

COBSEA

COORDINATING BODY ON THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA

Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework

2023

Executive Summary

The Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework aims to integrate and harmonize all programmes, projects, and activities that were and are proposed to be implemented in the East Asian Seas by Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) in relation to all matters related to the conservation and governance of the marine and coastal environments, including its biodiversity and ecosystems conditions. The contents of the Framework are based on the successes and recommendation of previous COBSEA projects, international frameworks and targets including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), studies commissioned by COBSEA, and consultations with experts in the field, in particular, nominated delegates from COBSEA participating countries. The actions included in the Framework are designed to complement each other.

COBSEA's Marine and Coastal Ecosystems activities shall be guided by a Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems (WGMCE). The WGMCE will be composed of nominated experts from all COBSEA participating countries who have direct working responsibilities on the topic and would be able to provide advice on relevant directions and activities, not only for their respective countries, but also for the region.

The work on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems for COBSEA has the overarching concept of Blue Economy, where the wellbeing of people in the East Asian Seas, particularly of the most vulnerable, are prioritized while ensuring the sustainability of the marine and coastal ecosystems. This is achieved by recognizing the valuable inputs and participation of local communities in the conservation of the environment and giving attention to their livelihood and economic activities. Blue Economy is integrated in all the projects and activities within the entire Framework, mainly through the three thematic areas for the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems: Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning, Marine Protected Areas and Network, Marine and Coastal Habitat Conservation and Restoration. Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning refers to identifying and planning the use of a marine and coastal space, whether it's for conservation purposes, fisheries, tourism, and other marine industrial activities. The establishment and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and MPA Networks is the primary conservation mechanism implemented on vital ecosystems. Marine and Coastal Habitat Conservation and Restoration include all related activities on coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, and other coastal ecosystems. Finally, Cross-Cutting and Supporting Mechanisms are the activities that are implemented across the different thematic areas. These are activities that must be included and taken into consideration when designing and implementing projects, such as community participation and knowledge management.

The Framework is a living document that provides opportunity for continuous improvement that shall capture innovations, advances, and global and regional priorities in the governance of marine and coastal ecosystems that can be incorporated in COBSEA. With this Framework as a reference, the Secretariat continues its role in providing support to participating countries; allowing the Secretariat to propose projects that assist in the achievement of the SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal GBF. The WGMCE serves as an advisory body, providing advice to the Secretariat on relevant activities and priorities that should be developed and implemented. Finally, based on national needs and circumstances in addressing relevant SDGs and Kunming-Montreal GBF targets, COBSEA participating countries can request support from the Secretariat, who will explore possible opportunities and resources to support the COBSEA participating countries. This Framework, thus, provides a more cohesive approach in undertaking relevant tasks in achieving marine and coastal ecosystems objectives to ensure that they are logical, appropriate, and relevant while ensuring cooperation and coordination for successful implementation.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACB	ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia
EAS	East Asian Seas
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GCRMN	Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEMS	Global Environment Monitoring System
ICRI	International Coral Reef Initiative
IOC UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IPLC	Indigenous People and Local Communities
IUCN	International Union on the Conservation of Nature
MCE	Marine and Coastal Ecosystems
MCSP	Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
NFP	National Focal Points
OECM	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
SBE	Sustainable Blue Economy
SCS SAP	Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand
SD	Strategic Directions
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP – WCMC	UNEP - World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WGMCE	Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

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1. Overview

The Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework (referred to as the “Framework”) is a living document that consolidates concepts, proposals, and ideas to bolster efforts on protection, management, and conservation of the marine and coastal ecosystem in the East Asian Seas (EAS) for the coming years. The contents are based on recommendations and proposed actions from previous COBSEA projects, COBSEA studies and reports, UNEP guidelines and initiatives on the marine environment, and successes by other Regional Seas. Furthermore, the ideas herein are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), UNEP Regional Seas Strategic Directions and Core Indicators, UN Environment Assembly Resolutions, and the COBSEA Strategic Directions. Due to this, the Framework does not aim to prescribe targets or outcomes that the East Asian Seas and the participating countries must attain, instead, it aims to support countries to achieve existing global targets. This Framework serves as a guide on how COBSEA would be prioritizing marine and coastal ecosystems efforts in the region in this UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

The programme title, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, attempts to simplify while capturing all relevant concerns on the protection, management, and overall conservation of the marine environment, including its biodiversity. Work on the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems incorporates the entire range of the socioecological systems¹ including marine biodiversity, coastal ecosystems, blue economy, wellbeing and livelihood of vulnerable communities, as well as the governance structures in place and the various management systems of COBSEA participating countries, and planning and development to ensure a programme. The Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework expands on the Marine and Coastal Planning and Management thematic area identified in the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022. For brevity, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems is shortened to MCE in this document.

The Framework will be implemented in full respect of national conditions and initiatives, and ensure ownership by participating countries. The implementation of this Framework and the establishment of the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems is to provide a regional venue for exchange of domestic practices among participating countries and to provide necessary guidance to participating countries. Nevertheless, participating countries continue to be the sole authority in the development and implementation of their own domestic marine and coastal activities.

1.1 Summary of Relevant Global and Regional Frameworks and Strategies

The [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#), Life Below Water, provides the main global targets and indicators that are relevant to COBSEA’s work on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems. This is further supported by the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), which have determined the most recent global targets on biodiversity for the decade ending in 2030. The MCE Framework is guided by the current [Strategic Directions 2018-2022](#). The [COBSEA Action Plan 1994](#) laid out the clear activities that COBSEA is intended to do in the East Asian Seas. The new [Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022 – 2025](#) identified specific goals and targets that the Regional Seas must follow, including a set of [Regional Seas Core Indicators](#). There is also the [Marine and Coastal Strategy for UNEP 2020-2030](#) which laid out several strategic objectives towards restoring and protecting the marine and coastal ecosystems. Finally, UNEP

¹ Socioecological systems is a framework developed by Ostrom (2007) that analyzes and utilizes the multi-scalar and spatiotemporal dimensions of an ecosystem with the aim of achieving a balance in the human-nature dynamics of a space. It examines the variables that make up a space, such as the actors (in this case the communities), the resources they need from which ecosystem, and the existing governance system, both inherent and tangible.

and therefore COBSEA, is guided by the [Medium-Term Strategy](#) to address the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste. [Annex 1](#) summarizes these different frameworks and strategies and their relationship with each other.

Apart from these, the Framework supports the achievement of several relevant UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions, including the following:

- UNEA 2-10 Ocean and Seas
- UNEA 2-12 Coral Reef Management
- UNEA 2-16 Mainstreaming of Biodiversity for Well-Being
- UNEA 4-12 Global Health of Mangroves
- UNEA 4-13 Sustainable Coral Reef Management
- UNEA 5-5 Nature-Based Solutions for Supporting Sustainable Development

1.2 Previous Efforts on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

Throughout the decades, COBSEA has made considerable strides in managing projects and initiatives related to Marine and Coastal Ecosystems. Notable projects and studies that were implemented and conducted across the region included the following efforts:

Table 1. Summary of Previous COBSEA Efforts

Year	Theme	Project Title and Funding Source	Outcome
2002-2003	Coral Reef	UNEP/ICRAN Small Grants Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 small projects across different countries • Monitoring Coral Reefs • Community-Based Monitoring and Management of Coral Reefs
2004-2009	Coral Reef	Green Fins	Improving code of conduct of scuba diving facilities. Coordination teams formed. Adopt a Reef, Monitoring using Reef Watch, Educational Materials Guidelines and Booklets
~~	Coral Reef	ICRAN Demonstration	Exchange information between well-managed MPAs and MPAs that need to improve management
2010-2013	MCSP, Climate Change	SIDA Spatial Planning in the Coastal Zone - Disaster Prevention and Sustainable Development	Guidelines: Spatial Planning in the Coastal Zone of the East Asian Seas Region: Integrating Emerging Issues and Modern Management Approaches Core set of MCSP trainers in 6 countries
2019-2020	Cross-Cutting	COBSEA Outlook on Ocean-Related SDG	Draft report and a series of workshops on the theme.
2020-2021	MCSP	Blue Solutions MCSP Trainings	More than 40 of government officials trained in 9 COBSEA countries.

