

Report of the Fifteenth NOWPAP CEARAC Focal Points Meeting

Background leading to this meeting

1. The Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre (CEARAC) is one of the four Regional Activity Centres (RACs) to coordinate activities relevant to specific components of the Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP). Since its inception in 2002, CEARAC has been mainly working on monitoring and assessing harmful algal blooms including red tides (under Working Group 3) and application of remote sensing techniques to the study on the marine and coastal environment (Working Group 4).
2. Since 2008, when CEARAC initiated an activity on eutrophication as a joint work of WG3 and WG4, its foci has shifted to eutrophication and marine biodiversity, basically in accordance with five thematic elements in NOWPAP Medium-term Strategy 2012-2017 (MTS). Then, in recent years, assessment of seagrass distribution in coastal areas was included in main projects of CEARAC.
3. At the second CEARAC Focal Points Meeting (FPM) of every biennium, the Secretariat of CEARAC presents a draft workplan and budget for the coming biennium for discussion. After some modification is applied to the draft based on suggestions from CEARAC FPs, it is submitted to the NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) as part of NOWPAP workplan for approval.
4. Coming to the end of the current 2016-2017 biennium, FPs of CEARAC gather at the 15th NOWPAP CEARAC FPM (29-30 August 2017, Toyama, Japan) to review the progress of on-going CEARAC activities as well as provide practical guidance to the presented workplan for the next biennium. Since NOWPAP itself implements its activities under the new MTS 2018-2023 from the next year on, working areas and foci of CEARAC activities will be pursuant to it.

Agenda Item 1 Opening of the Meeting

5. The meeting was opened at 9:00 at Meeting Room 1 in Tower 111, Toyama, Japan, on 29 August 2017 by Mr. Yuichi NAGASAKA, Director of CEARAC. Then, a

welcoming remark was made by Dr. Lev NERETIN, Coordinator of NOWPAP Regional Coordination Unit (RCU).

Agenda Item 2 Organization of the Meeting

2.1 Election of the officers

6. The meeting elected Dr. Yasuwo FUKUYO, FP of Japan as chairperson and Mr. Jae Yong CHOI, FP of Korea as rapporteur.

2.2 Organization of work

7. It was proposed by the Secretariat of CEARAC that, for the purposes of the CEARAC FPM, the rules used in the meeting be basically those of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), adjusted as appropriate to suit the nature of the meeting. Decisions should be made by consensus and English was the working language of the meeting.
8. The proposal was accepted.

Agenda Item 3 Adoption of the agenda

9. Mr. NAGASAKA introduced the Provisional Agenda (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/1) with the Annotated Provisional Agenda (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/2).
10. The meeting adopted both documents.

Agenda Item 4 Report of the Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) on the implementation of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) including the progress of the NOWPAP Medium-term Strategy 2018-2023

11. Dr. Ning LIU, programme officer of NOWPAP RCU, reported the progress of the entire NOWPAP activities since the 14th CEARAC FPM which was held on 7-8 April 2016, Toyama, Japan (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/3). Then Dr. NERETIN introduced the draft NOWPAP Medium-term Strategy 2018-2023 (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/Ref 1).

12. The meeting acknowledged the report.

Agenda Item 5 Report on the implementation of CEARAC activities for the 2016-2017 biennium

5.1 Overall progress of CEARAC activities

13. Mr. NAGASAKA reported the implementation and the expenditure of CEARAC activities for the 2016-2017 biennium (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/4).

14. The meeting adopted the report on the implementation and the expenditure of CEARAC activities for the 2016-2017 biennium.

5.2 Progress of specific projects

5.2.1 Assessment of major pressures on marine biodiversity in the NOWPAP region

15. Dr. Takafumi YOSHIDA from the Secretariat of CEARAC reported the progress of on-going project: assessment of major pressures on marine biodiversity in the NOWPAP region (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/5).

16. Dr. Guangwen MA, Alternate of China shared the message from a Chinese National FP on the draft report of pilot assessment and requested to circulate the revised report to national FPs to ensure the final report reflect the comments from all reviews before publishing.

17. Dr. Young Nam KIM, FP of Korea mentioned that the Korean government fully supports these activities to move forward with NOWPAP activities on marine biodiversity. Dr. Tatiana ORLOVA, FP of Russia thanked the experts and CEARAC Secretariat for their work.

18. Dr. YOSHIDA explained the steps and schedule for preparing the assessment report and asked CEARAC FPs and experts their support in preparing the report. He said that the report will be finalized by the end of December 2017. Dr. Joji ISHIZAKA, FP of Japan noted that this report is about current activities and recommended to finish the report on time.

19. The meeting agreed to invite relevant regional organizations and partners to the workshop to be organized in October in 2017 in Tokyo to review the first draft of the report where appropriate.

