

**COBSEA**

COORDINATING BODY ON THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA

## Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter

17-18 June 2019, Bali, Indonesia  
Meeting Report



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**1. Summary**

The Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WG ML) took place on 17-18 June 2019 preceding the 24th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 24) of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) in Bali, Indonesia. The Meeting brought together marine litter focal points of participating countries in preparation of the IGM 24. The aim was to provide an update on relevant regional and global processes on marine litter, share ongoing country initiatives and COBSEA projects in the region, and revise further the draft Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) for consideration at the IGM 24. An advanced draft of the revised RAP MALI was prepared which, with further amendments, was subsequently adopted at IGM 24. This report presents an overview of meeting proceedings and outcomes.

**2. Opening**

In their opening remarks, the newly appointed COBSEA Coordinator, the Deputy Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Director General for Environmental Pollution and Degradation Control of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia, emphasized the importance and urgency of measures in the region to prevent and reduce marine pollution from plastic litter in particular. The speakers reiterated the commitment of Indonesia, UNEP, and the Regional Seas Programme to coordinate and accelerate efforts to tackle marine litter in the East Asian Seas region by implementing United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions, strengthening COBSEA mechanisms for regional action, and leveraging the Regional Capacity Center on Clean Seas (RC3S) established by Indonesia.

At the time of the meeting, the Terms of Reference for the WG ML were envisaged to be formally adopted by the IGM 24 on 19-20 June in Bali, Indonesia, directly following the Working Group meeting. It was agreed that Indonesia as the host of both meetings would serve as Chair and the Coordinator of the COBSEA Secretariat would act as Rapporteur to the Meeting and would compile a meeting report to be shared with participating countries. It was emphasized that the meeting was technical in nature and provided input in relation to the work by COBSEA and to inform formal outcomes for consideration by the IGM. The meeting of the WG ML was convened with the mandate given in the resolution of the 2nd Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA to further the development and finalization of the COBSEA RAP MALI and the Terms of Reference for the WG ML prior to their proposed adoption at the IGM 24.

### 3. Update on regional and global marine litter processes

UNEP presented an update on regional and global processes on marine litter, including UNEA resolution 4/6 on Marine Litter and Microplastics. UNEA resolutions over the years have requested UNEP to provide support to the development of marine litter action plans and have called for greater collaboration and coordination through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML). UNEP highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen scientific and technological knowledge on marine litter, including the assessment of sources and pathways, harmonizing monitoring methodologies and gathering information to inform policy making. The presentation included planned work of the **Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group to examine options to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics** over the coming years, including a meeting planned for November 2019 in Bangkok; to take stock of existing activities and actions; to identify technical and financial resources or support mechanisms; to encourage partnerships as well as increased cooperation to develop source inventories, improve of waste management, raise awareness raising, and promote innovation; and to analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities. She introduced the [\*Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean\*](#) developed by the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) Working Group 40 on Plastics and Micro-plastics in the Ocean and the Working Group's proposed work on marine litter issues.

UNEP further introduced activities of the **Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)**, including a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on marine litter and the development of a methodology for hot spot assessment of plastic waste leakage and appropriate technologies in partnership with the East China Normal University (ECNU). Indonesia welcomed support for a methodology for hot spot assessment and prioritization of locations for hot spots in the region, to build on existing hotspot assessments conducted in Indonesia in 2018. The Secretariat noted that support for regionally coherent approaches and capacity building would also be provided through the joint COBSEA and UNEP project 'SEA circular' (see below). Ongoing GPML work on hotspot assessment in Africa will conclude in September 2019 with the establishment of a baseline and the development of a methodology to inform interventions and opportunities for investment. Recognizing the importance of collaboration, sharing lessons learned and avoiding duplication, the COBSEA Secretariat will ensure coordination with the GPML and other agencies with a mandate on marine issues, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The COBSEA Secretariat and a representative of Thailand, which holds the Chairmanship the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2019, shared an update on the **ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-25 and ASEAN Action Framework on Marine Debris**. The former provided guidance for coordination between COBSEA and ASEAN in Southeast Asia and enabled members of both regional bodies to streamline their efforts on marine litter in line with respective policy frameworks. The recent Bangkok Declaration on Marine Debris and ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris outline Member States' commitment to collaborate on the issue and provide clear synergies with COBSEA's mandate. Thailand shared ASEAN's plans to adopt the documents later that month and support the development of country action plans to implement the Framework. Thailand is currently seeking support from the World Bank to continue efforts and offered to share lessons learned on their national action plan.

