



COORDINATING BODY ON THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA

Summary Report
Technical Consultation of the
Working Group on Marine Litter
Virtual meeting
23-25 June 2020



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Introduction

The technical consultation of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) took place on 23-25 June 2020 as a virtual meeting, with participation of representatives of COBSEA countries and observers. The purpose of the consultation was to discuss progress and source input in relation to ongoing activities responding to decisions made at the 24th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) of COBSEA and the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI). This report summarizes discussions at the meeting, main outcomes and follow up actions.

1. Opening of the consultation

Mr. Jerker Tamelander, COBSEA Coordinator, opened the meeting at 9.00 am (ICT) 23 June 2020. He welcomed all participants and highlighted the importance of the meeting to move forward with the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI). Attendees were given the opportunity to introduce themselves. Mr. Tamelander explained that the meeting was originally envisioned to be held in person as a formal meeting of the WGML, but due to COVID-19 implications was convened as a virtual technical consultation. He noted that decisive action by governments, businesses, academia and others is fundamental to building back better coming out of the COVID pandemic. He emphasized that the COBSEA RAP MALI and the WGML can be leveraged also in this context. Mr. Tamelander gave an overview of the agenda for the technical consultation (see Annex 1) and reminded participants that the consultation is not a decision-making body but rather a venue to exchange views and guide the COBSEA Secretariat in efforts to support RAP MALI implementation.

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* Cover photo: Ishan @seefromthesky on Unsplash.

2. Organization of work

The COBSEA Secretariat presented recommendations on organization of work of the WGML, including procedure of nominating Working Group focal points and Expert Group members; frequency and mode of meetings as well as role and term of WGML Chairperson and Rapporteur.

Participants noted that WGML focal points as well as members of Expert Groups should be nominated by National Focal Points (NFP). Regular interaction will take place between meetings and correspondence on the work of the WGML will be addressed to WGML focal points.

Participants suggested that formal meetings of the WGML be convened in line with the WGML Terms of Reference contained in COBSEA RAP MALI (i.e. at least once per year). Challenges with holding in-person meetings during 2020 were noted. A recommendation was made to have an in-person meeting of the WGML immediately prior to the next COBSEA IGM, which is envisioned to be held early 2021. It was suggested that virtual consultation can be held prior to the next in-person meeting if needed. Participants concurred with the Secretariat's suggestion of having a representative of the meeting host country chair the meeting of the WGML. Clarification was sought regarding the interlinkage and workflow between the COBSEA Secretariat, the Working Group and the Expert Group. The Secretariat explained that the IGM is the decision-making body, giving directions for Working Groups. Any Expert Group established under the WGML reports to the same. In regard to a question on the tasks of the Chairperson, the Secretariat noted that any responsibility of the Chair outside of the discussions of the WGML would be on the agreement of the WG on a case by case basis.

3. Update on regional and global marine litter processes

Updates on regional and global marine litter processes were provided by COBSEA countries, observers and the COBSEA Secretariat.

3.1. Marine litter activities related to RAP MALI

COBSEA countries provided an update on national marine litter policy and planning progress. Information about ongoing and upcoming policies, priorities, projects and programmes was shared. Topics ranged from waste management, water quality, lifecycle management, sea-based sources of marine pollution to microplastics. Countries presented field work and upcoming trainings. Multiple countries noted the want and need to strengthen regional cooperation.

Among others, the **People's Republic of China** shared information on ongoing work on lifecycle management of plastic waste as well as on establishing infrastructure to enhance solid waste management. **Indonesia** is developing sea water quality index in all provinces and conducting workshops on data management in collaboration with Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA). In the **Republic of Korea**, a marine debris act will be enacted by the end of 2020. The country will host the 7th International Marine Debris Conference in 2022 and welcomed participation from COBSEA countries. **Malaysia** is currently developing a Marine Litter Roadmap and establishing working groups for elements of the Roadmap. The country invited others to share know-how and technical knowledge on establishing baselines and setting definitions. The **Philippines** is investigating impacts of COVID-19 on waste. They have recently finalized their National Plan of Action on Marine Litter, taking into account the commitment under COBSEA RAP MALI. **Singapore** is working on reducing land-based solid waste, including packaging waste, and they've put in place a waste management framework to reduce leakage into the ocean. **Thailand** is implementing a strategy for plastic management and is looking to cooperate with actors across the region to reduce marine litter. In **Viet Nam**, the National Action Plan for Management of Marine Plastic Litter by 2030 has been approved and the country is investigating setting up an International Centre on Marine Litter.

