

**Waves of Change:
Harnessing Technology to Power the Sustainable Blue Economy Workshop**
25-28 May 2026, Busan, Republic of Korea

Concept Note

A. Introduction

1. The workshop aims to further enhance the knowledge of Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s developing member countries (DMCs) on the key risks and opportunities for a sustainable blue economy in the Asia and Pacific region. It builds on the structure, key lessons, recommended actions, and project ideas generated at ADB's Workshop on Waves of Change: Advancing the Blue Economy across Asia and the Pacific in Auckland, New Zealand in August 2025. The event brought together 46 government officials from Pacific and Southeast Asian DMCs, and the People's Republic of China to share knowledge and explore possible pathways and projects that ADB could finance to develop a sustainable blue economy. Participants identified a strong pipeline of national and (sub)regional project ideas, including sustainable fisheries and seaweed initiatives, green port and shipyard upgrades, and integrated waste management systems.

2. Participants of the 2025 workshop emphasized the need for strong leadership, policy reforms, sustained financing, and enhanced regional cooperation. A key follow-up action was for ADB to organize additional knowledge-sharing and capacity building programs that focus on practical and affordable technology solutions for the sustainable blue economy. In response, the 2026 workshop will focus on advancing technological innovations that improve efficiency and minimize environmental impacts, to drive progress toward a sustainable blue economy. The workshop will showcase cutting-edge technologies, innovative tools, and sector-specific approaches that are shaping the sustainable blue economy. It will equip participants with practical insights and actionable strategies to address their regions' unique challenges and opportunities.

B. Background and Overview

3. **The Challenge.** Globally, the blue economy generates about \$2.5 trillion annually, with an asset base valued at \$24 trillion, supporting 300 million jobs and providing food security for 3.5 billion people.¹ While this presents significant opportunities for Asia and the Pacific region, climate change, pollution, and unsustainable human activities present challenges. For instance, recent estimates indicate that ocean warming could reduce tropical fish catch potential by up to 40% in parts of Asia and the Pacific.² According to the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, climate change is already causing widespread economic losses across ocean-dependent sectors, including fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and coastal infrastructure, with aggregate global GDP losses projected to rise under higher warming levels, escalating significantly beyond 2°C of warming.³ The costs of inaction are already substantial. Annual economic losses from coastal flooding in Asia and the Pacific are estimated

¹ O. Hoegh-Guldberg. et al. 2015. [Reviving the Ocean Economy: The Case for Action—2015](#). World Wildlife Fund International.

² V. WY Lam et al. 2020. [Climate change, tropical fisheries and prospects for sustainable development](#). *Nature Reviews Earth and Environment*. 1. pp. 440-454.

³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2023. [Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report](#). Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. pp. 35-115.

at \$26.8 billion on the basis of sea-level rise alone, and by 2050, may rise up to \$197.8 billion.⁴ Atoll nations, including Kiribati, the Maldives, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and Tuvalu will face the most severe losses relative to GDP. (footnote 4)

4. Technological innovation is a critical enabler of a sustainable blue economy, helping ocean-based industries grow while reducing pressure on marine ecosystems, providing greater efficiency gains while reducing adverse environmental impacts. Advances such as digital monitoring, remote sensing, AI-enabled fisheries management, and renewable marine energy and transport technologies can significantly improve efficiency, reduce waste and emissions, and lower operational costs across sectors. New tools for data collection, traceability, and environmental monitoring strengthen governance, support science-based decision-making, and help prevent overexploitation. Together, these innovations can unlock economic value from the ocean while safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring long-term resilience.

5. **ADB Initiatives.** In 2019, ADB launched the [Action Plan for Healthy Oceans and Sustainable Blue Economies](#) to scale up investments and technical assistance aimed at protecting and restoring coastal and marine ecosystems, promoting inclusive livelihoods, fostering the sustainable blue economy, building resilient coastal communities, and enhancing food security across Asia and the Pacific. Through the [Ocean Resilience and Coastal Adaptation Financing Partnership Facility](#), ADB supports DMCs in advancing ocean health and fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water. ADB is scaling up its ocean-positive commitments through global and regional partnerships, such as the Finance in Common Summit Ocean Coalition, which seeks to advance collective solutions that strengthen ecological resilience and socio-economic development, and the Clean Ocean Initiative 2.0, which – in partnership with other multilateral development banks – is tackling plastic pollution entering the ocean.

