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**Coordinating Body on the
Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)**

**Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of the
Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)**

Part 1: 8-9 September 2021 (virtual) and Part 2: 12-13 October 2022, Hanoi, Viet Nam (in-person/hybrid)

**Report of the resumed session of the Meeting,
addendum to UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/9/rev.1**

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING

1.1 Welcome Address and Opening Remarks

1. Mr. Mahesh Pradhan, Coordinator of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), welcomed the delegates to part 2 of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 25). This Meeting was convened in a hybrid format, with 25 participants attending in-person in Hanoi, Viet Nam, and 34 participants joining virtually through the Webex platform. The resumed IGM 25 followed the first part of IGM 25, held online on 8-9 September 2021.
2. Ms. Susan Gardner, Director of the Ecosystems Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), delivered opening remarks through a video message. Ms. Gardener thanked the Government of Viet Nam for hosting IGM 25 part two. She highlighted the expected outcomes of the Meeting, including the review of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022; guidance towards the development of new Strategic Directions 2023-2027; approval of the COBSEA workplan and budget 2023-2024; and consolidating activities on marine litter, marine and coastal ecosystems, and nutrient reduction in the East Asian Seas region. Ms. Gardner congratulated Mr. Mahesh Pradhan on his appointment as fulltime COBSEA Coordinator. Finally, she reiterated UNEP's continued commitment to support the COBSEA Secretariat and participating countries.
3. Ms. Kerstin Stendahl, Chief of the Ecosystems Integration Branch of UNEP, thanked all participants for joining IGM 25 part two in person and virtually and expressed her gratitude to the Government of Viet Nam for their strong support as the host country. She reiterated the importance of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in addressing the triple planetary crisis, and key role for COBSEA since its establishment in 1981. She recognized the growing portfolio of activities and partnerships and encouraged COBSEA participating countries to actively engage in COBSEA activities.
4. Ms. Pham Thu Hang, Deputy Director General of the Viet Nam Administration for Seas and Islands (VASI) of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam delivered her opening remarks on behalf of Viet Nam, as the host of IGM 25. She welcomed all participants and reiterated the importance of COBSEA in protecting and conserving the coastal and marine environment in the East Asian Seas. She highlighted Viet Nam's recent achievements in passing the Law on Environmental Protection in 2020, issuing the National Action Plan on marine plastic litter management to 2030, strengthening awareness on plastic consumption and disposal, and continuing effort to affirm political commitments to developing a global agreement on marine plastic pollution. She thanked UNEP for providing continuous support to participating countries through COBSEA over the last 40 years and wished participants a successful Meeting.

1.2 Introduction of participants

5. Heads of the Delegations were invited to introduce themselves and their respective delegations. The list of participants is found in Annex 1. Mr. Pradhan also recognized the participation of partners and observers, as well as colleagues from UNEP.

1.3 Presentation of credentials for the resumed Meeting

6. The Secretariat acknowledged the receipt of credentials of the delegates of all nine participating countries participating of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, in accordance with Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP.
7. As of 09:00 ICT (UTC + 7) on 12 October 2022, the representatives of the nine COBSEA participating countries were in attendance. The credentials issued by or on behalf of the Head of State of Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs or Minister of Environment, had been received either electronically or physically for the representatives of the following participating countries: Cambodia,

People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Update of the Bureau

8. The Secretariat noted that as this was the resumed Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting, the Bureau had already been elected Bureau during the first part of the Meeting in September 2021. The Bureau was reconfirmed by the Meeting, as follows:

Chair: Ms. Pham Thu Hang, Deputy Director General, Viet Nam Administration for Seas and Islands (VASI), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam

Vice-Chair: Ms. Angeline Chui, Deputy Director, International Policy Division, Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, Singapore

Rapporteur: Ms. Consolacion P. Crisostomo, Chief, Planning, Policy and Program, Development Division, Environmental Management Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines

2.2 Organization of work

9. Mr. Pradhan handed over to the Chair to conduct the remainder of the Meeting. The Chair confirmed that the Bureau had received valid credentials from all nine COBSEA participating countries.
10. The Chair announced that part two of IGM 25 was convened in hybrid format, on 12 and 13 October 2022 from 09:00 to 18:00 Indochina Time (UTC +7). The in-person Meeting would take place at the Fortuna Hotel in Hanoi, Viet Nam. Online participants could participate through the Webex platform.
11. The Chair invited the Secretariat to introduce the working and information documents as presented in the list of documents, UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/INF 2 rev.2/Add.1.
12. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the information on logistics and process for the hybrid meeting as presented in UNEP/COBEA IGM 25/INF 3 rev.2/Add.1. The Secretariat reminded the delegates that two separate resolutions would be adopted, one for each part of IGM 25.

2.3 Adoption of the revised agenda for the resumed Meeting

13. The Chair requested the Secretariat to discuss the provisional agenda of the Meeting as presented in working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/1 rev.2/Add.1 and the annotated agenda as presented in working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/2 rev.1/Add.1. The Secretariat explained that the documents were available through the Papersmart Portal¹ and had been shared with participating countries in advance of the resumed IGM 25.
14. After considering the provisional agenda submitted by the Secretariat, the delegates adopted the agenda as attached in Annex 2 to this report.

¹ <https://apps1.unep.org/resolutions/?q=cobsea-meeting-2022>

2.4 Opening remarks by participating countries

15. The Chair invited Heads of Delegations from the COBSEA participating countries to give their opening statements. Delegates were invited to share a copy of their written statements with the Secretariat during the Meeting.
16. Thailand expressed appreciation to UNEP for continuously supporting the East Asian Seas Regional Seas Programme and thanked the Government of Viet Nam for hosting the IGM. Thailand further expressed their appreciation to the COBSEA Secretariat for continuous work and congratulated Mr. Pradhan on his appointment as the Coordinator. In reference to the resolution made in the first part of IGM 25, including related to the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI), the Regional Guidance on National Monitoring, and the Terms of Reference for the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), Thailand looked forward to the progress made under these activities. She also thanked COBSEA and UNEP for their support through the SEA circular project which had contributed to the implementation of the RAP MALI. The delegate noted that COBSEA played an important role in providing guidance and support in the protection and conservation of the marine and coastal environment of the region and that she looked forward to the development of the new Strategic Directions and discussions on marine and coastal ecosystems.
17. Singapore thanked Viet Nam for preparing the Meeting and recognized that COBSEA had played an important role in the region by providing guidance and supporting partnerships. Singapore highlighted the transboundary nature of marine litter and shared that Singapore had adopted their National Action Strategy to address marine litter.
18. The Philippines congratulated COBSEA for organizing the virtual part one of IGM 25 and part two of the Meeting in hybrid modality and thanked Viet Nam for hosting the event. The representative stressed that COBSEA had been instrumental in the development of the Philippines National Plan of Action (NPOA) on Marine Litter, which engages multiple agencies in 16 regions of the country. Equally important was the adoption of legislation on extended producer responsibility (EPR). The Philippines welcomed efforts on marine and coastal ecosystems management and nutrients management in the region, which aligned with national existing initiatives including on blue economy. The Philippines also expressed their support for the implementation of the South China Sea Strategic Action Plan (SCS-SAP). The delegate reiterated support to COBSEA and looked forward to intensified support to countries.
19. Malaysia expressed appreciation for the continued support of COBSEA to participating countries and expressed gratitude to Viet Nam for hosting the IGM. Malaysia was dedicated to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and to ensure ocean sustainability, as evidenced by the Environmental Sustainability Roadmap in Malaysia 2020-2030. Malaysia is also advocating for proper collection mechanism through Reverse Vending Machines (RVM) that will contribute to a collection of recyclables of plastic waste and plastic bottles in a more systematic manner. Malaysia is also engaging industry players from a linear towards a circular approach to address the full life cycle of products. The delegate called for a multi-layered approach at all levels to address marine litter. Malaysia expressed appreciation to COBSEA and the Government of Sweden for support provided to develop the National Marine Litter Policy and Action Plan 2021-2030.
20. The Republic of Korea thanked UNEP, COBSEA, and Viet Nam for organizing the IGM, welcomed Mr. Pradhan and shared the hope that COBSEA would develop ocean-related sustainability further. The Republic of Korea had recently hosted the 7th International Marine Debris Conference (7IMDC) and thanked COBSEA and participating countries for joining.
21. Indonesia appreciated Viet Nam and COBSEA for preparing meeting documents and organizing the meeting. The delegate noted that the National Action Plan of Indonesia sets ambitious goals to reduce marine litter and plastic pollution by 2025. Indonesia was committed to strengthen the implementation of its national plan, including through financing, law enforcement, research, and development.

Furthermore, the G20 Presidency of Indonesia aims to be the interface between developing and developed countries and confirms their continuing efforts to focus on plastic and marine litter. Indonesia aimed to ensure a participatory process towards developing a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

22. China expressed gratitude to Viet Nam for hosting the IGM and thanked COBSEA and participating countries for attending the IGM. China expressed continued support to COBSEA and looked forward to working towards advancing marine ecological environment protection among coastal countries in the region.
23. Cambodia commended Viet Nam for the excellent hosting and thanked COBSEA and UNEP for organizing the event. Cambodia shared several ongoing activities, particularly related to plastic pollution, including economic instruments on plastic use; import restrictions and bans on certain plastic items; fees on plastic bags; “eco-school programmes”, “eco pagoda programme” and “village and commune safety programme”; and efforts to reduce plastic waste in public areas, including schools. Cambodia encouraged UNEP and COBSEA to continuously support participating countries and expressed support for the development of new Strategic Directions.

AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COBSEA ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

24. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present a summary of the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme on the implementation of COBSEA activities carried out during the period 2021 to 2022, shared as a working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/10.
25. The COBSEA Secretariat presented the report, which highlights key activities carried out during 2021-2022 towards the implementation of the workplan and the status of implementation of the resolution adopted by IGM 24. The report addressed three focus areas of the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022: regional governance, land-based marine pollution, and marine and coastal ecosystems. The report included an update on cooperation and collaboration with partner organizations and a financial report for the period of 2021-2022 as of 30 June 2022.
26. The Secretariat further presented the financial performance of the East Asian Seas Trust Fund for the period of 2021-2022, prepared, in accordance with the UN Financial Rules and Procedures and the COBSEA Financial Rules and Procedures. A total of USD 671,050 had been received in country contributions to the Trust Fund in 2021-2022. During the period under review, the total cost incurred to the Trust Fund amounted to USD 308,041 inclusive of 13 per cent programme support cost.
27. The Chair thanked the Executive Director of UNEP and the COBSEA Secretariat for activities implemented and progress made across the region. The Chair invited any questions for clarification from participating countries.
28. Malaysia thanked COBSEA for the work as presented by the Executive Director and congratulated COBSEA for successful implementation of the SEA circular project. He noted that the annual SEA of Solutions event had been held successfully online in 2021, co-hosted by the Government of Malaysia, bringing together a range of stakeholders. Malaysia thanked COBSEA for the support toward the adoption of their National Action Plan in 2021.
29. The Republic of Korea confirmed that they would pay the remaining balance of their Trust Fund contribution taking into account currency exchange fluctuations. The Secretariat thanked the Republic of Korea for adjusting their contributions based on the fluctuation of the currency exchange.

30. Thailand expressed their appreciation for the report and inquired about the extension of the SEA circular project. The Secretariat shared that discussions were ongoing with the Government of Sweden for a potential extension of the SEA circular project for two years.
31. Countries expressed their appreciation for the support of UNEP and COBSEA and endorsed the report of the Executive Director.

AGENDA ITEM 4: COBSEA REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON MARINE LITTER

4.1 Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter

32. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present updates from the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WMGL-4), which took place immediately prior to the IGM on 10 to 11 October 2022, in hybrid format, in Hanoi, Viet Nam, and through the Webex platform.
33. The Secretariat provided a summary of the WGML-4 and recommendations for the resumed IGM 25. The Working Group had discussed updates on marine litter efforts from participating countries and partners, as well as updates on the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML). Countries had welcomed progress on projects and the development of additional initiatives, including foundational funding on ghost gear, to achieve the biennial workplan. The Working Group had recommended follow-up activities to strengthen and harmonize marine litter monitoring, including a regional assessment building on national baselines, and recommended the progress report on the biennial workplan for implementation of RAP MALI 2021-22 for endorsement by the Meeting. The biennial workplan for implementation of RAP MALI 2023-24 and the process and format for national progress reporting had been developed further for finalisation and adoption by IGM 25 part two. Countries had been consulted on the establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML and development of the Node web platform and Research Network and had recommended the establishment of the Regional Node by the resumed IGM 25. Countries suggested the next WGML Meeting could take place in the third or fourth quarter of 2023, in a hybrid modality if possible.
34. The Chair invited participating countries and observers to provide feedback on activities.
35. The delegate of China reiterated that the regional assessment of marine litter status and trends should take place on a basis that the national baselines of all regional countries had been established and emphasized that the first full national progress reporting would require time and consultation across agencies and could not take place in early 2023. The delegate suggested ensuring that hosting arrangements for the Regional Node were sustainable before establishment.

4.2 Biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI

36. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present updates on the progress of implementation of the biennial workplan 2021-2022 and present the draft biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI 2023-2024, presented as working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/11. The Chair reminded the delegates that the workplan had been developed at the Fourth Meeting of the WGML, as per its mandate.
37. The Secretariat reminded delegates that RAP MALI paragraph 15 specified that biennial rolling workplans and progress assessment reports were developed through WGML and adopted by the IGM. The Secretariat presented the progress report of the biennial workplan of RAP MALI 2021-2022 and reported that all activities were expected to be completed by the end of the biennium and activities that would continue or had been postponed to the coming biennium had been highlighted in the draft workplan. Key achievements included pilot activities on integrated solid waste management conducted in Mersing Islands (Malaysia) and Untia (Indonesia), identification of foundational project

funding to address ghost gear through the Canadian Ghost Gear Fund, adoption of Regional Guidance on Harmonized National marine litter Monitoring Programmes- Monitoring Efforts and Recommendations for National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes, and the launch of the Regional Marine Litter Research Database for integration in the Regional Node.

38. The Secretariat further provided an update on funding and pipeline activities, including a possible low-cost extension of the SEA circular project until the end of 2024. Funding for COBSEA under the MA-RE-DESIGN project supported by the Government of Germany through the German Development Cooperation Agency² GIZ that had been postponed by a year was expected to commence by early 2023 for three years. A funding agreement through the Asian Development Bank from early 2023 to 2025 was still under consideration, and funding by the Government of Canada had been secured for foundational activities until the end of March 2023. Seed funding and capacity support would be provided by the GPML for the Regional Node.
39. The Secretariat proceeded to present the draft biennial workplan for implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI 2023-2024 for consideration for adoption by part two of IGM 25. The Working Group had developed the workplan further to include considerations of incentives and sustainable financing under Action 1, to explore follow-up opportunities to prevent and address ghost gear under Action 2, to consider accessibility and citizen science as well as establish national baselines to inform a regional assessment on monitoring under Action 3. The workplan further contained activities to support regional cooperation, national planning, access to resources on marine litter policies and initiatives, research, and capacity building through the Regional Node.
40. The Chair invited participating countries and observers to provide feedback on the presentation.
41. The delegate from Malaysia asked for more information on support provided related to legal and economic instruments, including plastic credits and EPR, and the process for tracking progress and replicating good practices. He voiced that a stepwise approach was needed to ensure countries like Malaysia could successfully address marine plastic pollution and microplastics through a multi-layer approach at the national, regional and international level.
42. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter elaborated that legislative gap analyses and guidance has been provided to countries based on expressions of interest to inform the needs-based development of legal instruments. Knowledge products and dialogues on plastic credits and EPR had been held under the SEA circular project, and further exchange and sharing of good practices would be provided *inter alia* through the MA-RE-DESIGN project. Good practices for replication would be shared as a core function of the Regional Node, once established. Progress could be tracked through national progress reporting, and the WGML provided a mechanism for peer-to-peer learning and exchange to promote the development of adequate instruments.
43. The representative of the Philippines suggested that in future, all sources of marine litter should be considered without limiting activities on sea-based sources to fishing gear. Delegates from Malaysia and Singapore added that COBSEA should focus on its mandate to address land-based and sea-based sources of marine litter and work with partners with relevant mandates and through existing platforms such as ASEAN to address issues outside of the scope of the workplan, such as ballast waters. The Secretariat emphasized that it would continue to work with partners with complementary mandates to support countries and to develop holistic workplans on marine litter as relevant.
44. Following the discussion, the Chair invited participating countries to adopt the biennial workplan through statements by Heads of Delegation.

² Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

45. The Meeting endorsed the progress report of the biennial workplan for implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI 2021-2022 and adopted the biennial workplan for implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI 2023-2024 as contained in resolution 2 adopted by the Meeting, in Annex 3 of this report.

4.3 Progress reporting process to track national progress toward RAP MALI implementation

46. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the progress reporting process to track national progress toward RAP MALI Implementation, presented as a working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/12.
47. The Secretariat presented the progress reporting process and format for consideration for adoption by part two of IGM 25. The process aimed to track advances made by countries on national marine litter planning, policies, and notable initiatives to track progress against the RAP MALI, identify support needs, and inform knowledge sharing through the Regional Node. The format had been developed in extensive consultation with the WGML and simplified further to reduce reporting burdens and align as far as possible with relevant reporting processes. Progress reports using the offline spreadsheet would be submitted by WGML focal points and compiled into a progress report by the Secretariat for consideration by the IGM on a biennial basis to complement reporting against the biennial workplan.
48. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter recalled that WGML-4 had added an optional column to allow for sharing of lessons learned as relevant and that the reporting spreadsheet could be tested in early 2023. This initial round of reporting would be non-exhaustive to identify the effort required for reporting. The first full reporting process would take place before IGM 26 in 2024 to inform reporting against the biennial workplan on implementing the RAP MALI.
49. The Chair invited participating countries and observers to provide feedback on the presentation.
50. The delegate from China suggested revisiting the frequency of reporting to avoid a high reporting burden on countries. The Secretariat reiterated that reporting should be simple and meaningful in line with biennial workplan reporting, as stated in the RAP MALI. The scope and content of measures reported remained at the discretion of countries, and the format allowed for simplified updates in consecutive reporting.
51. Representatives from Indonesia voiced their agreement with the process and format and expressed flexibility in terms of the timeline and frequency.
52. Following the discussion, the Chair invited participating countries to endorse the reporting process through statements by Heads of Delegation.
53. The Meeting adopted the national progress reporting process and format as contained in resolution 2 adopted by the Meeting, in Annex 3 of this report.

4.4 Establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter

54. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present updates on the establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node on the GPML, presented as a working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/13. The Chair reminded the documents that during IGM 24, the delegates requested that the Secretariat develop the Regional Node in consultation with the WGML. The Chair further reminded delegates that the Terms of Reference had been discussed at length and adopted by part one of IGM 25.
55. The Secretariat presented updates on the establishment of the Regional Node and requested participating countries to consider the establishment of the Regional Node. The Secretariat reminded delegates that part one of IGM 25 had recommended that the Secretariat act as an interim host institution while longer term hosting arrangements were explored. The Secretariat had developed

functions and services of the Node with regional partners, including a web platform linked to the Global Digital Platform of the GPML, which had been presented to the WGML-4 for further development.

56. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter further presented interim hosting arrangements through the Secretariat to develop core functions and services of the Node, and to develop longer term hosting arrangements. In line with the Terms of Reference, the Secretariat, as the interim host institution, would provide knowledge, capabilities, human resources, and extrabudgetary financial resources, to support the establishment, operationality, and functionality of the Node, and would report progress to WGML and IGM on a regular basis. Adequate project funding had been identified until the end of 2025, including ensuring staff capacity and developing the web platform. The GPML would provide additional staff capacity through a United Nations Volunteer in the Secretariat immediately following the establishment of the Node by IGM 25 part two. The establishment of the Node would enable the Secretariat, GPML, and future host institution to leverage additional funding to ensure continuity of support to the Node.
57. The next steps following the endorsement by IGM 25 part two included sending a letter to the GPML Steering Committee to formally establish the Regional Node with the Secretariat as the interim host institution. Updates on longer term hosting arrangements will be shared with the WGML and participating countries for consideration. The Secretariat emphasized that considerations of financial stability and sustainability would inform the development of longer term hosting arrangements and that any (co-)host institution would require an adequate mandate, stable funding, and capacity, as per the Terms of Reference of the Regional Node. The Secretariat assured countries that it had taken careful consideration of hosting responsibilities and identified adequate financial and human resource capacity to perform interim host duties.
58. The Chair invited participating countries and observers to provide feedback.
59. The delegate from China voiced support for the establishment of the Node as a meaningful platform for knowledge sharing, training, and capacity building. The delegate requested additional information on the interim hosting period and voiced concern that the burden for the Secretariat may be too high beyond 2025. She emphasized the need for stable, predictable funding to avoid risking the effective implementation of the RAP MALI. She stressed that should the Secretariat host the Node, it would need to fulfil all requirements as per the Terms of Reference. She requested further clarification on the role and function of the Secretariat and stressed that the Secretariat should ensure that its primary functions were carried out. The representative further asked for more information on the role of hosts and relationships with possible co-hosts.
60. The delegate from Malaysia voiced support for the establishment of the Regional Node and welcomed the support it will provide. He thanked the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas (RC3S) for previously expressing interest in hosting the Node in future. The representative stressed that the Node should be hosted by an institution with the relevant mandate and capacity and suggested a technical discussion with the Government of Indonesia in the near future on the future plans of the RC3S in view of hosting the Node. The delegate emphasized that details of longer term hosting arrangements and the establishment of the Node should be considered in a follow-up technical discussion and that participating countries should focus on endorsing the establishment of the Regional Node at this Meeting.
61. The delegate from Viet Nam shared their plans to develop a national marine litter database and expressed interest in connecting the national platform to regional and global efforts. Ms. Heidi Savelli offered to set up a call to discuss possible support to integrate the platform with the Regional Node and Global Digital Platform of the GPML. The Secretariat expressed its support to Viet Nam for the further development and integration of platforms.

62. The Representative from the Philippines thanked the Secretariat for this effort and welcomed the support the Regional Node would provide. He suggested that Secretariat develop a tangible matrix to guide the development of longer term hosting arrangements, including considerations of capacity and funding.
63. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter provided further information on hosting responsibilities and prerequisites for becoming a host or co-host institution to ensure sustainability, referencing the adopted Terms of Reference of the Regional Node. The latter stated that the Secretariat may act as a co-host or provide interim hosting services. Paragraph 55 of the East Asian Seas Action plan stated that the Regional Coordinating Unit administered by UNEP was expected to function primarily as the Secretariat of the Action Plan as well as to provide overall technical coordination and continuous supervision of the implementation of the action plan.
64. Ms. Heidi Savelli from UNEP added that the GPML was committed to providing support from the global level, including additional human resources such as a dedicated person that supports the Regional Node. The GPML would also provide strategic support to leverage additional capacity and funding once the Node was established. This was a successful model proven in different Regional Seas and had, in the past, resulted in leveraging resources for staff and activities for COBSEA, such as through the SEA circular project. She added that work was ongoing with Regional Seas programmes to identify Centres of Excellence, such as existing regional institutions that can support functions of the Node and implementation of regional action plans.
65. To enable establishment of the Regional Node in line with country needs and requests, the Meeting suggested that the Secretariat would not act as host institution but would carry out interim functions to operationalize the Node and develop detailed hosting arrangements for consideration by IGM 26. The Secretariat would work with interested parties to present longer term hosting arrangements to IGM 26. The GPML would provide capacity support for interim functions of the Secretariat.
66. Following further clarifications, the delegate from China thanked the Secretariat and the delegate of Malaysia for the productive discussion. She noted that her concerns had been accommodated and the Meeting could move forward with these provisions. She stressed that institutions interested in hosting should meet specific requirements as per the Terms of Reference and emphasized that China was interested in advancing the process with the remaining participating countries toward establishing the Regional Node with consideration of sustainable financing and human resource capacities.
67. Following the discussion, the Chair invited participating countries to endorse the establishment of the Regional Node through statements by Heads of Delegation.
68. The East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter was established by the Meeting with the provision that the Secretariat carries out interim functions and advances hosting arrangements for consideration by IGM 26, as contained in resolution 2 adopted by the Meeting, in Annex 3 of this report.

4.5 Update on negotiations toward an international instrument to end plastic pollution

69. The Chair invited UNEP to share updates on the international process related to developing an international instrument to end plastic pollution.
70. Ms. Heidi Savelli reminded the Meeting that the resumed Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) called for the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine environment in resolution 14, including provisions to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC). The first INC will take place on 28 November to 2 December in Uruguay, preceded by a multi-stakeholder forum and regional consultations. Meeting documents and further information on how to join the INC were available online.

71. Countries welcomed the information and shared updates on participation in the INC. Malaysia suggested support through COBSEA to provide guidance and assistance with meeting documents for negotiation.
72. Ms. Kerstin Stendahl emphasized that it was the role of governments to negotiate the content and scope of a legally binding instrument. Regional Seas programmes stand ready to provide any information that will be helpful during the negotiations. In May 2022, an information document was provided on Regional Seas activities related to marine litter and plastics to facilitate the process.
73. The Chair invited observers to add any interventions to this agenda item. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) recommended COBSEA participating countries on their progress toward tackling marine litter. WWF recommended that countries continue their leadership in the regional and global efforts to address plastic pollution, support the INC to develop an effective treaty for systemic changes, emphasize the full life cycle of plastic, and include robust technical and financial mechanisms.

AGENDA ITEM 5: MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

74. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Framework including the two studies commissioned by COBSEA to support the study, contained in working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/14.

5.1 Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning Policy Review

75. The Secretariat recalled that the Strategic Directions 2018-2022 called for a national and regional legal and policy framework to enable ecosystem-based approaches. This had led to the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning (MCSP) project between 2020-2021 in partnership with Blue Solutions, a GIZ-supported project. This included the development of the report entitled *Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning Policy in the East Asian Seas*. A virtual workshop on this subject had been convened in May 2021 to present this report, and inputs from COBSEA participating countries were integrated in 2021. The Secretariat shared the general findings of the report, as well as recommendations and follow-up actions.

5.2 Marine Protected Area Situational Analysis on the East Asian Seas

76. The Secretariat recalled that the Strategic Directions 2018-2022 called for the establishment of a COBSEA network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and to evaluate the management effectiveness of MPAs. To attain this, COBSEA had commissioned a desk study on MPAs in the East Asian Seas between 2021 and early 2022. The Secretariat reminded the IGM that a webinar to present the results had been held in February 2022 and that participating countries had been invited to review and provide comments on the study. The Secretariat shared the general findings of the desk study, including the challenges and obstacles of MPA management and networks in the region, opportunities to enhance management, as well as the recommendations.

5.3 Framework and Working Group for the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

77. The Secretariat shared that the Framework on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems had been drafted in line with COBSEA's Strategic Directions 2018-22, as well as COBSEA's long history of marine and coastal ecosystems activities and recent studies. Two virtual consultations with participating countries had been conducted on the draft Framework in July and August 2022 to ensure consistency with national and regional priorities. The Secretariat presented the draft Framework as a "living document" which would be updated on a regular basis. The Framework was aligned with different international and regional targets related to marine and coastal ecosystems. The main goal of the Framework was

to integrate and harmonize COBSEA efforts on marine and coastal ecosystems to ensure a cohesive and strategic approach.

78. The Secretariat proceeded to discuss the different areas of work included in the Framework. The Framework's overarching theme was a blue economy towards sustainable ocean ecosystems, assuring economic and livelihood opportunities for nearby communities, encouraging community participation and empowerment and ensuring equitable and inclusive benefit sharing. The thematic areas of the Framework included marine and coastal spatial planning (MCSP), marine protected areas (MPA), and marine and coastal habitats (coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetlands). The Secretariat also presented the cross-cutting and supporting mechanisms, where projects and activities could cover aspects of blue carbon and climate change, data management systems, communities of practice and knowledge sharing.
79. The Secretariat proposed the establishment of a Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, which would be composed of expert representatives of each participating country. The Secretariat shared the goal, objectives, functions, participation, and operation of the proposed Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.
80. The Chair invited participating country feedback toward adoption of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework, including the establishment of the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.
81. The majority of countries agreed on the contents of the Framework, including the establishment of the Working Group as the technical arm of COBSEA to strengthen work concerning marine and coastal ecosystems. They expressed caution to avoid duplicating work on marine and coastal ecosystems in the region, considering existing efforts and players in the field. It was emphasized that the Framework was a living document and would continue to be improved upon the establishment of the Working Group.
82. The delegate from the Philippines commended COBSEA on the MCSP and MPA reports. He noted that findings might be included not only in the regional Framework but also within each country's action plans.
83. In terms of the cross-cutting and supporting mechanisms, the delegate from Malaysia recommended including communication as one of the priority areas. Malaysia also stated that there should be no funds requested from participating countries, but rather that the Framework should be supported by projects.
84. The delegate from China mentioned that some statistics in the report needed to be further reviewed and that the data was not supported by the Government. China also advised removing the specific targets identified related to the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, since these were still under negotiation. Furthermore, China recommended working with partners such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC-WESTPAC), who work at an intergovernmental level on MCSP. The delegate suggested to finalize the Framework and consider the establishment of the Working Group after comments on the reports had been shared in writing and the outcome of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was known to ensure alignment. She requested that the Secretariat share proposed revisions to the Framework in writing following the Meeting, clarify the use of the Trust Fund for this item, and suggested considering this agenda item for adoption via email correspondence.
85. The Secretariat expressed that there were consistent talks with various funding agencies, such as the Government of Sweden, to support the work in this area. The Secretariat also clarified that the purpose of the Working Group was to aid COBSEA in identifying projects and priorities already taking place in the region and to avoid duplication by verifying activities that would require COBSEA's support.

The Framework did not have specific targets since targets already existed under the SDG and the upcoming post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Framework and Working Group would guide COBSEA in providing necessary support for participating countries to achieve these targets. The Secretariat clarified that there would only be one Working Group and that the recommendations of the two reports presented were only used as background information for the Framework, alongside information on previous COBSEA projects, and international and regional targets. The Secretariat suggested to remove references to the two reports in the Framework to avoid confusion.

86. The delegate of Thailand suggested to remove any reference to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to enable endorsement of the Framework as a living document so the issues could be advanced.
87. Given that there was no consensus for this agenda item, participating countries agreed that the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework would be revisited for finalization and adoption via email correspondence after the CBD COP.