While COBSEA has made several efforts in this area of work, particularly on coral reefs and marine and coastal spatial planning, much has to be done since the participating countries have not yet achieved the SDG 14. Additionally, the new Kunming-Montreal GBF provides an increased and ambitious set of targets that COBSEA can support on. This Framework would build on the best practices and lessons learned from these previous COBSEA initiatives.

1.3 Goals and Objectives of the COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework

The overall goal of the COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework is to integrate and harmonize all efforts of COBSEA in relation to the marine and coastal ecosystems which

will ensure a cohesive and strategic approach when developing and implementing relevant activities to address Sustainable Development Goal 14.2 and 14.5 and applicable goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The specific objectives of the COBSEA Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework are to:

- Strengthen the conservation and governance of the marine and coastal ecosystems in the East Asian Seas, in consideration of coastal communities, through the concept of Blue Economy;
- Ensure alignment of COBSEA activities on the marine and coastal ecosystems with international and regional targets;
- Address specific needs of each participating country and provide tailor-made solutions by ensuring the representation of all COBSEA countries in decision-making and implementation; and,
- Provide guidance on the marine and coastal ecosystems activities and how these are connected amongst each other.

1.4 Scope of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Framework

The work of COBSEA in Marine and Coastal Ecosystems can be summarized into several themes: the overarching blue economy concept followed by the three thematic areas of marine and coastal spatial planning (MCSP), marine protected areas (MPA), marine and coastal habitat conservation and restoration, which are developed alongside a set of cross-cutting and supporting mechanisms. The clear linkages between these thematic areas of COBSEA's work are demonstrated in Figure 1. Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning provides an overview of the scale and scope of work in the marine and coastal ecosystem of the East Asian Seas. In a properly defined marine spatial plan, areas for protection across different habitats are clearly identified. These are all captured within the concept of blue economy where the wellbeing of people in the East Asian Seas, specifically of the most vulnerable, are prioritized while ensuring the sustainability of the marine and coastal ecosystems. Several cross-cutting priorities and supporting mechanisms are also incorporated in the Framework to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the programme which incorporates relevant principles.

Based on the review of the different efforts in Section 1.3 above, Figure 1 also provides an overview of the recommendations that were identified in the final reports of the previous projects. Mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetlands are an added thematic area that COBSEA faintly explored in previous activities but are important ecosystems for conservation due to their services and value for nature, climate, and people. Following these recommendations and the activities that COBSEA already implement in more established areas of work (such as on Marine Litter), the next sections discuss the proposed streams that COBSEA may undertake in order to effectively bolster the efforts in conserving the marine environment. It should be noted that the success of these recommended efforts also depends on the continuous efforts to the address the other areas that impact the marine environment, such as on the prevention of marine litter and reduction of nutrient pollution.

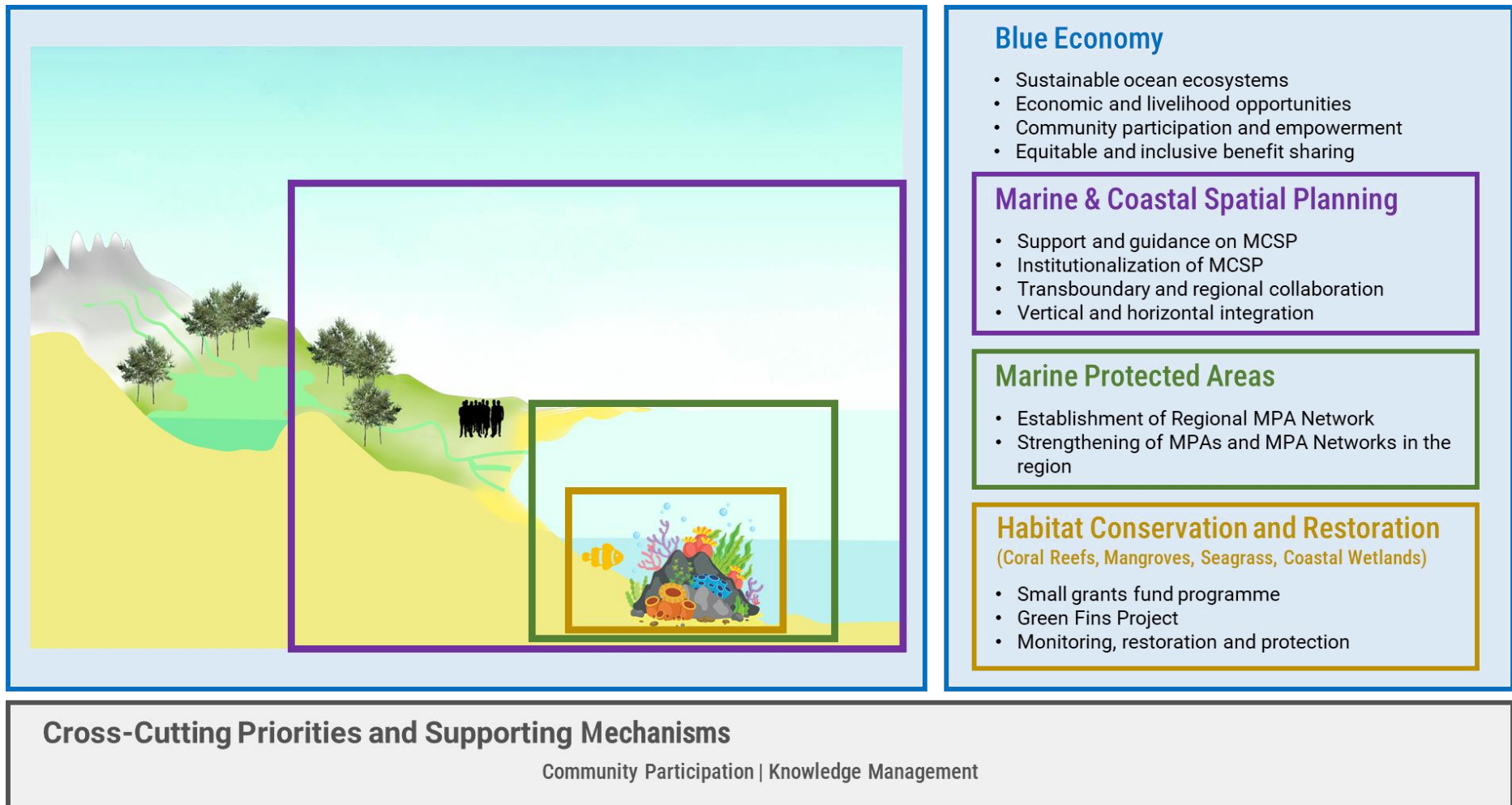


Figure 1: Recommendations for COBSEA work at different scales.

2. Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

The establishment of a Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems (WGMCE) is a proposed first step that would guide the formulation of a portfolio of substantive activities in the East Asian Seas.

In the past decades, COBSEA has made progress in the development of a resource base in this area, including technical tools as well as network of national institutions and resource persons, e.g., the establishment of working groups on coral reefs, mangroves, coastal wetlands and fishery refugia². However, to consistently improve the marine and coastal ecosystems, fragmented efforts and governance should be structured and streamlined by a working group that provides long-term and strategic guidance for the whole field of marine and coastal ecosystems. This will not only strengthen the sustainability of existing and further efforts in the area, but also alleviate the workload of National Focal Points (NFP), to increase the capacity of the existing human resource base, and to conduct work in a holistic, but tailor-made manner for every participating country.

The WGMCE shall consist of at least one representative of each COBSEA country who is an expert in the field of marine conservation. The WGMCE members shall work together to determine the goal, objectives, and activities that COBSEA must undertake to improve the marine environment of the East Asian Seas. The directions that the WGMCE comes up with shall be brought forward to the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM), granted however that the content has already been discussed internally by the WGMCE members in their respective countries. Experts on the topic from UNEP shall also be invited to further guide the discussion and ensure the alignment of the ideas with UNEP activities. The DRAFT Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems is found in [Annex 3](#).

