comments and the PRF responses. She requested that countries identify explicitly which portions they considered unresolved, so that the Secretariat could address them directly. She reiterated that the report is a technical resource describing regional progress, rather than a statement of official country positions.

8.10. Dr. Yu requested that the report and comment record be sent by email rather than only through a Google Drive link, because some participants could not access Google Drive. The Council Chair proposed a further period for final review, including an explicit request for concurrence or further comments from CPs.

8.11. ED Gonzales proposed dating the report to show the status of the information and treating it as a living document, since country targets and updates continue to evolve. She also proposed removing the PEMSEA logo to avoid implying an official position. Dr. Rasio supported the proposal and requested that the document be sent again to partners.

8.12. Dr. Yu sought clarification on the final release date and the process if no further objections were received. The discussion settled on November 15, 2026 as the final date for country feedback. The Chair explained that CPs would be informed of the deadline and that, in the absence of further comments, the text would be treated as agreed for finalization. Dr. Yu welcomed recirculation before final confirmation.

8.13. **Decision:** The EC agreed that the PRF Secretariat would recirculate the near-final report and the record of responses directly to CPs, with feedback requested by November 15, 2026. The report would be treated as a dated, living technical resource, rather than an official position paper of PEMSEA. The planned Asia-Pacific Ocean Week presentation would reflect its draft status. The agreed approach would be conveyed to the PC for notation.

9. PEMSEA BLUE CARBON PROGRAM AND REGIONAL BLUE CARBON ACCOUNTING PROTOCOL (EC/36/DOC/07)

9.1. The Council Chair invited Ms. Maida Aguinaldo to present the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program updates on behalf of Dr. Suk-Jae Kwon. Ms. Aguinaldo explained that the program had progressed from a zero-budget concept in 2023 to activities organized under five work streams: supply, demand, measuring and monitoring, training and capacity development, and strategic guidance and fundraising.

9.2. On supply, the initial assessment examined the extent and status of habitats, policies and regulations, management arrangements, issues and interest in blue carbon sites. The findings had been disseminated and discussed at the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development (PNLG) Forum and informed pilot-site readiness. A Regional State of Blue Carbon report supported by National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service (NMHMS) China was on hold pending review of an ASEAN report on blue carbon and financing, so that the regional work could address gaps rather than duplicate existing efforts.

9.3. On demand, a commissioned market assessment identified strong and rising demand in Asia for high-integrity blue carbon, driven by corporate net-zero commitments, Article 6 transactions, lower monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) costs, and instruments such as blue bonds and blended finance. Bottlenecks included supply readiness, standardized MRV, tenure and benefit-sharing arrangements, and aggregation of small sites into portfolios suitable for institutional investment.

9.4. The demand assessment informed workshops and market engagement, and supported the Blue Carbon and Biodiversity for People, Adaptation, and Sustainable Seas (BluePASS) proposal on blue carbon and biodiversity certification. Its priorities include funding readiness, MRV standardization and aggregation. Ms. Aguinaldo also referred to a seminar on blue carbon and biodiversity markets supported by the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI).

9.5. On measuring and monitoring, Ms. Aguinaldo described work on accounting standards and protocols, and on certification. The RBCAP drew on eight protocols from six countries, including national standards and university methods, and had also been compared with Verra. It had undergone consultations with experts, CPs, NCPs and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC), and had been refined following the PC's recommendations.

9.6. On training and capacity development, activities had included a roundtable discussion in 2023 and subsequent seminars, workshops and training supported by universities, NMHMS China, the Republic of Korea and other partners.

9.7 On strategic guidance and fundraising, the Blue Carbon Technical Working Group (BC TWG) had been meeting regularly, with the next meeting scheduled for October 28.

9.8. The current RBCAP package comprises six manuals: the main methodology, protocols for mangrove, seagrass and salt marsh ecosystems, and manuals on mapping and environmental parameters. Revised drafts and a record of revisions would be shared with the PC and experts who had reviewed the documents.