5.4 Updates on global activities - UNEP Marine and Coastal and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network

88. The Chair invited UNEP and experts of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) to provide updates on global activities on marine and coastal ecosystems activities.
89. Mr. Ole Vestergaard from UNEP provided an update on global activities, including on blue economy. He presented that at the heart of the approach was a well-managed, healthy ocean, and that the concept of a blue economy was a holistic approach to understanding connectivity, from land to sea, across different actors, interests, and sectors, and developing synergies to attain both environmental and economic sustainability. UNEP's sustainable blue economy initiative followed five core elements to guide decisions: protects, restores, and regenerates healthy ecosystems; equitable and inclusive processes and outcomes; climate stability and resilience; sustainable consumption and production; circular economy approach.
90. Mr. Vestergaard shared the three-step transition plan towards a sustainable blue economy, including to understand the system and identify entry points for transition, enhance the system to connect with an integrated policy framework, and to deliver change. He expressed that UNEP was committed to working with COBSEA and ensuring close cooperation with partners to leverage synergies, including towards the UN Decade on Ocean Restoration. The proposed marine and coastal ecosystems workstream was essential to support countries in attaining the targets of the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and to be able to identify country needs for collaboration.
91. Mr. David Souter, together with Mr. Samuel Chan and Mr. Tadashi Kimura, from GCRMN presented findings on the situation of coral reefs from two million observations over 41 years. Several mass bleaching events in 1998, 2010, and 2016 had damaged the world's coral reefs, although some signs of recovery had emerged in 2019. Coral cover was negatively correlated with population and climate stressors. GCRMN stressed the need for long-term monitoring, to be able to access more data, historical data, and data in various languages in the region. GCRMN expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share findings with COBSEA. As a network of coral reef scientists, the presenters of the GCRMN offered to collaborate and support country activities. They opened an invitation to attend a symposium in 2023 to discuss collaboration between scientists from the region and COBSEA.

AGENDA ITEM 6: NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

6.1 Desk Review on Nutrient Pollution as a Regional and Transboundary Challenge in the East Asian Seas Region

92. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the findings from the desk study on nutrient pollution as a regional and transboundary challenge in the East Asian Seas and the Strategy and Action Plan presented in the working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM/15.
93. The Secretariat shared that there was a strong focus on land-based sources of pollution in the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022, including nutrients and sediments. This had led to the desk study on nutrient pollution with the support of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM). The study showed that nutrient inputs on land were greater than nutrient waste in the water due to interactions with ecosystems, with a high percentage of fertilizers in the region wasted and entering water systems. Findings of this report informed the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

6.2 Regional Nutrient Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action Plan for the East Asian Seas Region

94. The Secretariat shared the *Reducing Nutrient Excess in the Watersheds and Seas of East Asia* report (RENEWSeas) informed by the *Desk Review on Nutrient Pollution as a Regional and Transboundary Challenge in the East Asian Seas Region*. In the latter, a general overview of the sources and fate of nutrients, as well as the institutional capacities of national bodies dealing with nutrient pollution, had been laid out. The RENEWSeas report included a quantitative analysis of nutrient flows from source to sea to (1) provide a proof of concept on how quantitative data could be used to inform national plans for pollution reduction; (2) provide benchmark values for nutrient waste reduction at COBSEA scale. Additional data annexed to the report provided quantitative data at national scales based on river basin analyses.
95. On behalf of the Secretariat, the independent consultant Ms. Liana McManus presented that the action plan identified two enabling conditions and six major objectives, each with a quantitative rationale spelled out at COBSEA scale. Additional materials in the report showed the national scale analyses based on modelled data using annual time steps for watersheds at least 10,000 km² in size or bigger. These data should be validated by COBSEA countries before they could be used in their respective planning and nutrient reduction target setting. Specific action plans for each of the six major objectives could only be done following further quantitative analysis at national scale. The report provided foundational modelled data, which required refinement e.g., using monthly time scales of nutrient flows to reflect the impact of monsoonal climate patterns, as well as examining smaller river basins. The RENEWSeas report provided a conceptual framework of goals and quantitative objectives/actions, against which national blueprints for nutrient pollution reduction could be designed. This approach ensured that the plan was not prescriptive but allowed participating countries to be in the driver seat to set national targets and metrics for nutrient pollution reduction.
96. The Chair invited participating countries for feedback and adoption of the draft RENEWSeas strategy and action plan.
97. The delegate from Malaysia supported the review of the transboundary challenge in the desk study as it highlighted the key challenges and national measures on eutrophication and marine pollution. The proposed approach would support countries to develop capacity for nutrient management in the region.
98. The delegate from China expressed that they needed more time to review the documents given that they had not been shared within the required six-week timeframe prior to the Meeting. She stressed that participating countries may reject documents for adoption that were received too late and requested that the Secretariat avoid late submission of documents in future.
99. The delegate of Singapore echoed this concern and inquired whether suggested edits had already been incorporated in the final version.

100. The delegate from the Philippines requested clarification on what was being adopted from the agenda item, whether it was the desk study or the RENEWSeas. The Secretariat clarified that both documents were being considered for endorsement.
101. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to provide participating countries with more time to review the document and provide feedback before endorsement.

AGENDA ITEM 7: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND STRENGTHENING COBSEA

7.1 Evaluation of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022

102. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the draft Terminal Evaluation of the Strategic Directions 2018-2022. The document is included as Annex I of the working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/16.
103. On behalf of the Secretariat, the independent consultant Ms. Connie Chiang presented the outcomes of the evaluation which looked at the work completed in the past five years and gave the Secretariat guidance on the way forward. The evaluation had been developed based on a survey, interviews with participating countries, and a desk review. She concluded that considerable progress had been made under the theme of land-based pollution, in particular, related to marine plastic litter, with the expansion of the project portfolio and progress made through initiatives such as SEA circular toward achieving the RAP MALI and Strategic Directions. Some progress had been made on the theme of marine and coastal planning and management with further programmatic development and revival of activities in 2022. However, progress had been delayed *inter alia* due to inconsistent staffing. Limited progress had been made on the governance component, in particular, due to the vacancy of the COBSEA Coordinator post in 2021-2022. The consultant concluded that fundraising to strengthen personnel for the development and implementation of activities in line with the Strategic Directions was key. Despite the challenges, a good portion of the framework had been met. Successful models from the marine litter component could be replicated to advance progress in other thematic areas.
104. The Chair asked participants for comments or questions on the draft Terminal Evaluation of the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022.
105. The delegate of the Philippines appreciated the report and mentioned its usefulness in drafting the new Strategic Directions and asked whether there was a specific evaluation for the COVID-19 period.
106. The delegate from Thailand appreciated that a strong focus had been given to marine pollution in the past, and funding had been leveraged to address this priority area. He stressed that effective funding strategies and mechanisms should be considered for the new Strategic Directions.
107. The representative of Singapore acknowledged that much progress had been made to address regional priorities and commended the efforts of the Secretariat and the use of the traffic light system to highlight where more progress could be made. She elaborated that it was in the nature of framework implementation that some areas advanced more quickly than others and that progress could advance at different speeds based on the prioritization of activities. Going forward, prioritization of activities to make the best use of limited resources would continue to be important.
108. The delegate from China noted the need for further funding, capacity, and project development in thematic priority areas of the Strategic Directions. She suggested considering the regional and national priorities to inform the way forward to advance progress.
109. The independent consultant elaborated that consultation to assess progress was crucial. She further highlighted that the Secretariat had found adaptive strategies to advance progress and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic through virtual working modalities which were advantageous. She

added that prioritization was important to address existing funding resources, priorities, and capacities.

7.2 Guidance on COBSEA Strategic Directions 2023-2027

110. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present guidance in the development of the new Strategic Directions 2023-2027 as included in Annex II of the working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM/25/16.
111. The Secretariat presented overarching elements for the development of new COBSEA Strategic Directions 2023-2027. The independent consultant presented preliminary elements for inclusion in new Strategic Directions for guidance by the Meeting, noting that these elements were work in progress and that the framework would be developed further with country input including through a workshop in 2023.
112. To strengthen governance of COBSEA, the consultant recommended the Strategic Directions include elements to establish an intersessional Bureau of the IGM to facilitate decision making and guidance to the Secretariat. She further added that new Strategic Directions could include provisions for the further development of COBSEA, including considerations toward becoming a Convention or expanding membership in future, continued project development and increasing financial resources through resource mobilization. Additional elements were related to strengthening outreach and communications, such as through presence in social media platforms, as well as inclusiveness of COBSEA activities to benefit all stakeholders throughout the region. She presented an option for a strengthened organizational structure of the COBSEA Secretariat to address needs and priorities for effective implementation of new Strategic Directions. The consultant further identified the need to expand human resources of the COBSEA Secretariat, including the need for more Programme Officers and hiring of extra expertise when needed. The implementation of this strategy would follow an incremental approach.
113. The Secretariat presented a proposed process for the development and endorsement of new Strategic Directions 2023-2027 in the intersessional period. The process would allow for drafting of a new framework in consultation with countries, including through webinars and a workshop by June 2023, and a procedure for adopting the framework either by email correspondence through an intersessional Bureau, as envisaged in the new Strategic Directions, or through an Extraordinary IGM, keeping in mind that the latter option required a considerable effort on behalf of the Secretariat.
114. Ms. Kerstin Stendahl added that the development of new Strategic Directions was very timely. Related to governance and overall Strategic Directions for the Regional Seas, she stressed that the IGM remained at the core of COBSEA, and that participating countries were the driving force, with the Secretariat providing important services and assisting the operation of COBSEA. An intersessional Bureau would provide a guiding body for the intersessional period to guide the Secretariat and liaise with all members of the IGM on operationalization and implementation of activities. This was a successful model used in other existing multilateral environment agreements and intergovernmental bodies.
115. The Chair thanked the Secretariat and called on participants for comments and guidance on the development of COBSEA new Strategic Directions 2023-2027.
116. The delegate from China emphasized that activities on marine and coastal environment might overlap with existing international bodies and requested that the Secretariat avoid duplication. She stressed that COBSEA was member driven to address national priorities. The aim of COBSEA should be to enhance the capacity of participating countries accordingly. The delegate requested clarification on the role and nature of the Bureau, including the role of the Chair and Vice-chairperson of the IGM. The representative concluded that function determined the structure of COBSEA and suggested that thematic priorities should inform governance and overcomplication should be avoided. Continued

correspondence with national focal points could provide the bridge between the Secretariat and the IGM.

117. The delegate from Singapore emphasized that, while considerations of gender equality etc. were important, COBSEA should remain true to its core mandate and reflect this in the new Strategic Directions. She further stated that COBSEA was a very small group and suggested that a Bureau might not be the most useful modality, but that COBSEA should remain agile and nimble to advance progress and avoid layers in the decision-making process. The delegate thanked the Secretariat for the clear timeline which would be discussed further.
118. The Secretariat asked participating countries which option for decision making was preferable towards the adoption of new Strategic Directions 2023-2027. The first option was through email correspondence and the second option through an online Extraordinary IGM. Both options would still follow the consultation process and timeline presented.
119. The Philippines reiterated the need to go through the process allowing for meetings and consultations before decision making.
120. The Meeting agreed to further develop the Strategic Directions through consultations, including a dedicated workshop, for consideration for adoption via email correspondence in the intersessional period.

AGENDA ITEM 8: STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF COBSEA

8.1 Scoping needs for establishment of COBSEA Regional Activity Centres

121. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/17 on the establishment of Regional Activity Centres (RACs).
122. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter reminded countries that IGM 24 had endorsed Guidance on the Establishment and Operation of COBSEA Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and encouraged the Government of Indonesia to develop the Regional Capacity Center for Clean Seas (RC3S) as a COBSEA RAC for consideration by IGM 25. She explained that RACs were defined as autonomous, international, or regional organizations, or national institutions with regional remit, designated by IGM to coordinate or carry out specific technical functions and activities in support of the East Asian Seas Action Plan and decisions of the IGM, with the purpose to strengthen delivery and support participating countries in meeting their commitments. She added that RACs operated under authority of IGM with guidance of the Secretariat to decentralize delivery of activities while adding human, technical and financial capacity. To establish a RAC, participating countries could prepare a proposal for IGM endorsement, authorizing the Secretariat to develop a hosting agreement and the RAC to prepare a Strategic Plan and workplan for IGM approval. She noted that RACs were financially self-sustaining and able to leverage project funding, without incurring cost to the Trust Fund.
123. The Secretariat elaborated that multiple RACs with relevant specialization could be established over time to support implementation of COBSEA key thematic areas identified in the Strategic Directions, RAP MALI and by IGM. This could include the RC3S on marine litter, a dedicated RAC for nutrient pollution, and a RAC with relevant expertise on marine and coastal ecosystem management.
124. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and opened the floor for comments and guidance by COBSEA participating countries and welcomed any suggestions for discussion of possible COBSEA RACs. No comments were received.

8.2 Draft proposal for establishment of RC3S as a RAC

125. The Chair invited the Government of Indonesia to share an update on the RC3S and plans toward its establishment as a RAC.
126. The representative of Indonesia reiterated the intention to implement the decision made by IGM 24 toward developing the RC3S as a RAC. He explained that the RC3S develops annual workplans with annual budgets. He introduced the three focus areas of the RC3S as (1) knowledge management, (2) capacity building and awareness raising, and (3) solution models for showcasing good practices and replication. RC3S activities also included expert meetings in partnership with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), SEA of Solutions in partnership with UNEP and COBSEA, showcasing private sector good practices, awareness raising and capacity building such as community and beach clean-ups and a workshop on marine litter monitoring for the local government. The representative stressed access to stable financing and the ability to fundraise despite challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized the continued commitment by the Government of Indonesia to establish the RC3S as a COBSEA RAC and invited the Meeting to consider the proposal favourably. He asked the Secretariat to present the proposal on behalf of the Government of Indonesia.
127. The Chair thanked the Government of Indonesia and invited the Secretariat to present the proposal for establishment of the RC3S as a COBSEA RAC as contained in Annex 2 of working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/13.
128. The Secretariat presented the proposal on behalf of the Government of Indonesia and reminded the Meeting that the RC3S had been established in response to the Bali Declaration on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities adopted at the Fourth Intergovernmental Review Meeting (IGR-4) on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2018. Draft Terms of Reference had been developed and shared by the Government of Indonesia at IGM 24 with the offer to establish the RC3S as a RAC. The purpose of the RC3S as a RAC was to contribute to the implementation of regional priorities identified in the COBSEA RAP MALI, including technical assistance to participating countries to address land-based and sea-based sources, to promote regional knowledge management and networking; awareness raising, education and training; to promote the activities of COBSEA, strengthen stakeholder participation and regional coordination; and mobilize resources for achieving the RAP MALI.
129. The Programme Officer further noted that the RAC would be financially self-sustaining with funding from the Government of Indonesia, with an office space and technical staff in place, annual workplans and budgets. The organizational structure of the RAC included a Governing Board, Executive Director, technical and administrative divisions.
130. The Chair thanked Indonesia and the Secretariat and opened the floor for comments and guidance by COBSEA participating countries. No further comments were received.
131. The proposal on behalf of the Government of Indonesia to establish the RC3S as a RAC was adopted by the Meeting, as contained in resolution 2 adopted by the Meeting, in Annex 3 of this report, authorizing the Secretariat to work with the Government of Indonesia on a hosting agreement and Strategic Plan for consideration by IGM.

AGENDA ITEM 9: WORKPLAN AND BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2023-2024

132. The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the COBSEA workplan and budget for the biennium 2023-2024 which is included as working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM/25/18.