2.1 Goal

- Ensuring sustainability of marine and coastal ecosystems for both people and planet in the context of the East Asian Seas

2.2 Objectives

- To create an open working environment towards a harmonized EAS effort on addressing concerns on the marine and coastal ecosystems at both regional and national levels.
- To identify regional and national priorities and ensure the representativeness of the COBSEA participating countries in the actions and activities related to marine and coastal ecosystems.
- To advise the COBSEA Secretariat on marine and coastal ecosystems strategies for the East Asian Seas, including the goals, objectives, actions, and indicators, even in the development of the Theory of Change.
- To support COBSEA countries in attaining their goals and targets in their work on the marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity.

2.3 Functions

- Provide expert guidance on marine and coastal ecosystems for the East Asian Seas, including, but not limited to, marine and coastal spatial planning, marine protected

² COBSEA (2018). *COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022*. Secretariat of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) and United Nations Environment Programme, Bangkok.

areas, and the conservation and restoration of different marine and coastal habitats (e.g., coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, coastal wetlands) that will be included in the COBSEA Strategic Directions and future related projects and activities;

- Serve as liaison between the COBSEA Secretariat and COBSEA countries on all topics related to marine and coastal ecosystem management, protection, and conservation;
- Develop biennial workplans, based on the Framework, to determine specific activities and targets to be approved by the COBSEA Intergovernmental meeting;
- Report on the implementation and progress of the Working Group responsibilities in the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting;
- Support in the development of project proposals and provide technical guidance and coordination on the implementation of projects and related activities on marine and coastal ecosystems; and,
- Stock-take existing related regional frameworks and align this MCE Framework with its implementation and vice-versa.

2.4 Participation

The COBSEA Secretariat will request nominations of 2-3 experts from each COBSEA participating country as representatives in the Working Group. The COBSEA National Focal Points will communicate nominations for the WGMCE. The COBSEA Secretariat will follow-up in the collection of names and organization of WGMCE meetings.

An expert should:

- Be a national of his or her own country regardless of the working location;
- Demonstrate representativeness through utmost overall familiarity with marine and coastal ecosystem situation in his or her representing country;
- Have led or participated in regional governance initiatives;
- Actively practice at the forefront of politics and/or academia;
- Have professional working proficiency in English language; and
- Be interested in long-term engagement regarding topics stated under “objectives” with COBSEA in the marine and coastal ecosystems area.

2.5 Benefits as Working Group Members

As a WGMCE member, the expert shall enjoy the following benefits:

- In-depth cooperation with COBSEA Secretariat, a regional intergovernmental mechanism administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);
- Opportunities to engage and exchange with other leading experts from East Asian and Southeast Asian countries on a regional level; and,
- Contribution to a better managed East Asian Seas Region as a change maker.

2.6 Operational Costs

To minimize the operation costs, WGMCE members shall conduct their work and communication online as much as possible.

However, adequate funding can be important to encourage the WGMCE members to involve in the COBSEA work. Funding possibilities will be identified for participation in physical meetings of the WGMCE.

2.6.1 Funding Possibilities

The following are the funding possibilities for the operations of the MCE Working Group.

- Budget allocation within received and successful MCE project grants towards conducting meetings for the MCE Working Group.
- Global Partnerships: The WGMCE can link up with relevant existing global partnerships. Examples for those global partnerships are: [Marine Ecosystem Services Partnership](#), [International Partnership on Marine Protected Areas, Biodiversity and Climate Change](#), [Blue Carbon Partnership](#), [the Blue Carbon Initiative](#), [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network \(GCRMN\)](#), etc. These can be sources of funding for the WGMCE.

2.7 Working Group Meeting

The WGMCE may be convened every two years and back-to-back with the Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM). It shall be hosted by one or more institutions in COBSEA participating countries. It will draw upon the example of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter. Online ad-hoc meetings may be convened by the Secretariat to consult on urgent matters regarding project development and implementation based on this Framework.

2.8 Organisational Structure of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Programme

The organigram below provides a suggested organizational structure of the marine and coastal ecosystems programme after the establishment of the WGMCE.

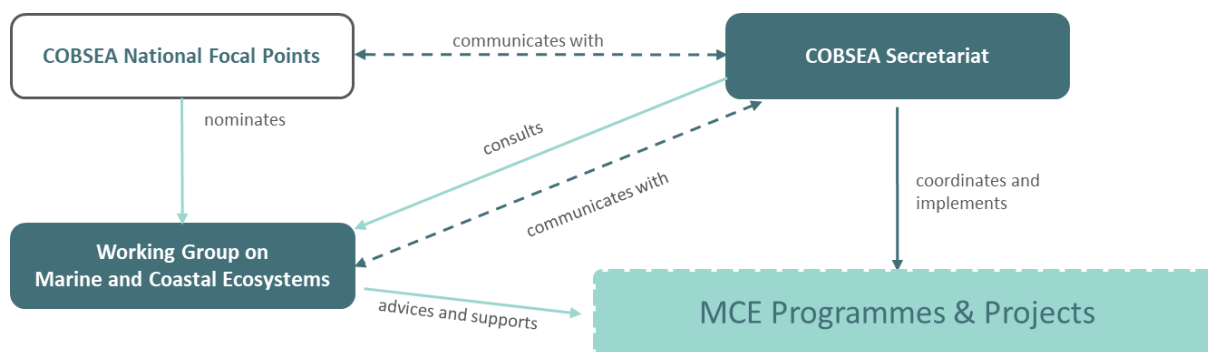


Figure 2: Working dynamics between the COBSEA Secretariat and WGMCE.

3. Blue Economy

UNEP is presently implementing the “Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative” which “aims to facilitate sustainable ocean-based economic, social and environmental benefits within the planetary boundaries of oceans and coasts”.³ Sustainable Blue Economy is when the “sustainable use of ocean and coastal resources generates equitably and inclusively distributed benefits for people, protects and restores healthy ocean ecosystems, and contributes to the delivery of global ambitions for a sustainable future”⁴. Blue Economy therefore works in ensuring the conservation of the marine and coastal environment while improving the lives and wellbeing of communities at the sea, including their economic activities and income source.

Blue Economy is the overarching theme for the work on marine and coastal ecosystems at COBSEA to benefit both people and planet. COBSEA aims to ensure an equitable and inclusive benefit sharing when conducting work on the marine and coastal ecosystems, especially for communities whose lives are directly impacted by the ocean. The subsequent thematic areas in the Framework are management tools that support Blue Economy. For instance, Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning (MCSP) encourages the identification of conservation areas in the space where economic activities might occur side-by-side. MCSP determines how the economic activity may benefit or harm the conservation area and vice versa. At the same time, MCSP will also be able to determine the appropriate kind of economic activities that will be beneficial to both the ecosystems and surrounding communities. Blue Economy is also integral to Marine Protected Areas (MPA) to determine the livelihood and alternative livelihood that support local communities who are affected and/or participant in the management of MPAs. The effective conservation of marine and coastal habitats may also benefit from a Blue Economy approach when considering the human activities that interact with these habitats and how the conservation and restoration of such improves the lives of the communities.

The integration of Blue Economy throughout this Framework is further in line with the Kunming-Montreal GBF goals on maintaining, enhancing, and restoring ecosystems while also acknowledging nature’s contribution to people and meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), where most of the COBSEA countries are also members of, have made a declaration on the Blue Economy last October 2021. In their statement, they have committed to take the leading role on regional cooperation regarding Blue Economy. Particularly, cooperation will be explored in the field of marine environmental protection, marine and coastal ecosystem protection, sea and ocean governance and management, among others.

3.1 Objectives

- To support the transition towards a sustainable blue economy in the East Asian Seas, particularly in areas of high ecological importance, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- To ensure that sustainable blue economy is integrated in the design and implementation of all activities in the marine and coastal ecosystems.
- To reduce the negative effects while ensuring equitability and inclusivity of economic activities that are occurring in the marine and coastal environment.

