

Major Stakeholders to Gather at the East Asian Seas Congress 2003

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- A major international event for various stakeholders of the Seas of East Asia will be held from 8-12 December 2003 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The East Asian Seas Congress 2003 is being organized by PEMSEA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment Malaysia. The Department of Environment Malaysia is the local organizing committee.

The Congress features two main events: The Ministerial Forum on the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia which is scheduled on 12 December and The International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the East Asian Seas: Towards a New Era of Regional Collaboration and Partnerships slated for 8-12 December.

Three side events would be held during the Congress: The 3rd Forum of the Regional Network of Local Governments Implementing Integrated Coastal Management and the Media Forum on Partnerships in Environmental Communication (9 December) and the Environmental Investments Round Table (10 December).

Ministerial Forum

The Ministerial Forum is a regional response towards the sustainable development of coasts and oceans. It provides a venue to discuss the state of the region's environment and natural resources and to agree on a common framework of actions for the East Asian Seas. Ministers from 12 PEMSEA participating countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, RP China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, RO Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam will review the final draft of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) and consider a declaration of regional cooperation for adoption.

Prior to the Ministerial Forum, three preparatory meetings attended by senior government officials would have been held in the People's Republic of China, Thailand, and Malaysia, respectively, to review the final draft of the 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.

International Conference

The International Conference will gather concerned stakeholders –policy makers, economists, environmental and natural resource managers, NGO 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 region.

The conference is focused on two themes. Theme A focuses on a Review of International and National Efforts Towards Addressing the Main Sectoral Concerns Regarding the Seas of East Asia and Theme B on the Essential Cross-Cultural Approaches and Processes: Towards Achieving Sustainable Development.

There will be eight concurrent workshop sessions coordinated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Environment Programme-Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (UNEP-GPA), WorldFish Center, UNDP- GEF (Kuala Lumpur) and PEMSEA. These sessions are on maritime transport; land-based pollution; fisheries and aquaculture; biodiversity; local governance and alliances; skills and expertise; finance, investment, and corporate responsibility; and national coastal policies and regional collaborative arrangements.

International speakers will be invited to keynote the conference as well as present papers during the workshop sessions.

Exhibits on the theme, “Regional Collaboration and Partnerships for the Sustainable Development of the Coasts and Oceans” will be set up by the PEMSEA Regional Office, its integrated coastal management demonstration/parallel sites, pollution hotspot project sites, and Congress sponsoring organizations.

The Congress Secretariat is calling for papers and posters on any of the workshop topics.

Side Events

Representatives of local governments in the PEMSEA participating countries will also meet for The Third Forum of the Regional Network of Local Governments Implementing Integrated Coastal Management. At the forum, local government leaders would share information, expertise, experiences and lessons in the implementation of the SDS-SEA and local coastal strategies and identify feasible options for securing the long-term sustainability of the network’s operation.

Journalists, broadcasters, and communicators for sustainable environmental development, as well as Project Management Directors of the PEMSEA sites, and representatives of international organizations, will also meet at The Media Forum on Partnerships in Environmental Communication to discuss environmental concerns, issues, and

information gaps in coastal and marine resource management. The forum hopes that workable mechanisms for partnerships in environmental communication would be identified.

The Environmental Investments Round Table will gather business professionals and other members of the private sector to discuss environmental investment opportunities in integrated coastal management as well as in subregional sea areas and pollution hot spot management sites. It will also be a venue for dialogues among local governments, private sector and interested investors and facilitate the formation and strengthening of public-private partnerships for environmental investments.

For more information about the East Asian Seas Congress 2003, please contact the Congress Secretariat at congress@pemsea.org or visit the congress website at <http://way.to/seascongress>.

GEF Secretariat Gives PEMSEA a Favorable Evaluation

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- “Highly satisfactory.” This was among the comments made by the GEF Secretariat regarding PEMSEA’s project design and implementation during the recently concluded Secretariat Managed Project Reviews (SMPRs) conducted by the GEF. PEMSEA is one of 15 GEF-funded projects selected for evaluation from July to September 2002.

The review panel noted that the participating countries had a strong government ownership of the PEMSEA project. They also observed that the governments have a high success in involving local champions, provincial governors and corporate leaders in project activities and integrating them into local government action programs.

The panel reported that “the Project has already seen considerable achievements on the ratification of conventions by the participating countries in extending and harmonizing the legislative, regulatory and institutional frameworks; in the development of country and local plans for Integrated Coastal Management; and in increasing awareness among governments, the private sector and the population at large on the importance of coastal management.”

