

Call for Expression of Interest Towards Establishment of a COBSEA network of Marine Protected Areas

Background

The East Asian Seas region consists of one of the most biologically diverse marine areas in the world and their ecosystems services constitute a critically important blue economy asset to the region. However, pressures from human activities and climate change pose significant challenges to the coastal and marine environment, dependent people and economic activities. Policy and management responses that address current pressures while anticipating future change is critical to meet global, regional and national ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation targets.

COBSEA is an intergovernmental mechanism for protection and sustainable development of marine and coastal areas of the East Asian Seas region. The East Asian Seas Action Plan¹ envisages implementation of integrated marine and coastal management, including the establishment of a viable network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), in order to conserve biodiversity and maintain productivity.

Further to this, COBSEA's current strategic directions² include a theme on marine and coastal planning and management, with the purpose to enhance and strengthen ecosystem-based marine and coastal planning and management, based on best available scientific evidence, focusing on MPAs including networks of MPAs as well as MSP in the COBSEA region. The Strategic Directions note that, while significant progress has been made in the region in terms of establishment of Marine Protected Areas, there are still gaps in relation to, for example, Marine Protected Area coverage, networking, and integration of Marine Protected Areas within broader spatial planning efforts. Consequently, the Strategic Directions encompass an activity on establishing a COBSEA network of MPAs.

Objective

The overall aim is to strengthen biodiversity conservation and increase resilience to adverse impacts of climate change, in line with the East Asian Seas Action Plan and COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022.

To this end, the objective of this activity is to propose focus, scope and activities for a COBSEA Network of MPAs, based on situation analysis and consultation. This will be presented for consideration at the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM-25) of COBSEA to inform further development of a COBSEA network of MPAs as well as in national policy and management planning.

Activity

The project entails preparing a study which will include a situation analysis of MPAs, MPA networking and existing initiatives and efforts within and among countries. This should enable specific identification of gaps and needs with particular attention to COBSEA's mandate and role. The analysis should further include a summary of MPA management effectiveness based on existing knowledge and published data. The study will be carried out based on desk review, country consultation and, as appropriate, other approaches. The study should further investigate and draw upon lessons learned from other relevant initiatives in the region and from other Regional Seas programmes. Based on the situation analysis, the study will include proposed scope and focus of a COBSEA network of MPAs, including suggested network activities.

¹ <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29052/AP94.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

² <https://www.unenvironment.org/cobsea/resources/policy-and-strategy/cobsea-strategic-directions-2018-2022>

Work may entail particular focus on critical habitats, such as coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, coastal marshes, and other areas important for fishery productivity, ensuring that ecosystem service values and costs associated with loss of such values are considered in the design and implementation. Opportunities for use of public-private partnership approaches should further be identified.

The work will contribute to an enabling policy and institutional environment for integrated and ecosystem-based marine and coastal planning and management, and promote regional cohesion and synergies. Additionally, the work will provide a foundation for further action, including efforts to enhance climate resilience of spatial conservation, in line with UNEA Resolution 2/12 on Sustainable coral reefs management.

Items that may be considered when conducting the work include:

- ongoing and upcoming relevant monitoring initiatives, including efforts developed in relation to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- activities carried out through the ASEAN Working Group on the Coastal and Marine Environment in relation to MPAs;
- recommendations arising from the GCRMN report ‘Status of Coral Reefs in East Asian Seas Region’, to be launched during the first half of 2021;
- North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN);
- climate model projection for future coral bleaching conditions and other relevant regional datasets;
- existing systematic prioritization eg Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas;
- European Union-funded Ocean Governance project ‘Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems, catalysts for building peace and security and fostering sustainable economies, South Asia and Atlantic Ocean basin’;
- UNEP’s MPA Toolbox & Learning Platform; and
- Marine and Coastal Spatial Planning policy review on national and regional legal and policy frameworks.

Findings of the work will be presented to IGM-25 for consideration to inform further development of a COBSEA network of MPAs. Recommendations arising from the IGM will guide how management effectiveness and relevant monitoring will be approached in the context of a COBSEA network of MPAs.

Proposed activity plan including deliverables and deadlines

Deliverables	Delivery date
Methodology and workplan	30 June
Situation analysis	
Zero draft for review by review by COBSEA Sec	15 August
Interim progress report and financial report	15 September
Draft study	
Zero draft for review by review by COBSEA Sec	15 September
First draft for review by COBEA countries and COBSEA Sec	1 October
Final draft	15 November
Webinar to introduce study to COBSEA countries and source input towards its finalization	30 October
Draft working document for COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting	30 November
Progress report and financial report	30 November

Budget

The total budget available for the activity is 60,000 USD.

Call for Expression of Interest

Selection of a lead entity to carry out the activity towards developing a COBSEA network of MPAs will be made on the basis of Expressions of Interests (EOI) submitted to the COBSEA Secretariat.

EOIs of up to two pages (not including annexes) should include:

- a description of how work is envisioned to be conducted including tentative methodology and workplan;
- information about the proponent entity including legal status, entity's prior experience in relation to MPAs and engagement with UNEP or other international organizations as well as identification of intended team members and their experiences and expertise including in relation to MPAs; and
- indicative budget as per Annex I (activity based, with expenditure classes).

Applicants are further to submit Certificate of Incorporation or equivalent registration document.

Eligibility: Applicants should either be governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental entities, including not-for-profit actors such as research institutions and foundations. For-profit entities are ineligible to apply.

Submission: EOIs are to be submitted to COBSEA Secretariat (unep-cobsea@un.org) by 21 May 2021.

Selection: The COBSEA Secretariat will evaluate EOIs submitted by the deadline and make a selection following UNEP's partnership policy and procedures. Once the selection process is completed all applicants will be notified via email.

Implementation: The COBSEA Secretariat will enter an implementation agreement ('Small Scale Funding Agreement', SSFA) with the selected partner, covering activities, deliverables and deadlines.

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Annex I. Activity Based Budget Template

Activity	Staff & other Personnel Costs*	Travel**	Contractual Services***	General Operating & Other Costs****	Total Cost (USD) *****
Methodology and workplan					
Situation analysis					
Detailed description of COBSEA network of MPAs					
Webinar to introduce draft findings					
Draft working document for COBSEA Intergovernmental Meeting					
Total					

* Including human resources-related costs

** Not to exceed 20% of total cost

*** Not to exceed 15% of total cost

**** Operational costs not to exceed 8% of total cost

***** The SSFA allows only for 'incidental procurement', i.e. cumulative procurement activities that are required to execute one or more activities of the SSFA and that involve no more than 15% of total cost. Procurement refers to services or goods purchased, such as equipment, plane tickets, venue hire, e.g. budget under contractual services and general operating costs. Further, administrative costs are not to exceed 13% of total cost.