133. The Secretariat presented the COBSEA workplan and budget 2023-24 and presented an overview of country contributions to the Trust Fund received in 2022. The Coordinator proposed to use the Trust Fund savings to cover staff cost and core operation cost for 2023 and 2024, including the organization of IGM 26 in 2024. He provided an updated organizational structure of COBSEA and the Secretariat for the coming biennium, including the ongoing recruitment of an administrative assistant at G6 level. He further highlighted that the position of the P3 Programme Officer on Marine Litter had been funded entirely through extrabudgetary resources over the past years. Due to the delay of new project funding under MA-RE-DESIGN to early 2023, the Coordinator proposed loaning against the Trust Fund in the interim to ensure continuation of the position until project funds were received.
134. The Coordinator elaborated that the balance of savings in the Trust Fund would be gradually reduced to support Secretariat capacity and core functions. He noted that currently, the contributions to the Trust Fund remained unsustainable in terms of covering effective cost of operation of the Secretariat. He reminded countries that resolution 1 of IGM 21 called for sustainable Trust Fund contributions which remained unmet in light of *inter alia* increases in standard staff costs. He also reminded the Meeting that paragraph 36 of the Strategic Directions recommends the development of a plan for strengthening resources mobilization and enhancing COBSEA Secretariat in terms of human capacity included in the Annex of the working document. The latter considers a possible increase in national contributions, raising extrabudgetary funding, and developing projects to address regional priorities.
135. Related to staffing, the Coordinator presented significant in-kind support provided by UNEP, including staff time in the Ecosystems Division and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. He further provided an overview of extrabudgetary resources leveraged to complement the Trust Fund for human capacity in the Secretariat, including the P3 Programme Officer, an International UNV on marine and coastal ecosystems, and a new national UNV on the Regional Node supported by the GPML. He invited participating countries with Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programmes to consider funding a JPO position in the Secretariat.
136. The Coordinator stressed that the Secretariat would actively seek extrabudgetary funding to implement regional priorities, including in new project areas identified. He shared an overview of extrabudgetary resources identified for project implementation and development, including the extension of SEA circular currently under consideration by the Government of Sweden, as well as exploration of funding for activities to address nutrient pollution and marine and coastal ecosystems, including through the Government of Sweden. He emphasized that the Secretariat leveraged significant amounts of extrabudgetary funding to maximize COBSEA resources.
137. Ms. Kerstin Stendahl complemented the presentation by the Secretariat by re-emphasizing that the Secretariat served the interests and needs of participating countries. She further highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Trust Fund sustainably and fully covers the staff cost and core functions of the Secretariat, in line with the East Asian Seas Action Plan and other Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. Currently, savings can and should be used to support the operation of COBSEA, but the Trust Fund must become sustainable in future, which requires a strategic discussion and decision in the coming years. She reiterated that Regional Seas Coordinators across the board are recruited at P5 level or above and that this should be reconsidered and adjusted in the future in COBSEA to provide the appropriate and required level of authority and to strengthen the Secretariat. Currently, while the Secretariat has been functioning well, it remains understaffed in light of priorities identified. While extrabudgetary resources can be used to complement core staff capacity for specific projects and activities for a specific period of time, core funding should be used for Secretariat personnel with core functions.
138. Ms. Annie Muchai from the UNEP Ecosystems Division complimented participating countries and COBSEA for their efforts and effective operation over the past years despite human resource challenges. She echoed Ms. Stendahl in recommending the realignment of the Coordinator position to P5 level to accurately reflect required delegation of authority. She noted that the ratio of extrabudgetary resources to core Trust Fund resources was quite high and highlighted the importance

of ensuring sustainable Trust Fund use to enable effective operation of the Secretariat. This could be a gradual process over the coming years toward strengthening COBSEA and the Secretariat. Ms. Annie Muchai added that by UN Financial Rules and Regulations applicable to COBSEA, annual budgets should endeavour to be spent within the year they are committed rather than accruing savings and contributions should sustainably cover expenses. This issue needs to be reconsidered in future.

139. The Chair thanked the Secretariat and UNEP for the presentation and interventions and opened the floor for comments or questions on the workplan and budget.
140. The delegate of the Philippines in principle agreed with recommendations to incrementally adjust contributions over time. The representative of Indonesia voiced openness to discuss an increase of national contributions.
141. The delegate of China asked for further information on the use of Trust Fund savings and legal provisions for use. She further noted the risk of a possible economic recession in the future considering current global economic developments may result in difficulties to increase voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund.. She proposed to use savings for capacity building of participating countries and reminded the Meeting that the IGM was the decision-making body of COBSEA relevant to the workplan and budget.
142. The delegate of Malaysia noted that the threshold for spending could be increased to match on what was agreed on Resolution 1 adopted at 21st IGM in 2013, while agreeing that sustainable provisions are required for the future. He further suggested that an internship programme could further strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat.
143. The Republic of Korea partly agreed with increasing contributions, however, an increase of 15 per cent in addition to Republic of Korea's commitment to address currency fluctuations posed a high increase in cost. Steps should be taken toward a more sustainable Trust Fund, however, she noted that any increase in budget required complex steps of approval at national level. She voiced preference for country contributions to remain at levels agreed by IGM 21 for the time being.
144. The delegate of Singapore thanked the Secretariat for the assessment and recommendations and requested clarification on the items for endorsement, including paragraph 23 and the Annex with recommendations for revising national contributions and resource mobilization. The latter should be considered separately from the workplan and budget and discussed further. Singapore endorsed the workplan and budget without paragraph 23 and Annex 1.
145. The COBSEA Coordinator clarified that recommendations for further strengthening the sustainability of the Trust Fund and the resource mobilization strategy annexed to the document could be removed to enable endorsement of the workplan and budget. He concluded that further information would be provided by the Secretariat to address the issue of sustainability and resource mobilization in future. Ms. Stendahl added that these considerations could be included in the draft Strategic Directions 2023-2027 for guidance by participating countries, noting that the issue of sustainability of the Trust Fund remains a priority that requires further discussion.
146. Following the discussions, the Chair invited the participating countries to adopt the COBSEA workplan and budget for 2023-24.
147. The workplan and budget for 2023-2024 was adopted with the provision that paragraph 23 and Annex 1 of the working document would be deleted.

AGENDA ITEM 10: DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

148. The Chair opened the floor to participants on proposals and offers for the venue of the Twenty-sixth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 26) of COBSEA to be held in 2024. The Chair noted the issue of hosting the Intergovernmental Meeting on a rotational basis, as raised at the Second Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting in 2018.
149. The delegate from Malaysia suggested considering Cambodia as host country for IGM 26 as the country had never hosted an IGM previously. The delegate from Thailand supported the suggestion.
150. The delegate from Cambodia thanked Malaysia and Thailand for the support and welcomed the proposal to host IGM 26. He reiterated that the Government of Cambodia would work with the Secretariat to organize IGM 26.
151. The Chair thanked countries for the proposal and thanked Cambodia for agreeing to host IGM 26.

AGENDA ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

152. The Chair invited participants to raise any other matters that they would like to discuss in the Meeting.
153. The delegate from Cambodia suggested that the Secretariat develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Cambodia to better facilitate cooperation with third parties for project implementation.
154. The Programme Officer on Marine Litter welcomed the suggestion and added the Secretariat would discuss further with the Government of Cambodia following the Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 12: ADOPTION OF THE MEETING REPORT

155. The Chair invited the Rapporteur and the Secretariat to share the Meeting Report draft for consideration and adoption by the IGM and invited participants to ask questions or comments for clarification
156. The Secretariat presented the draft report and reflected remaining comments on screen.
157. The Chair invited participating countries to adopt the report through statements by Heads of Delegation.
158. The Meeting report was adopted by the Meeting on 13 October 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 13: CLOSING OF THE MEETING

159. As part of the closing of part two of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting, the Chair turned to the COBSEA Coordinator, Mr. Pradhan, for his closing remarks and summary.
160. Mr. Pradhan expressed his sincere thanks to the Government of Viet Nam for their hospitality in hosting the Meeting and thanked all participating countries for active participation in the Meeting. He recognized the establishment of the first COBSEA RAC as a historic moment and thanked countries for endorsing the workplan and budget. The Coordinator thanked Ms. Stendahl for her strong support for COBSEA and wished every success in her new role and responsibilities as Climate Ambassador for Finland. He further thanked Ms. Krittika Kleesuwan for her many years of service to the COBSEA Secretariat and wished her all the best for her upcoming retirement.

161. The Chair thanked the COBSEA Coordinator, and gave the floor to Ms. Kerstin Stendahl, Head of the Ecosystems Integration Branch at UNEP.
162. Ms. Stendahl congratulated the room and participating countries for their important decisions, particularly on the establishment of the first RAC of COBSEA. She expressed her gratitude to the Chair, Ms. Hung, and her team for their generosity and hospitality. She thanked the COBSEA Secretariat for providing excellent services to COBSEA.
163. The Chair provided her closing remarks. The Meeting had successfully discussed and agreed key activities and solutions to address plastic pollution and challenges on marine and coastal ecosystems now and in the future. She reaffirmed Viet Nam's willingness to actively participate in regional and national activities on marine litter, blue economy, MCSP, MPA, and nutrient management. She thanked everyone for the active participation to make IGM 25 part two a success. On behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, she thanked UNEP and the Secretariat for their close cooperation COBSEA and support to participating countries over the past 40 years and looked forward to continued cooperation for regional action.
164. Upon completion of business as planned, the Chair declared the Meeting closed.

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ANNEX 2: AGENDA OF THE MEETING

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

- 1.1 Welcome address and opening remarks
- 1.2 Introduction of participants
- 1.3 Presentation of credentials for the resumed Meeting

1. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

- 1.3 Update of the Bureau
- 1.4 Organization of work
- 1.5 Adoption of the revised agenda for the resumed Meeting
- 1.6 Opening remarks by participating countries

2. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COBSEA ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

3. COBSEA REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON MARINE LITTER

- 3.3 Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter
- 3.4 Biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI
- 3.5 Progress reporting process to track national progress toward RAP MALI implementation
- 3.6 Establishment of the EAS Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter
- 3.7 Update on negotiations toward an international instrument to end plastic pollution

4. MARINE AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

- 4.3 Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning Policy Review
- 4.4 Marine Protected Area Situational Analysis on the East Asian Seas
- 4.5 Framework and Working Group for the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems
- 4.6 Updates on global activities including the Global Biodiversity Framework, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, and UNEP Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

5. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

- 5.3 Desk Review on Nutrient Pollution as a Regional and Transboundary Challenge in the East Asian Seas Region
- 5.4 Regional Nutrient Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action Plan for the East Asian Seas Region

6. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND STRENGTHENING COBSEA

- 6.3 Evaluation of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022
- 6.4 Guidance on COBSEA Strategic Directions 2023-2027
- 6.5 Follow-up and review of ocean-related SDGs

7. STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF COBSEA

- 7.3 Scoping needs for establishment of COBSEA Regional Activity Centres
- 7.4 Draft proposal for establishment of RC3S as a RAC

8. WORKPLAN AND BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2023-2024

9. DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING REPORT

12. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

ANNEX 3: RESOLUTION 2 OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING OF COBSEA

The participating countries of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), taking part in its Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting:

Thanking the Government of Viet Nam for hosting the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA;

Recalling consultations with participating countries prior to the Meeting and mutual consent to convene the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting in two parts in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the first part held virtually during 8-9 September 2021 to take decisions on urgent matters while the second part convened in hybrid mode during 12-13 October 2022, with the in-person session held in Hanoi, Viet Nam;

Bearing in mind the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022, which identifies addressing marine pollution, promoting marine and coastal planning and management, as well as ensuring sound governance, resource mobilization and partnerships, as regional priorities;

Noting the 2019 COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI), which aims to prevent and reduce marine litter from land-based and sea-based sources, to strengthen monitoring and assessment for evidence-based action, and create an enabling environment for implementation of the RAP MALI;

Noting further the establishment of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) by the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA to guide the Intergovernmental Meeting and Secretariat in implementation of the RAP MALI;

Recalling the resolution adopted by the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, requesting the Secretariat, in consultation with the WGML, to develop projects to achieve the RAP MALI, to develop a biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI, and to develop the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), for consideration by the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA;

Acknowledging the need to ensure the sustainability of the marine and coastal ecosystems and the effective management of nutrient pollution, in line with COBSEA's Strategic Directions 2018-22;

Recognizing the need to strengthen COBSEA's financial sustainability through the Trust Fund and extrabudgetary funding sources to ensure effective operation and implementation of the East Asian Seas Action Plan;

Recognizing further the need to strengthen the role of COBSEA and Secretariat capacity to improve coordination functions and enable effective support to participating countries to address regional challenges and priorities for the protection of the marine and coastal environment;

1. *Endorse* the progress report of the biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2022 as contained in Appendix 1 to this resolution;
2. *Approve* the biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2023-2024 as contained in Appendix 1 to this resolution and request the Secretariat, in consultation with the WGML, to implement activities of the workplan and further develop projects and mobilize resources to this end;
3. *Adopt* the Progress Reporting Process to track national progress toward implementation of the RAP MALI as contained in Appendix 2 to this resolution, and request the Secretariat to facilitate reporting in line with biennial workplan progress reporting;

4. *Endorse* the establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, contained in Appendix 3 to this resolution, and request the Secretariat to carry out interim functions and advance hosting arrangements for consideration by IGM 26;
5. *Request* the Secretariat to pursue the development of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework³, to be revisited following the adoption of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, for consideration of COBSEA participating countries for adoption via email correspondence;
6. *Encourage* the Secretariat to continue working on the Regional Nutrient Reduction Strategy and Action Plan to facilitate further review and endorsement of the document;
7. *Request* the Secretariat to proceed with the development of new COBSEA Strategic Directions 2023-2027⁴, in consultation with COBSEA participating countries, including a dedicated workshop, and to facilitate consideration of the Strategic Directions 2023-2027 for adoption via email correspondence in the intersessional period;
8. *Endorse* the proposal by the Government of Indonesia establishing the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas (RC3S) as a Regional Activity Centre for COBSEA, as contained in Appendix 4, and request the Secretariat to work with the Government of Indonesia to develop a host agreement and provide guidance to the RC3S for development of a Strategic Plan for consideration by Twenty-sixth Intergovernmental Meeting;
9. *Approve* the COBSEA workplan and budget for the biennium 2023-2024 as contained in Appendix 5 to this resolution;
10. *Welcome* the proposal for the Government of Cambodia to host the Twenty-sixth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in 2024.

APPENDICES⁵:

- Appendix 1: Biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2023-2024 (including progress report of the biennial workplan 2021-2022)
- Appendix 2: Progress reporting process to track national progress toward implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter
- Appendix 3: Establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter
- Appendix 4: Proposal for establishing the RC3S as a COBSEA RAC
- Appendix 5: COBSEA workplan and budget for 2023-2024

³ The draft Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework is available on the Papersmart Portal: https://apps1.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/unep_cobsea_igm_25_14_rev1_framework_and_working_group_for_marine_and_coastal_ecosystems_0.pdf#overlay-context=cobsea-working-docs%3Fq%3Dcobsea-working-docs

⁴ The guidelines for development of new Strategic Directions 2023-2027 presented to the Meeting are available on the Papersmart Portal: https://apps1.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/unep_cobsea_igm_25_16_annex_ii_suggestions_for_new_cobsea_strategic_directions_0.pdf#overlay-context=cobsea-working-docs%3Fq%3Dcobsea-working-docs

⁵ All meeting documents are available to delegates on the Papersmart Portal: <https://apps1.unep.org/resolutions/?q=cobsea-meeting-2022>

Appendix 1: Biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2023-2024 (including progress report of the biennial workplan 2021-2022)

I. Background

1. The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) was adopted by the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (IGM 24). Paragraph 15 of RAP MALI states that the Regional Action Plan is complemented by more specific biennial rolling workplans developed through the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) and adopted by the Intergovernmental Meeting. The biennial workplans form the basis for assessing progress on implementation of the RAP MALI and enable an adaptive approach, strengthening progress on priority issues, ensuring responsiveness to global-level developments such as United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions, and reducing risk for duplication of effort. Descriptions of key actions in RAP MALI Appendix 2 serve as a guide for development of activities in the rolling workplans.
2. The Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA requested the Secretariat, in consultation with the WGML, to develop projects to support implementation of the COBSEA RAP MALI and, upon request and subject to availability of funds, develop relevant national activities in participating countries. The WGML in its Third Meeting on 29-30 June 2021 welcomed presented project and funding opportunities and encouraged further development of the project pipeline to strengthen capacity of the Secretariat and provide support to participating countries to achieve the RAP MALI.
3. The biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2022 and an analysis of achieved progress, gaps, new funding opportunities, and key priority areas were developed through the WGML and presented to part one of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (IGM 25) held on 8-9 September 2021. The biennial workplan 2021-2022 was further revised and adopted by IGM 25 by silence procedure on 12 November 2021.
4. The workplan format enables tracking of progress to the WGML by the Secretariat on a quarterly basis, and to inform progress reports developed by the WGML for approval by the Intergovernmental Meeting, as per Terms of Reference of the WGML. The quarterly progress report tracker on status of implementation of the workplan until May 2022 was shared with the WGML. The quarterly progress report tracker until August 2022 is contained Annex 1 of this document. An updated final progress report tracker against the workplan spreadsheet will be presented to the WGML at its Fourth Meeting (WGML-4) on 10-11 October 2022 immediately prior to the resumed session of IGM 25 on 12-13 October 2022.
5. This document presents progress made toward completion of the biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2022 and the biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2023-2024. The biennial workplan 2023-2024 spreadsheet is attached in biennial workplan Annex 2. Participating countries developed the draft biennial workplan further at the Fourth Meeting of the WGML and adopted the biennial workplan 2023-2024 at the resumed session of IGM 25. The biennial workplan will provide the basis for regular progress assessment and for proposal of additional and complementary activities to address remaining gaps.