20. The meeting adopted the report.

5.2.2 Feasibility study towards assessment of seagrass distribution in the NOWPAP region

21. Dr. Genki TERAUCHI from the Secretariat of CEARAC reported the progress of on-going project: feasibility study towards assessment of seagrass distribution in the NOWPAP region (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/6).

22. Dr. KIM suggested that the Secretariat distribute detailed updates on this project to keep CEARAC FPs informed on progress of this activity. Dr. TERAUCHI replied that materials of the First International Workshop on Assessment of Seagrass Distribution in the NOWPAP Region held on 3 August in 2017 will be uploaded on the CEARAC website soon.

23. Dr. NERETIN asked linkage of the project with the Blue Carbon Initiative by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Dr. Terauchi replied that the Blue Carbon initiative will be described in the introduction chapter of the feasibility report.

24. Ms. Ran XIE, representative of DINRAC suggested cooperation between DINRAC and CEARAC on the establishment of a seagrass database to be developed. Dr. TERAUCHI replied that future collaboration is expected when future update of the database is necessary.

25. The meeting adopted the report.

Agenda Item 6 Discussion on the proposed workplan and budget for CEARAC activities for the 2018-2019 biennium

6.1 Proposals for specific projects

6.1.1 Development of a CEARAC Medium-term Strategy on marine biodiversity

26. Dr. YOSHIDA proposed a workplan and budget on development of a CEARAC Medium-term Strategy on marine biodiversity (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/7).

27. Dr. KIM inquired about the scope of CEARAC activities on marine biodiversity and asked about the relationship with the additional proposal (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/9). Dr. YOSHIDA clarified the separation of CEARAC MTS plan and additional proposal discussed later in 6.2.1.
28. Dr. FUKUYO asked the Secretariat what information will be collected. Dr. NERETIN voiced his concern again that the plan is too ambitious, and he suggested to narrow down the scope of the project to focus on biodiversity issues of transboundary concern. Dr. ORLOVA then agreed with that suggestion.
29. Following suggestions from the participants, Dr. YOSHIDA proposed again that objective of this project is to clarify potential topics which CEARAC should/can implement in the future, and asked CEARAC FPs to provide some potential topics which their countries are interested in. A robust discussion among the meeting participants ensued whether the proposal should be focused on biodiversity issues of transboundary concern or have multiple topics.
30. The meeting agreed on the proposal in principle, but decided that CEARAC FPs will provide further input on the potential topics and relevant data availability to the Secretariat by the end of September and the Secretariat will revise the proposal for final approval by CEARAC FPs and for submission to the 22nd IGM by the end of October.
31. Dr. YOSHIDA introduced a template for CEARAC FPs to provide potential topics on marine biodiversity. Meeting participants discussed the details of template submission and commented on possible topics, and agreed to provide the completed template by the end of September.

6.1.2 Development of a tool for mapping seagrass distribution in the NOWPAP region

32. Dr. TERAUCHI proposed a workplan and budget on seagrass distribution to be implemented in the 2018-2019 biennium: Development of a tool for mapping seagrass distribution in the NOWPAP region (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/8).

33. Dr. NERETIN asked if CEARAC has any plans to raise funding required for this project and collaborate with IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC/WESTPAC). Dr. TERAUCHI replied that he is considering submitting a proposal to two external funding sources. He also mentioned that CEARAC has been working with IOC/WESTPAC in the past and is considering another collaboration on this activity in the future.
34. Dr. KIM and Dr. ISHIZAKA pointed out the description of the task 3.1, detection of potential seagrass habitat and collection of water depth information, is not clear. Dr. TERAUCHI replied that he would revise description of this task before submission of the proposal to the 22nd NOWPAP IGM. He also promised to explain criteria of the potential seagrass habitat in the revised proposal document.
35. The meeting adopted the proposal in principle with modifications to reflect the discussion.

6.2 Discussion on additional proposal of specific projects of CEARAC for the 2018-2019 biennium

6.2.1 Consideration of future direction of NOWPAP marine biodiversity activities

36. Dr. YOSHIDA proposed to consider future directions of NOWPAP marine biodiversity activities during the 2018-2019 biennium in case of increase of allocated budget to CEARAC activities for the 2018-2019 biennium (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/9).
37. Dr. FUKUYO welcomed this initiative and supported the project. Dr. NERETIN also welcomed the initiative and noted the necessity to involve NOWPAP RACs in the process. Then, Dr. NERETIN noted the differences among RACs' expertise and focus, and the difficulty of creating a common topic. Dr. NERETIN also commented on availability of funds and proposed that RCU will seek additional funding for the next biennium using accumulated trust fund resources.
38. The meeting accepted the additional proposal.

