



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**  
**KAGAWARAN NG KAPALIGIRAN AT LIKAS YAMAN**



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO :** ALL BUREAU DIRECTORS

**THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
National Water Resources Board (NWRB)

**THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD)

**THE ADMINISTRATOR**  
National Mapping Resource and Information Authority (NAMRIA)

**THE DIRECTOR**  
Climate Change Service

**FROM :** THE UNDERSECRETARY  
Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change and PEMSEA National  
Focal Point, Philippines

**SUBJECT :** REQUEST FOR COMMENTS / INPUTS ON THE INITIAL DRAFT OF THE  
8<sup>th</sup> MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF PEMSEA FOR THE 2024 EAST  
ASIAN SEAS (EAS)

**DATE :** 26 March 2024

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This refers to the invitation of the members of the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), including the Philippine Government to participate in the forthcoming East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress in 2024 to be hosted by Xiamen, China. The 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum is an avenue for strengthening the commitment of PEMSEA country partners, which convenes Ministers and High-level Government Officials of PEMSEA country partners to engage in policy dialogue and provides direction on key concerns on regional cooperation. The Forum shall witness the signing of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Declaration which contains the updated commitments of PEMSEA Country Partners in implementing the regional ocean framework known as the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA).

Seven (7) Ministerial Forums have been conducted to date, each with a Ministerial Declaration adopted by Ministers of PEMSEA country partners. Each declaration addresses various concerns and implements various strategies and actions, which are as follows:

1. The **Putrajaya Declaration of Regional Cooperation** signed in 2003 during the 1st Ministerial Forum in Putrajaya, Malaysia, adopts the SDS-SEA as a common platform for regional cooperation, and as a framework for policy and programme development and implementation, at the national and local level;

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2. The **Haikou Partnership Agreement** adopted in 2006 during the 2nd Ministerial Forum in Haikou, China, established the regional coordinating mechanism in the implementation of the SDS-SEA. It contains an annex on **Partnership Operating Arrangements** that spells out the roles and responsibilities of the Country and non-Country Partners, as well as the make-up and functions of the different components of the region;
3. The **Manila Declaration** on Strengthening the Implementation of Integrated Coastal Management and Climate Change Adaptation in the Seas of East Asia Region adopted during the 3rd Ministerial Forum held in Manila, Philippines in 2009, highlights the participating countries' commitment to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of ICM;
4. The **Changwon Declaration Towards an Ocean-based Blue Economy: Moving Ahead with the SDS-SEA** adopted in 2012 in Changwon, RO Korea during the 4th Ministerial Forum, highlights the adoption of a blue economy approach and the Five-Year SDS-SEA Regional Implementation Plan;
5. The **Da Nang Compact** signed during the 2015 5th Ministerial Forum in Da Nang, Vietnam, committed to the development of the Regional and National State of Oceans and Coasts Reporting system and laid down the post-2015 Strategic Targets of PEMSEA;
6. The **Iloilo Ministerial Declaration** adopted in 2018 during the 6th Ministerial Forum, reaffirmed the commitments to increase ICM coverage and update the Regional and National State of Oceans and Coasts (SOC) Report, as well as support PEMSEA in the development, financing, and implementation of Blue Economy projects in ICM sites; and
7. One integral part of the **Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration** signed during the Ministerial Forum hosted virtually by Cambodia in 2021, is the endorsement of the formulation of the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030, which aims to combine the values, principles, and key achievements that were carefully cultivated and replicated through years of transforming the EAS Partnership from a regional marine pollution project into a leading regional collaborative mechanism.

In this regard and in preparation for the forthcoming 2024 EAS Congress and 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum, **may we request your respective office's inputs or comments on the draft of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Declaration** provided in the link: <https://bit.ly/4axzq9f> Kindly submit your inputs/comments to this office and copy furnish emails: [khasmarbella@gmail.com](mailto:khasmarbella@gmail.com) or [hcritical@denr.gov.ph](mailto:hcritical@denr.gov.ph) on or before **12 April 2024**.

