

Senior Government Officials Accept Sustainable Development Strategy

PATTAYA, THAILAND -- PEMSEA participating countries must actively pursue the endorsement of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) and the draft Putrajaya Declaration of Regional Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia. This was among the recommendations made during the Senior Government Officials' Meeting (SGOM) held on 4-5 August.

About 40 high-level officials from PEMSEA national focal agencies, international organizations, and the Regional Programme, attended the SGOM. The meeting was organized by PEMSEA to prepare the programme and working documents for review and endorsement by concerned ministers during the Ministerial Forum on the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia, which will be held during the East Asian Seas Congress 2003 on 12 December 2003 in Putrajaya, Malaysia (see related article).

The SGOM recommended the acceptance of the final drafts of the SDS-SEA and the Putrajaya Declaration subject to final national review. The meeting also agreed on a draft programme and provisional agenda for the Ministerial Forum.

The SDS-SEA expresses the shared vision of the countries and other stakeholders for the Seas of East Asia, and the way by which they will achieve that shared vision. The Putrajaya Declaration was developed to serve as the instrument signifying official country adoption of the SDS-SEA. The declaration is hoped to be endorsed during the Ministerial Forum.

The next SGOM will be held on 11 December in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Why An East Asian Seas Congress 2003?

Previous efforts of countries and international agencies to arrest environmental degradation in the Seas of East Asia have fallen short of tangible and lasting benefits to the environment and to the quality of life of the people in the region. To address this, the East Asian Seas Congress 2003 aims to catalyze regional partnerships and cooperation toward achieving the goal of sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia.

The Congress will be held on 8–12 December 2003 in Putrajaya, Malaysia, and features the:

1. Ministerial Forum on the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia; and
2. International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the East Asian Seas: Towards a New Era of Regional Collaboration and Partnerships.

The International Conference will be held from 8-11 December and will gather concerned stakeholders, policy-makers, economists, environmental and natural resource managers, non-government organizations representatives, media practitioners, the academe, civil society and the private sector, to discuss ways to strengthen regional collaboration, promote synergies and linkages among existing regional and global programmes, and work towards achieving sustainable coastal and ocean development in the East Asian Seas region. The International Conference will focus on two major themes:

A review of international and national efforts towards addressing the main sectoral concerns regarding the Seas of East Asia; and

The essential cross-sectoral approaches and processes towards achieving sustainable development.

The recommendations and conclusions of the International Conference will then be submitted to the Ministerial Forum on the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia which follows right after the Congress.

At Ministerial Forum scheduled on 12 December, ministers from PEMSEA participating countries will be informed of the conclusions and recommendations of the International Conference, discuss the state of the region's environment natural resources, and agree on a common framework of actions for the East Asian Seas also known as the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).

Starting in 2001, the SDS-SEA evolved and developed through a process of local, national, and regional consultations and consensus-building among participating governments and stakeholders. Prior to the Ministerial Forum, senior government officials would have held preparatory meetings to review the final draft of the SDS-SEA.

It is hoped that the ministers agree to endorse the SDS-SEA as it would provide the East Asian Seas region with a more integrated approach to environmental management based on:

1. Functional partnerships among governments, international agencies, civil society and the private sector;
2. Inter-linkages between multilateral environmental agreements, regional programmes of action, national policies and programmes and local operational activities;
3. Synergies that exist naturally within the global environment; and
4. Improved coastal and ocean governance as part of sustainable development policy.

It is hoped that stakeholders will adopt the SDS-SEA collectively as a region and individually as countries and other partners, committing to its implementation through policy formulation and action programs at regional, subregional, national, and local levels.

For more information on the East Asian Seas Congress 2003 visit the Congress Website at <http://way.to/seascongress>.

“Keep Building Partnerships” – Countries Urge PEMSEA

PATTAYA, THAILAND -- At an intergovernmental meeting held on 6-9 August, representatives from the 12 PEMSEA participating countries urged the regional programme to continue its efforts in forging partnerships to strengthen local, national, and regional capacities for the improved management of the environment and natural resources in the East Asian Seas region. The countries also encouraged PEMSEA to distill lessons learned from its activities, and disseminate the information to stakeholders within and outside the region.

Government representatives from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam participated in the 9th PEMSEA Programme Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting, which discussed the lessons learned and impacts of PEMSEA's activities in the region. The PSC meeting also reviewed PEMSEA's in-country progress on integrated coastal management (ICM) at the national demonstration/parallel sites and subregional sea areas and pollution hot spot sites.

