

CONCEPT NOTE

NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON MARINE LITTER MONITORING

Background

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Secretariat with funding support from the Government of Sweden are jointly implementing the project 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia' (SEA circular).

SEA circular project contributes directly to achieving the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) and COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018-2022. Accordingly, COBSEA partnered with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to map monitoring efforts in the region and prepare Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes in the East Asian Seas for discussion in the WGML and consideration by the First Part of the Twenty-fifth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM 25.1) of COBSEA. The Regional Guidance will be formally launched by COBSEA in June/July, 2022 during the IGM 25.2. Building on the [Regional Guidance](#) document that adopted during the IGM 25.1, SEA circular project is providing technical assistance to COBSEA member countries on marine litter monitoring toward developing and strengthening harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes in the target countries.

Under a partnership agreement with CSIRO the development and/or strengthening of national marine litter monitoring, the COBSEA RAP MALI recognizes that robust monitoring and assessment are indispensable in identifying marine litter status and trends and its most critical impacts, and to support development, tracking and evaluation of policy and management interventions.

Technical consultations of the COBSEA WGML on 23-25 June 2020 identified steps towards harmonized marine litter monitoring, in line with the RAP MALI:

Step	Status
Establish an inventory of existing marine litter monitoring efforts	Completed
Establish a Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group under COBSEA WGML	Completed
Establish common objectives for marine litter monitoring in the context of COBSEA RAP MALI	Completed
Identify proposed common indicators, recommended methods and data standards	Ongoing
Capacity building	Ongoing

Following the opportunities identified as part of the above-mentioned process, several COBSEA participating countries have expressed their strong interest and need to establish a marine debris monitoring program within their jurisdictions, which is harmonised with those programs in other jurisdictions.

Objective of this project

This project aims to facilitate technical assistance to Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam on marine litter monitoring to encourage participating countries toward developing and strengthening harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes in project target countries through the SEA circular project in line with the [COBSEA RAP MALI](#) and [UN Environment Assembly resolutions](#) on marine litter and microplastics.

In order to achieve the objective of this project, the following activities will be implemented with participating countries:

- **Activity 1** – Technical assistance for developing harmonized national marine litter monitoring programmes;
- **Activity 2** – Capacity building on marine litter monitoring;
- **Activity 3** – Establishing national baselines on marine litter;
- **Activity 4** – Informing regional assessment of marine litter status and trends.

COBSEA Secretariat and CSIRO will organize consultations to identify country needs, existing frameworks and existing project outputs where available. In order to meet national capacity needs and address monitoring priorities, participating countries are expected to involve in national consultations to identify monitoring objectives, gaps (based on country inputs provided to the regional monitoring inventory), capacity needs (linked to Activity 2), and steps toward a systematic national approach and source inventory. Based on national consultations, CSIRO will provide technical assistance to draft and strengthen national monitoring programme descriptions and identify action-oriented steps for further implementation.

Expected Outputs

Participating countries are expected to identify and align their existing capacity with COBSEA RAP MALI in order to build common understanding to identify the need to improve knowledge on the main types, sources and amounts of litter that enter the marine and coastal environment, to enable assessment of marine litter status and trends, the impact of marine litter on the marine and coastal environment and human health, as well as the socio-economic aspects of marine litter.

Sound marine litter monitoring and reporting from participating countries are also required to track progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 14.1. Furthermore, it is fundamental for participating countries to improve capacity in

terms of understanding, systematically tracking, and addressing marine litter sources and pathways over time that requires the establishment of sound national baselines to inform national monitoring efforts. Thus, technical assistance will be provided to identify sources and accumulation zones for marine litter to develop national baselines in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam, based on training and field data collection by collaborators in participating countries.

This project is expected to generate the following outputs:

- A regional training syllabus will be developed for all training modules and materials;
- National training plans identifying needs, stakeholders, priorities, and implementing modalities and programmes will be developed or elaborated for Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam;
- Training modules and materials will be developed and provided/made available to participants;
- National trainings will be held to build capacity of national and local authorities and stakeholders to conduct marine litter monitoring and assessment;
- A summary report will be provided, identifying any gaps and recommendations.

In addition, the transboundary nature of marine litter calls for a coordinated regional approach based on robust evidence. Taking into account identified regional priorities, existing monitoring efforts and gaps, a plan will be developed for preparation of a regional report with support from all participating countries, including recommended steps, procedures, and links to COBSEA institutional structures (such as the East Asian Seas Regional Node). Based on these recommendations, the Secretariat will consult COBSEA participating countries further to explore development of a regional assessment.

Agenda

Date: Monday, April 4th, 2022

Time (ICT/AEDT)	Topic	Presenter
11:00-11:10 / 15:00-15:10	Introduction and welcome remarks	Ms. Kamala Ernest, SEA circular Project Coordinator, UNEP
11:10-12:00 / 15:10-16:00	Developing and strengthening national harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes	Dr. Denise Hardesty (Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO)
12:00-12:30 / 16:00-16:30	Inputs from participating COBSEA Countries and Stakeholders	Representatives of COBSEA countries and Stakeholders
12:30-12:50 / 16:30-16:50	Discussion	Ms. Natalie Harms, Programme Officer Marine Litter, COBSEA
12:50-13:00 / 16:50-17:00	Summary & closing	Ms. Natalie Harms, Programme Officer Marine Litter, COBSEA