For your appropriate action.

  
ATTY. ANALIZA REBUELTA-TEH

*Attachment:*  
*-Initial Draft 8th Ministerial Declaration*

*cc: Atty. Jonas R. Leones*  
*Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs*  
*and Co-Chair, PEMSEA Partnership Council*

*Jeslina B. Gorospe*  
*Chief, Project Monitoring and Evaluation Division*  
*Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service (FASPS-PMED)*

## Concept Note and Draft Zero of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Declaration

### 1. BACKGROUND

The EAS Congress is a triennial event consisting of an international conference that serves as a platform for scientific discussion, exchange of knowledge, and partnership building on matters relating to the sustainable development of the coasts and ocean in the East Asian Seas region. Its Ministerial Forum provides a high-level discourse among the ministers of PEMSEA country partners resulting in a Ministerial Declaration that sets regional policy direction and targets in the run-up to 2030.

Building upon previous EAS Ministerial Declarations (see Annex 1) and in line with the PEMSEA Roadmap 2030 and Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) Implementation Plan (IP) 2023-2027, the EAS Congress 2024 aims to accelerate progress by forging “Blue Synergies” or action-oriented strategies that leverage cross- sectoral synergies through enhanced responsible governance, innovation scalability, blue investment and financing, and equity.

### 2. CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

The ocean ecosystem is complex and is interconnected with climate, biodiversity, energy, food security, health, economy, culture, and other aspects that affect people's well-being. Its interconnection with land and other water bodies makes it vulnerable to climate threats and hazards as well as to harmful human actions or unsustainable patterns of use. In essence, what happens to the ocean affects various sectors and vice-versa.

PEMSEA has long recognized that to create a sustainable ocean ecosystem, a synergistic approach that links and harmonizes policy actions and on-the-ground initiatives is required. Building synergies through collaborative approaches and seeking convergence are imperative to magnify the impact and co-benefits to an extent greater than what separate sectoral or administrative policies and actions can create on their own. Synergies have a multiplier effect that doubles the efforts and speeds up the achievement of targets.

EAS Congress 2024 aims to further elaborate and refine its strategies and approaches to create more synergistic impact and benefits.

## **MINISTERIAL DECLARATION Working Draft**

### **1. TITLE**

Strengthening Synergies in the Implementation of the SDS-SEA for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Climate-Resilient Ocean

### **2. PREAMBLE**

We, the Official Government Representatives of PEMSEA country partners gathered this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, China to review our commitments and progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), provide policy guidance and adopt actions to accelerate actions to secure PEMSEA 2030 roadmap of fostering effective ocean governance and healthy ocean, people and economies.

- 2.1. **WE** launched the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) 2023-2027 as PEMSEA's medium term plan for the sustainable use and management of the ocean, seas, and coastal and marine resources, aligned with agreements in the past Ministerial Declarations and relevant international and global commitments.
- 2.2. **WE** recognize the region's progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals through the implementation of the SDS-SEA and strengthening PEMSEA as a regional platform with strong competencies in applying integrated management approaches as well as reporting on the state of the coasts, rivers and ocean to support the countries in coastal and ocean policy development and strategic planning.
- 2.3. **WE** affirm our renewed commitment to contribute to relevant and interlinked regional and global agreements, including the Paris Climate Accord, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, UNEA Ministerial Declarations – which guide our collaborative actions for sustainable ocean and inclusive blue economies.
- 2.4. **WE** receive, albeit with deep concern, the findings of the World Ocean Assessment II, that the state of the oceans has not improved, and many of the ocean benefits are increasingly being undermined by the impact of climate change, biodiversity loss and marine pollution caused by unsustainable human and economic activities, resulting in disproportionate impacts to many countries and communities.
- 2.5. **WE** note, with deep urgency, of the need to address these interlocking pressures not in silos but through synergistic approaches anchored on an integrative and outcome-based approach;
- 2.6. **WE** underscore the fact that climate change affects and exacerbates the negative impact of human and economic activities on the ocean ecosystems; and note further,

that there are climate solutions that can be provided by the ocean ecosystems as well.

