

Strengthening Data Governance to Support Regional Action on Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas

ADB Circular Economy Forum 2025

**Track Session 3: Digitalization of the Plastic Value Chain: Data
Governance Framework**

18 June 2025, Manila, The Philippines

UNEP COBSEA Secretariat



COORDINATING BODY ON THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA – COBSEA

East Asian Seas Action Plan 1994

Intergovernmental body aimed at protection and sustainable development of the marine & coastal environment of East Asian Seas

Regional Seas

One of 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans

COBSEA countries

Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam

Secretariat

Hosted by Thailand (in Bangkok), administered by UNEP

www.cobsea.org



WHY REGIONAL GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Marine litter is transboundary

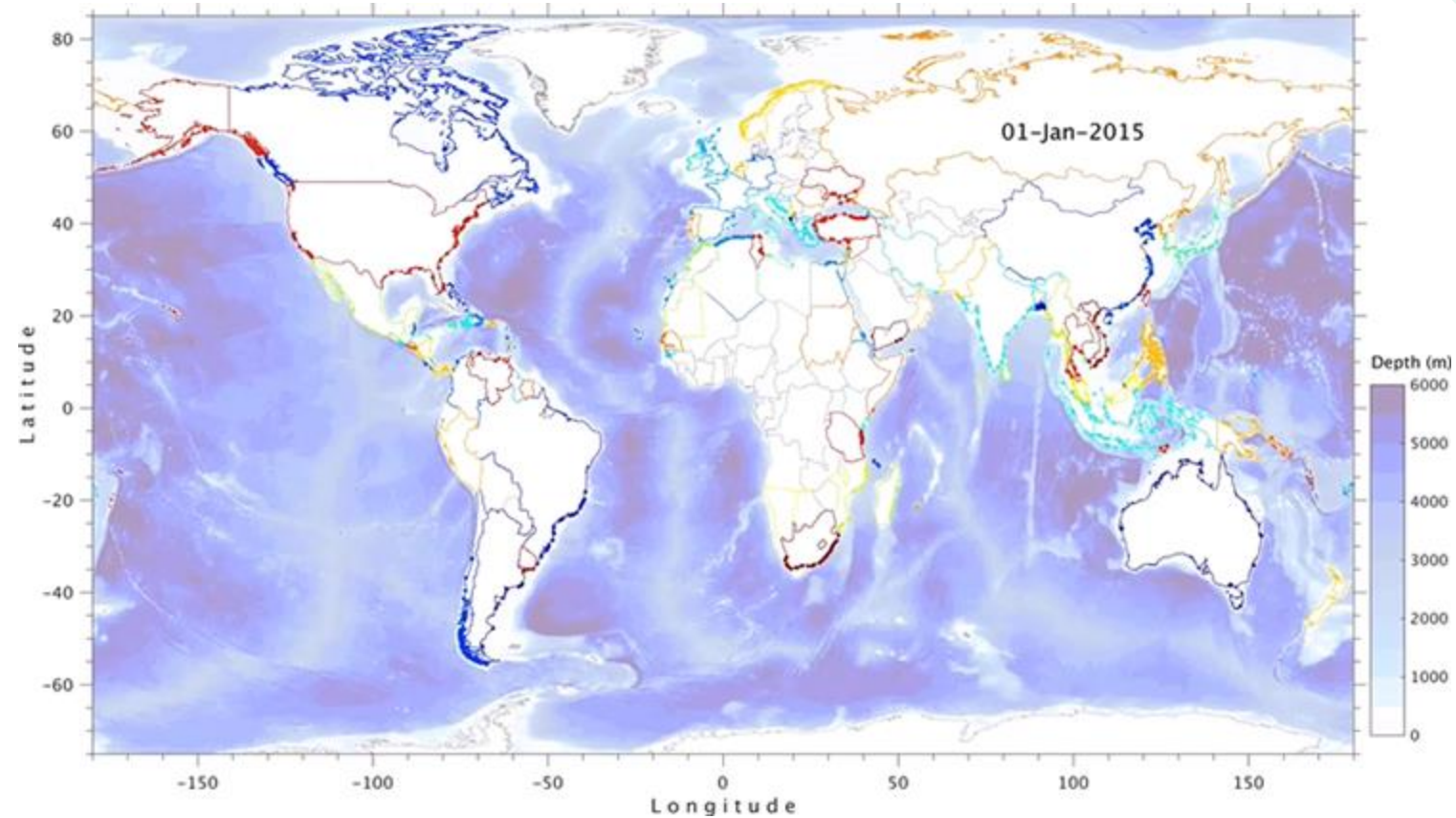
Sources and sinks may be in different countries