A representative of Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC-WESTPAC) shared an update on preparations for the **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**, including the development of an action plan in May 2019 and a regional workshop in Japan in July 2019. Participants were invited to contribute to ensure the inclusion of regional perspectives in the implementation of the UN Decade at the global level. Potential opportunities to leverage the UN Decade and align efforts were being identified

between COBSEA and WESTPAC and the Secretariat noted that the forthcoming COBSEA Sustainable Development Goal Outlook could help to articulate COBSEA’s contribution to UN Decade.

**4. Revision of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter**

The COBSEA Secretariat presented progress made since the 2nd Extraordinary IGM in 2018 and the meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WG ML) in December 2018 to revise the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI). The 2nd Extraordinary IGM of COBSEA had discussed an initial draft revision of RAP MALI and agreed steps for further development and finalization of the revised RAP MALI, including national consultation and convening of at least one regional workshop, with a decision to be made at IGM 24. At its meeting in December 2018, the WG ML recommended that the revised RAP MALI would retain the four main actions and focus on a smaller number of ‘directional’ activities reflecting collective priorities of countries, key gaps and COBSEA’s comparative advantage. In January 2019, the COBSEA Secretariat prepared process guidance for national consultations on the RAP MALI and further developed the revised document based on country inputs, including the revision of the draft WG ML Terms of Reference. Both documents had been shared with participating countries for discussion at the WG ML in June preceding the IGM 24.

WG members noted and welcomed the integration of comments provided by participating countries to the Secretariat on the basis of national consultations. During the meeting, WG members made structural as well as substantive edits to the revised draft of the RAP MALI, including:

- combining the section on background and rationale and streamlining language to include a joint definition of marine litter and priorities in the region;
- focussing and modifying the list of specific objectives to link more clearly to actions;
- specifying modalities for implementation, including rolling work plans as the basis for progress reporting on the COBSEA RAP MALI;
- confirming four main actions and highlighting that the detailed description of activities will serve as a guide to inform the development of rolling work plans for the implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI.

Working group members also provided updated information to amend the table on the current status of policy and planning frameworks relevant to addressing marine litter (contained in paragraph 7 of UNEP/COBSEA IGM 24/4), as follows (subject to ongoing updates):

Country	National policy/planning framework on or relevant to marine litter	Lead institution/body
Cambodia	Several laws and regulations address generation, management and discharge of waste.	Ministry of Environment, National Committee for Sustainable Development
PR China	Several laws and regulations address generation, management and discharge of waste.	Ministry of Ecology and Environment
Indonesia	National Plan of Action on Marine Debris 2018-2025; Presidential Decree 83/2018	Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and 16 other ministries

RO Korea	Draft of 3 <sup>rd</sup> National Marine Litter Management Plan 2019-2023.	Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, with Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation and Marine Litter Management Centre
Malaysia	Malaysia's Roadmap Towards Zero Single-use Plastics 2018-2030. No over-arching planning framework specific to marine litter.	Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC) leads implementation of the roadmap. Joint ministerial committee chaired by MESTECC and Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Lead national agency on marine litter not confirmed.
Philippines	Several laws and regulations address generation, management and discharge of waste.	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Singapore	Several laws and regulations address generation, management and discharge of waste.	No lead agency on marine litter; 'whole-of-government approach' including Coastal and Marine Environment Policy Committee (an inter-agency policy committee) and the Technical Committee on Coastal and Marine Environment (which comprises agencies and experts, including academics)
Thailand	Roadmap for Plastic and Waste Management 2018-2030. Thailand is planning to develop a national action plan on marine debris building on the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris.	Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, working through a Task Force of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, including the Pollution Control Department, Department of Environmental Quality Promotion, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, as well as with Ministries of Interior, Commerce and Finance
Vietnam	Several laws and regulations address generation, management and discharge of waste.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; and National Coordinating Body for Integrated Coastal Management

