



THE EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS 2015

Global Targets

Local Benefits

Setting the Sustainable Development Agenda for the Seas of East Asia beyond 2015

16-21 November 2015 • Furama Resort, Danang, Vietnam

**Overall Conclusions and Recommendations of the
International Conference on Sustainable Coastal and Ocean Development,
East Asian Seas Congress 2015,
Da Nang, Viet Nam**

The following conclusions and recommendation were prepared on the basis of the summary reports from the three thematic Sessions of the International Conference of the EAS Congress 2015, and presented by Mr. Terence D. Jones, International Conference Chair, for consideration by the Ministers during the Fifth Ministerial Forum on November 20, 2015:

I. Synergies and achievements that remain relevant and significant after a decade of partnerships for sustainable development in Seas of East Asia

1. Significant achievements have been made in East Asian Seas initiatives in strategic planning, institutional mechanisms and, to some extent, in translating regional policies into national strategies, programs and investments to address inter-state transboundary environmental issues. For example:
 - a. the development, adoption and implementation of national coastal and ocean policies in 85% (10 of 12) of countries;
 - b. the establishment of multisectoral institutional planning and coordinating mechanisms in 75% (9 of 12) countries;
 - c. national legislation on coastal and ocean management has been developed and adopted in 7 countries; and
 - d. national plans of actions or framework programs for SDS-SEA implementation have been developed and initiated in 10 partner countries.
2. The EAS Congress provided a venue for the launching of the Beta version of a new regional knowledge management platform, the Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank, which is designed with innovative tools and services to assist local governments to develop investable ICM projects, while also providing donors, development agencies and potential investors with access to information on projects that are socially, ecologically and economically sound.

3. A good example of strengthening the engagement of the private sector in SDS-SEA implementation was provided during this Congress with the launching of the East Asian Seas Business Network as a mechanism for strengthening interaction and collaboration between the corporate sector and PEMSEA Partner countries in progressing toward a blue economy for the Seas of East Asia, as well as the participation of representatives from the World Ocean Council, ICLEI and the Economist Asia Pacific in plenary and workshop sessions.
4. The monitoring and sharing of results through the proposed State of Oceans and Coasts reporting system, with a 'blue economy' theme is another notable development that was discussed and recommended during the International Conference.

Recommendations for future action:

5. All regional initiatives need to be sensitive to local national and sub-national capacities in technical and financial planning and governance structure in order to ensure more sustainable outcomes;
6. Regional and national plans of action need to move towards alignment to ensure synergy and a good leverage of national investment;
7. Collaborative arrangements among regional initiatives should be formed both through formal and informal means to enable efficiencies of work, to minimize redundancies among programs and to help clarify roles and functions among programs;
8. Broad-based partnerships should be established between regional initiatives and academia, business communities, civil society organizations, local government networks in participatory decisionmaking and transmitting global targets into national and local actions.
9. Regional initiatives must be sustained through innovative financing mechanisms and service orientation

II. Actions need to be accelerated to realize the Sustainable Development Goals and to confront especially the challenges posed by climate change

10. The key challenges of pollution from land-based sources, climate change, overexploitation of resources, and habitat loss in the Seas of East Asia are continuously confronting policymakers, investors and coastal communities. Providing a clean environment, safe drinking water, affordable housing, and reducing carbon and energy footprints of growing cities are critical issues besetting sustainable development in this region.

Actions are needed in the following areas:

11. A change in paradigm of the development path is reachable through:
 - a. the integration of ocean natural capital into economic accounting;
 - b. agreed methodologies to capture natural capital values in investment planning;

- c. promotion of investments through different forms of public-private partnerships;
- d. PPP project structuring and evaluation; and
- e. assessing the sustainability of cities and the ocean economy.

12. Innovations in different sectors must be made to promote the blue economy. For example, the Policy and Technical Workshop on nutrient management recognized the importance of an “Asia Partnership Network for Nutrient Management Platform”, which would enhance the integration of nutrient management across multisectoral and sectoral developmental plans within relevant national and regional strategy frameworks.

III. Moving the vision of the SDS-SEA 2015 to concrete realities locally by aligning with the global agenda, with particular focus on suitable governance arrangements

Recommendations for future actions:

13. ICM as a proven ecosystem-based management system to addressing complex coastal development challenges should be further applied across the EAS region, facilitated by incentive mechanisms, such as certification of local governments that are implementing ICM programs in accordance with PEMSEA’s ICM Code or similar international standard, with support of the international donor communities. It was noted that, during the Congress, 15 local governments from 6 countries were awarded Level 1 ICM Certification, in recognition of their achievements in improving coastal and ocean governance standards of PEMSEA’s ICM Code.
14. Regional city networks and initiatives such as the PEMESA Network of Local Government should be further strengthened with assistance of PEMSEA Partners and collaborators to build a large constituency of local governments with commitments to achieving global targets while responding to development challenges and local needs.
15. Translating the existing target of 25 percent coverage of coastline by ICM programs into agreeable, achievable and time-bound targets, such as areal extent and management effectiveness of marine spatial planning and marine protected areas, can help galvanize local targets to global agenda. The flexibility required to combine various levels of administrative boundaries to address ecosystem requirements should also be scaled up in appropriate contexts.

The overall sense of participant views arising from the many workshops and events was that the updated Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA 2015) provided a suitable platform for cooperation across regional organizations, national and local governments, donors, development agencies, financial institutions, universities and scientific institutions, the business sector and coastal communities, among others, as well as a framework for taking forward the many recommendations arising from this conference.