II. Progress report on biennial workplan for implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2022

6. All activities in the biennial workplan ending in 2022 are expected to be completed. Activities that will continue in the subsequent biennium due to their continuous nature or that have been postponed due to delays outside of COBSEA's control are clearly identified below and in the progress report tracker in the Annex 1 to this document.

Action 1. Preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based sources

7. Under '1.1 Legal and economic instruments' the COBSEA Secretariat utilized additional resources by the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) to collaborate with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Law Division to assist COBSEA countries in enhancing legal instruments on marine litter. Based on Expressions of Interest received from Cambodia⁶, Malaysia⁷ and the Philippines⁸, national legislative guidance was developed in close consultation with COBSEA focal agencies to strengthen national legal frameworks on marine litter. 12 case studies on good practices of plastic management are available online⁹ and additional case studies will be shared at WGML-4, developed under the SEA circular project implemented jointly by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and COBSEA. The Annual Report 2021 of SEA circular with detailed information on project results is attached in the Annex of working document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/4 rev.1/Add.1 and the Annual Report 2022 will be shared with the WGML when available.
8. Under '1.2 Integrated waste management' pilot activities in two sites in Petaling Jaya¹⁰ and Penang¹¹ in Malaysia were completed under the SEA circular project and case studies are available online for regional learning and replication. With funding under the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and UNEP 'Cooperation on Global Environmental Programs' umbrella agreement, three pilot activities to demonstrate integrated plastic waste management in island and remote communities will be completed by October in the Mersing Islands in Malaysia in partnership with Reef Check and in Untia in Indonesia in partnership with Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). Case studies and videos¹² for replication will be shared with the WGML, alongside a collection of good practices in the region developed in cooperation with USEPA partner Battelle and development cooperation agencies active in the region. Resources will be made available through the Regional Node.

Action 2. Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources

9. Under '2.1 Legal and economic instruments' a scoping study of legal frameworks relevant to addressing sea-based sources of marine litter in the East Asian Seas was developed in collaboration with UNEP Law Division with funding from the GPML. The study *Legal Guidance on Sea-Based Sources of Marine Litter in the Seas of East Asia, Regional Gap Analysis and Assessment*¹³ identifies existing frameworks and implementation gaps that may be considered as the basis for development of further activities under the biennial workplan 2023-2024. The document was revised based on comments received from participating countries.
10. Under '2.2 Removal of existing marine litter and its disposal' funding from the Ghost Gear Fund of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada has been identified by the Secretariat to support good practices related to recovery and recycling of fishing gear, as advised by the WGML and in line with the workplan. Funding is available for pilot activities related to gear marking, ghost gear retrieval and recycling for completion by end of March 2023 as a foundation for follow-up project development. Funded activities are included in the biennial workplan 2023-2024.

⁶ <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/legal-and-policy-guidance-addressing-marine-litter-cambodia>

⁷ <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/legal-and-policy-guidance-addressing-marine-litter-malaysia>

⁸ <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/resources/reports/legal-and-policy-guidance-addressing-marine-litter-philippines>

⁹ <https://www.sea-circular.org/best-in-class-practices/>

¹⁰ <https://www.sea-circular.org/publications/3r-reduce-reuse-recycle-initiatives-solving-plastic-solution-at-source-in-petaling-jaya/>

¹¹ <https://www.sea-circular.org/publications/waste-segregation-at-source-solving-plastic-pollution-in-penang/>

¹² Case study videos are available on the COBSEA Youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJxYOWUvcxX11AqVVxJ4X6g>

¹³ <https://www.unep.org/cobsea/resources/reports/legal-guidance-sea-based-sources-marine-litter-seas-east-asia-regional-gap>

Action 3. Monitoring and assessment of marine litter

11. Under '3.1 Expert Group' an Expert Group on Monitoring was established by the WGML at its Third Meeting on 29-30 June 2021. Experts were nominated by National Focal Points and are consulted on capacity building activities on monitoring. The composition of the Expert Group may be reviewed once further capacity is built at national level. The Expert Group will be invited to join relevant agenda items of WGML-4 to provide guidance on monitoring activities in the coming biennium.
12. Under '3.2 Regional and National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes' Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes was adopted by IGM 25 part 1 as a foundation for technical assistance and capacity building on monitoring. In partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) with support from the SEA circular project, a regional training of trainers was held on 25-29 July in Thailand and follow-up national trainings will be held in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Viet Nam by November 2022. Training modules will support online/virtual training on monitoring methods in the future and will be available through the Regional Node. A regional consultation was held on 4 April 2022 and national consultations will be held and targeted technical assistance provided to strengthen and harmonize national marine litter monitoring programmes in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Viet Nam by November 2022. National baseline surveys will be conducted by November 2022 to inform monitoring programmes. The national baseline assessment in Thailand was held 1-3 August with participants from neighbouring countries to encourage peer learning for replication. A proposed plan for a regional assessment of marine litter status and trend will be discussed at WGML-4 to inform further activities for strengthening and harmonizing monitoring in the coming biennium 2023-2024.

Action 4. Activities supporting the implementation of COBSEA RAP MALI

13. Under '4.1 Regional and international cooperation and reporting' the Secretariat continues to strengthen coordination with relevant regional and global entities to promote knowledge sharing on marine litter, align efforts and avoid duplication, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership. A strategy paper for strengthening coordination with ASEAN was developed based on discussions of the WGML and with the ASEAN Secretariat. Updates from COBSEA and areas for coordination were presented at the 23rd Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME) on 26-27 July 2022 and COBSEA activities were supported by representatives of Thailand. ASEAN Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and Regional Centre are invited to share knowledge and opportunities for coordination at WGML-4. The third annual SEA of Solutions regional partnership event was held successfully as a virtual event in November 2021, co-hosted by the Government of Malaysia. Around 800 participants from government, business, academia, and civil society registered for the event and identified 10 solutions for acceleration. In November 2022, a smaller recognition event will be held, and information shared with participating countries in due course.
14. Under '4.2 National planning and policy frameworks' the Secretariat provided technical assistance for development and implementation of National Action Plans on Marine Litter or equivalent planning or policy documents, including in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam through SEA circular. Malaysia's National Marine Litter Policy and Action Plan 2021-2030, developed with support from COBSEA under SEA circular, was presented at SEA of Solutions. Regional sectoral guidelines on the prevention and reduction of marine litter from land-based sources will be developed with support under the 'Marine Litter Prevention through Reduction, Sustainable Design and Recycling of Plastic Packaging' (MA-RE-DESIGN) project with funding from the Government of Germany. The project start has been postponed by a year to October 2022 by the donor. It is proposed that this activity be postponed for inclusion in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 accordingly. A regional reporting format for national progress reporting on marine litter planning and policy frameworks toward achieving the RAP MALI was developed with the WGML in 2020 and shared again as an information document to part one of IGM 25. The format and progress will be finalized by the WGML-4 for consideration by part

two of IGM 25. A survey of status of national planning frameworks may be conducted in August 2022 to support revision. The first iteration of formal regional reporting will likely commence in 2023. It is proposed that this activity continue in the biennial workplan 2023-2024. Also under 4.2, the Secretariat has made significant progress in developing the services and functions of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML, including pillar one on knowledge management related to policies and good practices, in line with the Terms of Reference adopted by part one of IGM 25. The beta web platform of the Node will be presented to WGML-4 for feedback and part two of IGM 25 will be requested to endorse the formal establishment of the Regional Node with the Secretariat as interim host institution. Following establishment, knowledge on marine litter policy and regulatory frameworks, initiatives and good practices will be made successively available through the Node. It is proposed that this activity continue in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 related to the Regional Node.

15. Under '4.3 Research activities' a regional marine litter research database¹⁴ was developed and soft launched at a regional consultation with COBSEA countries in April 2022. The database and inventory of research publications from the region in different languages will be available through the Regional Node and is currently accessible in beta version through the Global Digital Platform of the GPML. A research network to address knowledge gaps and promote regional research will be launched by November 2022. It is proposed that this activity continue in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 related to the Regional Node. Regional modelling of plastic pollution flows and emissions into the environment has been undertaken with University of Leeds in partnership with UN-Habitat. The findings of the report are currently being formatted to be shared with stakeholders in the region. Findings will be curated in the Regional Node. The WGML may advise on follow up analyses on marine litter flows.
16. Under '4.4 Information, education, outreach and involvement of stakeholders' the SEA circular project mapped existing campaigns on plastic pollution in the region and successfully held the 100 Days to #BeatPlasticPollution Campaign¹⁵. The campaign featured stories of over 30 sustainability advocates from the region, reached over 20 million people over a period of 100 days and engaged more than one million people in 45 countries including through four Augmented Reality tools. A video on the RAP MALI was developed to increase visibility and outreach¹⁶. The video and any additional outreach material may be translated in future based on country needs.
17. Under '4.5 Training and capacity building' plans were made to develop material of the UNEP Massive Open Online Course on Marine Litter in Khmer to further expand accessibility in the region. However, the next iteration of the MOOC has been postponed to 2023 by UNEP GPML. It is proposed that this activity be postponed to the biennial workplan 2023-2024. Previously, the MOOC has been made available in Indonesian, Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese, including through the SEA circular project. Capacity building resources, including training modules developed on marine litter monitoring, will be available through the web platform of the Regional Node following its formal establishment in line with the adopted Terms of Reference. It is proposed that this activity continue in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 related to the Regional Node.

III. Biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI 2023-2024

18. The workplan format is structured along the four main actions of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) and corresponds to the list of key actions contained in Appendix 2 of RAP MALI, as suggested in the resolution of IGM 24. The biennial workplan is presented below and further attached in spreadsheet format in biennial workplan Annex 2.
19. The workplan identifies specific activities and where relevant deliverables; the roles of the WGML, countries and Secretariat and other partners as appropriate; identified funding sources, including existing

¹⁴ <https://mapla-riv.web.app/>

¹⁵ <https://www.sea-circular.org/events/100-days-to-beatplasticpollution/>

¹⁶ <https://youtu.be/mu74t56JNKk>

and pipeline funding for the biennium; timeframe for implementation of activities; and status of implementation. The workplan focuses on activities COBSEA participating countries will collectively pursue because they are regional in nature or require coherent national efforts. At the national level, countries may further develop activities to address national priorities and needs, and report on such efforts through the WGML.

20. Activities in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 build on progress made in 2021-2022, in line with priority areas identified by the WGML and IGM toward achieving the RAP MALI. The new workplan includes activities that have been postponed or that continue in the next biennium as well as new activities that are considered achievable using existing resources or where additional funding sources have been identified to provide adequate capacity for implementation of the RAP MALI.
21. The agreed workplan format enables tracking of progress to the WGML by the Secretariat on a regular basis, and to inform progress reports developed by the WGML for approval by the Intergovernmental Meeting, as per Terms of Reference of the WGML. The workplan enables continuous tracking of activities from ‘not started’ (implementation not started, planning may be underway); ‘initiated’ (initial steps taken to plan implementation, implementing modality/partner identified); ‘underway’ (activity ongoing, agreement or similar signed, significant progress made); ‘advanced’ (activity nearing completion, advanced delivery of outputs); to ‘completed’ (activity completed, deliverables finalized); as well as tracking timeliness of implementation.
22. The WGML may recommend a revision or adjustment of the biennial workplan in due course to reflect any relevant developments at regional or global level, such as negotiations toward an international instrument on plastic pollution and marine litter, as needed, for approval by the COBSEA IGM, in line with the Working Group’s mandate.

Update on extrabudgetary funding for implementation of the workplan

23. The project ‘Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia’ (SEA circular) implemented jointly by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and COBSEA was scheduled to conclude by end of 2022. The project is funded by the Government of Sweden. A low-cost extension of the project until end of 2024 is currently being considered to allow for completion of activities delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic to achieve the envisaged project outputs. Follow-up and continued activities funded through SEA circular have been identified in the workplan 2023-2024 accordingly.
24. The project ‘Marine Litter Prevention through Reduction, Sustainable Design and Recycling of Plastic Packaging’ (MA-RE-DESIGN) led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) with funding from the Government of Germany was postponed by a year by the donor. The project is expected to start in October 2022, allowing funding for COBSEA activities and staff to commence from early 2023. Postponed activities from the 2021-2022 workplan have been included in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 accordingly.
25. The start of COBSEA activities under the technical assistance (TA) project ‘Promoting Resource Efficiency and Circularity to Reduce Plastic Pollution for Asia and the Pacific’ led the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is pending due to ongoing streamlining of ADB-UN agreement procedures at global level. Activities are expected to commence in early 2023 and have been included in the biennial workplan 2023-2024 accordingly.
26. To address the implementation gap related to the prevention and reduction of marine litter from sea-based sources (Action 2 of the RAP MALI), a new source of funding was identified to pilot activities on abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). The Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the Government of Canada is providing approximately USD 235,000 (CAD 300,000) to COBSEA through the Ghost Gear Fund to pilot activities related to prevention, removal and recycling of ghost gear, addressing priority issues identified in activity 2.2 of the biennial workplan 2021-2022.

Funding for these foundational activities must be used by end of March 2023. More information is provided below and in Annex 2 and in the meeting document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/4 rev.1/Add.1.

Workplan 2023-2024: Action 1. Preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based sources

27. Activities to identify, compile and share resources and case studies to promote good practices related to plastic pollution prevention and management under '1.1 Legal and economic instruments' and related to integrated waste management under '1.2 Integrated waste management' will continue with funding from MA-RE-DESIGN. This includes sharing learning on extended producer responsibility generated through the project, as well as identifying existing good practices to prevent and reduce plastic waste in the region. Knowledge products, case studies and media will be accessible through the Regional Node with a focus on replicability and success factors.
28. Countries may wish to consider developing an activity under 1.3 to address the 'Removal of existing litter and its disposal' as well as possible funding sources to guide implementation of the RAP MALI in this area.