Ms. Harms provided an update on the regional marine litter project **SEA circular**. The project, which aims to ensure less plastic is wasted and reduce input to and impact on the marine environment and dependent people, is jointly implemented by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and COBSEA with support from the Government of Sweden. The project supports implementation of provisions of the RAP MALI including in relation to development of regionally coherent marine litter monitoring; addressing marine litter research gaps and needs; marine litter planning in line with RAP MALI; and sharing knowledge and peer learning. The project leverages COBSEA mechanisms and provides funding for the work of the WGML related to RAP MALI implementation. Ms. Harms explained that Output 2 of the project, strengthening science basis for decision making, and Output 4, regional networking for coherent action, were led by COBSEA. She presented activities for 2020 which includes drafting a regional guidance for harmonized monitoring; national trainings; hotspot assessments; providing assistance for national marine litter planning as well as developing services of the Regional Node. Due to COVID implications, Ms. Harms mentioned that the annual partnership event SEA of Solutions will be held virtually towards the end of 2020. The Secretariat emphasized that the SEA circular project targets all of COBSEA while specific activities take place in certain countries. Six out of COBSEA's nine participating countries are eligible for support to national activities through the project, whereas all COBSEA countries participate in regional activities supported through the project such as sharing information and exchanging best practices and lessons learned. The project therefore provides opportunity to leverage expertise and capacity knowledge partners in the People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea and Singapore.

The proposed **Voluntary Commitment** on marine litter to be registered at the second UN Ocean Conference was further presented by the Secretariat. The aim is to support the implementation of the RAP MALI and the suggested deliverables, such as establishing a regional guidance on harmonization of national marine litter monitoring programmes, align with the work of COBSEA and RAP MALI.

Ms. Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida presented the UNEP project 'Promotion of Countermeasures Against Marine Plastic Litter in South East Asia and India' (**counterMEASURE**) and their work on plastic free rivers, aimed at promoting action against marine plastic litter in India and South East Asia. The project, funded by the Government of Japan, has collected primary and secondary data for a leakage pathways analysis and visualization. Key findings highlight the need of localized solutions for plastic pollution as well as local capacity building to improve the public sector's capacity for waste management and stakeholder's understanding of plastic. Ms. Nagatani-Yoshida stressed that science, policy, communication and citizen engagement are all important aspects to achieve plastic free rivers.

An update on the project 'Rethinking Plastics – Circular Economy Solutions to Marine Litter' implemented by **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit** (GIZ) with funding from the European Union, was presented by Mr. Alvaro Zurita. The project is carried out in coordination with UNEP and COBSEA over a period of three years and targets a number of East Asian Seas countries. Areas of action include policy dialogues; plastic waste management; litter from sea-based sources and green procurement. Mr. Zurita noted that the project is aligned with multiple current initiatives and fosters the dialogue between Europe and the region. He further mentioned that COVID presents new challenges for the plastic recycling sector and for project implementation.

Ms. Amparo Perez Roda introduced the work of the **Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO) to prevent and reduce Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG). ALDFG constitutes a significant component of global marine litter. Ms. Perez Roda informed that FAO is preparing a global programme to support measures to address ALDFG and other issues impacting

sustainable fishing operations. FAO has prepared Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear to prevent and reduce ALDFG in an effort to eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. To prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from shipping and fisheries, the **GloLitter Partnerships Project** has been launched by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and FAO, with funding from Norway. Ms. Perez Roda explained that UNEP had been identified as one of the Strategic Partners for the Partnership which aims to reduce marine litter from maritime and fisheries sector in support of existing international frameworks. She welcomed Expressions of Interest from COBSEA countries to join the Partnership by 30 June 2020.

3.2. Global marine litter processes

Updates on the **Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML)** were provided by Ms. Heidi Savelli from UNEP headquarters. The GPML supports implementation of relevant UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions and strives to reduce the leakage of plastics into the ocean through improved design, encouraging closed-loop systems and minimizing waste generation. The Partnerships aims to implement legal, policy and institutional frameworks related to marine litter. Ms. Savelli offered GPML support towards the establishment of an East Asian Seas Regional Node on marine litter. She presented work on emerging issues which includes engaging businesses and investigating liability of marine litter impacts. Ongoing work entails supporting national source inventories pilots to guide action plan development of the 12 Regional Seas programmes action plans on marine litter, including COBSEA's.