Global trade connects jurisdictions

Actions will not be coherent outside common frameworks

Individual countries cannot solve it (cost-effectively)

Regional cooperation connects local & national action to global goals



Source: UNEP & Florida State University, 2020

REGIONAL MARINE LITTER FRAMEWORKS

COBSEA

Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

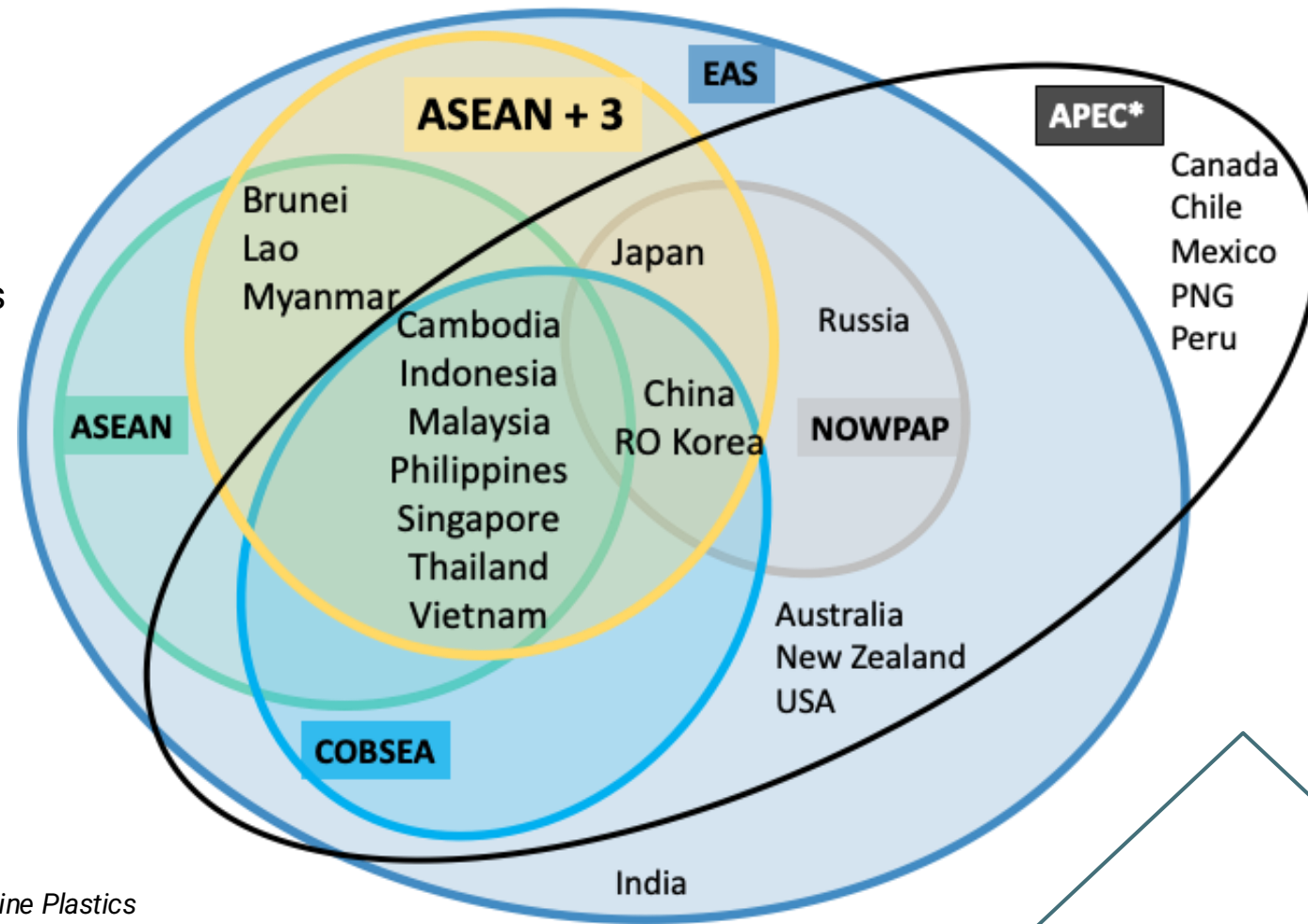
ASEAN

Bangkok Declaration;
Regional Action Plan on Combatting Marine Debris

APEC

Roadmap on Marine Debris

Numerous other initiatives



Source:
COBSEA & NUS (2020): *Status of Research, Legal and Policy Efforts on Marine Plastics in ASEAN+3: A Gap Analysis at the Interface of Science, Law and Policy*

COBSEA FRAMEWORKS FOR ACTION





Strategic Directions 2023-2027

Marine pollution prevention, reduction and control (incl. plastic from land & sea)

Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI)

Adopted by IGM 24 (2019), aligns with UNEA & 2030 Agenda

Working Group on Marine Litter & Expert Group on Monitoring

-  **ACTION 1:** prevent and reduce marine litter from land-based sources
-  **ACTION 2:** prevent and reduce marine litter from sea-based sources
-  **ACTION 3:** strengthen monitoring and assessment
-  **ACTION 4:** create enabling conditions for action, e.g. knowledge sharing, regional coordination, research, awareness raising



Regional Activity Centre on marine pollution: RC3S in Bali, Indonesia

WHY DATA GOVERNANCE MATTERS



CHALLENGES IN THE EAS REGION

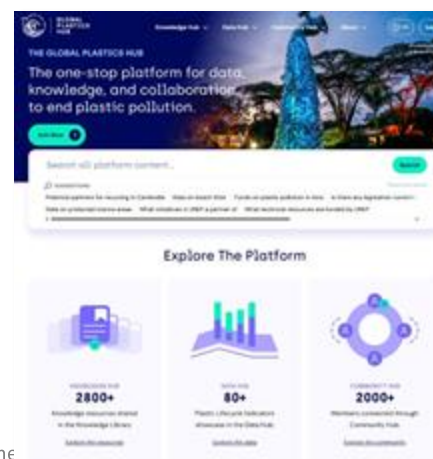
- **Fragmentation?** Different legal frameworks, data methods, reporting formats across COBSEA countries > hard to compare & coordinate
- **Interoperability gaps?** Siloed national systems limit regional data integration
- **Capacity gaps?** Many agencies need stronger tools, training, and resources
- **Trust & transparency?** Data sharing limited by concerns about ownership, misuse, reputational risk