- 2.7. **WE** stress the complexity of ocean governance and management in the face of increasingly intense uses and the value of horizontal and vertical governance integration that forges collaboration with country partners at the regional level for harmonious and complementary actions at different management levels as well as the need to work with other Regional Seas Programs to share information and increase understanding and knowledge on various initiatives and solutions including potential joint actions to address common transboundary issues affecting ocean ecosystems.
- 2.8. **WE** emphasize that effective ocean governance will need science-based evidence to support policy development and strategic actions as well as technology and innovation for improved data, information, and knowledge management;
- 2.9. **WE** acknowledge the importance of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021 to 2030) to address the growing need for knowledge and capacity to support responsive ocean policies and programs.
- 2.10. **WE** recognize that the global ocean economy contributes significantly to economic growth, employment and innovation and realizing the full potential of the ocean will require responsible and sustainable resource utilization.
- 2.11. **WE** acknowledge that realizing the full potential of sustainable blue economies requires scaled-up financing and blue investments to support the conservation and equitable growth of healthy, productive, and climate-resilient ocean in the East Asian Seas and globally;
- 2.12. **WE** are convinced of the urgent need for transformative partnerships among governments, financial institutions, and ocean stakeholders to pioneer innovative blended finance instruments, risk management approaches, and leadership initiatives that overhaul capital flows and access to support integrated and nature-positive ocean planning, conservation, and climate adaptation.
- 2.13. **WE** realize the need to reduce pressures from human activities and transform coastal communities to become environmental stewards require strong coordination and monitoring as well as empowerment and capacity building activities.
- 2.14. **WE** recognize PEMSEA Resource Facility's strategic role in keeping abreast with emerging ocean issues, trends and developments, facilitating collaborative activities in the region and ensuring effective implementation of the SDS-SEA and monitoring and reporting on its achievements and progress.

### **3. Policy Guidance**

A synergistic implementation of the SDS-SEA 2023-27 is critical in harnessing and optimizing collective efforts that better address pressure areas and fill in gaps to

accelerate sustainable use and management of the oceans. In order to generate significant development impacts, it is imperative to adopt an outcome-based integrated approach in building and leveraging synergies.

#### 4. Synergistic Actions

We support and commit to work with PRF in the implementation of the SDS-SEA and to enhance regional coordination and harness synergies across priority areas like ocean governance, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, sustainable and inclusive blue economy, and protection of ocean health and people's well-being to achieve faster progress towards the goals and objectives of PEMSEA Roadmap 2030 through strengthened implementation of the SDS-SEA over 2023-2027.

##### 4.1. Effective Ocean Governance.

- a. **Vertical-Horizontal Governance.** The ocean environment is complex in nature and managing the resource is even more complicated. Countries have limited jurisdiction but ocean pressures and impact are transboundary. PEMSEA, as a regional coordinating mechanism for SDS-SEA implementation remains relevant and plays a catalytic role to promote vertical, horizontal, and spatial integration to promote effective ocean governance. Vertical linkage across local, national, and regional levels help set the standards or benchmarks for local implementation. Horizontal linkages require coordinating across sectors and other regional seas programs. Recognizing the land-sea interface and the connectivity of ecosystems from ridge to reef supports spatial linkages and integrated management. The sharing of information and the lessons learned will help strengthen regional standards and actions.
- b. **Science, Technology and Innovation.** Science-based evidence support policy development while innovations and technology lead to increased efficiencies in policy implementation and ocean management.

**Action 1.** To provide science-based evidence for policy and planning by measuring the effectiveness of integrated coastal management and expand its scope and linkages to marine spatial planning and other area-based management approaches; promote inclusive digitalization and utilize innovative technology to support ocean monitoring and generate smart data-driven maps to better understand and protect the ocean from overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution, and biodiversity loss and manage jurisdictional and resource-use conflicts.