Other issues discussed included the role of the WG ML as described in the draft Terms of Reference, such as to meet periodically between IGMs, to support the implementation of the RAP MALI, the development of rolling work plans, and the assessment of progress. The Secretariat noted that while the RAP MALI had no 'expiration date', it should align with the cycles of the Strategic Directions to increase cohesion. Countries noted that the RAP MALI was very ambitious and flagged that the implementation of activities would require appropriate resources. Moreover, the RAP MALI was identified as a guiding framework to enable regionally



coherent approaches to marine litter monitoring and planning and to support nationally appropriate efforts toward reducing marine litter pollution.

The Secretariat addressed country comments and revised the draft of the RAP MALI in line with discussions at the WG ML meeting and shared the revised version with participating countries for finalization and adoption at the IGM 24. The final 2019 COBSEA RAP MALI is included in the Annex of the Resolution of the IGM 24.

## 5. Marine litter activities and initiatives in the region related to RAP MALI

The WG ML also provided an opportunity to update participating countries on ongoing marine litter activities and initiatives in the region related to the RAP MALI.

### 5.1 Ongoing marine litter projects

The COBSEA Secretariat introduced the regional project 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain' (**SEA circular**) implemented jointly by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and COBSEA, with support from the Swedish Government (see Annex 3). The project aims to reduce adverse impact of land-based plastic leakage into the marine environment, by ensuring that less plastic is wasted at source and management of the plastic value chain is improved in South East Asia. The project focuses on the lifecycle stages of (i) Production of plastic products, (ii) Plastic use, and (iii) Collection / sorting / recycling, with target activities in Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and engaging the People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea and Singapore as knowledge partners for peer learning. The project engages governments, businesses, academia, consumers and disadvantaged groups in a people-centred value chain approach. Outputs 2 and 4 in particular will leverage COBSEA to strengthen the evidence base for decision making; support countries to undertake hotspot assessments, develop monitoring programmes and marine litter planning frameworks; and facilitate regional knowledge exchange through a knowledge hub on marine litter (which may be developed as a GPML Regional Node) and the annual SEA of Solutions week (the inaugural event will be in November 2019 in Bangkok). The Secretariat highlighted that project activities would be aligned with both the RAP MALI and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris to leverage synergies and avoid duplication.

The COBSEA Secretariat introduced the UNEP project 'Promotion of Countermeasures Against Marine Plastic Litter in Southeast Asia and India' (**counterMEASURES**) aimed at developing a regional model for plastic leakage assessment and monitoring in Asia. The project focuses on Mumbai city, the Ganges and Yamuna River Basin and the Mekong River basin to identify major sources of plastic leakage and entry points for action, including outreach activities and developing scenarios for assessing and monitoring plastic flows into the environment. The Secretariat highlighted synergies with the SEA circular project and priorities of the RAP MALI. WG members voiced their interest in receiving further updates on project outcomes at WG ML meetings.

### 5.2 Updates from participating countries and observers

Participating countries shared brief updates of national and local marine litter activities:

Representatives of **Cambodia** highlighted existing knowledge gaps and the need for robust evidence to inform the development of legal instruments to address land-based marine pollution and microplastics. Representatives noted their interest in exchanging experience and knowledge with COBSEA countries to support the development of monitoring platforms and effective legal instruments.



Representatives of the **People's Republic of China** shared ongoing efforts to address land-based sources of marine litter such as an action plan to address marine litter and watersheds and measures to improve monitoring of marine litter including plastics and microplastics. The country is making progress in the investigation of microplastics in the ocean including in polar areas and published a report on marine litter and microplastics. Other efforts include local-level policies to address plastic waste such as single-use plastic bans; projects to support scientific research on marine (micro)plastics in cooperation with academia (e.g. East China Normal University); and high-level support to increase public awareness for waste management issues.

Representatives from **Indonesia** shared their efforts to reduce marine pollution, including in the fisheries sector, such as awareness raising and education efforts for coastal fishing communities. Representatives highlighted national initiatives to identify best options and implement best practices for sustainable nutrient management and the national target of reducing marine litter by 70 per cent by 2025. Noted challenges included the country's large territory, the difficulty of engaging and educating all groups of society, the importance of capacity building for local and national government, and the short timeline set by the national target.