³ [Enabling sustainable, resilient and inclusive blue economies | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

⁴ [Unpublished] United Nations Environment Programme (n.d.). *Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning Policy in the East Asian Seas: Assessment, Lessons Learned and Recommendations towards ecosystem-based management and sustainable blue economy.*

3.2 Recommended Strategies for Blue Economy in the East Asian Seas

COBSEA's research identified points to focus on in developing blue economy strategy in the region. The following can be taken into consideration for COBSEA's MCE efforts:

- Efforts to ensure that marine and coastal ecosystems of the region are healthy, resilient and productive.
- Support for innovation and increased investment through the development of sustainable marine finance, optimization of regional data management, sharing and utilization of the best available science and technology, including local indigenous and knowledge.
- Strengthening understanding of marine knowledge at all levels throughout the region.
- Identification and valuation of ecosystem products and services and a robust assessment of its ecological and socio-economic linkages.

Furthermore, the mentioned report encourages the EAS countries to formulate national Sustainable Ocean Plans by 2030 to facilitate the sustainable use of the ocean.

4. Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning

Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning is an ecosystem-based management approach that is conducted through “... a public process of analyzing and allocating parts of the three-dimensional marine spaces to specific uses, to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that are usually achieved through the political process.”⁵ Spatial planning for all areas is the first target of the Kunming-Montreal GBF. COBSEA’s Strategic Directions and previous projects and reports have identified MCSP as a way to balance the use of marine space and resources in the region by integrating economic and social activities in ecosystem conservation. The use of MCSP can identify the relevant areas that should be protected alongside the different activities occurring in both the marine and coastal areas. MCSP also provides a way of contextualizing how these activities, such as tourism, fishing, industrial, etc., benefit or harm protected areas and vice versa. Such work is an integral part of Blue Economy that requires finding the balance between economic activities with conservation and social sustainability. The WGMCE shall provide recommendations and insights into the development of the MCSP Project; however, this section provides general ideas that can be considered for COBSEA.

4.1 Objectives

- To support countries in the development and implementation of their MCSP policies and plans at different scales, whether at national and/or local;
- To support the mainstreaming of MCSP plans at national and local development plans to ensure that identified activities are funded and sustained;
- To ensure sustainable blue economy is integrated in the development of marine and coastal spatial plans; and,
- To increase the capacity of authorities, particularly at sub-national and local levels to develop and implement MCSP.

4.2 General Project Ideas

4.2.1 Updating of the East Asian Seas Marine Spatial Planning Guidelines

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) previously supported the development of the existing guidelines entitled, “Spatial Planning in the Coastal Zone of the East Asian Seas Region: Integrating Emerging Issues and Modern Management Approaches”. This was adapted by 5 EAS countries and was integrated by 1 EAS country in an existing policy. The guidelines can be further improved to include the wider scope of marine and coastal spatial planning and to incorporate:

- the allotment of 10% coverage for MPAs in line with SDG 14;
- all EAS countries; and
- the development of blue economy to support livelihoods.

NOTE: The guidelines are only nine years old and most of the content would surely still be applicable. What needs to be done, first and foremost, is to determine if the old document was even useful for the countries to avoid developing guidelines that are not really used by countries.

⁵ Ehler C, Douvère F. Marine spatial planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme. IOC manual and guides, No. 53, ICAM Dossier No. 6. UNESCO: Paris; 2009

4.2.2 In-Country Support in MCSP Activities

COBSEA countries to identify MCSP activities that they need support in. This can include a range of activities such as working on the national MCSP, supporting the development and implementation of MCSP in local areas of the country, and capacity building and trainings. The **Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) Transition Framework** must be integrated in all these activities. The central principle for SBE initiative is that it must be **ecosystem-based** (balancing ecological, economic, social and conservation goals and objectives toward sustainable development); **place- or area-based** (local, national or regional); **integrated across economic sectors and among governmental agencies** (vertically and horizontally); **adaptive** (capable of learning from experience); **strategic and anticipatory** (focused on the long-term); **science- and technology-based** (technology modernization and business innovation); and **participatory**, (with stakeholders actively in the process).

4.2.3 Support in regional exchange and capacity building on MCSP

Throughout the decades, COBSEA has been providing regional training and capacity building efforts on MCSP. COBSEA shall continue these efforts and further conduct exchange of knowledge amongst the participating countries and improve regional capacity on the development and implementation of MCSP to achieve Kunming-Montreal GBF Target 1.

5. Marine Protected Area and Marine Protected Area Network

Marine Protected Area is a tool to provide protection in areas of the marine and coastal ecosystems where human activities are regulated to restore the health of the ocean. “They can be particularly effective when developed as part of a wider management solution”⁶, such as a well-designed marine and coastal spatial plan. The UN SDG 14 indicates that at least 10% of coastal and marine areas are conserved, while the Kunming-Montreal GBF target aims to conserve at least 30% of coastal and marine areas. One such mechanism to achieve these targets is through Marine Protected Areas. Apart from merely establishing MPAs, there is also a need to ensure the effectiveness of MPAs in meeting their goals, especially through its governance system. Increasingly, the establishment of MPA Networks which tackles both social and ecological connectivity of MPAs, is considered as a process that increases the achievement of conservation objectives. The general concept of Blue Economy must be integral in the process of establishing or improving the management of MPAs. Particularly for vulnerable communities affected by such MPAs, sufficient consideration must be given on how their economic activities influence the situation of the MPA and vice versa. The WGMCE shall provide insights and recommendations on the MPA work of COBSEA.

5.1 Objectives

- To increase the coverage and achieve effectiveness of MPA and MPA Networks in the East Asian Seas to reach global targets while ensuring the socio-economic and ecological quality and value in the expansion, in accordance with the national circumstances, priorities and capabilities of each participating country;
- To encourage participating countries to assess the effectiveness of MPAs and MPA networks, including at regional scale with the guidance of Kunming-Montreal GBF monitoring framework;
- To strengthen the governance of MPAs, such as the use of the MPA toolbox, establishment of the MPA Network, and increasing dialogue between the different countries and experts; and,
- To ensure that MPA stakeholders benefit from the ecosystem services of the MPA and MPA Networks using various tools, such as payment for ecosystem services, blue economy activities, and financial sustainability.

5.2 General Project Ideas

5.2.1 Establishment of Regional MPA Network

MPA Networks enhance the effectiveness of individual MPAs and physically-linked MPAs in protected biological resources for the ecosystem as well as for society. IUCN-WCPA (2008) defines MPA Networks as “a collection of individual MPAs or reserves operation co-operatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales and with a range of protection levels that are designed to meet objectives that a single reserve cannot achieve.”⁷ Therefore, the establishment of MPA Networks can help in attaining the 10% target when an area, whose marine ecosystem does not create an environment conducive for the development of MPAs, can instead support in the governance of adjoining MPAs. MPA Networks also increase the resilience of individual MPAs when connecting MPAs are able to provide the ecological support needed by each MPA. Thus, the establishment of a Regional MPA Network must be grounded on scientific findings, ecological relevance, and geared towards improving the value of the individual MPA as well as the overall marine ecosystem. UNEP-WCMC (2008) study

⁶ [Promoting Effective Marine Protected Areas | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

⁷ : IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN-WCPA) (2008). *Establishing Marine Protected Area Networks—Making It Happen*. Washington, D.C.: IUCN-WCPA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and The Nature Conservancy.

recommends that the establishment of MPA Networks should be “within a broader spatial planning”, thus it is imperative that MCSP as presented above should be prioritized prior to developing an EAS MPA Network. The COBSEA Strategic Directions targets the establishment of network of MPAs in the East Asian Seas.