 - COBSEA's Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes adopted by IGM 25 (2021)
 - Towards a Regional Assessment of Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) endorsed by IGM 26 (2024), opportunity to expand to remaining ASEAN countries to harmonize monitoring approaches
 - Regional training of trainers; national trainings in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam



BUILDING DATA SYSTEMS THROUGH REGIONAL–GLOBAL INTEGRATION

Strengthening data governance requires robust systems that ensure:

- **High-quality data** — accurate, complete, timely, and verifiable
 - **Interoperability** — open platforms that support real-time data sharing
 - **Capacity building** — empowering local actors through practical training and tools
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- **The Global Plastics Hub** (UNEP HQ): an open, multi-stakeholder platform aggregating global data and resources on marine litter & plastic pollution
 - **UNEP COBSEA's Regional Node** connects with the Global Plastics Hub to align regional & global efforts, supporting RAP MALI implementation



WAY FORWARD & OPPORTUNITIES

- Strengthen regional data frameworks, aligned with global efforts
 - Explore piloting shared dashboards and metadata standards
 - Support & amplify national innovations among COBSEA countries
 - Explore synergies with partners (e.g., ADB's digital roadmap) to promote circularity, traceability, and capacity-building
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- Build interoperable, inclusive, transparent data ecosystems
 - Shift from fragmented reporting to **coordinated** action
 - Enhance traceability, accountability, policy enforcement

Through leveraging existing mechanism (e.g., RAP MALI, COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter, WGML)



UN 
environment
programme

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