Representatives of the **Republic of Korea** mentioned the planned launch of the 3rd marine litter management plan in 2019 in line with 5-year review cycles for national planning. The plan would address marine litter through lifecycle management, including improved waste treatment, public awareness, management of land and sea-based litter. A special plan on marine litter focused on the expansion of collection, disposal and recycling, with the aim of reducing plastic marine litter by 50 per cent by 2030.

Participants from **Malaysia** emphasized the priority issue of addressing illegal trade of plastic sourced from developed countries and called for streamlining of initiatives at the regional level. The representative suggested exploring how the COBSEA mechanism could be leveraged to combat the export of scrap litter to Malaysia and other countries. Malaysia does not have an overarching national action plan on marine litter, but Malaysia's Roadmap Towards Zero Single-Use Plastics 2018-2030 addresses sources and solutions of plastic pollution. The country looked to COBSEA to support the development of a national action plan on marine litter.

Representatives of the **Philippines** noted that plans toward reducing marine litter were in the early stages, with initial efforts focusing on the clean-up of water bodies such as rivers and Manila Bay and localized plastic bans. The country's solid waste management is currently in a consultation and would include waste actions toward banning single-use plastics. Development of a national action plan on marine litter is being initiated – the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is taking the initiative to consolidate efforts on marine litter reduction, including creation of a steering committee; is coordinating with other agencies and stakeholders in the formulation of policy frameworks; and is engaging a consultant to arrange a stakeholder consultation to gather data and information on marine litter management and collect ideas for a national initiative. The Philippines welcomed support from COBSEA and through the SEA circular project for establishing necessary baselines and scientific evidence.

Delegates from **Thailand** highlighted the country's efforts to apply a 3R approach for a circular economy, improve the efficiency of solid waste management, the establishment of a public-private partnership for plastic waste management, and a coastal and river clean-up programme. The country adopted a Roadmap for Plastic and Solid Waste Management 2018-2030 in April 2019 in cooperation with the private sector, outlining efforts to move toward sustainable plastic management through a circular economy approach. The Roadmap aims to successively phase out seven plastic products, including plastic cap seals, oxo-biodegradables, microbeads (in 2019), thin-film plastic bags, Styrofoam food containers, plastic straws and single-use plastic glasses (by 2022), and to achieve the reuse/recycling or proper disposal of all plastic waste by 2030. Challenges included identifying achievable milestones and effectively engaging the private sector to reach these targets.

Representatives of **Vietnam** highlighted that marine debris was a national priority topic and that the Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands (VASI) was identified as the focal agency for marine litter. The country is currently developing policies to address respective issues, such as a national action plan for marine litter management that will include a categorization of marine debris and facilitate inter-administration cooperation to strengthen solid waste management.

Participants from **Singapore** noted that while there was no national action plan on marine litter, a number of domestic regulations existed to address plastic pollution. National efforts include regulations on solid waste management; stringent control of effluents and leakage of hazardous substances into water bodies; use of litter traps to prevent leakage into the ocean; tackling excess consumption of plastic; planned mandatory reporting of packaging and Extended Producer Responsibility for single-use plastic packaging. Initiatives to address sea-based sources of pollution focus on reducing pollution from ships in line with the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). The country is addressing industrial discharge and wastewater treatment, including removal of microplastics from wastewater and the development of membrane technology to prevent leakage into the marine environment. Challenges to be addressed through COBSEA include improving monitoring and research on marine litter and harmonizing approaches for comparable data management.

**Other updates** included the outcomes of recent Group of 20 (G20) meetings, including on resource efficiency and marine plastic litter. Representatives of Singapore shared G20 deliberations on the need for science-based policy making and for a comprehensive lifecycle approach to addressing marine litter, food loss and waste. G20 members had recognized the issue of marine litter and the need for action including through a G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter (2017) and G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastics Litter (2019), global and national policy approaches, information sharing and international cooperation, the promotion of innovative solutions through different platforms, multi-stakeholder engagement and awareness raising.