The panel identified three important challenges facing PEMSEA: the consolidation of capacity building achievements for strengthening local governance; the definition of a long-term institutional structure(s) to ensure sustainability of PEMSEA’s objectives; and the search for formal representation of the concerned ministries at appropriate levels in its forthcoming ministerial forum.

The ministerial forum is one of the main features of the East Asian Seas Congress 2003, a major international event for stakeholders in the East Asian region to be held from 8 –12 December 2003 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (see related article).

Shihwa to Invest US\$ 620M for Environmental Restoration

SHIHWA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA -- A plan for the environmental restoration of Shihwa's coastal and watershed area was recently approved by the Shihwa Lake Management Committee. The Mid-term Implementation Plan (2001-2006) of the Shihwa Comprehensive Management Plan includes 26 action programs in four strategic focus areas: improvement of water and sediment quality; ecosystem and living resources management; coastal utilization and space management; and the strengthening of institutional arrangements and capacity building. The implementation of the approved plan is expected to cost about US\$ 620M by 2006.

Each action program identifies the specific activities and plans involved, the target investments, and the implementing agencies. To improve the water and sediment quality of Shihwa Lake, the Korean government is planning to construct a tidal plant with an estimated investment of US\$ 200M. The establishment of sewage treatment plants, artificial wetlands, and various facilities for reducing non-point sources of pollution are also included in the plan.

PEMSEA Staff Obtains First-hand Info on ICM

BATAAN, PHILIPPINES -- The PEMSEA Regional Programme Office (RPO) Staff experienced first-hand integrated coastal management (ICM) in action through a study tour to the Bataan ICM Program, locally known as BIGKIS-Bataan, on 7-9 February 2003. The study tour provided the PEMSEA staff with the basic concepts and principles of ICM and increased their awareness and understanding on the activities of BIGKIS-Bataan.

The staff participated in a local coastal cleanup in the town of Orani, which exposed them to the importance of environmental awareness and local political will in addressing the problem of waste disposal.

The coastal cleanup was followed by a visit to a mangrove reforestation site near the town of Orion. The visit provided the participants with better insights on the important role mangrove ecosystems play in maintaining biological diversity and preventing shore erosion.

The staff also visited the Philippine National Oil Company Petrochem Estate to gain increased understanding on how the estate practices corporate responsibility in environmental protection.

“We realized the strong potential of the industrial sector as partners in environmental management,” said Jun Hernandez, PEMSEA Senior Accounting Clerk.

The visit to the town of Morong proved to be another learning experience for the staff where the Community-Based Pawikan Conservation Project has turned turtle poachers into protectors. The intense public awareness campaign on the need to protect marine endangered species contributed to the success of the project. The staff participated in the release of the sanctuary’s captive-bred Olive Ridley sea turtle hatchlings.

“It is an unforgettable experience,” said Azenith Carlos, PEMSEA Library Assistant. Most of the PEMSEA staff experienced the release of sea turtle hatchlings for the first time.

PEMSEA regularly conducts study tours to assist in human resource development in ICM especially at the local level.

Preparations for Environmental Investment Roundtables Underway

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Preparations are now being undertaken by PEMSEA for the conduct of exploratory meetings among operating companies, investment groups and financial institutions interested in pursuing joint-ventures with local governments and investors in the East Asian region. These meetings are in preparation for a series of Environmental Investment Roundtables showcasing investment and financing opportunities for various projects under a public-private partnerships (PPP) mechanism. Donor agencies are also expected to attend the roundtables.

"The Roundtables are intended to bring together local stakeholders who would require technical and management expertise and financial backing from those who are able to extend this support," said S. A. Ross, PEMSEA Senior Programme Officer. A preliminary list of environmental investments have been identified in the Philippines, PR China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.

An investor's registry had been set up to assist private sector investors. Registration forms are available online from the PEMSEA website, www.pemsea.org, together with excerpts of some opportunity briefs.

Under the PPP mechanism, there will be resource pooling and risk sharing among the concerned parties. The private sector is expected to provide the technical know-how and the necessary infusion of capital while the public sector partner complements these in terms of familiarity with local conditions and guaranteeing manpower resources.

For comments and inquiries, contact PEMSEA's Sustainable Financing Unit through info@pemsea.org.

China to Host First Senior Government Officials Meeting on the East Asian Seas

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- The State Oceanic Administration through the Department of International Cooperation, People's Republic of China, will host and co-organize the First Senior Government Officials Meeting (SGOM) on the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).