9.9. Additional annexes on seaweeds, tidal flats and peatlands had been requested by CPs. Existing protocols had been reviewed to identify the gaps needed to standardize the new annexes with the current methodology, while funding was being sought for their development and for testing the existing protocols. Four draft training manuals had also been prepared. A training-of-trainers activity is proposed for 2027 for PNLC members and government partners at national and local levels, subject to funding availability.

9.10. Pilot testing of the RBCAP is underway in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. The partner institutions identified were Bogor University for Bontang, the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute for eight municipalities and a potential additional site in Bataan Province, and Prince of Songkla University for its partner sites in Thailand. The Republic of Korea had expressed interest in pilot testing in two sites but required further discussions with government partners. The implementing institutions are PNLC members, with pilot activities linked to PNLG sites.

9.11. PRF also took note of NMHMS' initiative to pilot a blue carbon program in salt marshes and seagrass beds, including measuring and monitoring in the Yellow River Delta of Dongying City, a PNLG member. The program is still ongoing and results will be shared to the PC. This initiative was reported at the 18th EAS PC in Singapore last July 2026.

9.12. Ms. Aguinaldo reported that a biodiversity crediting scheme for Southeast Asia is in final draft and would be presented to the BC TWG on October 28. Funding had also been obtained from the Republic of Korea for a blue carbon registry to be developed by the UP Marine Science Institute, with completion envisaged by April 2027 for review by the PC and EC.

9.13. She invited the EC members to the Second International Seminar on Blue Carbon and Biodiversity Credit Markets: Bridging Supply and Demand, to be held in hybrid format on November 20, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (GMT+8), with support from the KMI. The program and invitations would be shared with interested participants.

9.14. **Discussion highlights:**

9.15. Dr. Wakita acknowledged Dr. Kwon's leadership and recalled the blue carbon regional workshop held in Busan on September 7, 2026. Participants from China, Thailand, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and the Philippines had discussed implementation at the

local level. She welcomed confirmation of implementing sites in three countries and the strong interest expressed by local governments at the PNLG Forum in learning about and implementing blue carbon activities. She viewed this as an opportunity to strengthen work between PNLG and PNLC.

9.16. The Council Chair noted that the Philippines was beginning discussions on blue carbon under its blue economy initiatives and indicated that he would meet with the PRF Secretariat for guidance on next steps.

9.17. Dr. Rasio asked how the members could be encouraged to use the RBCAP and how implementation and effectiveness would be ensured. He also asked how the regional protocol would relate to global certification organizations and standards associated with carbon emissions and accounting.

9.18. The Chair agreed that a standard accounting protocol was needed, while recognizing that countries face different situations. He considered the regional protocol a first step and a basis from which CPs could assess and adapt an approach suited to their circumstances.

9.19. ED Gonzales emphasized that implementation would not occur automatically after publication of a protocol. PRF was therefore pursuing pilot testing with partners in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, including the prospective pilot in Bataan Province. She also noted the Philippines' national blue carbon policy and discussions on developing a national accounting protocol that could draw on PEMSEA's regional work on blue carbon.

9.20. Dr. Wakita committed to relay the EC's comments to Dr. Kwon so that the BC TWG could address the implementation questions, and to provide the PC and EC with continuing feedback on progress.

9.21. **Conclusion:** The EC noted the updates on the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and RBCAP. The Secretariat would record the implementation and follow-up points raised by members.

10. VENUE FOR THE 37TH EC MEETING AND 19TH PC MEETING (EC/36/DOC/08)

10.1. The Chair introduced the item, noting that early consideration of venues and dates for PEMSEA's governance meetings would help the prospective hosts plan and allow partners to estimate attendance budgets. Ms. Tigulo presented the proposed arrangements for the two meetings in 2027.

10.2. The 37th EC Meeting was proposed for 23 or 24 March 2027 in Manila, Philippines. The 19th EAS PC Meeting was proposed for the week of 19 July or 26 July 2027 in Da Nang,

Viet Nam, subject to the host's confirmation. The PRF had submitted a proposal to Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Environment concerning hosting of the PC meeting.