Ms. Savelli further provided updates on the **Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastic (AHEG)**. She informed that AHEG 4 is postponed and that intersessional roadmap is currently under review. Multiple capacity building and outreach activities are underway, including national training on monitoring and assessment as well as a massive open online course on marine litter to be launched in 2020 in additional languages from the COBSEA region. Ms. Savelli presented that next steps include preparations of UNEA-5 and finalization of the stocktaking exercise which is open for comments until 31 July 2020.

Ms. Susan Wingfield from the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions shared updates from the **Basel Conventions and the Plastic Waste Partnerships**. She explained some of the most significant decisions that were adopted during the BRS Conference of Parties in 2019, one of them being the Plastic Waste Amendment. The Amendment, which will be effective as of 1 January 2021, aims to make global trade in plastic waste more transparent and better regulated. Ms. Wingfield presented a number of Partnership Programmes under the Basel Convention. One of them is the Partnership on Plastic Waste which was established in 2019 with COBSEA as a partner. The main objective of the Partnership is to prevent and minimize plastic waste. Ms. Wingfield noted that one of the strengths of the Partnership is the breadth of stakeholders involved and she encouraged all COBSEA countries to join the partnership. She further announced a call for proposals for pilot projects to improve and promote environmentally sound management of waste and to prevent and minimize its generation. Applications, due in July 2020, are welcome from Parties and Basel and Stockholm Convention Regional and Coordinating Centres. A small grant programme on plastic waste was presented as another funding opportunity. 150 – 180 000 USD will be awarded to a number of projects targeting transboundary movements of plastic waste; environmentally sound management; prevention and reduction of the generation of plastic waste; and/or reduction of the risks of hazardous constituents in plastic waste. Projects will be implemented by Regional Centres and Ms. Wingfield encouraged COBSEA countries to liaise with regional centres in Indonesia and China in regard to the grant opportunity. The first call for proposals is open until 15 July 2020. Basel Convention Regional Centres were suggested to partake in future WGML deliberations as observers.

4. Rolling workplan for RAP MALI implementation

4.1. Developing the biennial RAP MALI workplan

The COBSEA Secretariat presented a draft format and initial content for the rolling workplan for RAP MALI implementation, based on detailed description of activities in RAP MALI Appendix 2, for discussion and further revision toward consideration by the IGM 25. As per RAP MALI, the biennial rolling workplan is to be developed through the WGML and adopted by the IGM. Ms. Harms explained that the proposed workplan covers specific activities and deliverables; roles of the WGML, COBSEA countries and the Secretariat; timeframe for implementation as well as funding sources. The presented format categorizes activities as ongoing, planned or potential opportunities. Input was sought on the format as well as initial content of the workplan. The Secretariat emphasized that the workplan forms the basis for assessing progress on implementation of the RAP MALI and enables an adaptive approach.

Suggestions from COBSEA countries included removing activities that are too uncertain and focusing on realistic and achievable activities, in particular activities involving all of the COBSEA countries. Clarification was sought in regard to certain projects and activities. It was noted that the Secretariat will share more background information on existing activities as needed via regular correspondence. No comments were raised on the workplan format. The Secretariat will revise the draft workplan based on received input to share with the WGML for comments. The Secretariat invited the WGML to share opportunities for activities for further development of the workplan in the coming months.

4.2. Tracking progress in implementation of the RAP MALI

A proposed format and process for tracking progress in implementation of the RAP MALI was introduced by COBSEA Secretariat. As with the workplan, the progress assessment report is to be developed through the WGML and adopted by the IGM. The Secretariat explained that the aim is to have a reporting process that is easy, yields useful information and reduces duplication of efforts. The Secretariat emphasized that the draft template allows for collection of data in a consistent format that supports synthesis and reporting.

Countries informed the Secretariat that internal consultation needs to be made to explore how the reporting process aligns with existing national reporting efforts. Several participants acknowledged the importance of tracking progress while also highlighting the number of already existing reporting duties. Clarity was sought in regard to some definitions such as the classification informal sector. A suggestion was made that countries report on the basis of national priorities, using a common format. Participants welcomed a suggestion to test the format to inform further development.