The PSC expressed its appreciation at the emerging role of PEMSEA as a regional platform for stakeholder partnerships at both the national and international levels to collectively address the critical issues related to coastal and marine environment and resources. The PSC also noted the substantive achievements and successful implementation of various project activities at PEMSEA sites, including coastal strategy development, environmental risk assessment, Integrated Information Management System, environmental investments, public awareness, and civil society participation.

The PSC also called on all participating governments to actively pursue the national final review and endorsement of the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Seas of East Asia and the Putrajaya Declaration of Regional Cooperation by their respective governments. The PSC recommended that all countries do their part in helping PEMSEA organize and promote the East Asian Seas Congress 2003 (see related article).

PSC meetings serve as a venue to review the progress of PEMSEA activities in the region and to make recommendations for their effective implementation. The Royal Government of Thailand hosted the 9th PSC, which was also attended by representatives from the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, the academe, and international/donor/financial institutions.

Gulf of Thailand Project Enhances Oil Spill Planning and Claims Recovery

HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM -- Twenty-two representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam enhanced their knowledge and skills in oil spill contingency planning and claims recovery during the Gulf of Thailand Training Workshop on Contingency Planning and Claims Recovery held last 7-11 July 2003.

The training course was well received by the participants and considered very useful for their respective work, especially in the implementation of the PEMSEA-Gulf of Thailand Project (see related story). The training enabled participants from Cambodia and Vietnam to develop a framework for formulating their respective oil spill contingency plans. As a result of the training, the Thai participants developed an action plan for improving the country's national oil spill contingency plan emphasizing damage assessment and cost recovery mechanisms.

The training enhanced the participants' understanding of claims procedures, admissibility, and the contingency planning process. It further increased awareness among the participants on the need for collaboration among countries to strengthen response capability at the national and subregional levels. Participants also recognized the need to ratify international conventions such as the Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution, and the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, to enable them to derive full benefits from the existing liability and compensation regimes. The training stressed that the recovery of cost from ship-based oil pollution sources is closely linked to the effectiveness of the national oil spill contingency plan.

Capt. Patrick Ooi of the East Asia Response Pte Ltd. and Ms. Caryn Anderson of the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation conducted the training workshop, which was organized by PEMSEA in partnership with PV Drilling Company and Vietnam Environment Protection Agency.

PEMSEA and IOI Ink Capacity Building Agreement

PATTAYA, THAILAND -- PEMSEA and the International Ocean Institute (IOI) recently signed a memorandum of agreement for a collaborative partnership to mutually promote integrated marine and coastal management and sustainable development through national capacity building. The agreement was signed on 6 August as part of the 9th PEMSEA Programme Steering Committee Meeting (see related article).

This new capacity building partnership includes the sharing of information and outputs generated by PEMSEA and IOI such as workshop proceedings, newsletters and other publications; development of website linkages; supporting professionals from developing countries to participate in training activities, conferences and workshops through funding or cost sharing opportunities; joint publication of special issues of Tropical Coasts Magazine; and cooperation on research projects, meetings and training programs in integrated management and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.

The agreement was signed by PEMSEA Regional Programme Director, Dr. Chua Thia-Eng and IOI Executive Director, Dr. Iouri Oliouline.

PEMSEA Fosters Subregional Collaboration in Gulf of Thailand

HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM -- Subregional project task team representatives from Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam discussed effective approaches in implementing PEMSEA's Gulf of Thailand (GOT) Project at the national and subregional levels, in a meeting held last 11 July. The linkages between the project capacity building components at the national level and the inter-country collaboration components at the subregional level were stressed.

During the meeting, participants were provided with an opportunity to share their experiences and initiatives related to oil spill preparedness, planning and response. The Thai presentation on their experience and lessons learned in the implementation of national oil spill contingency plan, particularly in combating the two major oil spill incidents in 2002, was regarded with great interest. Participants considered that the sharing of experiences and lessons learned among the countries should be an important part of the GOT Project.

The GOT Project focuses on capacity building at the national and subregional levels and aims to develop an operational framework which can mobilize local stakeholders to undertake preparation, response and cooperative activities at national and subregional levels against oil spills in the GOT.

The GOT project focuses on oil spill risk assessment, the development of human and equipment resources in contingency planning, response and compensation claims, natural resource damage appraisal and the sharing of information and experiences among stakeholders at national and subregional levels.

National Support for Sustainable Development Strategy Increases

Brunei Darussalam and Japan expressed their support for the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) during interagency consultations held in Bandar Seri Begawan and Tokyo, respectively.

On 3 July, PEMSEA Regional Programme Director, Dr. Chua Thia-Eng visited Tokyo, Japan, to participate in a consultative meeting with officials from the Ministry of Land, Transport and Infrastructure, Fisheries Agency, and the Ship and Ocean Foundation to discuss Japan's comments on the SDS-SEA.