Workplan 2023-2024: Action 2. Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources

29. Under '2.1 Legal and economic instruments' a regional workshop with COBSEA national focal agencies and ministries of fisheries as well as international and regional experts will be held on ghost gear prevention through improved gear marking and to share good practices for ghost gear retrieval and management. The workshop will be organized in collaboration with regional partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to facilitate regional learning on challenges and technology options for gear marking and to make recommendations for harmonizing and effectively implementing gear marking practices, including improving regional coordination. The workshop builds on findings of regional study of existing frameworks and implementation gaps conducted in 2021-2022 (see above). The workshop will be funded through the Canada Ghost Gear Fund and is planned in February 2023. Opportunities will be explored to build on this activity with follow-up activities subject to project funding in 2023-2024.
30. Under '2.2 Removal of existing marine litter and its disposal' one to two pilot activities on recovery and recycling of ghost gear will be supported and case studies, videos and practical guidance on safe retrieval of ghost gear will be compiled in a toolbox for communities and dive operators in the region. This foundational activity is funded through the Canada Ghost Gear Fund for completion by end of March 2023. The toolbox will be made available through the Regional Node. Countries may wish to identify follow up activities and possible funding for the biennium. Opportunities will be explored to build on this activity with follow-up activities subject to project funding in 2023-2024.

Workplan 2023-2024: Action 3. Monitoring and assessment of marine litter

31. Under '3.1 Expert Group' the composition of the Expert Group on Monitoring of the WGML will be updated as needed to reflect growing capacity in the region and experts will be engaged in monitoring activities as relevant. No dedicated activity is envisaged under the workplan 2023-2024.
32. Under '3.2 Regional and National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes' follow-up activities will focus on further strengthening capacity on marine litter monitoring and harmonizing monitoring efforts in the region, in line with Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes. Based on capacity needs identified at the training of trainers held in Thailand on July 2022, this will include a regional training for all COBSEA countries on harmonizing monitoring methodologies and improving data analysis for decision making. Additional marine litter surveys will be supported to build national monitoring programmes and feed into a regional assessment of marine litter status and trends that can inform regional priorities and actions and track progress against regional and global frameworks. These activities are a continuation of support through the SEA circular project in its extension phase.

Workplan 2023-2024: Action 4. Activities supporting the implementation of COBSEA RAP MALI'

33. Under '4.1 Regional and international cooperation and reporting' the Secretariat will continue strengthening coordination with relevant regional and global entities to promote knowledge sharing on marine litter, align efforts and avoid duplication, including ASEAN and the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership. This may include participation in respective regional working groups and coordination toward harmonizing plastic standards and practices. With additional funding under an extension of SEA circular and new projects such as MA-RE-DESIGN and the ADB TA project, regional multi-stakeholder partnership events such as SEA of Solutions will be convened to share good practices and promote collaboration.
34. Under '4.2 National planning and policy frameworks' a regional workshop will be held with all COBSEA countries to promote the development and implementation of evidence-based National Action Plans that meet national needs, regional priorities, and global goals. This activity builds on past technical assistance and will be supported by the GPML considering ongoing negotiations toward an international instrument on plastic pollution and marine litter. Postponed from 2021-2022, regional sector guidelines will be developed on the prevention and reduction of marine litter from land-based sources related e.g. to waste management, tourism, and plastic manufacturing, with funding from MA-RE-DESIGN. Following guidance from WGML and the resumed session of IGM 25, national progress reporting on marine litter planning and policy frameworks toward achieving the RAP MALI will be conducted on an annual basis. Access will be provided to policy-related marine litter knowledge and networking through the Regional Node once established.
35. Under '4.3 Research activities' a regional marine litter research database will be accessible through the Regional Node and collaborative research will be promoted through the launch of a Regional Research Network of the Node. This may include webinars or meetings of the Network and development of joint research by Network members to address knowledge gaps. Relevant research findings may be shared with the WGML to inform decision making toward bridging the science-policy gap.
36. Under '4.4 Information, education, outreach and involvement of stakeholders,' any relevant information and outreach on COBSEA and marine litter action in the region will be shared through the Regional Node. Countries may wish to consider developing any targeted outreach and stakeholder engagement activities to meet regional needs.
37. Under '4.5 Training and capacity building,' promotion of the UNEP Massive Open Online Course on Marine Litter will continue in the new biennium, including access to resources in languages from the region as needed and possible. Access will be provided to capacity building resources, including training and online courses through the Regional Node. Countries may wish to identify any specific capacity building needs to be addressed.

Biennial workplan for implementation of RAP MALI 2023-2024

#	Activity	Lead entities and roles	Funding source	Timeframe							
				2023				2024			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ACTION 1. PREVENTING AND REDUCING MARINE LITTER FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES											
1.1 Legal and economic instruments											
	Encourage and assist countries to develop legal and economic instruments to manage and prevent marine litter, by sharing knowledge products and case studies, including on circular economy models, addressing single-use products, deposit refund schemes, including lessons learned on incentives for businesses and consumer behaviour change [continued from 2021-22]	Secretariat shares resources through the Regional Node of the GPML; WGML recommends further action	MA-RE-DESIGN								
1.2 Integrated waste management											
	Share good practices of integrated waste management for replication in the region, including measures to reduce waste and illegal dumping, improve collection and recycling, engage the informal waste sector and remote communities, including learning on sustainable financing and business models; and identify opportunities to replicate and scale up action [continued from 2021-22]	Secretariat shares good practices for replication through the Regional Node of the GPML; WGML recommends further action	MA-RE-DESIGN								
1.3 Removal of existing litter and its disposal											

ACTION 2. PREVENTING AND REDUCING MARINE LITTER FROM SEA-BASED SOURCES									
2.1 Legal and economic instruments									
Organize a regional workshop toward harmonizing gear marking for ghost gear prevention and to share good practices on ghost gear retrieval and management, in collaboration with partners such as FAO	Secretariat organizes workshop; WGML recommends further action	Canada GGF							
Explore opportunities to support harmonized gear marking and ghost gear prevention and management in the region, in collaboration with partners such as FAO	Secretariat identifies funding opportunities and develops proposals, WGML provides guidance	tbd							
2.2 Removal of existing marine litter and its disposal									
Enhance 1-2 pilot activities on recovery and recycling of ghost gear and share good practices and practical guidance on safe retrieval of ghost gear	Secretariat shares resources for replication; WGML recommends further action	Canada GGF							
Explore opportunities to demonstrate best practices on ghost gear removal and management in the region, including through the Regional Node	Secretariat identifies funding opportunities and develops proposals, WGML provides guidance	tbd							
ACTION 3. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF MARINE LITTER									
3.1 Expert Group									
3.2 Regional and National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes									
Deliver regional training to further harmonize and strengthen capacity on monitoring methodologies and data analysis for decision making, in line with Regional Guidance	Secretariat conducts capacity building in collaboration with CSIRO, in consultation with WGML	SEA circular project extension, MA-RE-DESIGN							

<p>Technical assistance to conduct and expand marine litter surveys to build harmonized national monitoring programmes, based on respective national policies, approaches and circumstances, and Regional Guidance, considering issues of accessibility, user friendliness and civil society data</p>	<p>Secretariat provides technical assistance in collaboration with CSIRO, in consultation with WGML</p>	<p>SEA circular extension</p>								
<p>Conduct regional assessment of marine litter status and trends building on national monitoring efforts, based on national baselines</p>	<p>Secretariat coordinates assessment in collaboration with CSIRO; WGML provides guidance on objectives and process</p>	<p>SEA circular extension</p>								
<p>ACTION 4. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COBSEA RAP MALI</p>										
<p>4.1 Regional and international cooperation and reporting</p>										
<p>Strengthen coordination with relevant regional entities such as ASEAN, including on knowledge sharing and harmonizing standards/practices for plastic management [continued from 2021-22]</p>	<p>Secretariat communicates with partners such as ASEAN Secretariat and participates in events/WG meetings; WGML provides guidance on aligning efforts</p>	<p>SEA circular extension</p>								
<p>Convene regional conferences for stakeholder engagement and partnerships and coordinate ongoing efforts, such as SEA of Solutions partnership week on plastic pollution [continued from 2021-22]</p>	<p>Secretariat organizes event in collaboration with UNEP and partners, in consultation with WGML members</p>	<p>SEA circular extension, MA-RE-DESIGN, ADB GEF</p>								

4.3 Research activities									
Provide access to marine litter research from the region and promote networking for collaborative research to address knowledge gaps and policy priorities, through the Regional Node of the GPML	Secretariat supports development of science-related knowledge management of the Regional Node with regional partners and Node host(s); WGML develops ToR of the Regional Node for consideration by IGM 25	SEA circular extension, MA-RE-DESIGN, ADB GEF, GPML							
4.4 Information, education, outreach and involvement of stakeholders									
Information and outreach on COBSEA and marine litter action in the region is shared through the Regional Node and the GPML	Secretariat hosts Regional Node in the interim; WGML recommends further action	SEA circular extension, MA-RE-DESIGN, ADB GEF, GPML							
4.5 Training and capacity building									
Promote the UNEP Massive Open Online Course on Marine Litter in the region and improve regional accessibility, including availability of resources in languages from the region [postponed/continued from 2021/22]	Secretariat updates content in collaboration with UNEP; WGML encourages participation of national stakeholders	GPML							
Provide access to marine litter capacity building resources and expertise, through the Regional Node of the GPML	Secretariat hosts Regional Node in the interim; WGML recommends further action	SEA circular extension, MA-RE-DESIGN, ADB GEF, GPML							

Biennial workplan Annex 1: Biennial workplan 2021-2022 progress tracker (available on the Papersmart Portal)

Biennial workplan Annex 2: Draft biennial workplan for implementation of the RAP MALI 2023-2024 spreadsheet (available on the Papersmart Portal)

Appendix 2: Progress reporting process to track national progress toward implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

I. Background

1. The Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) is complemented by more specific biennial rolling workplans as well as progress assessment reports developed through the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) and adopted by the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting (paragraph 15, RAP MALI). RAP MALI Appendix 2 Activity 4.2.3 identifies development of a reporting format on national planning and policy frameworks as a task of the COBSEA Secretariat.
2. Progress reporting will take place every two years to reduce reporting burdens while yielding meaningful information on progress made in the region to address marine litter in line with the RAP MALI. National progress reports will be prepared using a common template to allow for simplified data collection in a consistent format. The reporting spreadsheet will allow countries to update progress against previously reported measures and/or report new measures and interventions. Reports are submitted by national WGML focal points to the COBSEA Secretariat on request, at least 6 months prior to the Meeting of the WGML, for compilation and review by the WGML. Final draft progress assessment reports will be provided to the Intergovernmental Meeting for adoption.
3. An initial draft reporting format and procedure was prepared by the COBSEA Secretariat and discussed by the WGML in a technical consultation from 23-25 June 2020. Participating countries were invited to test the progress reporting spreadsheet and share additional comments and suggestions and updated draft reporting procedure and corresponding reporting spreadsheet were prepared based on inputs received. The progress reporting process and format was further simplified to reduce duplication of effort related to reporting against existing regional and global frameworks. The updated reporting spreadsheet was shared as an information document at part one of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) of COBSEA on 8-9 September and consideration of the reporting process was postponed to part two of the Meeting.
4. The final reporting spreadsheet is attached in progress reporting Annex I. The reporting process and format was finalized by the Fourth Meeting of the WGML and adopted by the resumed IGM 25. The first full round of reporting will be aligned with biennial workplan reporting in 2024.

Progress reporting Annex 1: Final revised reporting format to track national progress toward implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter
(spreadsheet available on the Papersmart Portal)

Part A. General information: <i>One entry per reporting entity</i>					
Reporting country	Reporting entity	Contact person	title/position	email	telephone
<i>Select participating country</i>	<i>Provide name of institution</i>	<i>Provide information on contact person for follow up</i>			

Part B. Specific actions: <i>Multiple entries for ongoing / completed actions possible (No.1, 2, 3...)</i>					
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No.	New entry or update	Title of measure/ intervention	Targeted sources of marine litter	Type(s) of measure (select up to 2)	Short summary (incl. expected impact)
#	<i>Select whether the measure reported has been reported previously to enable progressive reporting</i>	<i>Provide short descriptive name of reported measure, e.g. National Marine Litter Action Plan</i>	<i>Select sources of marine litter the measure focuses on reducing/ preventing</i>	<i>Provide information on the type of measure, select main and additional (as appropriate)</i>	<i>Summarize objectives and key activities, including delivery against national/regional/ international frameworks (if any) and implementing partners (if any). Where relevant include numerical targets/goals (500 characters)</i>

Implementing period	Geographic scope	Targeted sector(s) (select up to 2)	Target group(s), beneficiaries	Estimated budget (USD)	Link to add. resources, website	Lessons learned, success factors (optional)
<i>Select years of period for action</i>	<i>Select geographic scope of action</i>	<i>Which sectors are measures aimed at? select main and additional (as appropriate)</i>	<i>Which main stakeholders are targeted / who benefits from measures? select main and additional (as appropriate)</i>	<i>Provide estimate of total budget allocated (if possible)</i>	<i>If available, provide link to additional resources such as websites or reports</i>	<i>Share any lessons learned, including obstacles faced and success factors relevant to the development of policies/plans or initiative with a view to replication (as relevant)</i>

Appendix 3: Establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter

I. Background

1. The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML), at its first Meeting in December 2018, noted that the development of a Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) could address knowledge management and networking needs of the East Asian Seas region. Information on the development of a Regional Node and initial draft Terms of Reference were presented to the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (UNEP/COBSEA IGM 24/5). In the resolution adopted by the Meeting, COBSEA countries requested the Secretariat, in consultation with the WGML, to develop the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML, for consideration by the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 25).
2. Proposed draft Terms of Reference of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML and opportunities to work with regional partners were developed and further revised with guidance from the WGML at the technical consultation on 23-25 June 2020 and the Third Meeting of the WGML on 29-30 June 2021. Indonesia reaffirmed interest in exploring the role of RC3S as a host or co-host of the Regional Node at part one of IGM 25 on 8-9 September 2021, considering the strong alignment of RC3S' mandate on knowledge management, capacity building and awareness raising with objectives of the Node.
3. Part one of IGM 25 adopted the revised Terms of Reference of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML through silence procedure on 12 November 2021 as the foundation for establishing the Regional Node. Participating countries welcomed Indonesia's initiative related to the role of RC3S as host institution of the Regional Node and requested the Secretariat to support hosting of the Regional Node in the interim and coordinate with RC3S and the Steering Committee of the GPML toward establishing the Regional Node and developing sustainable hosting and funding arrangements in the longer term.
4. This document contains further information on interim arrangements of the Regional Node supported by the COBSEA Secretariat, including an interim workplan, and next steps for developing longer term hosting arrangements, as well as the draft letter to the GPML Steering Committee requesting formal establishment of the Regional Node based on adopted Terms of Reference. Part two of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA endorsed the formal establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML.

II. Interim arrangements of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML

5. As per the agreed Terms of Reference, the purpose of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML is to support implementation of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) by providing a regional marine litter knowledge management and networking mechanism. The objectives of the Regional Node are to:
 - a. Enhance knowledge sharing, awareness and information exchange on sources, pathways and impacts of marine litter;
 - b. Create an effective multi-stakeholder regional network and facilitate regional and international cooperation;
 - c. Leverage additional resources for efforts in the region to address marine litter.
6. To this end, the East Asian Seas Regional Node will deliver knowledge management and networking functions and services on marine litter along three pillars:

Pillar 1 – Marine litter policy and management: Providing access to information on national and regional policy development in the context of the RAP MALI through development, maintenance and updating of an online knowledge repository.

Pillar 2 – Marine litter science: Providing broad access to marine litter research findings through a searchable online catalogue and facilitating enhanced networking among academic and research institutions in the region to address knowledge gaps.

Pillar 3 – Marine litter capacity building: Providing capacity support, including access to capacity building and outreach resources (in English as well as languages of the region), and where possible developing and implementing capacity building activities (including training).

7. The following plan for interim arrangements of the Regional Node by the COBSEA Secretariat provides information on governance, funding, and priority activities to end of 2024.