The Secretariat will simplify the progress reporting format based on received comments and share template and Excel spreadsheet for further review. More information about the progress report will be shared with the revised progress reporting template. COBSEA Secretariat will circulate the revised format for testing in 2020 and adjusted as needed thereafter. The final draft will be presented for consideration at IGM 25.

5. Marine Litter Monitoring

5.1. Development of harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes

Proposed steps towards development of harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes was presented by COBSEA Secretariat, in line with COBSEA RAP MALI Action 3. Mr. Tamelander explained that defining objectives common to all programmes provide a basis for harmonization, including identifying common core indicators and coherent methods. He emphasized that harmonizing programmes does not entail identical monitoring programmes

across all COBSEA countries. To assist the work, the Secretariat proposed inventorizing current marine litter monitoring through mapping marine litter monitoring datasets, activities, indicators and methods in COBSEA countries as well as identifying a core set of common indicators and associated recommended methods. The work is envisioned to be carried out during 2020. To strengthen capacity at regional level tailored to national need, the Secretariat suggested conducting virtual trainings tailored to context as well as regional webinar on harmonization of monitoring programmes. Mr. Tamelander proposed that the Secretariat prepares draft common objectives based on consultation of WGML deliberations as well as objectives of existing monitoring programmes. The final draft is suggested to be agreed at WGML meeting for consideration at COBSEA IGM 25.

A recommendation was made to start by inventorizing existing marine litter monitoring efforts (item c in section IV of background document AI.5), and that other steps outlined in the discussion paper will follow from and build on this.

Ms. Denise Hardesty of the **Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)**, who supported the COBSEA training-of-trainers conducted in September 2019, presented on marine litter data collection and harmonizing approaches. She introduced the work of CSIRO which aims to reduce plastic entering the ocean by 90 per cent by 2025. Their approach to collecting marine litter data entails statistically robust sampling as well as validating estimates of pollution from land; identifying hotspots; and investigating driving forces. Ms. Hardesty encouraged establishing baselines to adapt to future needs and inform systemic change, exploring citizen science and the use of applications, and surveying both “coldspots” and hotspots to understand sources and impacts of marine litter, inform policy responses and evaluate their effectiveness. She noted the importance of sampling microplastic with a random sample, covering land, shoreline and sea. Ms. Hardesty emphasized the importance of identifying key questions along national priorities to define monitoring programmes and guide meaningful design adapted to available means, challenges and gaps. She encouraged participants to design for (1) a controlled search effort and pattern, (2) standardization of surveys for comparability locally (urban areas and rural), nationally and regionally, and (3) an analysis prior to data collection. Ms. Hardesty emphasized the value of common objectives and approaches at the regional level while adapting to national contexts and priorities to enable comparability across the region.

5.2. Establishment of a Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group

Mr. Tamelander explained that the purpose of the Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group, outlined as an action in Annex 2 of the RAP MALI, is to support the development of harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes. The task of the group would be to provide technical advice and input on relevant activities and work would be carried out through correspondence and meetings when necessary.

It was noted that that the composition and duration of the Expert Group as well as profile of Expert Group members should match the Group’s role and function. It was recommended that Expert Group sessions be convened within the WGML meetings, chaired by the WGML Chair. It was further recommended that nominations of Expert Group members should be made by NFPs.

COBSEA Secretariat will revise the draft Terms of Reference of the Expert Group based on input received during the technical consultation and share with the WGML for feedback and further development.

6. Development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML

The Secretariat presented an updated Terms of Reference to guide the development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML. Ms. Harms noted that the Regional Node provides a regional marine litter knowledge management and networking mechanism to support implementation of RAP MALI. The Node would further promote development and implementation of GPML at regional level. The Secretariat explained the proposed functions of the Node which includes focus on (1) marine litter policy and management; (2) marine litter science; and (3) marine litter capacity building. Proposed activities were presented including potential partners and funding streams. Ms. Harms suggested that the Secretariat coordinates the hosting of the Node while it would be co-hosted by core partners. The Node is proposed to be funded through project means, GPML support as well as co-funding through co-hosts. Ms. Harms emphasized that the Regional Node would not incur any costs to the Trust Fund.