6. ADB actively supports innovation in technology and designing financial instruments for sustainable blue economy initiatives, including through: the Blue Southeast Asia Finance Hub, which is designed to develop a pipeline of blue economy projects that capitalize on technology and mobilize private capital for sustainable ocean outcomes⁵, the ADB Oceans Financing Initiative, which aims to attract innovative financing mechanisms to de-risk and accelerate technological innovation in the sustainable blue economy,⁶ and knowledge events, such as the Waves of Change workshop. Looking ahead, ADB's evolving strategic approach to the sustainable blue economy will seek to deepen collaboration with a range of partners to drive transformative action and continue to invest in technological innovation. ADB's policy-based lending and targeted technical assistance at the country level will also advance sustainable blue economy initiatives.

C. Funding and Partnerships

7. **Funding.** The event will be jointly funded and implemented under TA 10243⁷, TA 10218⁸, TA 10179⁹, and TA 6742¹⁰. TA 10243 supports DMCs in adopting environmentally sustainable

⁴ I. Monioudi et al. 2025. [Impacts of Sea Level Rise and Adaptation across Asia and the Pacific](#). *Scientific Reports*. 15 (35742).

⁵ ADB. 2024. [Blue SEA Finance Hub](#).

⁶ ADB. [ADB Oceans Financing Initiative](#).

⁷ TA 10243: Enhancing Environmental Sustainability through Inclusive, Integrated Solutions.

⁸ TA 10218: Implementing the Regional Cooperation and Integration Operational Plan (Phase 2).

⁹ TA 10179: Enhancing Effectiveness of Subregional Programs to Advance Regional Cooperation and Integration in Southeast Asia (Phase 2).

¹⁰ TA 6742: Building Coastal Resilience through Nature-Based and Integrated Solutions.

growth through targeted technical, policy advice, and capacity building, including a focus on marine and coastal protection, ocean resilience to climate change, and waste management, particularly targeting plastic pollution. TA 10218 complements these efforts by assisting new collective action mechanisms, exploring pathways to a sustainable blue economy, and promoting digital solutions through regional cooperation. TA 10179 supports initiatives that strengthen government officials' capacities in public policy, strategy development, and project management, with a focus on regional cooperation and regional public goods—including the sustainable blue economy. TA 6742 further strengthens coastal resilience by advancing nature-based and integrated solutions, improving policy and governance for ecosystem management, and piloting risk financing and insurance for coral reef protection in selected Pacific countries.

8. **Partnerships.** ADB, partnering with the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), will convene the workshop in Busan. Hosting the workshop reflects ROK's leadership in advancing the sustainable blue economy and its longstanding commitment to regional cooperation. As the host of the United Nations Ocean Conference in 2028, ROK offers a unique opportunity to learn from its practical experience in smart ocean and maritime technologies, world-class research and innovations, and strong industry partnerships. In parallel, ADB is exploring complementary partnerships with regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, to strengthen cross-regional collaboration and knowledge exchange. ADB is also assessing opportunities for deeper engagement with policy and knowledge partners, and the private sector.

D. Workshop Rationale and Learning Objectives

9. The workshop aims to strengthen the knowledge and capacities of government officials from ADB's DMCs, particularly those from coastal and island nations. It will enhance participants' ability to: inform national policymaking, offer access evidence-based resources, and foster a regional network of peers. The workshop will also allow participants to engage and provide feedback on and inform ADB's ongoing work to support healthy oceans and the sustainable blue economies. The workshop will be jointly designed and delivered by ADB's Environment team, the Regional Cooperation and Integration and Trade Division, the Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit of Southeast Asia Department, the ADB-Korea Climate Technology Hub, in consultation with regional and sector departments, and DMCs.

10. The 2026 workshop places emphasis on blue economy productive sectors—such as sustainable tourism, renewable energy, and blue finance—given their growing relevance to driving the sustainable blue economy. These sectors present opportunities for decarbonization, job creation, and climate-smart development in coastal and island contexts. They are also central to reducing pressure on marine ecosystems while supporting economic diversification and community resilience. Integrating these sectors into ocean governance frameworks is essential to ensuring that emerging growth pathways are both climate aligned and socially inclusive.

11. The four-day workshop aims to:

- (i) facilitate in-depth discussions to deepen understanding of the key issues and challenges facing a sustainable blue economy, with a focus on tourism, renewable energy, and governance. Each module will cover the state of the science, relevant theories, policy response examples, successful projects, and real-world case studies;
- (ii) introduce participants to innovations, new technologies and applications in the ocean-focused industry through direct contact with suppliers, and a field visit;

- (iii) explore possible pathways forward, including the identification of potential initiatives and projects, particularly involving the use of technologies to advance the sustainable blue economy agenda;
- (iv) allow participants to apply their newly gained knowledge by envisioning, planning, and presenting their proposed initiatives to an audience of their peers and experts,
- (v) gather participant feedback, and validate priority areas to refine proposed initiatives of ADB's forthcoming approach to healthy ocean and the sustainable blue economy; and
- (vi) strengthen networks among blue economy experts, policymakers, and practitioners to promote collaboration and knowledge exchanges.

