

DRAFT Terms of Reference

COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

I. Background

1. The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) is consolidating its work on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, resulting in the development of a COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework. The implementation of this Framework will be guided by a specialized body with significant expertise to identify key issues and solutions to improve and attain the socioecological sustainability of the marine and coastal ecosystems of the East Asian Seas.
2. These Terms of Reference describe the purpose, role, composition, and working modalities of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.

II. Purpose

3. The COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems is established to provide guidance and support on the implementation of COBSEA work on the marine and coastal ecosystems, therefore supporting the development and execution of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2023-27 and the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework.

III. Functions

4. The Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems will:
 - i. provide expert guidance on marine and coastal ecosystem for the East Asian Seas, including, but not limited to, marine and coastal spatial planning, marine protected areas, and the different marine and coastal habitats (e.g., coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, coastal wetlands) that will be included in the COBSEA Strategic Directions and future related projects and activities;
 - ii. serve as liaison between the COBSEA Secretariat and COBSEA countries on all topics related to marine and coastal ecosystem conservation and governance;
 - iii. develop biennial workplans, based on the Framework, to determine specific activities and targets to be approved by the COBSEA Intergovernmental meeting
 - iv. report on the implementation and progress of the Working Group responsibilities in the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting;
 - v. support in the development of project proposals and provide technical guidance and coordination on the implementation of projects and related activities on marine and coastal ecosystems; and,
 - vi. establish Expert Working Groups according to the specific thematic areas of the Framework.

IV. Participation

5. COBSEA participating countries shall be invited to participate in the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems through nomination of a Working Group focal point. The Working Group focal point should represent the national agency with lead or coordinating responsibility at the national level regarding marine and coastal ecosystems governance and should have relevant experience and expertise. COBSEA participating countries may also nominate additional experts to attend Working Group

meetings, to ensure that the full range of national expertise and interest is brought to the Working Group, and to enable the Working Group to take into consideration the multiple dimensions of governance of the marine and coastal ecosystems.

6. Relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, as well as relevant regional bodies and organizations concerned with marine and coastal ecosystems, may be invited to participate in Working Group meetings as observers. Local authorities, private sector entities and non-governmental organizations may be invited to participate as observers on recommendation by Working Group focal points. Observers may, upon invitation of the Working Group members, make contributions on matters being discussed in the meeting and within the scope of their activities and expertise. Certain meeting discussions may be limited only to representatives of COBSEA participating countries.

V. Organization of Work

7. The COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems will function through meetings as well as intersessional work. Intersessional work will be carried out mainly by correspondence and online meetings. Subject to availability of funds, the intersessional work may be carried out through meetings of Expert Groups and workshops. The working language is English.
8. The COBSEA Secretariat will function as secretariat for the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, including its Expert Groups.
9. Meetings of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems are held at least once per year. Where practical, meetings may be held in association with other COBSEA meetings. The Secretariat, in consultation with Working Group focal points, prepares a provisional agenda and distributes relevant meeting documents one month prior to each meeting. Meeting officers consisting of a Chairperson and a Rapporteur are elected by consensus from among meeting attendees representing COBSEA participating countries. The Meeting Chairperson and Rapporteur prepare a draft Working Group meeting report, shared with Working Group focal points for comment within one month of the meeting. The final meeting report is submitted by the COBSEA Secretariat for consideration by the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting.
10. As nominated experts, the outputs, strategies, and decisions that are agreed upon by the Working Group are considered to be in agreement of the priorities and requirements of the COBSEA participating countries, allowing the Working Group and the COBSEA Secretariat to proceed on plans and activities.
11. Costs associated with COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems meetings are covered through external funds including where possible contributions by participating countries, or from other appropriate sources, unless/ until provisions for this are made in the East Asian Seas Trust Fund.