10.3. **Conclusion:** No further comments or objections were raised. The EC noted the proposed arrangements, and the Secretariat would follow up on the hosting and planning requirements.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (EC/36/DOC/09)

11.1. The Council Chair invited EC members and the Secretariat to raise matters not covered by the agenda.

11.2 ED Gonzales informed the EC of the ongoing work on a supplemental hosting agreement with the Philippine Government, covering technical and administrative support for the Secretariat. She expressed appreciation to the Philippine Government for the release of funds for rehabilitation and refurbishment of the PRF building, and expressed hope that the EC would see the renovated building at its meeting in March 2027.

12. MEETING CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (EC/36/DOC/10)

12.1. At the invitation of the Council Chair, Ms. Tigulo presented the summary of conclusions and recommendations for review. The read-back covered adoption of the agenda; the Audit Committee TOR; recruitment and announcement of the incoming Executive Director; the 19th EAS PC Meeting provisional agenda; KCMA admission; EAS Congress preparations; the MPA report; blue carbon activities; and the proposed EC and PC meeting arrangements.

12.2. Dr. Rasio requested the recruitment-process record during the read-back, and the Secretariat agreed to provide it to the EC. Ms. Yuniarti corrected the COP dates mentioned in the Congress item. The summary also recorded recirculation of the MPA report for country feedback and the November 15 deadline.

12.3. The Chair asked members to identify omissions, inaccuracies or additions. Dr. Rasio expressed his agreement with the conclusions. No further comments or objections were raised.

12.4. **Decision:** The EC adopted the summary of conclusions and recommendations during the 36th EC Meeting.

13. PRF SECRETARIAT ANNOUNCEMENTS (EC/36/DOC/11)

13.1. Ms. Tigulo presented the timetable for review and publication of the 36th EC meeting proceedings. The summary of conclusions and recommendations would be submitted to the EC on October 27 for final review and approval. Drafting of the proceedings would continue until November 6, followed by circulation to the EC on November 6 for review and approval through November 17.

13.2. The Chair clarified that publication of the proceedings was scheduled for November 18 and asked members to take note of the review and publication timetable. No comments were raised.

14. CLOSING OF THE 36TH PEMSEA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

14.1. The Council Chair thanked the EC members and the Secretariat for their participation and preparations. He recapped approval of the expanded Audit Committee TOR; endorsement of KCMA's application; the proposed Congress theme and dates; the MPA report discussions; notation of blue carbon updates; and the proposed venues for the next EC and PC meetings.

14.2. On the incoming Executive Director, the Chair referred to approval of the appointment while reiterating the time allowed for signing and finalization of documents and the intention to make the formal announcement in the second week of November.

14.3. Looking ahead to the EAS Congress 2027 in Indonesia, the Chair advised that the PRF would provide regular updates so that the EC and PC could remain aligned and address issues promptly. He emphasized that the Congress would rely on PC technical inputs for the program, sessions and other substantive elements, and encouraged partners to respond promptly.

14.4. The Chair requested prompt review of the meeting outcomes and follow-up actions so that the endorsed items could be carried forward to the PC.

14. 5 He then declared the 36th PEMSEA EC Meeting closed.

Annex 1.0 - Agenda of the 36th PEMSEA Executive Committee Meeting

October 26, 2026 | DENR Central Office, Philippines and via Zoom

Time	Agenda	Presenter	Action requested
1:30 PM	Opening of the Meeting and Approval of the Meeting Agenda	Atty. Jonas Leones	For adoption
1:35	1.0 Expansion of the Terms of Reference of the PEMSEA Audit Committee	Ms. Aimee Gonzales	For approval
1:45	2.0 Announcement of the PRF Executive Director	Atty. Jonas Leones	For information
1:55	3.0 Draft Provisional Agenda for the 19th EAS PC Meeting in July 2027	Ms. April Ann Tigulo	For approval
2:05	4.0 Application of KCMA for Admission as a Non-Country Partner	Ms. April Ann Tigulo	For endorsement to PC
2:15	5.0 Updates on EAS Congress 2027 Preparations	Dr. Rasio Ridho Sani	For endorsement to PC
2:25	6.0 Marine Protected Areas in the East Asian Seas Report	Ms. Aimee Gonzales	For endorsement to PC
2:35	7.0 PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol	Dr. Suk-Jae Kwon; presented by Ms. Maida Aguinaldo	For notation
2:50	8.0 Venue for the 37th EC Meeting and 19th PC Meeting	Ms. April Ann Tigulo	For notation and discussion
3:00	9.0 Any Other Business	EC members	For discussion
3:10	10.0 Meeting Conclusions and Recommendations	Ms. April Ann Tigulo	For approval
3:25	11.0 Secretariat Announcements	Ms. April Ann Tigulo	For information
3:30	Closing of the Meeting	Atty. Jonas Leones	