The UNEP MPA Network Review⁸ cited Ardron et al. (2008) in determining the eight key stages in the development of an MPA Network:

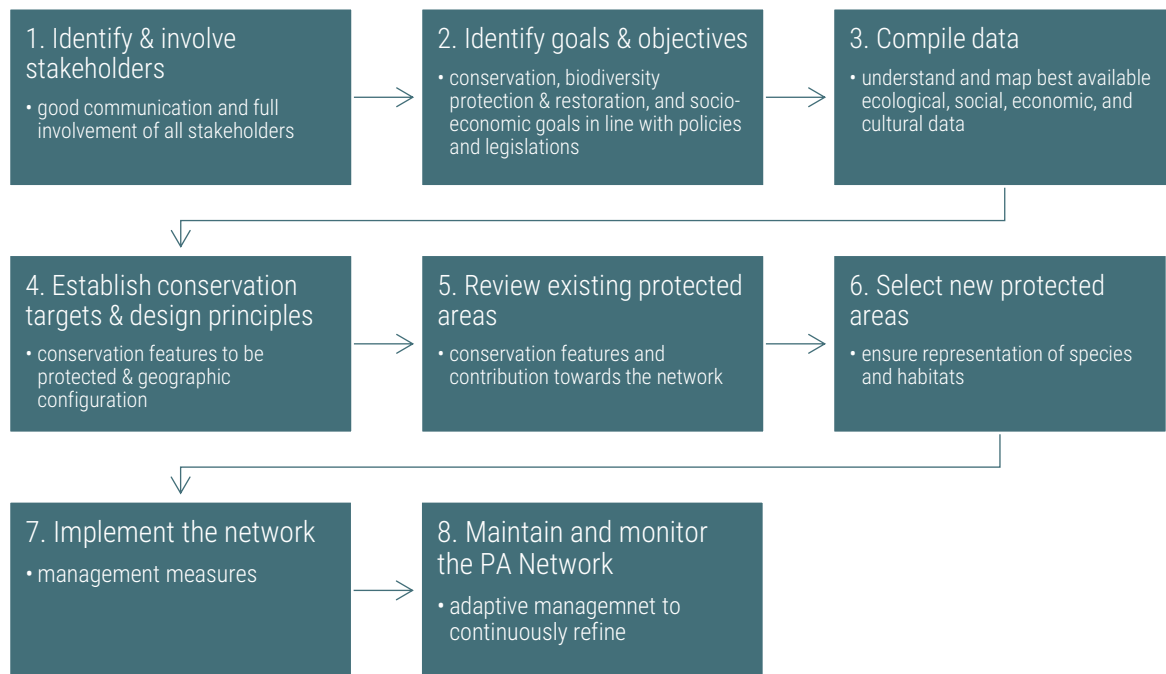


Figure 3: Key stages in establishing an MPA Network (Ardron et al., 2008).

There are several types of MPA Networks that exist. Considering the diversity of culture, history, and economic priorities in the region, a social MPA Network is the most ideal start for the East Asian Seas. MPA managers across the region can form a social MPA Network where exchange of information, knowledge, capacity building, and enhanced communication will be the main priority. MPA managers learn from each other and would be able to identify common priorities in the management of MPAs that is beneficial for both the national priorities and regional collaboration. MPA managers can range from government-led MPAs to a community-based MPAs or, in many instances, a blend of government, community, and civil society.

5.2.2 Strengthening the Governance of MPA and MPA Networks

COBSEA countries to identify MPA and MPA Network activities that they see potential for support. These can include a range of activities such as the establishment and/or expansion of MPAs and MPA Networks, capacity building to improve the governance of MPA and MPA Networks, providing support on developing sustainable finance and livelihood initiatives such as through blue economy and payment for ecosystem services (PES)⁹, and MPA monitoring activities. Ideally, these activities cover large marine ecosystems within the country and would contribute to the COBSEA MPA Network. These MPAs should also identify clear benefits for

⁸ UNEP-WCMC (2008). *National and Regional Networks of Marine Protected Areas: A Review of Progress*. UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge.

⁹ “PES deals can offer the rural poor an opportunity to augment their income as stewards of the land by implementing practices to restore and maintain ecosystem services” from [Payments for Ecosystem Services: Getting Started - A Primer \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/publications/9789280700000)

people in addition to nature. Further guidance on the needs of the individual countries are to be provided by the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems.

MPA Toolkit and Learning Platform

UNEP is developing an MPA Toolkit and Learning Platform which could also provide guidance in identifying the challenges for MPAs. The MPA Toolkit and Learning Platform is structured around four key themes:

- MPA effectiveness
- Climate “future-proofing” MPAs, MPAs as nature-based solution
- MPA business planning and benefit sharing
- MPAs and sustainable livelihoods

This could be used by COBSEA in assisting COBSEA participating countries in improving the management of existing MPAs and/or in preparation for upcoming MPAs.

5.3 Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures

Beyond marine protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM) has been recognized as an alternative means of achieving the conservation of nature. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹⁰ defines an OECM as:

“a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained longterm outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values”

OECM is also recognized as a means of achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Marine and coastal areas in the East Asian Seas may already be delivering conservation without needing to be converted to protected area status due to their other use. COBSEA can further look at OECMs existing in the area.

¹⁰ Convention on Biological Diversity (2018). *Protected Area and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures*. [Protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures \(cbd.int\)](https://www.cbd.int/protected)

6. Marine and Coastal Habitat Conservation and Rehabilitation

6.1 Coral Reefs

Coral Reefs are an important marine ecosystem that serve as habitats for numerous marine species and is estimated to provide ecosystem services to around 1 billion people¹¹. The coral reefs in the East Asian Seas in particular account for 30% of the world's total.¹² COBSEA has historically been active in the conservation of coral reefs, such as through the [Green Fins](#) project which UNEP and COBSEA initiated in the East Asian Seas. COBSEA is also a member of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), which is a global partnership that conserves coral reefs. The 2020 Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) Report on the Status of Coral Reefs of the East Asian Seas indicated a continuous decline of coral reefs in the region, specifically during the mass coral bleaching events in 2010 and 2016. Coral reef conservation can be achieved through the effective implementation of MPAs and, in areas, with high tourism activities, through an agreed code of conduct when it comes to coral reefs.

6.1.1 Objectives

- To integrate, through policy development, the responsible interaction with coral reefs, especially in tourism areas;
- To increase awareness on the value and vulnerability of coral reefs;
- To restore damaged and deteriorated coral reef areas; and
- To support coral reef monitoring for the region.

6.1.2 General Project Ideas

6.1.2.1 Green Fins Project

The Green Fins Project is an existing UNEP initiative that was piloted in the East Asian Seas in 2004. The goal of Green Fins is to improve the standard and code of conduct of the scuba diving and tourism industry in coral reefs. Green Fins members can boast as being part of a network of environmental-conscious tourism practitioners. This ensures that tourism activities that are conducted under the auspices of Green Fins do not interfere with the natural processes of coral reefs. Additionally, Green Fins dive members are also capable of conducting coral reef monitoring which is crucial in determining whether the protection mechanisms for the coral reefs are sufficient or whether more efforts should be done.

While COBSEA has not been working with Green Fins during the last decade, Green Fins continues to function in several countries in the region. Reactivating this project can lead to several activities:

- Information, education, and communication campaigns with tourists and communities living near coral reefs;
- Improve the standards and code of conduct of scuba diving and other marine water tourism activities, potentially leading to policies that must be adapted by the national and local governments;
- Regular monitoring of coral reefs; and
- Coral reef restoration in areas that are experiencing degradation.

¹¹ [Why protecting coral reefs matters | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

¹² International Coral Reef Initiative (2021). *Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020*. Chapter 7. Status and trends of coral reefs of the East Asian Seas Region.

6.1.2.2 Small-Fund Grants Programme

The Small-Fund Grants Programme which COBSEA implemented in 2002-2003 was considered successful with the recommendation for its continuation. The programme provided support in coral reef monitoring and capacity building to MPA managers. A similar kind of small-grants project can be considered by COBSEA where local communities/governments which have coral reefs can apply for funding from COBSEA to conduct any of the following activities:

- Coral reef monitoring of existing MPAs or as part of data gathering needed towards the development of MPAs;
- Coral reef rehabilitation;
- Capacity building on monitoring and evaluation; and,
- Advocacy campaign.

The Small-Fund Grants Programme can work hand-in-hand with Green Fins in the implementation of activities at the grassroots level. In 2021, UNEP and ICRI continued to implement the Small Grants Programme to support activities on coral reefs.

6.2 Mangroves, Seagrasses, and Coastal Wetlands

The COBSEA Strategic Directions identified mangroves, seagrasses, and coastal wetlands as critical habitats that should be focused upon. PEMSEA reported that the East Asian Seas hold 31% of the world's mangroves and 33% of the world's seagrass beds¹³. Additionally, COBSEA countries are also home to 139 RAMSAR Wetlands of International Importance; the breakdown is available at Table 2¹⁴.