E. Participants

12. Similar to the 2025 workshop, this workshop will bring together mid-level officials responsible for blue economy-related issues from Asia and the Pacific. Participants will have responsibilities relating to various aspects of the sustainable blue economy, such as tourism, transport, energy, urban, agriculture, environment, and finance. Participants will have deep knowledge of and experience in designing and implementing sustainable blue economy initiatives. A total of 57 participants are expected to attend, with 3 participants for each country to be nominated by DMC governments based on the workshop's focus areas. Participating DMC governments include representatives from: South Asia (Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Brunei Darussalam,¹¹ Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam), the Coalition of Low-Lying Atoll Nations on Climate Change (Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and the Maldives), the Pacific (Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, the Cook Islands, Fiji, and the Kingdom of Tonga), and the People's Republic of China.

F. Indicative Workshop Design and Structure

13. The workshop will span 4 days and will include a field visit that will highlight institutions and enterprises in Busan actively engaged in fisheries, maritime transport, pollution control, tourism, renewable energy, governance and blue finance. The workshop will draw clear linkages to last year's key themes—connectivity/transport, fisheries, marine pollution, and regional cooperation and integration—while exploring new dimensions, such as marine spatial planning, innovative financial instruments, data and monitoring systems, and private-sector engagement. The final program will be refined in close coordination with partners and participating DMCs to ensure alignment with country priorities, strengths and experience.

14. The workshop will be highly interactive to encourage discussions through case studies, group discussions, and presentations. Facilitated brainstorming sessions during the workshop will provide a platform for participants to explore key issues, share challenges and solutions with regional counterparts, and ideate new project opportunities (or build on previous ones). To conclude the workshop, an action planning session will guide participants in outlining next steps and charting pathways to identify and implement sustainable blue economy initiatives.

¹¹ Brunei Darussalam representatives will fund own their travel expenses for this workshop.

Annex 1: Indicative Workshop Program/Design

Day 1: 25 May 2026 (Monday)

08:30-09:00	On-site Registration
09:00-10:00	<p>Opening Session</p> <p><i>The session will feature welcome remarks from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) of the Republic of Korea, followed by an overview of the learning objectives, and how the 2026 Waves of Change Workshop builds on earlier regional cooperation initiatives (including the 2025 edition). The session will conclude with a participant expectations-setting exercise to help frame the context and guide the workshop discussions.</i></p>
10:00-11:00	<p>Session 1: Setting the scene – Technology and the Next Wave of the Sustainable Blue Economy</p> <p><i>This session will provide a comprehensive overview of the concept of the sustainable blue economy, and its various components, with a strong focus on how technological innovation is shaping emerging opportunities, evolving risks, and new investment pathways in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It will highlight the role of technology as a catalyst for cross-sector integration (e.g., tourism-energy-governance) and establish a shared foundation for the workshop’s applied, pragmatic and project ideation exercises.</i></p>
11:00 – 11:15	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
11:15-12:30	<p>Session 2: Charting ADB’s Approach to Healthy Oceans and the Sustainable Blue Economy</p> <p><i>The session will open with a concise overview of ADB’s forthcoming approach to healthy oceans and the sustainable blue economy, followed by structured and interactive engagement. Through guided small-group discussion and plenary feedback, participants will share insights on progress and challenges since 2019, emerging priorities, and where ADB can deliver greatest strategic value in the coming years.</i></p>
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00-15:30	<p>Session 3: Advancing Technology-Enabled Sustainable Tourism</p> <p><i>The session will explore tourism as an integrated sustainable blue economy sector, linking connectivity, marine spatial planning, plastics, and digital solutions. The focus will be on technology-enabled solutions (e.g., data platforms, smart infrastructure, circular tourism models). Practical</i></p>

	<i>examples and case studies featuring ADB projects and good practices from ADB developing member countries (DMCs) will also be shared.</i>
15:30-16:00	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
16:00-17:30	<p>Session 4: Learning Exercises and Discussions – Translating Sector Insights into Project Opportunities</p> <p><i>This interactive learning and ideation session will move beyond knowledge exchange to early-stage project concept development. Participants will identify concrete tourism and connectivity-related challenges, explore potential technological solutions, and opportunities for regional, subregional, and cross-regional cooperation.</i></p>