Dr. Chua presented the background of the SDS-SEA, and explained the consultative processes that took place as early as 2000. He emphasized that the Strategy is intended to serve as a strategic regional framework and a platform for achieving common visions for the Seas of East Asia. The strategy also provides a regional cooperative forum for all agencies at local, national, regional, and international levels to work together in meeting the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

"The SDS-SEA is not a legally binding document," Dr. Chua said. Countries are free to implement the strategy in part or in full depending on their own situation. He clarified that the strategy is not a duplication of the roles of other agencies and programmes.

The SDS-SEA is a package of relevant international instruments and regional action programmes intended for regional and local implementation at site-specific levels. The action programs contained in the SDS-SEA can be implemented by various agencies and strengthen agencies' work programs rather than replace them.

On 22-25 July, Dr. Chua and PEMSEA Senior Programme Officer Dr. Jihyun Lee, attended an interagency consultative meeting at Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. The meeting was organized by the Department of Environment and chaired by the Ministry of Development Permanent Secretary, Hj. Moh. Jumin b. Haji Marsal. Her Royal Highness Princess YTM PAP HAJJAH MAJEEDAH NUURUL BOLKIAH BT. KDYMM PADUKA SERI BEGINDA SULTAN HAJI HASSANAL BOLKIAH MU'IZZADIN WADDAULAH also attended the meeting.

Dr. Chua and Dr. Lee presented PEMSEA's activities and the SDS-SEA. The meeting expressed general agreement with the concept and approach of the SDS-SEA and clarified that the SDS-SEA can serve as a general framework for the country to develop its national coastal/marine policy and strategy. The document can also build upon the foundation developed by the Coastal Resource Management (CRM) Project almost 15 years ago.

It was noted that Brunei Darussalam has made significant progress and achievements in the implementation of the CRM project and the subsequent implementation of many of the project's recommendations.

Sihanoukville Coastal Strategy Embodies Stakeholders' Vision

SIHAOUNKVILLE, CAMBODIA -- “Clean, pristine, healthy and peaceful environment, with historical and cultural values restored, marine and coastal biodiversity and unique habitats preserved, a center for marine and coastal eco-tourism, with a modern international port developed, practicing sustainable and responsible fisheries management and enjoying viable local economy.” This is the vision of various stakeholders in Sihanoukville.

On 5 June 2003, as part of celebrations for World Environment Day, the Sihanoukville Coastal Strategy was formally approved by stakeholders in a declaration ceremony witnessed by more than 1,000 representatives from local and national government agencies, international organizations, the private sector, and local communities. The strategy clearly captures the peoples' shared vision for the environment. Strategies for realizing the common vision were also included in the coastal strategy, which will serve as the guide to agreed goals for socioeconomic development and environmental conservation of Sihanoukville.

The Coastal Strategy contains five specific major strategies:

1. Inform and educate stakeholders of their rights and responsibilities, and the issues concerning the coastal and marine environment to ensure their involvement and active participation in the development and implementation of marine and coastal management programs;
2. Preserve and restore the ecological, cultural and social values of Sihanoukville for the benefit and security of present and future generations;
3. Protect the health of the ecosystem and well-being of the people, and mitigate environmental damages caused by various human activities such as pollutant discharges, uncontrolled exploitation of resources, habitat destruction, and unregulated development;
4. Sustain the important ecological, social and economic benefits that marine and coastal resources provide to present and future generations; and
5. Develop opportunities for socio-economic advancement for the people of Sihanoukville while ensuring that the environmental integrity of the coastal area is never compromised.

From these five strategies, objectives and action programs were formulated, with stakeholders expected to take part in its implementation.

Work on the Sihanoukville Coastal Strategy started through a series of stakeholder consultation workshops held in August 2001 in the three districts of Sihanoukville: Mitapheap, Stung Hav and Prey Nup. These eventually led to wider consultative

workshops, which included participants from local and national agencies. The workshops resulted in the formation of a draft Coastal Strategy, which was reviewed, refined and finalized by local and national stakeholders.

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PEMSEA Welcomes New Staff

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- PEMSEA welcomes Mr. Sothou Sang, Technical Staff of PEMSEA's integrated coastal management (ICM) demonstration site in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. Mr. Sang will undergo training on Integrated Information Management Systems (IIMS) development at the PEMSEA Regional Programme Office from July to December 2003.

As part of the IIMS training, he will assist PEMSEA in identifying mechanisms for developing institutional arrangements and environmental monitoring. His stint with PEMSEA will provide him opportunities for wider exposure to the programme's activities, as well as provide him hands-on experience in project development and implementation.

"I expect to apply the skills I have learned at PEMSEA to the Sihanoukville ICM project," Mr. Sang said.