Observers were invited to share updates of their initiatives and efforts to combat marine litter in the East Asian Seas region of relevance to COBSEA participating countries and in line with the RAP MALI:

A representative of the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** shared ongoing efforts to strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks for marine litter action relevant to COBSEA countries and the RAP MALI, including government-led action planning, institutional strengthening, investment preparation, partnerships, knowledge and financing, and addressing socioeconomic impacts, including funding support through the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The observer from the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** shared updates from the GoTFish initiative which supports fisheries departments of the Gulf of Thailand countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam) to access funding and address the challenges particular to the region, such as, inadequate fisheries management, high fishing pressure, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as well as competition with other users of the coasts and the sea. The project aims to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea (SCS-SAP) by improving the governance of the fishery resources through an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, showing clear synergies with COBSEA.

A participant of **IOC-WESTPAC** presented ongoing efforts and collaboration on microplastic monitoring through three new Regional Training and Research Centers and a network of universities and institutions in the region. A draft guideline for monitoring on beaches had been developed and progress was being made toward in-country implementation and assessments, as well as the development of surface water and marine organism monitoring guidelines. Good opportunities exist to cooperate with IOC-WESTPAC Regional Centers and partners such as ECNU to improve the science basis for decision making.

The representative of the **Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)** shared their efforts to support integrated coastal management (ICM) in the Philippines and national ocean policy in Timor-Leste. Ongoing and potential projects include a source to sea initiative on Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) in ASEAN countries, collaborative efforts on marine pollution from ships, municipal-level coastal zone management efforts, an integrated information management system for coastal and watershed areas that could include marine litter parameters, and upcoming microplastic trainings and 2021 East Asian Seas Congress where an update on the RAP MALI could be shared.

An observer from the **Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF)**, highlighted ongoing marine litter assessments and activities on threats to endangered species. The participant stressed interest in being a COBSEA institutional partner and welcomed the opportunity to explore possible synergies and areas for collaboration.

A participant from the **National University of Singapore (NUS)** provided an overview of a recent report reviewing research on marine plastics in South-East Asia and highlighted that an updated version of the report could be more exhaustive to include microplastic research and marine litter impacts. The speaker called for improved coordination a knowledge management platform to share resources, identify gaps and catalyse cooperation in line with the RAP MALI and COBSEA aims to establish a GPML Regional Node.

A representative of the **Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia's (ERIA)** shared efforts to develop a Regional Knowledge Center on Marine Plastic Debris, presented lessons learned from marine litter activities enacted in Japan, and updates on the transboundary movement of plastic waste on the context of the Basel Convention relevant to marine litter efforts in the region.

A speaker from the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** presented the 'Plastics in Nature' initiative focussing on business model innovation, global plastic policy, and plastic-smart city pilots in Asia, including in COBSEA countries. The initiative will share best practices and encouraged COBSEA to support efforts calling for a legally binding agreement on marine litter.

The **Swedish delegation** reiterated its support to COBSEA's marine litter efforts through the SEA circular initiative and recognized COBSEA as the only intergovernmental body in the East Asian Seas with country ownership for an agreed action plan on marine litter, at the time of the meeting. They highlighted that SEA circular intends to build on and leverage COBSEA's mechanisms and mandates and help to bridge existing gaps on marine litter. They commended COBSEA participating countries' knowledge sharing, collective efforts, and intention to coordinate and collaborate on this topic.

### 5.3 Emerging activities by COBSEA related to marine litter

The COBSEA Secretariat introduced planned activities related to marine litter in line with the RAP MALI to inform discussions at the IGM 24. This included the proposed establishment of a **GPML Regional Node** to enhance knowledge management, information sharing, outreach and awareness raising on marine litter to streamline action in the region. In line with recommendations of the WG ML meeting in December 2019, the Secretariat noted that a GPML Node could address particular needs of the East Asian Seas region and contribute to implementing the COBSEA RAP MALI. The SEA circular project was presented as an opportunity to advance development of a Regional Node of the GPML. Specifically, the Node could leverage the multi-stakeholder partnership to create an effective regional network of public and private bodies, ensuring representation of all relevant stakeholders; develop regionally-appropriate communication channels; facilitate exchange of expertise and good practice; provide advice and training including on monitoring and assessment; support awareness raising; and enable resource mobilization. The draft Terms of Reference shared with participating countries for their consideration at the IGM 24 outline the detailed objective and function of such a Regional Node. The Node could be (co)hosted by a regional entity such as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre, overseen/guided by the WG ML and receive funding through COBSEA projects and the GPML. The Secretariat also introduced the Guidance Note on the Establishment and Operation of **COBSEA Regional Activity Centres** shared with participating countries for consideration at the IGM 24 and noted the opportunity presented by Indonesia to develop the newly established RC3S into a Regional Activity Centre. Next steps for the development of a Regional Node and Activity Centre were decided at the IGM 24.

