

Progress Report on the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 - 2020



Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Region: East Asian Seas

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Guidance: Please provide any updates since the 18<sup>th</sup> GMRS held in 2016 up to date

**I. Progress in the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 -2020 since 2017 up to date**

**1. Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in line with the SDG Goal 14.1.**

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
1.1	Enhance data, information management, monitoring and assessment at national and regional level through development of guidelines, baselines, regional indicators, and monitoring programmes as well as identification of region-specific emerging issues through research	Development of a methodology for marine litter hotspot assessment which builds on modelling and expert elicitation, prepared by East China Normal University and in collaboration with UNEP Science Division. An Expert Meeting to review progress with the methodology was held.	The marine litter hotspot assessment methodology was presented at meetings of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter in 2018 and 2019, and will inform country activities under the SEAcircular project.	2019
		The 'SEAcircular' project was developed by COBSEA and UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office. The project aims to prevent land-based plastic leakage into the marine environment in line with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets.	The project was approved by Sida in July 2018, with a grant of USD 6.4M. The inception phase was completed in Q2 2019. Activities are underway. The project will work with industry and governments to improve management of the plastic value chain, support COBSEA countries implement marine litter hotspot assessments, develop harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes and further develop the national policy framework, and will also support multistakeholder	2018 (project approval and initiation)

			outreach and capacity building efforts.	
		Development of harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes.	A regional Training of Trainers on marine litter monitoring using the GESAMP WG 40 guidelines is being organized for COBSEA countries, in collaboration with GPML, GPA, Indonesia Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas and other partners. The training of trainers will be held in Bali, Indonesia, 9-13 September 2019. Technical and other support will be provided to countries in following up on the training, towards development and implementation of national marine litter monitoring and regional reporting.	2019; ongoing
1.2	Raise the visibility of relevant pollution issues at all levels and facilitate science-policy interactions emphasizing socio-economic impacts and promoting relevant practices, tools, technologies and measures	Revision of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter adopted 2008, in line with the COBSEA Strategic Directions (2018-22) and to take into account relevant SDGs and UNEA resolutions.	A revised COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (2019) was adopted at the 24th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, held in Bali, Indonesia, June 2019. Implementation of the RAP MALI is supported through projects underway and under development.	2019
		Government and industry dialogue on packaging standards and definitions towards marine litter related efforts through ASEAN, including organization a workshop.	The workshop generated recommendations for harmonization of standards and definitions to improve the management of plastic in packaging in the region that	2019

			informed the development of a Report on the Role of Packaging Regulations and Standards in Driving the Circular Economy (final, for publication in 2019). The work was supported by GPML/Norway and the SEAcircular project.	
		Analysis of the gender, human rights and economic dimensions of marine litter in the East Asian Seas region.	The report on the economic, gender and human rights dimensions of marine litter, prepared in collaboration with SEI, is in final draft form and will be published in 2019. The report highlights impacts of plastic pollution on disadvantaged groups and on economic development, highlights knowledge gaps, and informs a people-centred approach to marine litter prevention. The report was prepared through the SEAcircular project and will guide project activities.	2019
		Organization of the 'SEA of Solutions' partnership week for marine plastic pollution prevention, with UNEP and other partners (supported through the SEAcircular project)	The event will be held in Bangkok, 11-14 November 2019. The multistakeholder event provides opportunities to leverage investments, learn about innovative technologies and the latest science, support good governance, and advance community actions. Registration form: <a href="https://www.sea-circular.org/asset/sos-2019-registration/">https://www.sea-circular.org/asset/sos-2019-registration/</a>	2019 (ongoing)

			Future events are expected to be held in Viet Nam in 2020 and in Malaysia 2021.	
1.3	Raise issues at global level and facilitate regionalization of outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and mandated global partnerships	Development of the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas as a Regional Activity Centre of COBSEA.	Responding to the Bali Declaration, Indonesia has established a Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas in Bali, Indonesia, and proposed it would function as a COBSEA RAC. A regional consultation meeting was held in Jakarta in April. COBSEA IGM-24 encouraged Indonesia to further develop the Centre as a RAC, for consideration at COBSEA IGM 25.	2019
		Development of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022	Under the Strategic Directions COBSEA will address, inter alia land-based marine pollution with a focus on nutrients, sediment and wastewater; as well as marine litter and microplastics. Specific measures and priority activities are identified.	2018
		An East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) is being developed, pursuant to the resolution adopted at COBSEA IGM 24. This is being done in close consultation with the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter and for consideration by the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting.	Activity underway, including consultation with relevant regional partners. The EAS regional node of GPML is envisaged to encompass Hubs or Networks focusing on Knowledge (implemented in collaboration with ERIA); Science (implemented in collaboration with NUS/CIL and ECNU) as well as a Capacity (implemented in collaboration with R3CS). The work	ongoing

			is supported through SEAcircular and GMPL/Norway.	
		COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter	The revised COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter includes adopted Terms of Reference of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter. The working group is established to promote implementation of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, providing strategic as well as technical support and advice to the COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting and COBSEA Secretariat; exchanging information that supports implementation of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter; and promoting regional cooperation in the context of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. Prior to the formal adoption of the ToR, working group meetings were convened in 2018 and 2019 under mandate given by the COBSEA IGM in 2018.	2019