Mr. Michikazu Kojima from the Economic Research Institute for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asia (ERIA) presented the **Regional Knowledge Centre for Marine Plastic Debris** (RKC-MPD). The international organization ERIA, established in 2017, works with ASEAN Secretariat and research institutes from East Asia to provide intellectual and analytical research and policy recommendations, including recent research on regional waste management and international trade of recyclable waste. Mr. Kojima explained that the RKC-MPD was established in 2019 with support of Japan as an information clearinghouse on marine plastic in the region. Key activities include collection and analysis of marine litter information, knowledge sharing and capacity building through the RKC-MPD's website. Mr. Kojima encouraged COBSEA countries to share information on existing marine litter policies and best practices and highlighted the opportunity of cooperation on the policy-related knowledge management and networking services of the Regional Node.

Findings of a marine litter review conducted by **National University of Singapore** (NUS) was presented by Ms. Youna Le Berre Lemarie-Lyons. The study analysed the status of research, legal and policy efforts on marine plastics in ASEAN +3 countries. An inventory of scientific publications has been compiled, noting that the majority of the literature has been published in the past three years. Ms. Lyons clarified the initial study did not take national laws and policies into account nor include research in languages other than English. The review further mapped institutions and policy bodies addressing the topic of marine litter. Ms. Lyons concluded that there's fragmentation in research and that certain substantive issues, e.g. regional baseline and monitoring, are in need of further research. Moreover, she noted the study found a misalignment of research with policy needs and emphasized the necessity of context-specific outreach and education. To conclude, Ms. Lyons expressed the support of NUS to developing the Regional Node and its marine litter science knowledge management and networking services, including establishing dialogue across regional research centres.

Experiences on implementing and developing a North West Pacific Regional Node of GPML was shared by Mr. Feng from the Northwest Pacific Action Plan - Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre (**NOWPAP-DINRAC**). Among others, the Regional Node focuses on networking, research and capacity building. Mr. Feng explained that a website, marine litter database and WebGIS marine litter system have been established within the framework of the Node. He shared the guiding principles of the Regional Node which included phased implementation and gradual improvement. He recommended maintaining close communication with participating countries to ensure smooth collection of routine data and information as well as promote research and exchange of information.

Mr. Dida Migfar Ridha, Director of Coastal and Marine Pollution and Degradation Control at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia and ex officio Executive Director of the **Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas** (RC3S) provided an update of the centre's activities.

The RC3S aims to strengthen GPML as well as interlinkages with other partnerships; improve the coordination, engagement and support of the work on marine pollution; and encourage sharing of information and knowledge on marine litter. The Centre, established in 2019 in response to the Bali Declaration, is a proposed Regional Activity Centre. Activities include establishing a knowledge management platform; creating a hub for solutions to marine pollution from land-based activities; well as strengthening capacity building efforts. Mr. Migfar Ridha presented ongoing and past projects which includes organizing trainings, webinars, coastal clean-ups and workshops as well as developing model to control pollution leakage from rivers. He explained the roadmap for collaboration which entails national, regional and global partnerships.

Discussion was held on the development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node, its services and engagements of partners. The importance of the Regional Node was noted among participants. Activities for the Node were suggested to be concrete and support as well as enable countries to carry out work prioritized in the RAP MALI. One country wondered if there were any recommendations besides the Node being hosted by the Secretariat, bearing in mind the requirements this may place on the Secretariat. Questions were further posed how the co-hosted institutions will be chosen and how responsibilities between them will be divided, as well as on resourcing of the Node's activities and its sustainability in the longer term. Several countries noted that they wished to provide input to the research inventory presented by NUS. The COBSEA Secretariat highlighted that the initial study NUS would inform the development of a searchable online catalogue of marine litter research and frameworks that would continue to be expanded and updated in future as part of the Regional Node. Future iterations could also include research in national languages from the region.

The COBSEA Secretariat agreed to simplify and clarify the updated Terms of Reference further to focus on core issues and ensure sustainability of the Node, and elaborate on possible hosting arrangements, to be shared with the WGML for comments. The COBSEA Secretariat assured it would continue working with partners on developing core functions and services of the Node for consideration by IGM 25.

7. Project development in support of RAP MALI implementation

COBSEA Secretariat presented project development opportunities to implement the RAP MALI and sought input from participating countries on priorities, based on the biennial workplan and COBSEA's mandate.