The Secretariat highlighted its cooperation with the East China Normal University to develop a methodology for **marine plastic litter hotspot assessment** and opportunities for capacity building in participating countries. A representative of the East China Normal University introduced the methodology and related research efforts. The methodology would be developed further and applied in target countries of the SEA circular project, with regional support from COBSEA and the East China Normal University, in line with the RAP MALI and country needs for improved understanding of plastic waste leakage and material flows to inform decision making. Working Group members welcomed the further development of a regionally coherent methodology and support through COBSEA and the SEA circular project to build capacity to conduct hotspot assessments in participating countries to help identify sources and leakage of marine litter.

UNEP shared the upcoming opportunity for participating countries to engage in a **Training of Trainers** on the Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter and Microplastics in the Ocean informed by the GESAMP WG 40 Guidelines. The training would take place in Bali in September 2019 to build capacity of national agencies to apply various methods of marine

litter and microplastic sampling and data collection to inform the development of regionally coherent monitoring and assessment systems. The regional training would be supported by the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), the GPML, COBSEA and other partners and could be followed up by national capacity building activities.

The Secretariat presented upcoming opportunities to address **sea-based sources of marine litter** from capture fisheries and aquaculture. Building on discussions at the WG ML meeting in December 2018, future marine litter related activities of COBSEA could include addressing regional priorities for reduction of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and its impacts, aiming to fill critical gaps in knowledge, capacity and policy frameworks; to implement reduction measures and share experiences regionally; and to catalyse effective action through cross-sectoral collaboration and outreach. The Secretariat noted initial funding had been secured through the GPML for activity development including a possible regional workshop or recruitment of a technical consultant. A pre-concept note for a Global Environment Fund (GEF) funded project tentatively titled 'Reducing Sea based Marine Litter via the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) in SEA' had been shared with participating countries and the Secretariat would participate in workshop of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on *Best Practices to Prevent and Reduce Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear* in July 2019 to scope further opportunities for COBSEA initiatives. A project on sea-based sources of marine litter could include components focused on (1) documenting the current situation and environmental impacts increasing the capacity of government and private sector actors to assess and address sea-based sources of marine litter, (2) supporting port reception facilities to advance circular economy measures, (3) improving governance, and (4) sharing knowledge and best practices.

## 6. Closing and outlook

The meeting of the WG ML enabled marine litter focal points and representatives of COBSEA participating countries to exchange progress of ongoing initiatives, and to emphasize priorities, challenges and support needs that could be addressed through COBSEA. The meeting served to provide participating countries with updates of ongoing and planned initiatives related to marine litter in the region in line with global frameworks and enabled the Secretariat and UNEP to share relevant information and address questions from participating countries to inform discussions and decisions at the IGM 24. The WG ML successfully deliberated and jointly revised further the draft RAP MALI, resulting in an advanced draft that was finalized and adopted at the IGM 24 on 19-20 June 2019. Upcoming meetings of the WG ML planned in 2020 and beyond will provide updated information on projects and planned activities discussed in this meeting, and will inform the development of rolling work plans for the implementation of the RAP MALI and for the preparation of the IGM 25.