Annex 2.0 - Meeting Documents

link

Reference	Meeting document
EC/36/DOC/01	Expansion of the Terms of Reference of the PEMSEA Audit Committee
EC/36/DOC/02	Announcement of the PEMSEA Resource Facility Executive Director
EC/36/DOC/03	Draft Provisional Agenda for the 19th EAS Partnership Council Meeting in July 2027
EC/36/DOC/04	Application of Korea Coastal Management Association for Admission as a Non-Country Partner
EC/36/DOC/05	Updates on East Asian Seas Congress 2027 Preparations
EC/36/DOC/06	Marine Protected Areas in the East Asian Seas Report
EC/36/DOC/07	PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and Regional Blue Carbon Accounting Protocol
EC/36/DOC/08	Venue for the 37th EC Meeting and 19th PC Meeting
EC/36/DOC/09	Any Other Business
EC/36/DOC/10	Meeting Conclusions and Recommendations
EC/36/DOC/11	PRF Secretariat Announcements

Annex 3.0 - Presentation

link

Annex 4.0 - Photos

link

Annex 5.0 - List of Participants

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Atty. Jonas Leones
EAS PC Chair
Undersecretary, Policy, Planning and International Affairs
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Philippines

Mr. Rasio Ridho Sani (Online)
EAS PC Co-Chair
Deputy Minister, Pollution Control and Environmental Damage
Indonesia

Dr. Kazumi Wakita (Online)
Technical Session Co-Chair
Professor, School of Marine Science and Technology, Tokai University
Japan

Mr. Le Dai THANG (Online)
Intergovernmental Session Chair
Deputy Director, Department of Marine Resources Control and Marine, Island Environment Protection
Vietnam Agency of Seas and Islands (VASI)
Ministry of Agriculture and Environment
Viet Nam (MAE)

Dr. Xinwei YU (Online)
Intergovernmental Session Co-Chair
Director, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Natural Resources
P.R. China

OBSERVERS

China

Dr. Linlin ZHAO (Online)
Deputy Director
China-PEMSEA Center
MPA Expert / Consultant
First Institute of Oceanography
P.R. China

Ms. Xiaotong ZHU (Online)
Program Manager
China-PEMSEA Center
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Indonesia

Mr. Sayid Muhadhar (Online)
Director
Coastal and Marine Pollution and Damage Control
Indonesia

Ms. Aditya Yuniarti (Online)
Associate Environmental Impact Assessor
Directorate of Coastal and Marine Pollution and Damage Control, Deputy for Pollution Control and Environmental Damage
Indonesia

Indah Fionita (Online)

Zulfa Rohadatul Aisy (Online)

Amelia Anggita (Online)

Aufa Fadhliah (Online)

Philippines

Dr. Al Orolfo
Director
Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

Ms. Maritess Romena
OIC Chief / Assistant Division Chief
Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service
Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

Ms. Khasmer Marbella
Project Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service
Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF)

Ms. Aimee Gonzales
Executive Director

Ms. April Tigulo
Secretariat Coordinator

Ms. Ma. Niña Yambao
Secretariat Assistant

Ms. Klyra Orbien
Communications Officer

Ms. Rose Jean Manzano
HR and Administrative Officer

Mr. Jun Dacaymat
IT System Administrator

Ms. Maida Aguinaldo (Online)
Blue Carbon Program Coordinator