

## Regional workshop on marine litter monitoring: Advancing Data Analysis and Data Comparability in the East Asian Seas

### *Concept note and agenda*

**Date:** 9 October 2023

**Venue:** Bangkok, Thailand (in person / hybrid), [Holiday Inn Bangkok Sukhumvit](#)

### **Background:**

Monitoring and assessment are indispensable in identifying marine litter status, trends, and its most critical impacts, and to support development, tracking and evaluation of policies and management interventions. The Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) recognizes the importance of robust and harmonized monitoring of plastic pollution in the environment in the East Asian Seas. The aim is to improve evidence for effective decision making at national level and greater data comparability at regional level to address the transboundary issue of marine litter. Effective data collection and management is also needed to track progress toward an anticipated international instrument on plastic pollution and marine litter in the environment.

To strengthen and harmonize marine litter monitoring efforts in the region, COBSEA countries adopted Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes. In partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), national baseline surveys were conducted in Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam in 2022. Training on marine litter monitoring methods was provided at regional and national levels, and national focal agencies and technical partners identified additional capacity building needs on data analysis and strengthening data comparability to track effectiveness of interventions over time.

This workshop is organized by COBSEA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in partnership with CSIRO, with support from the SEA circular<sup>1</sup> and MA-RE-DESIGN<sup>2</sup> projects. The workshop is part of **Bangkok Plastics Week**, a series of capacity-building and networking events on plastic pollution, organized jointly with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and partners:

- **9 October:** Regional workshop on marine litter monitoring
- **10 October:** Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter: Methods for comparable data collection to prioritize and evaluate interventions

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<sup>1</sup> The SEA circular project ('Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia') is implemented by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), with support from the Government of Sweden. SEA circular aims to reduce and prevent plastic pollution and its impacts by working with governments, businesses, civil society, academia, and international partners. The initiative promotes market-based solutions and enabling policies to transform plastic value-chain management, strengthens the science base for informed decision making, creates outreach and awareness.

<sup>2</sup> The MA-RE-DESIGN project ('Marine litter prevention through reduction, sustainable design and recycling of plastic packaging') aims at preventing plastic waste leakage through better waste management and strategies to reduce single-use plastic packaging and promote Extended Producer Responsibility at national and local level in Thailand. At regional level, the project fosters knowledge exchange and harmonization across COBSEA countries.

- **11-12 October:** [Global Plastics Summit](#), organized by Economist Impact, including a session co-organized by COBSEA and ADB: *'Working Group #3: Localizing a global mandate: The role of regional bodies and stakeholders.'*

### Objectives:

The workshop will build capacity of participants to apply recommended monitoring approaches and to interpret and manage data to inform policies and interventions and track effectiveness. It aims to:

- Build skills on data analysis from marine litter monitoring surveys;
- Create shared understanding of the value of harmonizing and data sharing;
- Strengthen capacity to improve data collection and comparability;
- Share ongoing monitoring efforts and strengthen national monitoring programmes;
- Identify further capacity building needs and inform training modules and technical assistance.

### Target participants:

The workshop is open to all nine COBSEA countries to foster peer learning and harmonization of efforts in line with Regional Guidance. Participants include technical staff from COBSEA national focal agencies responsible for marine litter monitoring and plastic pollution assessment, as well as technical partners from COBSEA countries supporting relevant government agencies.

As part of the Bangkok Plastics Week, participants are invited to join a regional workshop on metrics for downstream plastic pollution data collection, co-organized with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 10 October at the same venue, and the Global Plastics Summit, organized by The Economist on 11-12 October in Bangkok.

### Draft agenda:

Time (ICT)	Topics	Format and speakers
9.00–9.15	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome remarks from UNEP and COBSEA</li> <li>• Introduction of participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Kamala Ernest, Project Coordinator SEA circular</li> <li>• Mr. Mahesh Pradhan, Coordinator of COBSEA</li> <li>• mentimeter</li> </ul>
9.15–10.30	1. Setting the scene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back to basics: Survey design and methods to answer your questions</li> <li>• Overview of monitoring efforts in East Asian Seas countries</li> <li>• Overview of surveys and trainings conducted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive exchange (mentimeter)</li> <li>• Presentation, video material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
10.30–10.45	Coffee break	
10.45–12.30	2. Unlocking the power of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis: What happens after data collection?</li> <li>• Steps to measure effectiveness of policies and interventions</li> <li>• From cleanups to citizen science</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation, animation</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Group exercise</li> </ul>

12.30–13.45	Lunch break	
13.45–14.00	Energizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group exercise</li> </ul>
14.00–15.15	3. Harmonizing monitoring for data comparability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is harmonization important?</li> <li>• The value of data sharing and transparency</li> <li>• Toward a regional assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Group discussion</li> </ul>
15.15-15.30	Coffee break	
15.30-16.30	4. Identifying capacity needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input to online training modules and tools</li> <li>• Support to expand survey efforts and data sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
16.30-17.00	Closing and takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natalie Harms</li> <li>• Denise Hardesty</li> </ul>

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) is a regional intergovernmental mechanism and one of 18 Regional Seas programmes. It is the decision-making body for the East Asian Seas Action Plan, bringing together nine countries – Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Viet Nam – in protection and sustainable development of the marine and coastal environment. The COBSEA Secretariat is hosted by Thailand in Bangkok and is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

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