**Action 2.** Establish linkages with other regional seas program in building successful synergistic approaches through the application of integrated coastal and/or river basin management, integrated pollution reduction and wastewater and solid waste management, and climate change and disaster risk reduction programs, and develop collaborative actions in terms of joint research, training and capacity development programs, measuring and monitoring impacts, and sharing knowledge, lessons, and good practices, among others.

##### 4.2. Healthy and Resilient Oceans.

- a. **Ocean-Climate Synergy.** Ocean are intricately part of the climate discourse because of its vulnerability to the impact of climatic change, and have the

potential to provide solutions to climate issues. Majority of island and coastal states include at least one ocean-climate action in their updated Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Protecting and strengthening resilience of ocean resources support countries in achieving their respective NDCs and climate goals under SDG 13.

**Action 3.** Implement ocean-based climate solutions that will address climate issues and ocean pressures while at the same time protecting ocean health and ecosystem.

#### **4.3. Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Blue Economy.**

- a. Building on the Blue Economy definition adopted by PEMSEA Country Partners in the Changwon Ministerial Declaration in 2012, develop a set of criteria to characterize sustainable, resilient, and inclusive ocean-based and -related economic activities that constitute blue economy. Adopting indicators and targets as well measurement and verification tools will facilitate the integration of blue economy in national and local development plans and investment priorities. It is imperative to build on and continue to refine and update the regional and national state of the ocean and coasts every 5 years to demonstrate the value added of blue economy and monitor impacts and progress made towards reducing pollution, GHG emissions, and biodiversity loss while building innovative, climate-smart, socially inclusive, and resource efficient ocean economies.
- b. **ESG and Sustainable Blue Financing.** Many activities and production decisions of industries, including ocean-related industries, result in environmental and social impacts. Incorporating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) will help industries and firms manage financial risks and opportunities related to environmental, social and governance. Making ESG as a criterion for unlocking finance from financial and non-financial institutions will promote environmentally and socially responsible ocean industries and advance the sustainable growth of the blue economy.

**Action 4.** Engage in global initiatives to develop the sustainable blue economy pathways taxonomy and criteria for economic activities to be considered as contributing to sustainable, inclusive and resilient blue economy through the continued updating of the regional and national state of the ocean and coasts reports.

**Action 5.** Work with the economic development and environmental management planners and policymakers in promoting the blue economy and its incorporation in national and local development and investment priorities to support the agenda on sustainable, innovative, and resilient economies, food, water, and energy security, livelihoods and job creation, climate resiliency, and social inclusion while protecting environmental quality and health of the people, coastal and marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

**Action 6.** Promote the adoption of ESG framework to manage risks and opportunities associated with sustainability issues, in particular, responsible production, reduction of pollution and biodiversity loss, carbon neutrality, nature-based solutions, and building resilience to be able to access blue financing.

#### 4.4. Healthy People.

**Sustainable Blue Food and Health.** Blue foods are aquatic foods rich in protein, fatty acids and micronutrients sourced from marine and freshwater environments. They support healthier, more sustainable, more equitable food systems that contribute to in achieving SDG Zero Hunger and SDG3 Health and Well-being. However, blue foods are yet to figure significantly in food and health discussions, which currently center around agriculture, terrestrial crops and livestock. Promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture value chain and marine biotechnology support food security and the development of blue food systems.

**Action 7.** Highlight blue food systems in the blue economy and integrate blue foods in the regional, national, and local planning agenda as concrete solutions to SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, SDG 3 on Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 14 on Life Below Water.