Day 2: 26 May 2026 (Tuesday)

08:15-08:30	On-site Registration
08:30-09:00	Recap (Insights from Day 1)
09:00-10:30	<p>Session 5: Fostering Renewable Energy for Coastal and Marine Systems</p> <p><i>This session will focus on emerging ocean-positive energy solutions—such as offshore wind, tidal and wave power, and floating solar—and how these technologies can support decarbonization, reduce pressures on marine ecosystems, and strengthen coastal resilience. It will explore key enabling policies, environmental and social safeguards, and regional cooperation opportunities, with practical examples from across Asia and the Pacific.</i></p>
10:30-11:00	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
11:00-12:30	<p>Session 6: Strengthening Governance for Technology Enabled Ocean Management</p> <p><i>This session will discuss the role of ocean governance in enabling and scaling technological innovations—such as digital monitoring systems, data platforms, and smart enforcement tools—to support sustainable ocean management. It will explore how robust policy frameworks, strengthened institutional coordination, and regional cooperation can harness technology to improve transparency, compliance, and decision-making, with practical examples from across Asia and the Pacific.</i></p>
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00-15:00	Session 7: Scaling Up Finance for Sustainable Blue Economy Initiatives

	<i>The session will explore how sustainable blue economy initiatives, including new technologies, can be financed and scaled through blue finance, blended finance, environmental taxes, and private sector innovation. Practical examples and case studies featuring ADB projects, and good practices from ADB DMCs will also be shared.</i>
15:00-15:30	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
15:30-16:30	<p>Session 8: Learning Exercises and Discussions – Converting Sector Insights to Project Opportunities</p> <p><i>The interactive learning and brainstorming exercise will link knowledge exchange to early-stage project ideation on good practices and technology innovations in renewable energy, tourism, ocean governance or financing. Participants may also discuss potential initiatives that may be pursued, including the potential for regional, subregional, and cross-regional cooperation in implementing sustainable blue economy initiatives.</i></p>
16:30-17:30	<p>Session 9: Recap for Day 2</p> <p><i>A summary of key discussions will be shared, highlighting priority challenges, potential solutions, and identified next steps.</i></p> <p>Field Visit Briefing and Guidelines</p> <p><i>Participants will be briefed on the field visit sites and guiding questions will be provided. They will be assigned in teams to prepare lessons from the visits report on Day 4.</i></p>

Day 3: 27 May 2026 (Wednesday)

8:30-09:00	On-site Registration
09:00- 17:00	<p>Site Visits: Exploring Technology-Enabled Sustainable Blue Economy Innovations</p> <p><i>The field visit will showcase institutions and enterprises in Busan actively engaged in sustainable blue economy sectors and technology applications in fisheries, maritime transport, pollution control, tourism, renewable energy, and ocean governance/blue finance. Participants will be requested to summarize key takeaways in their learning teams on Day 4.</i></p>

Day 4: 28 May 2026 (Thursday)

08:30-09:00	On-site Registration
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09:00-10:00	Discussion – Site Visits
10:00-10:30	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
10:30-12:30	<p>Session 10: Learning Exercises and Discussions – Integrating Blue Economy Technology and Sector Insights into Cross-Cutting Project Pathways</p> <p><i>This session will guide participants in bringing together lessons on blue economy technology and integrating insights across tourism, energy, governance, and financing to develop coherent, cross-sector project concepts. Opportunities for regional, subregional, and cross-regional cooperation in implementing sustainable blue economy initiatives will also be explored.</i></p>
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:00	<p>Session 11: Learning Exercises and Discussions – Integrating Blue Economy Technology and Sector Insights into Cross-cutting Project Pathways</p> <p><i>Participants present the outputs of their group discussions, highlighting opportunities to scale up technology pathways and innovation in the sustainable blue economy. Presentations will highlight: the development challenge being addressed; the role of technology and innovation; potential financing and implementation pathways; and opportunities for regional and subregional cooperation.</i></p>
15:00 – 15:30	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
15:30-16:30	<p>Session 12: Reflections and Action Planning</p> <p><i>The final session will synthesize key insights from the workshop, facilitate discussions on lessons gained from the site visit and sessions and preceding sessions, and elicit participants' reflections. It will also explore concrete actions and next steps that participants can undertake upon returning to their respective countries.</i></p>
16:30 – 17:00	<p>Closing Session and Graduation</p> <p><i>Remarks</i></p> <p><i>Awarding of Certificates of Participation</i></p>