Governance and institutional arrangements

8. To ensure a sound institutional foundation, the Regional Node should be hosted by an institution or combination of institutions with relevant mandate, necessary technical capacity, and demonstrated willingness to maintain and develop the Node. As requested by part two of IGM 25, the COBSEA Secretariat will carry out interim functions of the Regional Node with a focus on developing the core functions and services of the Node, and advance longer term hosting arrangements for consideration by IGM 26.
9. In the interim, the COBSEA Secretariat will provide knowledge, capabilities, human resources, and extrabudgetary financial resources, to support establishment, operationality, and functionality of the Node to meet country needs. Professional staff within the Secretariat with relevant knowledge will ensure delivery of knowledge management and networking work of the Node, including overall supervision by the COBSEA Coordinator, coordination of work by the P3 Programme Officer on Marine Litter, and recruitment of a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) on marine litter and specialized consultants to support implementation.
10. The Secretariat will seek guidance from the COBSEA WGML on the work of the Regional Node and in line with the biennial workplan for implementation of RAP MALI. The Secretariat will report progress made to the WGML and Intergovernmental Meeting on a regular basis and share updates with the GPML Steering Committee.

Funding

11. During this transitional period, the Secretariat will utilize identified project funding for the development of Node functions and structures and strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat for implementation. Additional seed funding is provided by the GPML, e.g., for the recruitment of a UNV, as well as knowledge management support toward establishing the Regional Node and linking its web platform to the Global Digital Platform of the GPML to curate resources and data from the region.
12. Additional funding has been identified until the end of 2025 to ensure staff capacity, further develop functions, design, and web infrastructure of the Regional Node, and to develop longer term hosting arrangements (see UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/4 rev.1/Add.1 for more details):

Funding source	Personnel and technical support	Timeframe
a. 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia' (SEA circular):		
Government of Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop core functions, including Node web platform and pillar 2 research database • support for Secretariat capacity 	2018-2022, possible extension 2023-2024
b. 'Marine Litter Prevention through Reduction, Sustainable Design and Recycling of Plastic Packaging' (MA-RE-DESIGN):		

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), supported by the Government of Germany's Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft (ZUG) initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop case studies, resources, and training through the Node support for Secretariat capacity 	2023-2025
c. Promoting Resource Efficiency and Circularity to Reduce Plastic Pollution for Asia and the Pacific'		
Asian Development Bank (ADB), supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> disseminate knowledge under the Node 	2023-2025
d. Global Partnership on Marine Litter		
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curation of resources and data from the region under the Global Digital Platform 	2023-2025

13. Upon establishment of the Node, the Secretariat will identify new funding streams and projects beyond 2025 in coordination with the WGML, the RC3S and the GPML, toward continuity of funding to support the Regional Node and its activities.

Workplan of priority activities 2022-2024

14. To pursue the objectives of the Regional Node, the Secretariat will develop knowledge sharing and networking functions, as well as address, operation, maintenance, and funding considerations. The priority activities below are in line with the activity plan contained in the Terms of Reference of the Regional Node and focus on laying the foundation for effective and sustainable management of the Node toward achieving the RAP MALI. Activities will be developed and delivered in consultation with the WGML, in collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders in the region, and in coordination with the RC3S and GPML, using project funding identified above.

#	Activity	Timeframe		
		2022	2023	2024
1.	Establishment and management of the Regional Node			
1.1	Request establishment of the Regional Node through a letter to the GPML Steering Committee			
1.2	Develop longer term hosting arrangements, incl. organizational and financial considerations and workplan with RC3S and WGML			
1.3	Develop web platform of the Regional Node with links to Global Digital Platform and hold stakeholder consultations to improve functionality in phases			
1.4	Identify funding needs and opportunities for Node activities, operation, and maintenance			
1.5	Report progress to the WGML and IGM on a biannual basis and share updates with the GPML as relevant			
2.	Develop pillar 1 related to land-based and sea-based marine litter policy and action			
2.1	Compile existing marine litter policy and regulatory frameworks of marine litter and plastic pollution in the region			
2.2	Compile initiatives and good practices on prevention and management of marine litter in the region, including development of case studies			
2.3	Identify gaps and needs related to policy development and replication of good practices as well as country interest for further support			
3.	Develop pillar 2 related to marine litter science and research			
3.1	Integrate marine litter research database in the Node web platform and develop database further to meet stakeholder needs			

3.2	Launch regional research network and promote collaborative research to address knowledge gaps and policy priorities, including webinars/meetings to share relevant findings with WGML			
3.3	Explore steps for compilation of monitoring data at regional level to track transboundary flows, in consultation with WGML			
4.	Develop pillar 3 related to capacity building on marine litter			
4.1	Compile capacity building resources, tools and activities tailored to regional needs, including UNEP/COBSEA knowledge products			
4.2	Build a registry of experts/institutions for technical assistance and capacity building services			
4.3	Provide online/in-person training in collaboration with experts and partners e.g. on marine litter monitoring methods and surveys			

Next steps

15. Once endorsed by part two of IGM 25, the COBSEA Secretariat will formally request the establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML in a letter to the GPML Steering Committee, identifying the COBSEA Secretariat as carrying out interim functions. Following the workplan above and with guidance from the WGML, the Secretariat will establish and manage the Regional Node until longer term hosting arrangements are agreed.

III. Letter to GPML Steering Committee requesting establishment of the Regional Node

Subject: Request for establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML

Dear members of the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML),

Acknowledging that the GPML is a global multi-stakeholder partnership to share knowledge and experience and advance solutions to prevent marine litter and microplastics, and that Regional Nodes of the GPML address regional knowledge and networking priorities, we request the establishment of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML.

In response to the resolution by the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 24) of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 25) adopted Terms of Reference of the Regional Node and endorsed its establishment with the purpose of supporting implementation the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) by providing a regional marine litter knowledge management and networking mechanism.

IGM 25 endorsed the establishment of the Regional Node and requested the COBSEA Secretariat to support interim functions and to advance longer term hosting arrangements for consideration by IGM 26 planned for 2024. The host institution(s) will provide capacity and/or financial resources to support maintenance, operational stability, and functionality of the Node.

The objectives of the Regional Node are to (1) enhance knowledge sharing, awareness and information exchange on sources, pathways and impacts of marine litter; (2) to create an effective multi-stakeholder regional network and facilitate regional and international cooperation; and (3) to leverage additional resources for efforts in the region to address marine litter.

In line with the Terms of Reference, the East Asian Seas Regional Node will deliver knowledge management and networking functions and services on marine litter along three pillars:

Pillar 1 – Marine litter policy and management: Providing access to information on national and regional policy development in the context of the RAP MALI through development, maintenance and updating of an online knowledge repository.

Pillar 2 – Marine litter science: Providing broad access to marine litter research findings through a searchable online catalogue and facilitating enhanced networking among academic and research institutions in the region to address knowledge gaps.

Pillar 3 – Marine litter capacity building: Providing capacity support, including access to capacity building and outreach resources (in English as well as languages of the region), and where possible developing and implementing capacity building activities (including training).

Until 2025, the COBSEA Secretariat has secured project funding for the development and operation of Node functions and structures, including creation of a web platform and recruitment of staff for management of the Node.

The COBSEA Secretariat will identify additional resources in coordination with the GPML to ensure continuity of funding and will develop longer term hosting arrangements including considerations of financial sustainability as per the Terms of Reference.

The Secretariat values any seed funding and human resource support from the GPML, such as support for staff capacity through a United Nations Volunteer, to support interim arrangements.

Thank you for your support and continued cooperation.

Best regards,

[signature]

Mahesh Pradhan, COBSEA Coordinator

Appendix 4: Proposal for establishing the RC3S as a COBSEA RAC

Submitted on behalf of the Government of Indonesia

I. Introduction

The 'Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas' (RC3S) was established in response to the Bali Declaration on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities adopted at the Fourth Intergovernmental Review Meeting (IGR-4) on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) held in Bali, Indonesia, from 31 October to 1 November 2018.

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) held a consultation meeting on the in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 8-9 April 2019 to inform the development of Terms of Reference of the RC3S as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre (RAC). Terms of Reference were further modified to reflect views by COBSEA participating countries and to apply best practice from other Regional Seas programmes in the establishment of Regional Activity Centres. During the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 24) of COBSEA held on 19-20 June 2019 in Bali, Indonesia, Indonesia presented the Terms of Reference of the RC3S (UNEP/COBSEA IGM 24/6). With a focus on capacity building, knowledge management and awareness raising, the RC3S would address regional priority issues and needs as identified by COBSEA, in particular in the context of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) as well as the COBSEA Strategic Directions. The RC3S would complement and strengthen current efforts through COBSEA, including by supporting resource mobilization and partnerships for implementation and could become the host of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) once established. To support the establishment of RACs, IGM 24 endorsed *Guidance for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres*.

A Regional Activity Centre (RAC) is an autonomous, international or regional organization, or a national institution with regional remit, designated by the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting to coordinate or carry out specific technical functions and activities in support of the East Asian Seas Action Plan and decisions of the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting, with the purpose to strengthen delivery and support participating countries meet their commitments. RACs operate under the overall authority of the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting and the guidance of the COBSEA Secretariat, decentralizing delivery of activities while adding human, technical, and financial capacity to the work of COBSEA.

The Government of Indonesia, in close coordination with the Secretariat of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), is proposing the establishment of the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas (RC3S) in Indonesia as a COBSEA Regional Activity Centre (RAC) to support the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI).

This document outlines statement of purpose and objectives, description of functions (i.e. operational procedures; programmatic; financial reporting), and institutional, governance arrangements (i.e. staffing and procedures for appointing a director), and the foreseeable consequences of the establishment of the RAC and the advantages to COBSEA participating countries, in accordance with the *Guidance for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres* (UNEP/COBSEA IGM 24/7).

II. Updated Terms of Reference of the RC3S as a COBSEA RAC

1. Rationale

Indonesia attaches great importance to solving the problem of marine pollution originating from land-based activities. This must be carried out not only by each country but also in the framework of cooperation between countries, through improving the capacity in the field of human resources, knowledge, and transfer

technology. In connection with the reduction in the impact of land-based pollution, Indonesia Presidential Decree No 83/2018 has promised to reduce waste to the sea by 70 per cent by 2025. In 2017, Indonesia also launched a National Action Plan (NAP) to reduce plastic waste through various activities carried out by stakeholders.

In response to the Bali Declaration on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities adopted at the Fourth Intergovernmental Review Meeting (IGR-4) on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA) and to assertively and effectively address regional priorities, Indonesia established the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas (RC3S) in Bali, Indonesia. RC3S aims to foster linkages to the Regional Seas, other platforms and international initiatives for the protection of the marine environment from marine litter, building on resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

2. Purpose and Objectives

RC3S was established by the Government of Indonesia to contribute to the reduction and mitigation of land-based sources of marine pollution, with particular focus on nutrient, wastewater, marine litter and microplastics. RC3S functions as a hub for capacity building, knowledge management and awareness raising, supporting decision makers as well as other stakeholders at regional, national and sub-national levels.

Within the context of the East Asian Seas Action Plan and priority thematic areas of the COBSEA Strategic Directions, the primary purpose of the Regional Activity Centre (RAC) is to contribute to the implementation of regional priorities identified in the COBSEA RAP MALI, namely the prevention and reduction of land-based as well as sea-based sources of marine litter, strengthening monitoring and assessment, and enabling implementation through knowledge management, capacity building and education. In conducting its work, the Centre will seek to develop cooperation with relevant global and regional entities including the United Nations and its related bodies, in particular the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and other relevant international organizations, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations.

Specific objectives of the RAC are to:

- a) Provide technical assistance to participating countries to address plastic marine litter from land-based and sea-based sources in line with the RAP MALI;
- b) Promote regional knowledge management and networking related to policies and good practices, research and science, and capacity building, through the East Asian Seas Regional Node;
- c) Support awareness raising, education and training to participating countries and stakeholders in the region;
- d) Promote the activities of COBSEA and strengthen stakeholder participation, regional partnerships and coordination including with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);
- e) Support resource mobilization, development and implementation of project activities toward achieving the RAP MALI.

3. Description of Functions

Functions of the Centre more broadly include to:

- Enhance the capacities of decision makers across sectors as well as other stakeholders to prevent pollution of the marine environment by identifying, developing, mobilizing, and strengthening mechanism for capacity building and transfer of technology;
- Establish, maintain and disseminate information on institutions, initiatives, experts and equipment relevant to the work of the centre and for the purpose of supporting training, education and promotion of public awareness;
- Provide a framework for exchange of information, experiences, tools, legal and policy frameworks as well as institutional and enforcement arrangements related to the mandate of RC3S;
- Assist countries, on requests, in the development of their national capabilities to address marine pollution;

- Compile and disseminate experiences, approaches, tools, guidance and any other practical information related to the implementation of the programme of RC3S.
- Raise awareness among stakeholders including through development and implementation of campaigns and other relevant efforts;
- Communicate the work of RC3S and COBSEA widely;
- Mobilize financial and other support towards implementation of activities of the RC3S.

4. Operational Procedures

With a view to furthering the implementation of COBSEA priorities, a Strategic Plan will be developed for consideration by the IGM. The RAC will develop biennial workplans and budgets focusing on COBSEA priorities and needs, under the guidance of the COBSEA Secretariat, for approval by the COBSEA IGM. The RAC will submit half-yearly progress reports to the COBSEA Secretariat and will provide final reports upon completion of activities.

The COBSEA RAC will consult with COBSEA countries and national institutions, with a view to strengthening collaboration in development and delivery of activities as well as increasing efficiency, avoiding duplication and improving the overall coherence of COBSEA efforts. The COBSEA RAC will implement transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities. The COBSEA RAC will respect the regulations of the United Nations System and UNEP relating to the administration and operation of RACs.

5. Financial Arrangements

The COBSEA RAC will be financially self-sustaining with appropriate financial management mechanisms in place through the RC3S. The Centre's budget and expenses will be reported to the IGM against biennial workplans.

The Government of Indonesia will provide office space (fully furnished, including maintenance, computers and other equipment) and technical staff for the Centre as an ongoing commitment. The Centre builds on initial funding of USD 500,000 towards operationalization and programme/activity development for the RC3S to leverage additional resources including through:

- a. Resource mobilization from the international donor community, including international organizations, regional financial institutions, private sectors, and partners of governments and institutions;
- b. Extrabudgetary funding for relevant COBSEA activities and project implementation through the RAC;
- c. Voluntary contributions from governments and institutions;
- d. Other funds, including contributions in the form of non-financial nature.

The COBSEA RAC will support resource mobilization towards implementation of the RAP MALI and its biennial workplans.

6. Institutional and Governance Arrangements

A hosting agreement will be signed between the COBSEA Secretariat, administered by UNEP, and the host Government, in line with existing Regional Seas RACs.

The RAC will operate under the overall authority of the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting and the guidance of the COBSEA Secretariat. The COBSEA Secretariat will provide programmatic supervision of RAC activities unless other arrangements are made by decision of the COBSEA IGM.

The organizational structure of the RAC includes:

- a. Governing Board
- b. Executive Director
- c. Technical divisions
- d. General Administrative and International Cooperation division.

The Governing Board of the Centre shall be established and consists of host Government representatives, UNEP, and participating countries, representing the IGM in between sessions. The Governing Board of the Centre shall provide guidance and support to the Executive Director in developing and implementing the programme of the Centre. The Executive Director of the Centre will be proposed by the host Government and confirmed by the IGM for a term of 5 years. The Executive Director will be responsible for, inter alia, programmatic, operational, and financial management, and reporting to the Governing Board. The Executive Director will coordinate with the COBSEA Secretariat to submit progress and financial reports to the IGM. The Governing Board and

The organizational structure includes technical divisions to carry out the workplan, including training, knowledge management and outreach. Technical divisions will be supported by an administrative division to manage human resources, budgets, and support international cooperation. The structure and work of the RAC will be evaluated from time to time as needed.