About 30 high-level officials from PEMSEA national focal agencies, concerned international organizations, and the Regional Programme, are expected to attend the first SGOM slated on 8-10 April.

Mr. Li Haiqing, Director General the Department of International Cooperation, informed that the meeting will be held in Zhuhai Municipality, Guangdong Province. The meeting will review the final draft of the Strategy, share experiences in national cross-sectoral consultations, and discuss measures to facilitate national and regional consensus building for the SDS-SEA.

The People's Republic of China remains to be active in efforts to formulate a common regional framework for the sustainable development of the East Asian Seas. The SGOM in China is the first of three meetings to be 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 December in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (see related article).

Chonburi Increases Marine Resources Awareness

CHONBURI, THAILAND -- In a bid to increase awareness on the importance of marine resources, volunteers released over 2 million shrimp larvae and 50 green and hawksbill sea turtles into the sea during a ceremony held in Kram Island, Sattahip.

Over 80 students, fishers, government representatives and staff from the Project Management Office (PMO) of PEMSEA's Chonburi Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) demonstration site participated in the event. The activity exposed the students to the importance of marine resources and built awareness among fishermen and local communities on the need to preserve marine resources in the area.

The Si Racha municipality provided the turtles which were taken from its conservation pond at Loi Island while the shrimp larvae were provided by the Fishery Department.

Kram Island belongs to the Royal Thai Navy and is a nesting ground for green and hawksbill turtles. The release of sea turtles and shrimp larvae has become an annual event and is now on its third year. During the same occasion, the PMO also shared information on its ICM activities and distributed 150 t-shirts to participants.

Mission Forges Stronger Partnership for Bohai Sea

BEIJING, PR CHINA -- Stronger working partnership among the PEMSEA Regional Programme Office, the project staff and government counterparts at the national, provincial and local levels, geared towards improved performance and efficient project implementation were forged during the audit mission to the Bohai Sea Environmental Management Project.

Dr. Huming Yu, PEMSEA Senior Programme Officer for Coastal and Ocean Governance, Maria Teresita G. Lacerna, PEMSEA Site Officer for Bohai Sea, and Prof. Li Wenhai, Director of the Bohai Sea National Project Management Office (NPMO), traveled to north China from 19-30 January 2003 to conduct an on-site evaluation of the implementation of various projects in the Bohai Sea area.

The team gave a briefing on project management to local project teams including the staff of the NPMO and the Provincial Project Management Office (PPMO). The commitment and efforts of local governments for project implementation were recognized. The problems and constraints encountered in implementing the various projects were also discussed and counter measures identified to address them. The NPMO and PPMO will continue to take an active role, particularly, in supervising and coordinating the various project activities. The collaboration among the team, the project staff, and the local governments facilitated the finalization of 10 project proposals.

The team also visited different sites for promoting investment opportunities, which included the Shuangtaize estuary and the areas around the Chao River and the Haihe River. Four pre-feasibility studies are being refined to encourage the participation of the private sector in environmental investments. Investment opportunity briefs are expected to be completed and presented at the Investment Roundtable scheduled within the year.

Brunei Darussalam Initiates River Clean-up

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM -- The Government of Brunei Darussalam will launch a project to monitor and assess the water quality of the Brunei River as a first step to a long-term clean-up and monitoring program.

PEMSEA has been requested to provide technical assistance in the planning and implementation of the project, which aims to develop a scientific database to assess the state of the water quality of the Brunei River. This database would be compared with an earlier database gathered in 1987.

The planned database would be developed to be a tool in the design of an implementation strategy for the clean up of the Brunei River and for a long-term pollution monitoring program using established water quality standards.

PEMSEA Receives Chi Rho Award

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- PEMSEA was recently awarded the Chi Rho Award from Miriam College for its support to the college's program on the environment. The award is given annually in appreciation of the school's partners in its various projects and programs. PEMSEA was among the 13 organizations which provided support to Miriam College's Environmental Studies Institute (ESI).

In May 2002, PEMSEA, in partnership with the ESI, the Philippine Science High School, Globe Protocols, and the British Volunteer Services Overseas organized and conducted the Youth Nature Camp in Sibuyan Island, Romblon Province. The summer youth camp provided high school students an opportunity to interact with nature and heighten their awareness, sensitivity, and respect for the rich marine and coastal heritage of the country. PEMSEA hoped that through the nature camp, the youths could enhance their commitment and motivation to take active leadership roles in environmental preservation and sustainable development.