Table 2: Ramsar Sites in EAS Countries

Country	Number
Cambodia	5
China	64
Indonesia	7
Malaysia	7
Philippines	8
RO Korea	24
Singapore	N/A
Thailand	15
Viet Nam	9

These ecosystems have an important value in ensuring biodiversity, addressing climate change, and disaster mitigation. Moreover, when well-managed, these ecosystems also improve the coral reef ecosystems and can form part of a network of MPAs. The resilience of the marine ecosystem is greatly enhanced when there are multiple ecosystems present in the area. Mangroves and seagrasses are ecosystems that some COBSEA countries already include in their scope of MPAs. Finally, the conservation of these ecosystems can be part of blue economy and blue carbon. Carbon sequestration through the marine environment is found to be significantly higher than that from rainforests.

6.2.1 Objectives

- To expand COBSEA's work in other marine ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetlands - the protection of which contributes to the 10% target of the SDG and the 30% target of the Kunming-Montreal GBF; and
- To ensure that the conservation of the identified ecosystems contribute to the wellbeing of surrounding communities.

¹³ PEMSEA (2018). *State of the Oceans and Coasts: Blue Economy Growth in the East Asian Seas Region.. Regional_SOC_20190611.pdf* (pemsea.org)

¹⁴ [Country profiles | Ramsar](#)

6.2.2 General Project Ideas

6.2.2.1 Establishment, Expansion, and Improve Governance of Habitats

Through the development of a successful MCSP as targeted at Chapter 4 above, the areas for mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetlands will be properly determined. This could pave the way towards identifying the kinds of activities that can be done in these areas, which ideally are towards ecosystem conservation. Mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetland areas shall be put under protected area governance. The connectivity between and among these ecosystems, together with coral reefs, must also be taken into consideration. The presence of these protected areas should not negatively impact the lives of neighbouring communities. Mangroves, in particular, is a very important resource that communities need for their survival. The WGMCE shall provide guidance in the specific activities needed for these ecosystems.

6.2.2.2 Restoration Projects

The conservation of existing ecosystems is still the best way to go forward. However, there may be instance that degraded and depleted mangrove, seagrass, and coastal wetland ecosystems can be considered for restoration, particularly those that are connected or as part of large protected ecosystems. Great care, including extensive research, should be prioritized when doing restoration programs. Doing so is further in line with the Kunming-Montreal GBF Target 2 of 30% restoration of degraded ecosystems.

7. Cross-Cutting Priorities and Supporting Mechanisms

Several other concepts have been proposed and brought up throughout the different projects, reports, studies, and frameworks. While certainly not new, the concepts below are cross-cutting priorities and supporting mechanisms that, as much as possible, should be integrated in the different projects and activities proposed in this Framework.

7.1 Community Participation

Participation is a crucial aspect in any development work, especially work that directly affect the wellbeing of the community. The different MCE projects coming out of this Framework shall ensure the integration and active participation of indigenous people and local community (IPLC), and gender considerations. As a major stakeholder in marine and coastal ecosystems governance, coastal communities, especially the vulnerable including women and the fishing community, have a vital role in both the governance of the marine ecosystem and as beneficiaries of the ecosystem services that the marine environment provides. Community participation through consultation and active participation must be integrated in all the proposed projects in this document, as indicated in Target 22 and 23 of the Kunming-Montreal GBF that aims for full, equitable, inclusive, effective, gender-responsive representation for IPLC and women and girls. The UNEP MPA Guidelines recognize the role of surrounding communities in the governance of the marine environment.

7.2 Knowledge Management

7.2.1 Knowledge Generation

The generation of knowledge for sustainable marine and coastal management and conservation in the region is vital to COBSEA's role in the region. One key aspect of this is conducting research and studies to better understand the complex environmental, economic, and social issues affecting the marine and coastal ecosystems in East Asian Seas. COBSEA also facilitates the development and dissemination of regional tools, such as best practices, guidelines, and standards, to support the effective management of marine resources. These knowledge generation efforts are crucial for informed decision-making and action towards achieving the sustainable development of the East Asian Seas.

7.2.2 Storage and Retrieval

7.2.2.1 Monitoring

Throughout the different thematic areas of work, it is important to establish a standard monitoring system that would allow COBSEA and the participating countries to effectively have a baseline on the current situation, develop necessary interventions, and track progress on the impact of the interventions. Additionally, developing high quality monitoring techniques, on the status of coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass, and coastal wetlands, as well as the impacts of MCSP, MPA and MPA Network systems, at both regional and national scales, can provide an accurate idea of the status of these habitats and management efforts that are also comparable across the different COBSEA participating countries. Long-term monitoring and environmental assessment is included in the East Asian Seas Action Plan as an important scientific activity that leads towards effective and timely management actions. Monitoring efforts to be done for MCE are in line with Target 20 of the Kunming-Montreal GBF fosters capacity-building and development, including strengthening scientific research and monitoring capacity.

7.2.2.2 Data Management

Several forms of data management needs have been discussed in the many projects and reports of COBSEA. The East Asian Seas Action Plan recognizes the importance of data management towards the success of activities in COBSEA. This ranges from collection, monitoring, storage, reporting, and sharing. Data management is particularly important for determining baselines and in reporting against the different frameworks that COBSEA abides by. Multiple data management systems already exist through different efforts by various organizations. COBSEA does not need to add to the present initiatives. Instead, COBSEA can support and utilize these efforts, and participate in their development and enhancement.

The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) operates two relevant management systems, the World Database on Protected Areas and the World Database on other effective area based conservation measures (OECM). UNEP-WCMC sets the global standards on science and data which are relevant for developing actions and policy. The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) are developing an ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism and ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard for data management in the region. Other existing data management systems are developed by PEMSEA and the UNEP Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) Ocean Programme.

7.2.3 Knowledge Dissemination

7.2.3.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is an important component to ensure that stakeholders learn from the best practices in other areas. Learnings from the projects must be well documented to provide insights for other stakeholders in the region and beyond. Knowledge sharing can also be achieved by engaging the education sector. Communities, particularly coastal communities, shall learn the value of and can be actively engaged in marine and coastal conservation in elementary and high school. This provides an opportunity for raising environmentally aware communities.

7.2.3.2 Communications

Effective communication plans should be incorporated in all the different projects that will be implemented under MCE. The aim is to not only communicate about the project itself, but to also increase awareness on marine and coastal ecosystems issues and provide a sense of responsibility for the general public to participate in the conservation of the environment. Existing platforms such as the COBSEA quarterly newsletter, COBSEA Twitter, and the Regional Seas weekly newsletter can be utilized to extend the reach of communicating marine and coastal ecosystems activities and concerns.

7.2.4 Knowledge Reporting (Community of Practice)

When there is a collective need to address a common concern, interested and relevant stakeholders are able to gather and participate in decision-making and the implementation of the projects and activities. Developing a Community of Practice has been recommended in the different reports and projects of COBSEA. Several streams can be considered in developing a Community of Practice, such as through the different thematic areas presented in this document with the support of the WGMCE or through the different project as implemented.

8. Implementation Strategy and Funding Mechanisms

The implementation of this Framework would largely depend on the approval of the National Focal Points during the Intergovernmental Meeting, planning and recommendations by the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, and donor preference and availability of funds. As with the spatial scale and scope presented in Figure 1 above, the programmes and projects identified are ideally implemented in a systematic process from the wider activities of the MCSP, to more specific activities with the habitats. However, the Secretariat recognizes that programme and project implementation are mostly dynamic and that these can happen simultaneously. Blue Economy continues to be an integral overarching theme that must be applied in the different projects and activities. The following figure explicitly presents the interconnectivity of the programmes presented in this Framework.

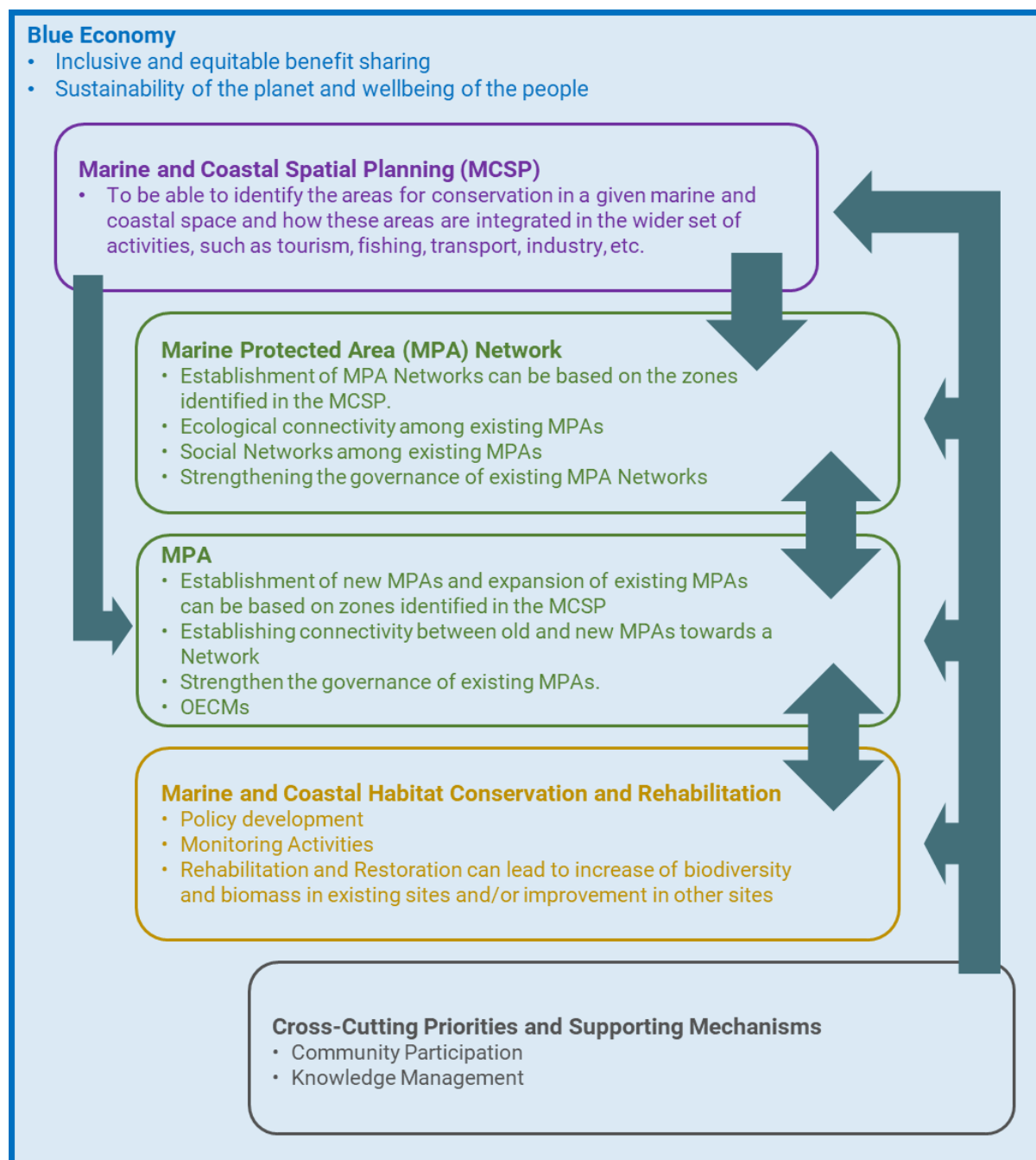


Figure 4: Proposed implementation strategy based on linkages of the programmes and activities.

The COBSEA Secretariat will regularly seek out funds from donors and grants to support the development and implementation of projects and activities that are aligned with this Framework and with the workplan to be designed by the WGMCE. In anticipation of call for proposals, the COBSEA Secretariat, together with the WGMCE, will already prepare several concept notes to support the different parts of this Framework. Resources within UNEP, when possible, will also be tapped to support the different areas of this Framework.

The following table provide several donors and grants that the COBSEA Secretariat is monitoring. The list is not comprehensive and COBSEA participating countries are encouraged to identify potential donors that they propose for COBSEA to further explore.

Table 3: Potential Funding Sources

Multilateral/International Funds for Marine and Coastal Ecosystems	Development Agencies for Marine and Coastal Ecosystems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEF (GEF 8, GEF Small Grants Programme) • Global Fund for Coral Reefs • Coral Research and Development Accelerator Platform • Green Climate Fund • ADB: Action Plan for Healthy Oceans and Sustainable Blue Economies (Green and Blue Bonds) • Blue Action Fund • Adaptation Fund • Southeast Asia – Europe Joint Funding Scheme for research and innovation • European Commission • World Bank Knowledge for Change 2022; IBRD & IDA: PROBLUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AusAid • Blue Planet Fund and Biodiverse Landscape Fund by UKAid • GIZ • International Climate Initiative (IKI) • JICA • KOICA • SIDA • USAID

9. Partnerships

Below is a summary of partners that COBSEA can consider for each of the thematic areas and/or projects. COBSEA participating countries are encouraged to further identify partnerships and areas for collaboration as they deem fit. Upon establishment of the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, a more comprehensive review of potential partners per thematic area can be done to gain a more detailed information on the initiatives of the different organizations in the region.

Table 4: Potential partners per thematic area

Organization	Blue Economy	MCSP	MPA	Coral Reef	Mangroves, Seagrass, Coastal Wetlands	Data Mgt
ASEAN						
ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity						
Coral Triangle Initiative						
Green Fins						
ICRI / GCRMN						
IOC- UNESCO						
Mangroves for the Future						
PEMSEA						
UNEP GEMS Ocean						
UNEP WCMC						

10. Development of Regional Activity Centres

A Regional Activity Centre (RAC) is an autonomous international or regional organization that provides technical functions and activities for the Regional Seas and participating countries. Several Regional Seas across the globe have been developing Regional Activity Centres. During 24th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, participating countries were requested to [review the guidelines](#) of developing Regional Activity Centres. The establishment of a RAC for the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems programme of COBSEA will depend on the need as identified by the IGM and the Working Group.

Establishing a RAC for Marine and Coastal Ecosystems in the EAS region can be a highly desirable action to enhance the capacity of COBSEA and to create a physical location that unleashes more potential and interactivity. Whilst the concrete mandates of the RAC should be based on the expertise of the hosting organization or institution, a RAC for the different areas of work and needs of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems will immensely benefit COBSEA especially through activities such as: blue economy and society, monitoring and assessment, communications and advocacy, and science, innovation and policy. As a physical location, a RAC can further strengthen the relationship between COBSEA and the hosting countries.

The development of a RAC is dependent on the voluntary application of a participating country or institution within the participating country. A proposed RAC shall be assessed by the WGMCE and shall be brought forth in the IGM.

11. Monitoring of the MCE Framework

Together with the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems, this MCE Framework shall be regularly monitored to ensure its continued applicability against global and regional goals and targets, and national priorities related to biodiversity and ecosystems, and the marine environment. As this is a living document, it can be amended to incorporate relevant thematic areas, projects, and activities to align with continuous development in this field.