6.3 Discussion on the draft workplan and budget of the entire CEARAC activities for the 2018-2019 biennium and recommendation to the twenty-second NOWPAP IGM

39. The Secretariat of CEARAC presented a draft workplan with two budget plans for entire CEARAC activities for the 2018-2019 biennium (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/10).
40. Dr. NERETIN commented again on the importance of providing specific and meaningful proposals that could be submitted to IGM. He explained the rationale for focusing on the development of the NOWPAP regional action plan on marine and coastal biodiversity and biodiversity issues of transboundary concern.
41. Dr. NERETIN introduced RCU's intention of developing a project on NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on marine biodiversity similar to NOWPAP Marine Litter Activity (MALITA) project together with CEARAC with participation of other RACs, which will be submitted to the 22nd NOWPAP IGM, and he asked CEARAC FPs for their feedback. After consideration, the meeting suggested to discuss these plans among RCU and all RACs.
42. The meeting reviewed the workplan and budget of the entire CEARAC activities for the 2018-2019 biennium, and agreed to submit it, after some modification, to the 22nd NOWPAP IGM to be held in Japan on 19-20 December 2017.

Agenda Item 7 Report on CEARAC marine litter activities

43. Dr. YOSHIDA reported the progress of its marine litter activities for the current 2016-2017 biennium and the workplan for the 2018-2019 biennium (UNEP/NOWPAP/CEARAC/FPM 15/11). The workplan will be submitted and discussed at the NOWPAP International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) to be held on 20 September 2017 in Toyama, Japan with marine litter FPs of NOWPAP.
44. Dr. KIM pointed out that there is no common monitoring standard of microplastics. He asked to have the NOWPAP ICC meeting contribute toward creating a standard or procedure. Dr. NERETIN noted that NOWPAP supports these activities and participates in them. He reported on the content of marine litter activities and asked CEARAC to strongly support them as well.
45. Dr. FUKUYO asked whether the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) has already developed some measurement standards for microplastics and emphasized importance of this issue

in the future activities. Dr. NERETIN informed the meeting about ongoing activities of GESAMP Working Group 40 on global review of monitoring methodologies on microplastics. NOWPAP has delegated a representative of the Republic of Korea to this group.

46. Dr. ORLOVA noted that microplastics in the sea is an issue connected to transboundary issues mentioned in the discussion of CEARAC Medium-term Strategy.

47. The meeting acknowledged the report.

Agenda Item 8 Arrangement of the 16th NOWPAP CEARAC FPM

48. Mr. NAGASAKA proposed to hold the 16th NOWPAP CEARAC Focal Points Meeting in spring 2018 in Toyama, Japan, and the meeting agreed on the proposal.

Agenda Item 9 Other matters

49. The meeting was invited to raise any other issues relevant to CEARAC activities.

50. Dr. YOSHIDA reported a research project, S-13 Development of Coastal management Method to Realize the Sustainable Coastal Sea, funded by the Environment Research and Technology Development Fund administered by Ministry of the Environment of Japan. He explained the S-13 brochure handed out to the meeting participants. This is a 5-year project started in 2013.

51. Although the focus of this project is the coastal areas of Japan, Dr. NERETIN pointed out the potential to incorporate the output of this project into the NOWPAP activity on integrated coastal area management. He expected CEARAC Secretariat to get involved in POMRAC FPM and in PEMSEA – POMRAC joint training course as well.

52. Dr. Teruhisa KOMATSU, representative of IOC/WESTPAC gave a presentation on its history and activities. Dr. FUKUYO asked about possible cooperation between IOC/WESTPAC and CEARAC. Dr. KOMATSU mentioned seagrass mapping as a possible area of cooperation. Dr. LIU also mentioned possible cooperation between NOWPAP RCU and IOC/WESTPAC in the area of microplastic research.

53. Dr. ISHIZAKA mentioned the importance of training courses. He first expressed appreciation to CEARAC to help the 2016 International Hydrological Programme (IHP) training course. He suggested CEARAC to help PICES remote sensing training course planning in 2018. He further suggested CEARAC to plan second series of NOWPAP remote sensing training course in collaboration with PICES after 2020. The meeting agreed the importance of the training course.
54. Dr. FUKUYO noted potential collaboration with Southeast Asian countries through IOC/WESTPAC in organizing training courses, especially for young researchers. Dr. NERETIN agreed and mentioned the importance of information sharing, and encouraged CEARAC FPs to inform NOWPAP about other trainings and activities they come across.

Agenda Item 10 Adoption of the report of the Meeting

55. A draft report of the 15th NOWPAP CEARAC Focal Points Meeting was prepared by the Secretariat of CEARAC with the help of Mr. Jae Yong CHOI, the rapporteur. After review, the report was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item 11 Closure of the Meeting

56. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Fifteenth NOWPAP CEARAC Focal Points Meeting was closed by the chairperson at 14:38 on 30 August 2017.