Further information and documentation, including the report of the IGM 24 and the COBSEA RAP MALI 2019 can be found online at [www.cobsea.org](http://www.cobsea.org)

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## Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda of the Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter

Annex 2: Participant list

Annex 3: SEA circular project overview

## Annex 1: Agenda of the Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter

### Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter 17-18 June 2019 Inaya Putri Bali Hotel Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of Chairperson and Rapporteur
3. Update on regional and global marine litter processes
  - i. Outcomes of the 4<sup>th</sup> UN Environment Assembly
  - ii. Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics
  - iii. GESAMP Working Group 40 on Plastics and Micro-plastics in the Ocean
  - iv. Global Partnership on Marine Litter
  - v. ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2016-2020 and ASEAN Action Framework on Marine Debris
4. Revision of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI)
  - i. Progress made since COBSEA EO IGM 2 and the Working Group Meeting in December 2018
  - ii. Revision of the RAP MALI for discussion at IGM 24
  - iii. Next steps
5. Marine litter activities and initiatives in the region related to RAP MALI
  - i. Addressing land-based sources of marine litter
    - 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain'
    - 'Promotion of Countermeasures Against Marine Plastic Litter in Southeast Asia and India'
  - ii. Updates from participating countries and observers
    - Progress made on national marine litter plans
    - Ongoing and planned initiatives with development cooperation partners
    - Gaps and needs
  - iii. Emerging activities by COBSEA related to marine litter
    - Establishment of a Regional Node of the GPML and a Regional Activity Centre
    - Marine plastic litter hotspot assessment
    - Training of Trainers on the Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter and Microplastics in the Ocean (GESAMP WG 40)
    - Marine litter from capture fisheries and aquaculture
6. Any other business
7. Summary and Closing of the Meeting



## Annex 2: Participant list

### **CAMBODIA**

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Annex 3: SEA circular project overview



Timeline	2018 – 2022
Lead agencies	UN Environment, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)
Donor	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Target countries	Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam
Project impact	Less plastic wasted, with reduced input to and impact on the marine environment as well as dependent people
Project Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in plastic products that are difficult to collect and recycle</li> <li>• Increase in plastic reuse and recycle</li> <li>• Increase in awareness about marine litter and plastic pollution, and public and consumer support for policies to fight it</li> </ul>

The project aims to reduce adverse impact of land-based plastic leakage into the marine environment, by ensuring that less plastic is wasted at source and management of the plastic value chain is improved in South East Asia. Considering waste management systems in the region remain largely inadequate to process increasing amounts of plastic waste, the project focuses on the lifecycle stages of (i) Production of plastic products, (ii) Plastic use, and (iii) Collection / sorting / recycling, to ensure that less plastic is wasted and strategically prevent plastic litter entering the ocean. To achieve these objectives, project partners include national and local government agencies; businesses, producers, retailers, and associations in the packaging, consumer and institutional products industry. To promote inclusive whole-of-value-chain planning at the national and regional level, project activities will actively engage civil society, consumers, informal waste workers, and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of marine litter.

The project has four components:

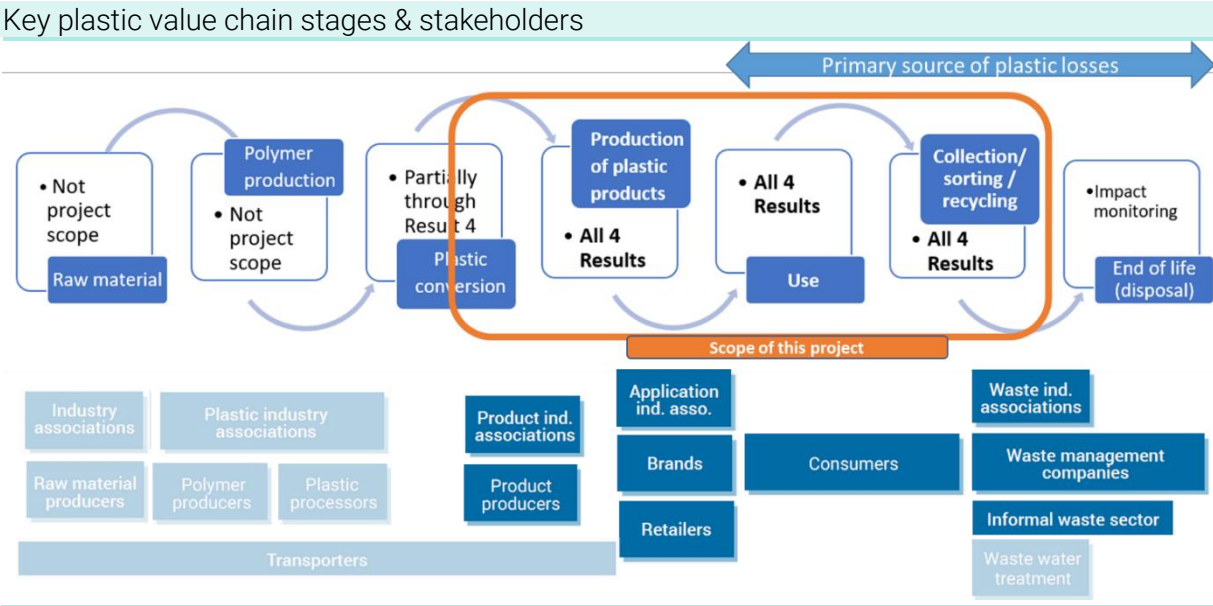
**Output 1:** Identify and develop market-based solutions towards 'less plastic wasted' to promote transformational changes in plastic management. Using a Circular Economy approach, this includes creating business incentives for plastic reduction and recycling that increase plastic re-use and recovery and reduce single-use plastic products.