Other awardees included the United Nations Environment Program, World Wildlife Fund Philippines, Australian Agency for International Development, JRS Business Corporation, Japan Milk Carton Recycling Association, Jollibee Food Corporation, Petron Foundation, Petroleum Institute of the Philippines, Cooperative Research Center, Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education, Academy for Educational Development, and the Office of the President of the Philippines.

The award was received by Sylvia Inciong, PEMSEA Technical Officer from Miriam College president, Dr. Patrician Licuanan during in a program last 30 January.

PEMSEA Invites Media to ICM Study Tour

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- For the first time, PEMSEA is including a media practitioner to be part of the study tour to Xiamen, PR China on 13-15 March 2003.

Recognizing the crucial role of media as a key partner in promoting environmental sustainability, PEMSEA endeavors to involve environmental journalists in the East Asian region in its programs and activities. The study tour is one of PEMSEA's activities that aims to provide environmental journalists with an opportunity to gain increased and deeper understanding on Integrated Coastal Management (ICM).

The ICM Study Tour will also be participated in by senior government officials, local leaders and natural resource managers of PEMSEA participating governments and other interested groups to familiarize them with the ICM working model, which has been operating successfully in Xiamen since 1994.

Participants, would be able to see environmental improvements initiated by the government of Xiamen Municipality as well as the economic prosperity it has achieved. There will also be an opportunity for policymakers and resource managers of the region to discuss with their counterparts the application of the ICM approach, and share experiences and lessons learned.

PEMSEA shall provide funding support, which covers a roundtrip air ticket, food, lodging and local transportation expenses.

PEMSEA Website Increases Hits by 300%

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Starting with an average of 6,000 hits from January to November 2002, PEMSEA's website, <http://pemsea.org> has reached a 300% increase in hits early this year. A few days after the launching of a revamped website, the hits reached 18,000 by the end of 2002. In January 2003, hits rose to an overwhelming 56,000.

With its new structure, the PEMSEA website is now able to expand its information coverage. Five major sections were launched:

About PEMSEA, which highlights the organization's structure, programmes, and activities;

Information Center, which contains facts and figures, articles and other reference materials on the East Asian marine ecosystem and environmental management;

Media Information Resource Center, which provides story ideas, photo stocks, news releases and the PEMSEA E-Updates newsletter to media practitioners;

Trainings, which features information on specialized training courses, internship and fellowship programs to environmental workers and managers; and

Young Environmentalists, which aims to develop future champions for the environment.

The website also extends its service to organizations with similar mandates by providing them an avenue for announcing news and promoting their events, call for proposals, or job opportunities.

With the enhanced PEMSEA homepage, a returning visitor will quickly notice the changes in the color scheme, the animated graphics, and a more refined yet vibrant visual layout. An online subscription facility for the E-Updates, where an interested visitor can directly key in an e-mail address, is now available. The navigation of the site was likewise improved with the use of popup menus.

New Philippine PEMSEA Focal Point

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Mr. Demetrio Ignacio, Jr., Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary for Policy and Planning has been appointed as the new PEMSEA focal point. An economist and expert in policy formulation and government operations, Undersecretary Ignacio has been involved in the development of national coastal and marine policy for the Philippines and is concurrently the Deputy Head of the Presidential Management Staff and in-charge of the Macro-Economic and Political Policy Office under the Office of the President.

Undersecretary Ignacio's selection as PEMSEA's new focal point comes in the light of the selection of a new DENR Secretary, Hon. Elisea G. Gozun, who assumed office on 15 December 2002. The DENR is PEMSEA's focal institution in the Philippines.

“Monsoon Tale” Video Now Available

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- A new 28-minute documentary on PEMSEA, entitled Monsoon Tale is now available. The video was co-produced by PEMSEA and UNDP TV Unit-Azimuths and features PEMSEA activities in Batangas Bay, Manila Bay and Bataan, Philippines and Xiamen, China.

Monsoon Tale focuses on environmental issues and concerns that face two countries, and how strategies were implemented to improve environmental management. On-site footages and interviews from different stakeholders in the region are highlighted, including a video clip from the Manila Bay Declaration ceremony with Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Monsoon rains is an environmental phenomenon which affects all coastal communities in the region and shows how the East Asian countries are interconnected.

Parties interested to obtain copies of "Monsoon Tale" may contact info@pemsea.org.

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