Appendix 5: COBSEA workplan and budget for 2023-2024

Background

1. The following workplan and budget for the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) was adopted by the resumed Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA.
2. All United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) trust funds, including those pertaining to Multilateral Environmental Agreements have been established in accordance with Article V of the General Procedures Governing the Operations of the Fund of UNEP and as such are governed by the Financial Rules of UNEP. UNEP Financial Rule 201.4 states that all matters not covered by the Financial Rules of UNEP are governed by the Financial Regulations and Rules of the UN (ST/SGB/2003/7).
3. The UN Financial Rules are supplemented by the specific procedures for the operation of COBSEA as adopted at the Twenty-second Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (UNEP/DEPI/COBSEA IGM22/8).
4. The Regional Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas Region (hereinafter referred to as the “East Asian Seas Trust Fund”) was established upon the adoption of the relevant Action Plan in 1981. The Action Plan including its annexes – among them the Terms of Reference for the Trust Fund – was revised in 1994 as the Action Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas region (hereinafter referred to as the “East Asian Seas Action Plan”). In decision EA.4/L.30 the United Nations Environment Assembly approved the extension of the East Asian Seas Trust Fund until 31 December 2022.
5. In Resolution 1, adopted by the Twenty-first Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in 2013, participating countries agreed on the annual budget of USD 340,000 for COBSEA as the minimum financial requirement to maintain implementation of the East Asian Seas Action Plan and Secretariat services. The current level of total yearly contributions, as per communication from participating countries, is pledged at USD 325,000. As of 30 June 2022, a total amount of USD 671,050 has been received in contributions from governments to the Trust Fund during the period of 2021-2022.
6. It is brought to the attention of the participating countries that the implementation of the workplan 2023-2024 and related decisions is subject to fund availability.
7. The Twenty-first Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (2013) agreed that the positions of Programme Officer (P3 level) and Senior Secretary (Administrative Assistant G6 level) would remain frozen until participating countries increased their contributions to the COBSEA Trust Fund to ensure sustainable operation of the Secretariat. The First Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (2014) emphasized that the minimum level required to fulfil the duties of a COBSEA Coordinator was a P4 position, noting that most secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) administered by UNEP had a coordinator at P5 level or above. The Twenty-second Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (2015) agreed that the Secretariat would be staffed with a minimum of one professional staff at P4 level to coordinate the work of the Secretariat, assisted by one General Service staff at G6 level. The Twenty-third Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (2017) agreed Terms of Reference for the recruitment of a COBSEA Coordinator at P4 level.
8. The position of COBSEA Coordinator was filled at the P4 level on 1 April 2019. Following the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (2019), the position of Programme Officer (P3) was re-established and filled as of 1 September 2020 using project funding, with the intention that the position be supported through the Trust Fund in the longer term. The position of Administrative Assistant (G5) remains filled and the position of Administrative Assistant (G6 level) remains frozen.

9. Based on guidance of the first part of Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (September 2021), the Secretariat proposes to continue the Coordinator position at current P4 level during the 2023-24 biennium, whereas the Administrative Assistant is being classified and recruited at the G6 level as approved. The envisaged savings accrued in the Trust Fund of USD 858,789 will be utilized in a transparent manner, as approved by the IGM, with the Trust Fund surplus gradually phased out.

Trust Fund budget 2023-2024

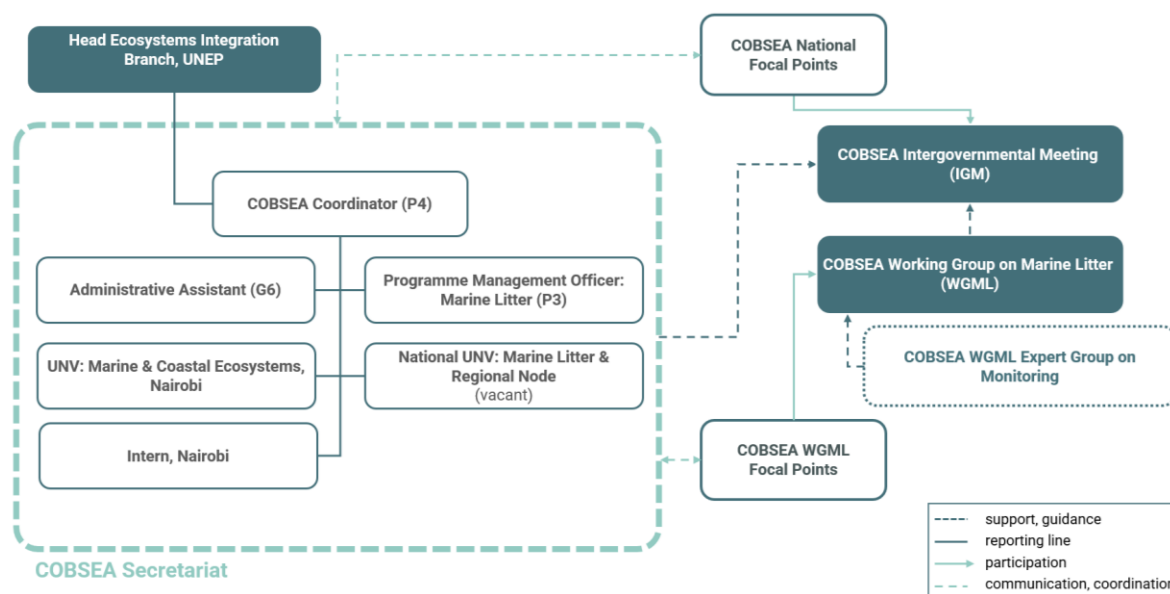
10. The table below presents the proposed Trust Fund budget for the period of 2023-2024 (in USD):

Budget year		2023	2024
Coordinator (P4) ¹		198,300	198,300
Coordinator (P5)		-	-
Programme Officer (P3) ²		-	-
Administrative Assistant (G5)		-	-
Administrative Assistant (G6)		80,000	80,000
Administration and other personnel		20,000	20,000
Sub-total: Personnel		298,300	298,300
Governance	COBSEA IGM 26 ⁴		50,000
Governance	Travel	20,000	20,000
Governance	Strategic Directions 2023-27	30,000	10,000
Sub-total: Activities		50,000	80,000
Rent		20,600	20,600
Office equipment and misc.		2,000	2,000
Sub-total: Operation component		22,600	22,600
Grand total		370,900	400,900
13% Programme Support Cost (PSC)		48,217	52,117
Grand Total with PSC		419,117	453,017
Proposed use of Trust Fund savings		(100,000)	(125,000)
Grand Total		319,117	328,017

¹ It is proposed that COBSEA Coordinator continues at the P4 level over 2023-24, which is to be revisited during 2025-26 subject to availability of resources, as elaborated in para 11.

² The Programme Officer P3 will be funded from extra-budgetary (XB) resources. However, pending receipt of these funds, the Secretariat will request for a cash loan from the Trust Fund to cover these costs estimated at US\$69,250 under the UNEP cash loan policy. The cash will be reimbursed to the trust fund as soon as the XB funds are received. Detailed explanation in para 13.

COBSEA organizational structure



Workplan 2023-2024

11. Based on guidance of the first part of Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA (September 2021), and while the Secretariat continues to maintain the Coordinator position at P4 level during the 2023-24 biennium, it is sought to consider aligning the position with the level of functions of a Coordinator which would also be in line other Regional Seas Programmes all currently at P5 and D1 levels. This is important to strengthen the functions of the COBSEA Secretariat, towards the effective implementation of COBSEA's Strategic Directions 2023-27. It will be subject to availability of adequate financial resources in the COBSEA Secretariat. The COBSEA Coordinator budget indicates the standard salary cost applicable to the Bangkok duty station from 1 June 2022.
12. Based on the approval of the IGM25.1 the Administrative Assistant (G6) position is available in 2022, in lieu of the Administrative Assistant (G5) position, which will be frozen. The recruitment process for this position is currently underway, and it is envisaged that this position will be filled by early 2023. This position has been budgeted accordingly for 2023-24, in line with standard salary cost applicable to the Bangkok duty station.
13. The position of Programme Officer Marine Litter (P3) was funded through extrabudgetary resources under the 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia' (SEA circular) project from September 2020 to December 2022, incurring no cost to the Trust Fund. A commitment letter has been received from GIZ for the MA-RE-DESIGN project, which is expected to commence in 2023 and will provide two years of staff funding for the P3. A cash loan from the Trust Fund to cover this position over 2023 is proposed, until receipt of project funds from GIZ. The P3 contributes to efficient operation of the Secretariat, as well as resource mobilization and implementation of the RAP MALI across multiple projects.
14. Additional positions in the Secretariat currently use extrabudgetary funding and do not incur costs to the Trust Fund.
15. UNEP will continue to support the COBSEA Secretariat in functions pertaining to strategic planning, high level engagement and intergovernmental meetings as well as for the day-to-day finance and administrative management, from Headquarters (Nairobi, Kenya) and from the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, Thailand).

16. Provisions for covering operational costs in 2023-2024 have been made in keeping with current costs of rent and office equipment.
17. Regional travel has been budgeted for 2023-24 for missions related to the implementation of the workplan, for the COBSEA Coordinator and Secretariat staff to meet COBSEA National Focal Points and relevant national high-level officials, and for participation in other relevant meetings such as the Global Meeting of the Regional Seas.
18. Implementation of this workplan will be funded primarily by the East Asian Seas Trust Fund, and by extrabudgetary sources as noted. An overview of project activities supported by extrabudgetary funding is described in UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/4 and below.
19. Programme support cost is applied at the rate of 13 per cent on the expenditure incurred.
20. The working capital reserve is established at the level of 15 per cent of the average yearly budget for the biennium, in compliance with UN Rules and Regulations and UNEP Financial rules, Article 8 (Rules 208.1; 208.2; 208.3) and Article 9 (Rules 209.1; 209.2; 209.3).
21. In case of timely collection of all COBSEA participating country contributions as per agreed contributions scale, the budget 2023-2024 will result in a decreasing balance of net assets position of the Trust Fund as of 30 June 2022 as presented below (in USD):

	Forecast 2021	Forecast 2022	Forecast 2023	Forecast 2024
Net Assets Entry Position	949,045	858,789	667,238	510,2531
Contribution for the Year	325,000	325,000	325,000	325,000
Budget for the Year	<u>(361,092)</u>	<u>(449,175)</u>	(419,117)	(453,017)
Net Assets Closing Position	912,953	734,614	573,121	382,2364
Working Capital Reserve	(54,164)	(67,376)	(62,868)	(67,953)
Net Assets Closing Position after reserve	858,789	667,238	510,253	314,053

22. It should be noted that, while a positive closing position is still forecast in 2023 and in 2024 due to substantial savings under the Trust Fund, the proposed annual budget exceeds the expected annual income of the East Asian Seas Trust Fund. This is due in part to current yearly contribution levels not yet meeting the level agreed in Resolution 1 adopted at the Twenty-first Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, and due to increases in standard staff costs and cost related to office space. In the current biennium, the proposal is to utilize USD225,000 of the Trust Fund savings (USD 100,000 in 2023 and USD125,000 in 2024) towards the budget of a strengthened Secretariat. As such, countries may consider increasing their annual contributions to the COBSEA Trust Fund to meet the annual budget.

UNEP contributions to the COBSEA Trust Fund

23. UNEP provided in-kind support to the COBSEA Secretariat in 2021-2022 amounting to approximately USD 198,300 including 100% of the interim COBSEA Coordinator salary from May 2021 to 31 May 2022 and in-kind contributions in the form of staff time.
24. During the period 2023-2024, it is estimated that UNEP will provide in-kind contributions through time dedicated by different staff members to COBSEA activities and projects, as follows:
 - a. UNEP Ecosystems Division, Nairobi on strategic and programmatic functions (USD 113,114):
 - Chief of Ecosystems Integration Branch, D1 (USD 25,746)
 - Chief of Marine and Freshwater Branch, D1 (USD 10,298)

- Coordinator, Global Programme of Action on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, P5 (USD 22,176)
- Programme Management Officer, Global Partnership on Marine Litter, P4 (USD 19,320)
- Programme Management Officer, Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, P4 (USD 19,320)
- Head of UNEP Regional Seas Programme Unit, P3 (USD 16,254)
- b. UNEP Asia Pacific Office, Bangkok on strategic and programmatic functions (USD 47,992):
 - Regional Director and Representative, D1 (USD 25,746)
 - Deputy Regional Director, P5 (USD 22,176)
- c. Administrative and fund management support from Nairobi (USD 35,574)
- d. Official missions by UNEP staff members to the region.

Extra-budgetary contributions

25. The table below presents allocated extrabudgetary funding for the period of 2023-2024 (in USD):

Budget year	2023	2024
Programme Officer Marine Litter (P3)	69,250	138,500
International UNV – Marine and Coastal Ecosystems (Nairobi)	63,000	63,000
National UNV (Bangkok)	65,000	65,000
Sub-total: Personnel	197,250	266,500

26. The position of Programme Officer Marine Litter (P3) was filled from 1 September 2020 till 31 December 2022 using extrabudgetary funding through the SEA circular project. Additional extrabudgetary funding for the position 2023 has been identified through an externally funded project. As an interim measure, this position will be funded by a cash loan against the COBSEA Trust Fund, until once project funding is available.
27. A national UNV will be funded through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter to support the activities of the Regional Node during 2023-2024.
28. COBSEA countries participating in the JPO programme are invited to consider seconding an Associate Programme Officer to the COBSEA Secretariat in 2023-2024 to further strengthen Secretariat capacity.
29. The COBSEA Secretariat will continue its efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to complement the Trust Fund towards addressing needs and priorities identified through COBSEA and strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat. In line with the resolution of the Twenty-fourth Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, the Secretariat has developed projects to support implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and COBSEA Strategic Directions. This will contribute to the Trust Fund for Support of the East Asian Seas Action Plan (QEL) which did not have any activities in 2019-2020 given the limited and remaining balance of USD 11,200.57. Projects underway and under development are presented in document UNEP/COBSEA IGM 25/4. The table below provides the estimated current and planned extrabudgetary funding in the current budget period, including for Secretariat personnel:

Project description	Duration	Source	Budget (USD)
Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia (SEA circular) ¹	2018-2022	Government of Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	6,371,784

Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning including Marine Protected Areas	2020-2021	Government of Sweden through UNEP	164,000
Nutrient Pollution	2020-2021	Government of Sweden, Ministry of Environment	60,000
Demonstrating integrated solid waste management to prevent marine litter in the East Asian Seas	2021-2022	United States Environmental Protection Agency under USEPA-UNEP umbrella agreement	220,478
Combating ghost gear in the East Asian Seas ²	2022-2023	Government of Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DOF)	235,478
Marine Litter Prevention through Reduction, Sustainable Design and Recycling of Plastic Packaging (MA-RE-DESIGN) ³	2023-2025	Government of Germany, Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft (ZUG) through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	829,015
Promoting Resource Efficiency and Circularity to Reduce Plastic Pollution for Asia and the Pacific	2023-2025	Global Environment Facility (GEF) through Asian Development Bank (ADB)	200,000

¹ Implemented jointly with UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

² CAD 300,000 based on UN Operational Rate of Exchange (15 August 2022:1.274).

³ EUR 800,000 based on UN Operational Rate of Exchange (15 August 2022: 0.965).

30. The COBSEA Secretariat will continue engagement with UNEP professional staff members based in Nairobi, Kenya and Bangkok, Thailand as well as global partnerships led by UNEP, such as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) and the Global Wastewater Partnership (GW²I) and the Global Coral Reef Partnership to leverage technical and policy support.