**2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21.**

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
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2.1	Support mainstreaming of climate change into regional and national policies and institutional frameworks	Development of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022	Under the Strategic Directions, adopted by the IGM in 2018, COBSEA seeks to 'increase resilience to adverse impacts of climate change through coastal and marine planning and management' including by building capacity.	2018
2.2	Assess the impacts of climate change and the resilience of people, society and ecosystems in marine and coastal areas to propose adaptation strategies	Demonstration project 'Including coral reef resilience and vulnerability to climate change in marine spatial planning in Malaysia'. The project was funded through an ICRI-UNEP small grants programme and implemented in collaboration with SymbioSeas and WWF.	The project demonstrated an approach to integrate climate vulnerability considerations in marine conservation planning and zoning processes. Through application of UNEP planning tools (downscaled climate model projections and guide to resilience assessment), the project determined priority actions and target locations for conservation in a network of co-managed marine protected areas that will maximize returns on investment in the face of climate change. The project generated recommendations for and contributed to building the capacity and raise the awareness of conservation staff in Malaysia. Project results were shared among countries through the IGM.	2019
2.3	Create or support climate research, policy networks and inter-regional knowledge exchange towards a better understanding of climate			

	impacts on the marine and coastal environment			
2.4	Facilitate access to instruments for climate financing at national and regional levels	A plan for strengthening resource mobilization will be developed, pursuant to the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022. This will include plans for expanding the pool of partners funding the work of COBSEA, including through relevant climate financing mechanisms.	Activity being initiated in late 2019	
		A concept proposal was prepared for the 2019 IKI call, focusing on priority actions under the Marine and Coastal Planning and Management theme under the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022.	The concept proposal was not selected for further development in UNEP's internal vetting process. Opportunities to pursue project development with UNEP and other Regional Seas in response to future calls will be explored.	2019

**3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth.**

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
3.1	Promote application of guidelines, rules and regulations for exploitation and exploration of living and non-living resources within Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and develop such instruments, where necessary, based on the ecosystem approach			

**4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management.**

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
4.1	Support science-policy dialogue, science-based decisions and provision of regional guidelines	Development of COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022	The Strategic Directions place emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leveraging COBSEA as an intergovernmental policy mechanism towards planning, implementation and tracking of delivery of ocean-related SDGs, in line with the global “Regional Seas Directions 2017-2020.”</li> <li>- specific measures and actions (including e.g. guidelines, information sharing, capacity building etc) under the two substantive themes as well as the over-arching Governance theme</li> <li>- using an ecosystem-based approach based on the best available scientific evidence</li> <li>- strengthening and mainstreaming action plans for ecosystem-based marine and coastal planning and management in each country, in line with national SDG actions, etc.</li> </ul>	
4.2	Support member states with developing integrated ocean policy and improve relevant national legislation to enhance chronological consistency and coherency across sectors			



		Preparation of a regional outlook document on COBSEA's contribution to the follow up and review of ocean-related SDGs, drawing on guidance prepared by UN Environment	A draft outlook document, prepared by a consultant, was presented to the 24th IGM. The draft will be further developed, shared with countries for national review, after which a regional consultation workshop will be held in the third quarter of 2019. The final outlook will be presented to the IGM.	Ongoing
4.3	Enhance information exchange and interregional cooperation towards common goals	An East Asian Seas Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) is being developed, pursuant to the resolution adopted at COBSEA IGM 24	(See above)	ongoing
4.4	Encourage multi-stakeholder participation including NGOs and the private sector to promote compliance with Regional Seas instruments, existing guidelines and regulations of ocean management	COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022	<p>COBSEA Strategic Directions, inter alia, identify use of public-private partnership approaches and catalysing investment in implementation addressing land-based pollution; collaboration with the private sector in relation to sharing of information and best practices and transfer of technology.</p> <p>Attendance of UN, international, regional and civil society partners as observers in COBSEA IGMs and technical meetings.</p> <p>Multistakeholder consultation in development and implementation of project activities (e.g. SEAcircular).</p>	Ongoing

4.5	Ensure the highest standards of Secretariat performance in support in administration of the Conventions and Action plan	Strengthening COBSEA Secretariat in line with Strategic Directions 2018-2022 (the governance theme addresses COBSEA as a regional policy mechanism and identifies priorities in creating the necessary conditions for COBSEA and its Secretariat to efficiently deliver their mandates)	<p>A plan for strengthening resource mobilization and enhancing COBSEA Secretariat in terms of human capacity will be developed (starting 2019)</p> <p>Classification of a Programme Officer Position (P3) in the COBSEA Secretariat complete, to be advertised pending budget confirmation.</p> <p>A JPO joined the COBSEA Secretariat for her third and fourth year as JPO, focusing on the SEAcircular project and providing support to the work of the Secretariat. A second JPO is expected to join the Secretariat for her third year as JPO, in the last quarter 2019.</p>	Ongoing
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## II. Challenges with the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 – 2020

The RSSD were considered in and supported the development COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022, and its priorities are well reflected there. But the extent to which it actually influenced/steered the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022 is debatable. The RSSD 2017-2020 are somewhat innocuous. The ‘nature’ of the RSSD as a strategic document (level, focus, interrelationship with a multitude of other strategic and planning frameworks etc) may need some further consideration.

While good progress has been made, capacity limitations (financial, human resources) have restricted COBSEA’s delivery of some elements in RSSD that are incorporated in the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022.

### **III. Lessons learnt (2017 – up to date)**

Engagement with and input from other RS has been very meaningful for COBSEA. e.g. information sharing and activity alignment with and participation in meetings of neighbouring RS has been programmatically as well as politically meaningful. Also, input and experiences shared by other RS in developing COBSEA's institutional framework has been very useful in 'revitalizing' COBSEA. This is one of the more important aspects of RS as a collective.

### **IV. Any other issues / decisions / case studies / experiences to be shared**

### **V Emerging issues that have not been covered in the RSSD 2017-2020 but are proposed to be covered during the next RSSD**

Decade of Ocean Science

Decade of Ecosystem Restoration

SDG tracking and reporting

UNEP Ocean Strategy including more explicit attention to leveraging RS as a collective and RS in follow up on relevant UNEA resolutions

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