This included possible future funding under the umbrella agreement between the **US Environmental Protection Agency** and UNEP to expand and build on SEA circular activities on solid waste and marine litter management in line with RAP MALI. Further information would be provided by the Secretariat in due course.

The Secretariat shared information about a project under development by the German Development Cooperation Agency GIZ under a newly established **German Federal Environment Ministry grant programme** on marine litter. The initial project proposal identified COBSEA as a regional mechanism for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The draft **Voluntary Commitment** on marine litter for registration at the next UN Ocean Conference that was shared for comments with participating countries was presented as another opportunity to implement the RAP MALI. One deliverable of the Voluntary Commitment includes developing an initiative on addressing sea-based sources of marine litter as called for in Action 2 of the RAP MALI. Possible activities and funding sources will be reflected in the biennial workplan.

The Secretariat welcomed a participant's suggestion to invite experts and participating countries to propose and prioritize project ideas and invite the WGML to share project development opportunities and needs through regular and frequent correspondence and interaction.

8. Summary of outcomes and next steps

In the final session, the COBSEA Secretariat presented a summary of discussions and proposed follow-up steps.

- **Agenda item 2 Organization of Work:** an in-person WGML meeting will be held immediately prior to the IGM 25, with no in-person meeting in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Secretariat will liaise with countries through regular correspondence, and additional virtual consultation will be held if needed. Formal meetings of the WGML will be held at least annually, in line with the WGML Terms of Reference contained in COBSEA RAP MALI. The Secretariat will invite NFPs to nominate WGML focal points and Expert Group members through formal correspondence.
- **Agenda item 3: Update on regional/global ML processes:** The Marine Litter Massive Open Online Course is being translated into Thai and Vietnamese and will run in at least one of these additional languages already in 2020. Countries were encouraged to directly follow up on partnership and funding opportunities with Basel Convention Secretariat and through the GloLitter Partnership. Basel Convention Regional Centres will be invited to participate in future WGML deliberations as observers.
- **Agenda item 4: RAP MALI workplan and progress reporting:** The workplan is to focus on realistic and achievable activities and avoid activities that are too uncertain. The Secretariat will revise the draft workplan and initial content based on received input and share more background information on existing activities bilaterally as needed. Countries will report on progress on the basis of national priorities, using a common format. The Secretariat will revise the draft progress reporting format based on comments received during the technical consultation and will share a draft reporting spreadsheet to test its application. Information shared during this test will not constitute a formal submission and will not be used further by the Secretariat without explicit authorization, but will inform further adjustment of the draft progress reporting format as needed.
- **Agenda item 5: Marine Litter monitoring:** Inventorizing existing marine litter monitoring efforts will be the first activity, from which other steps outlined in the discussion paper can follow. The Secretariat will revise the Expert Group Terms of Reference based on input received during the technical consultation. The revised Terms of Reference will be shared for feedback and further development by COBSEA countries. Sessions of the Expert Group will be convened within WGML meetings and chaired by the WGML Chair. The composition and duration of the Expert Group will be defined based on its role and functions. Members of the Expert Group are to be nominated by NFPs, on invitation by the Secretariat.
- **Agenda item 6: Development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node:** The Secretariat will further develop the Terms of Reference, with a focus on core issues, ensuring sustainability, and elaborating hosting arrangements. The Secretariat will continue working with partners on developing core functions and services of the Node.
- **Agenda item 7: Project Development in support of RAP MALI implementation:** The Secretariat will invite countries and experts to propose and prioritize ideas for project development and invite the WGML to share project development opportunities and needs through regular interaction. Further information on project opportunities presented during the consultation to be shared in due course.

The COBSEA Secretariat will shared revised drafts of discussed documents with the WGML by 31 July 2020 with the deadline for participating countries to provide input by 31 August 2020. The Secretariat would further circulate the draft meeting summary for review and comment prior to that.

9. Any other business

Participants requested presentations from the technical consultation along with meeting recordings. The Secretariat confirmed this would be provided by email and/or through the COBSEA website.

COBSEA Secretariat briefed participants that initial discussions have been held with Viet Nam, as hosts of the next COBSEA IGM, on potential dates of the IGM. The Secretariat will be in touch with further information on scheduling in the near future. The Secretariat thanked Viet Nam for offering to host the 25th IGM.