Annex 1: Relevant Global and Regional Frameworks and Indicators

Thematic Area	SDG	UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy	UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022 - 2025	Regional Seas SD	Regional Seas Core Indicators	COBSEA Action Plan	COBSEA Strategic Directions	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning (with Climate Change Adaptation)	<p>Target: 14.2. Sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts</p> <p>Indicator: 14.2.1. Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 1: Establish knowledge-base on marine and coastal ecosystems to inform policies on human activities affecting their functions</p> <p>Strategic Objective 3: Support policies and strategies enabling integrated management and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystem services</p>	<p>Nature Action Outcome 1: An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established</p> <p>Outcome 2: Sustainable management of nature is adopted and implemented in development frameworks</p> <p>Outcome 3: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced</p>	<p>Marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) promoted towards the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine protected areas designated, effectively managed and ecological connectivity strengthened. • Sea areas under spatial planning increased. • Degraded marine ecosystems restored. • Cooperation and integration of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) strengthened between different RSCAPs and various sectoral organizations (e.g., fisheries and biodiversity organisations). 	<p>No. 19. Category: Climate Change Adaptation Indicator: 1) % national adaptation plans in place 2) Sector based national adaptation plans 3) Number of existing national and local coastal and marine plans incorporating climate change adaptation</p> <p>--</p> <p>No. 22. Category: National ICZM in Place Indicator: National ICZM guidelines and enabling legislation adopted</p>	<p>Management aspects of rehabilitation of vital ecosystems and restoration of ecologically or economically important species and communities</p> <p>23. Active measures to rehabilitate damaged natural habitats (within the realm of scientific and economic possibility) and to replenish depleted species populations will need to be undertaken to restore the kind of sustainable productivity which serves as the basis for the generation of food, other useful products, and amenities on which human populations depend. Establishment of regional mechanism for the development of cooperative management approaches to the conservation of migratory marine species need to be encouraged and developed.</p>	<p>Theme 2, activity i. Review of national and regional legal and policy frameworks in the COBSEA region and recommendations for creating enabling conditions for ecosystem-based approaches</p> <p>Theme 2, activity ii. Developing regional guidelines for an ecosystem-based approach to marine and coastal planning and management</p> <p>Theme 2, activity iii. Building capacity on marine and coastal planning and management, including to address climate change in the coastal and marine environment</p> <p>Theme 2, activity iv. Exchange of information, knowledge and best practices</p>	<p>Target 1 Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.</p>
Marine Protected Areas and MPA Networks	<p>Target: 14.5. Conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas</p> <p>Indicator: 14.5.1. Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas</p>				<p>No 21. Category: Critical marine habitat under protection Indicator: % marine protected areas designated</p> <p>--</p> <p>No 15. Category: Loss of critical habitat Indicator: Trends in critical habitat extent and condition</p>	<p>Establishment of a viable network of marine protected areas</p> <p>24. A network of properly managed marine protected areas including strictly protected reserves should be established. Critical habitats to form part of this network are to be selected on the basis of their productivity, uniqueness, or vulnerability. Such a measure would have the twin goals of conserving biodiversity (to the degree possible) and maintaining useful levels of productivity with respect to human needs.</p>	<p>Theme 2, activity v. Establishing a COBSEA network of marine protected areas (MPAs)</p> <p>Theme 2, activity vi. Evaluating the effectiveness of the management of MPAs</p>	<p>Target 2 Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.</p> <p>Target 3 Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water,</p>

Thematic Area	SDG	UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy	UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022 - 2025	Regional Seas SD	Regional Seas Core Indicators	COBSEA Action Plan	COBSEA Strategic Directions	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
								<p>and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities including over their traditional territories.</p>

Annex 2: Supporting References, Guidelines, and Tools

Blue Economy	
UNEP – Blue Economy	Governing Coastal Resources - Implications for a Sustainable Blue Economy
UN Finance Initiative	Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative
World Bank Blue Economy	Blue Economy Development Framework
ASEAN Declaration	ASEAN Leaders Declaration on Blue Economy
Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning	
COBSEA – Spatial Planning Guidelines for EAS	Spatial Planning in the Coastal Zone of the East Asian Seas Region: Integrating Emerging Issues and Modern Management Approaches”
UNEP – MSP and ICZM to Support SDGs	Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management Approaches to Support the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Targets 14.1 and 14.2
IOC - UNESCO	MSPglobal International Guide on Marine/Maritime Spatial Planning
Marine Protected Area and Marine Protected Area Network	
UNEP – MPA Governance Guide	Enabling Effective and Equitable Marine Protected Areas - Guidance on combining governance approaches UNEP - UN Environment Programme
UNEP – MPA Network Review	National and Regional Networks of Marine Protected Areas: A Review of Progress
IUCN-WCPA MPA Network Guide	Establishing Resilient Marine Protected Area Networks – Making it Happen
UNEP WCMC Ecosystem Services Guidance	UNEP-WCMC Resources
IUCN Guidance on OECM	Recognising and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures
Marine and Coastal Habitat Conservation and Restoration – Coral Reefs	
UNEP – Coral Reef Restoration Guide	Coral Reef Restoration: A guide to coral restoration method UNEP - UN Environment Programme
GCRMN – Status of Coral Reefs	Status of Coral Reefs of the East Asian Seas 2020
Marine and Coastal Habitats Conservation and Restoration – Mangroves, Seagrass and Coastal Wetlands	
Nairobi Convention – Guidelines for Mangroves	Guidelines on Mangrove Ecosystem Restoration for the Western Indian Ocean Region - Western Indian Ocean Ecosystem Guidelines and Toolkits (unep.org)
Global Mangrove Alliance	State of the World’s Mangroves 2022
UNEP – Seagrass and PES	Protecting Seagrass Through Payments for Ecosystem Services: A Community Guide UNEP - UN Environment Programme
UNEP – Importance of Seagrass	Out of the Blue: The Value of Seagrasses to the Environment and to People UNEP - UN Environment Programme
Cross-Cutting Priorities and Supporting Mechanisms	
Community Participation	
UNEP – Gender Mainstreaming	Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

Data Management	
UNEP Global Environment Monitoring System for the Ocean and Coasts (GEMS Ocean) Programme	The Global Environment Monitoring System for the Ocean and Coasts - Strategy Brochure (unep.org)
UNEP WCMC – World Database	World Database on Protected Areas
UNEP WCMC OECM Database	World Database on other effective area based conservation measures (OECM)
UNEP WCMC User Manual	User Manual for the World Database on Protected Areas and world database on other effective area-based conservation measures: 1.6
ASEAN Clearing House	The ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism (chm-cbd.net)

Annex 3: Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems

I. Background

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

II. Purpose

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

III. Functions

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

IV. Participation

5. COBSEA participating countries shall be invited to participate in the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems through nomination of 2-3 Working Group focal points. The Working Group focal points should represent the national agency with lead or coordinating responsibility at the national level regarding marine and coastal ecosystems and should have relevant experience and expertise on the different scope of this Framework. COBSEA participating countries may also nominate additional experts to attend Working Group meetings, to ensure that the full range of

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

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

V. Organization of Work

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

Annex 4: Summary of Informal Consultations

Background

1. The COBSEA Secretariat is developing a Framework for Marine and Coastal Ecosystems to integrate, harmonize, and guide COBSEA's effort in the marine and coastal environment. The development of this Framework is timely as COBSEA is currently designing the new Strategic Directions 2023–2027 which will guide COBSEA's work in the next five years. This allows COBSEA to ensure prioritization of this area of work in the coming years.
2. Leading to the presentation during the Part 2 of the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) in October 2022, the COBSEA Secretariat organized two virtual informal consultations with nominated representatives of COBSEA participating countries regarding the Framework. The goal of these meetings were to firm up the content of the framework and determine the level of interest regarding its development. The following are the details of the consultations:

Date:	04 August 2022	14 September 2022
Participants:	28 participants, 9 countries	16 participants, 6 countries

Outcome of First Meeting

3. The COBSEA Secretariat presented the contents of the Framework during the meeting. This included the four key thematic areas at that time: marine and coastal spatial planning, marine protected area, marine and coastal habitats, and a cross-cutting theme which incorporates blue economy, blue carbon, data management among others. Additionally, the establishment of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Ecosystems was proposed. Colleagues from UNEP-WCMC were in attendance during this meeting and provided an overview of their work in the region.
4. Overall, the participants expressed support with proposed Framework and the Working Group. A key recommendation from the first meeting was to make Blue Economy an overarching thematic area instead of just part of the cross-cutting themes due to its increasing significance in conservation management while ensuring inclusivity with the needs of the nearby communities.

Outcome of Second Meeting

5. The COBSEA Secretariat presented the second draft of the Framework, in which Blue Economy has taken on an overarching theme. The rest of the Framework remained largely the same. Each participating country were asked to present their feedback on the Framework, recommendations for improvement, and their national priorities. Significant recommendations were the establishment of the Regional Activity Centre, incorporation of more climate change and carbon credit elements, consideration for marine species, increase knowledge sharing elements, and supporting transboundary collaboration among the countries. UNEP Marine and International Waters Unit presented Blue Economy as implemented by UNEP and resource mobilization options including GEF-8 funding and coral reef funds.

Next Steps

6. The COBSEA Secretariat will finalize the content of the Framework in time for its presentation in the IGM. Once approved in the IGM, the COBSEA Secretariat will proceed in the establishment of the working group who will support in the development of the workplan and projects. In the meantime, the COBSEA Secretariat is monitoring call for proposals and continuous to develop concept notes for projects based on the draft.