## 5. Commitments

5.1 We call on our Country Partners to:

- a. mobilize resources and forge strategic partnerships to fully support the implementation of the priority programs under the SDS-SEA and the identified synergistic actions;
- b. contribute to attaining the goals of the SDS -SEA by putting in place enabling policies, where relevant and implementing activities in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities; and
- c. strengthen existing and establish new blue synergies by adopting a whole-of-society approach, and engaging the public and the private sector, non-government organizations, international development agencies, youth, women, vulnerable groups and other relevant stakeholders in implementing the SDS-SEA.

5.2 We affirm our commitment to continue to provide country contributions to support the PEMSEA Resource Facility which provides technical, facilitation, and management services and coordinates the implementation of the SDS-SEA;

5.3 We extend our appreciation to the government of PR China for hosting the EAS Congress and the Ministerial Forum in Xiamen, PR China.



Annex 1: List of Ministerial Declarations and themes

Year	Ministerial Declaration
2021	<u>Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration</u> <i>Advancing Our Sustainable Development Agenda: Road to 2030 for Healthy Ocean, People and Economies</i>
2018	<u>Iloilo Ministerial Declaration</u> <i>East Asian Region Moving as One to Secure Healthy Oceans, People, and Economies</i>
2015	<u>Da Nang Compact on the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia 2015</u>
2012	<u>Changwon Declaration Toward an Ocean-based Blue Economy</u> <i>Moving ahead with the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia</i>
2009	<u>Manila Declaration</u> <i>Strengthening the Implementation of Integrated Coastal Management for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Adaptation in the Seas of East Asia Region</i>
2006	<u>Haikou Partnership Agreement on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia</u>
2003	<u>Putrajaya Declaration of Regional Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia</u>

Annex 2: Progress in accomplishing targets identified in previous EAS Congresses

A review of progress made in securing targets agreed by PEMSEA partners in previous Ministerial Declarations and other Partnership Council agreements indicate the following achievements to date:

- A self- sustaining PEMSEA Resource Facility able to manage and coordinate a suite of products, services and diverse sources of funding to advance SDS-SEA implementation at the regional, national and local levels since 2015.
- Two Regional and ten National State of Ocean and Coasts reports to monitor progress, impacts and benefits, and to continually improve planning and management of SDS-SEA implementation
- Ten national coastal and ocean policies, and supporting legislation and institutional arrangements, consistent with international environmental and sustainable development commitments and based on best available scientific information.
- ICM programs for sustainable development of coastal and marine areas covering 40.4 % of the region's coastline and contiguous watershed areas.

- Strengthened PEMSEA Network of Local Governments from 17 in 2006 to 52 members to date
- Adoption of formal charter and expansion of the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centres with four regional centres of excellence and 17 members in nine countries in the EAS region
- Lessons in transforming PEMSEA from a regional project to regional governance mechanism in the EAS region applied to Arafura Timor Seas
- Adoption of PNLG Strategic Action Plan 2022-2023
- Endorsement of a regional strategy and action plan on biofouling management
- Mainstreaming of gender equality and social inclusion in the SDS-SEA implementation
- Operationalization of an interactive online learning platform through the SEA Knowledge Bank
- Development of a metric-based approach in monitoring and evaluating SDS-SEA through the SDS-SEA M&E plan

*Annex 3: Examples of targets with clear indicators and timelines based on current regional projects (for discussion).*

- A self- sustaining PEMSEA Resource Facility able to manage and coordinate a suite of products, services and **funding mechanism** to advance SDS-SEA implementation at the regional, national and local levels by 2027.
- Updated Regional and National State of Ocean and Coasts reports to monitor progress, impacts and benefits, and to continually improve planning and management of SDS-SEA implementation by 2027
- XX State of River Basin Reports that provide baseline information on governance, socioeconomic, ecological conditions, gaps and needs and help inform the planning and development of IRBM strategies and action plans in X river basins/sub-basins by 2026
- XX Integrated river basin management and investment plans in XX river basins/sub- basins by 2026
- *XX GHG baseline emission reports using IMO methodology by 2025-6*
- *XX Decarbonization strategy and road maps in the maritime transport sector by 2026*