COBSEA Secretariat informed that Ms. Natalie Harms has been appointed to the P3 Programme Officer position in the COBSEA Secretariat. Mr. Tamelander congratulated Ms. Harms to the job and welcomed her to the COBSEA Secretariat in her new position. He further noted that Ms. Harms will focus in particular on marine litter and that the position is funded through SEA circular project. This illustrates the importance of projects in supporting and strengthening the core work of COBSEA.

10. Closing of the consultation

Mr. Tamelander closed the meeting ahead of schedule at 9.40 am on 25 June 2020 by thanking meeting participants and observers for excellent input, sharing of valuable technical knowledge and for useful guidance provided.

Annexes

Annex 1: Annotated agenda of the Technical Consultation of the COBSEA WGML

Annex 2: Participant list

Annex 1: Annotated agenda of the Technical Consultation of the COBSEA WGML

1. Opening of the consultation

Opening remarks, presentation of the agenda, participants to briefly introduce themselves.

2. Organization of work

As a technical consultation and being the first virtual regional meeting convened by COBSEA, it is proposed that the consultation be chaired by the Secretariat. Participants will discuss the operationalization of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML), including membership and national representation, Meeting periodicity and intersessional work, and the role of the Secretariat.

See *“Operationalization of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter”*

3. Update on regional and global marine litter processes

3.1. Marine litter activities related to RAP MALI

The Secretariat will provide an update on the SEA circular project and other activities relevant to the RAP MALI. Countries will report briefly on recent progress with national marine litter policies and planning progress. Opportunities for synergies with regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris will be identified and discussed. Observers will be invited to share updates of their marine litter relevant to the RAP MALI.

3.2. Global marine litter processes

The Secretariat and relevant experts will provide updates on global marine litter processes relevant to COBSEA and the RAP MALI, including the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) Working Groups 40 and 43, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership.

4. Rolling workplan for RAP MALI implementation

4.1. Developing the biennial RAP MALI workplan

The proposed format for the biennial COBSEA RAP MALI workplan will be presented, including initial draft input for the workplan. Participants will be invited to discuss and provide guidance on further development of workplan format and content. The detailed description of key actions as contained in Appendix 2 of the RAP MALI will serve as a guide for the Working Group’s deliberations in elaborating specific activities in the workplan.

See *“Initial draft format for the RAP MALI biennial rolling workplan”*

4.2. Tracking progress in implementation of the RAP MALI

An initial draft reporting format to track national progress toward implementation of the RAP MALI will be presented. Participants members will be invited to discuss and further develop the draft format.

See *“Draft reporting format to track national progress toward implementation of the RAP MALI”*

5. Marine Litter Monitoring

5.1. Development of harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes

Suggestions for the preparation of regional guidance on harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes will be presented. Participants will be invited to discuss and provide recommendations on further development of regional guidance.

5.2. Establishment of a Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group

Initial draft Terms of Reference for a Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group to be established under the WGML will be presented. Participants will be invited to discuss and provide recommendations on further development of these, for consideration at the next Meeting of the WGML.

See *“Preparation of regional guidance on harmonized marine litter monitoring”* and *“Annex 3: Draft Terms of Reference: Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group”*

6. Development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML

The Secretariat will present updated Terms of Reference for the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML for discussion and review by the WGML. Participants will be invited to provide recommendations on further development of the Terms of Reference and on the process towards establishment of a Regional Node.

See *“Development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML”*

7. Project development in support of RAP MALI implementation

An update on project development will be provided by the Secretariat. Participants will be invited to advise the Secretariat on project development, and to identify support needs relevant to the implementation of the RAP MALI.

8. Any other business

The Secretariat will invite participants to raise any other matter that they would like to discuss.

9. Closing of the consultation

The Secretariat will inform participants on planned arrangements for the 3rd Meeting of the WGML and will close the consultation upon completion of business.

Schedule

The consultation will take place virtually (information on how to join the meeting and technical requirements will be shared in due course) from 23 to 25 June, with two two-hour sessions planned per day.

Time (ICT)	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
08:45	Log in, introduction to functions of the platform	Log in	Log in
09:00-11:00	Agenda items 1, 2 and 3	Agenda item 5	Revisiting remaining issues from previous sessions
12:45	Log in	Log in	Log in
13:00-15:00	Agenda items 3 and 4	Agenda items 6 and 7	Agenda items 8 and 9

Annex 2: Participant list

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