**Output 2:** Strengthen the scientific basis for informed decision-making to address marine plastic litter, by building national and regional capacities, and generating and disseminating data and information products, coherent methodologies, indicator frameworks and reporting processes/systems, in line with global best practice. Building on intergovernmental COBSEA mechanisms, the project will assist government partners to assess, develop and implement strategies and plans to address plastic pollution holistically from 'source to sea' and collect findings of plastic hotspots in the environment to monitor progress of upstream efforts to reduce leakage.

**Output 3:** Create widespread outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution to raise awareness of marine litter and of solutions for better plastic value chain management, to promote behavioural change among consumers and in the industry and create an enabling space for

policy development. This will involve regional constituency engagement and knowledge exchange, targeted outreach campaigns and linking to global campaigns (e.g. Clean Seas).

Output 4: Regional networking will establish the necessary mechanisms for technical advice and exchange, facilitating dialogue and networking and provide targeted capacity building and technical support. The project will support implementation of regional frameworks –such as the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework of Action on Marine Debris—and improve coordination among actors, including finance institutions and international and regional organizations engaged in developing plastic pollution and waste management systems. This component will leverage regional efforts, including through ASEAN-led mechanisms and working groups, to share knowledge and coordinate efforts in the region for a holistic whole-of-value-chain approach.



**Regional cooperation to address a transboundary challenge**

The project will leverage COBSEA intergovernmental mechanisms and engage COBSEA focal agencies with a strong marine focus to enable government partners in target countries to bridge existing policy gaps and address upstream sources of pollution. By working with COBSEA bodies and partners such as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), the project will support efforts to improve the scientific evidence base for policy making, such as hotspot analysis for plastic leakage along the plastic value chain. Regional mechanisms will play a key role in constituency engagement and networking to share knowledge, good practices and solutions, and to harmonize key definitions, methodologies, standards and regulations on plastic management.

The knowledge generated by the project will support participating countries in implementing holistic national plans and frameworks in line with regional frameworks.

**Ensuring equitable and inclusive solutions for marine litter**

This project integrates a human rights-based approach across output areas, ensuring that project design and activities are guided by the principles of equality, participation and inclusion to protect the interests of right holders (including marginalized and disadvantaged groups) and hold accountable duty bearers (governments, businesses, and people of power). The aim is to ensure a fair, equitable and ethically-sound course of action, that leads to more effective,

appropriate and sustainable outcomes in the longer term. While all citizens in target countries are considered right holders, this project aims to engage and support those who face an imminent infringement of their human rights due to government inaction or irresponsible business practices. Coastal (fishing) communities and informal waste workers that are exposed to plastic pollution require particular consideration when developing sustainable solutions. This project provides safe spaces for dialogue with consumers and communities, including vulnerable groups, to voice grievances and concerns, and strengthen their collective voice vis-à-vis duty bearers.



**COBSEA**

COORDINATING BODY ON THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA