

Abstract

Regional Cooperation in Ecosystem-based Management in the Seas of East Asia: The Partnership Approach

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PEMSEA is a regional project of the Global Environmental Facility. It has been operating since 1994 focusing on building intergovernmental, interagency and multi-sectoral partnerships for the sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia. PEMSEA is participated by 15 countries, viz., China, Japan, DPR Korea and RO Korea in the north and the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) in the south covering a total sea area of 7 million km² and total coastline of 234,000 km. The Seas of East Asia are composed of six Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) and have major river systems draining into the regional seas with a total combined watershed of 6.25 million km².

PEMSEA has adopted the concept of ecosystem-based management in managing the river-basins, estuaries and coastal seas of the region through the application of integrated and adaptive management approaches in addressing pollution, loss of habitats and biodiversity, depletion of fisheries and marine resources, coastal reclamation, and other coastal and marine issues within the confine of the socioeconomic, political, cultural and ecological characteristics of the region. PEMSEA mobilizes the three key sectors of society, viz., government, private and the NGOs, and uses the key dynamics of integrated management towards achieving environmental sustainability.

PEMSEA has set-up a series of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) demonstration sites to serve as working models for ICM application. Achievements in local actions, such as conflict resolution, improvement of coastal landscape, effective waste management, clean beaches and restoration of habitats, in several ICM demonstration sites in the region create confidence and capacity in coastal management and thereby generate more interests among local governments in replication and scaling up. 27 local governments in nine countries have set-up and sustained ICM programmes using their own financial resources. Efforts are now being made to scale up ICM practices in 20% of the regional coastline by 2017. A PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) has been established with one of them (Xiamen, China) hosting the regional secretariat and an annual event on the "International Forum on Sustainable Coastal Cities" during "World Ocean Week".

Based on the experience of local ICM implementation, management efforts have extended beyond administrative boundaries, within or outside national jurisdiction. A subregional agreement between Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam for oil and chemical spills response and cooperation in the Gulf of Thailand is now in operation with appropriate private sector groups involved in oil spill training and exercise. In Manila Bay, Philippines, political commitments at the national and provincial levels have been forged through the Manila Bay Declaration to implement the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy,

especially recent actions to develop coordinating mechanisms for the management of Laguna de Bay, Pasig River and Manila Bay. In Bohai Sea, the inner sea of China, cooperation among 3 provinces and two cities has been promoted through the Bohai Sea Declaration and the implementation of the Bohai Sea Management Strategies. Appropriate legislation on Bohai Sea Management has been tabled at the National Assembly.

With the development and endorsement of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), the countries of the region have now moved forward to implement a common regional marine strategy that responds to WSSD, UNCED, MDG as well as to several ocean-related declarations, such as the Seoul Declaration of the APEC Ocean Related Ministers, the Putrajaya Declaration and concerned strategy and action plans. A follow-up project proposal for SDS-SEA implementation is being developed following the approval of the GEF-PDF B grant.

PEMSEA is now undergoing transformation to institutionalize its current project-based operation into a longer term PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF), which provides secretariat and technical services to participating countries. China, Japan and RO Korea will provide annual cash contributions while the Philippines will continue hosting the Regional Programme Office. In addition to the PRF, the regional mechanism includes: (a) a Partnership Council composed of governments and partnering stakeholders; (b) a partnership fund to receive contributions and donations; (c) a tri-annual EAS Congress featuring a Ministerial Forum and an international conference for reviewing progress on SDS-SEA implementation at national and local levels, exchange of experiences and information and providing opportunity for interaction between decision makers and the stakeholders; and (d) a state of the coasts report for reviewing progress made in the region with respect to coastal and ocean governance. Effective implementation of the SDS-SEA will certainly create stronger cooperation and collaboration among various coastal and ocean management initiatives, including regional and international organizations in fulfilling their ocean-related mandates as well as strengthening individual management efforts in the six large marine ecosystems of the region.