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Scene Setting – Plastic Pollution in Southeast Asia

12 September 2024 • webinar

Mahesh Pradhan

Coordinator

UNEP COBSEA, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia



Eddy Mazuaansyah bin Mohd Ali Murad, Malaysia, on behalf of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)

UNEA and the marine litter and plastic pollution journey

UNEA 1 (2014) requested a state of knowledge report

UNEA 2 (2016) requested a state of governance report

UNEA 3 (2018) agreed to the vision of zero leakage and provided a mandate for the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics (AHEG)

UNEA 4 (2020) renewed the mandate of the AHEG and stressed the importance to strengthen the scientific and technical knowledge with a new state of knowledge report / increased coordination amongst actors through coordination of multi-stakeholder action

UNEA RESOLUTION 5/14

UNEA–5.2 adopted resolution 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument". (March 2022)

The resolution:

- Requested the Executive Director of UNEP to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) to negotiate an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.
- Set an ambitious timeline for the INC to finalize its work by end of 2024.
- Specified, among others, that the international legally binding instrument:
 - Could include both binding and voluntary approaches;
 - Be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses full life cycle of plastic;
 - Take into account, among others, the Rio Declaration and national circumstances and capabilities.



PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS OVER INC-1 TO INC-4

- 1. Initial Framework Development:** establishing the foundational elements for a global plastics treaty, including identifying key issues related to plastic pollution and gathering stakeholder input
- 2. Consensus on Key Issues:** converging on critical topics such as waste management and the need for improved recycling practices
- 3. Engagement of Stakeholders:** a diverse range of stakeholders, including government representatives, NGOs, and industry players, participated actively, contributing to a comprehensive dialogue on the complexities of plastic pollution.
- 4. Outlook for INC-5:** decided to establish an open-ended legal drafting group, to start working at INC-5 to conduct a legal review of any elements of the draft text forwarded to it by the plenary with a view to ensuring that the text is reflected in a legally sound manner and make recommendations on the language to the plenary for its consideration.



UNEA-5 resolution sets the ambition of completing the INC work by the end of 2024

AD HOC INTERSESSIONAL OPEN-ENDED EXPERT GROUPS

24 – 28 August 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

Expert group 1 tasked to develop an analysis of potential sources, and means that could be mobilized, for implementation of the objectives of the instrument, including options for the establishment of a financial mechanism, alignment of financial flows, and catalysing finance.

Co-chaired by Ms. Kate Lynch of Australia and Mr. Oliver Boachie of Ghana.

Expert group 2 tasked to identify and analyze criteria and non-criteria-based approaches with regard to plastic products and chemicals of concern in plastic products, and product design focusing on recyclability and reusability of plastic products, considering their uses and application.

Co-chaired by Mr. Axel Borchmann of Germany, Ms. Gwen Sisor of Palau, and Mr. Luay Almkhtar of Iraq.



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

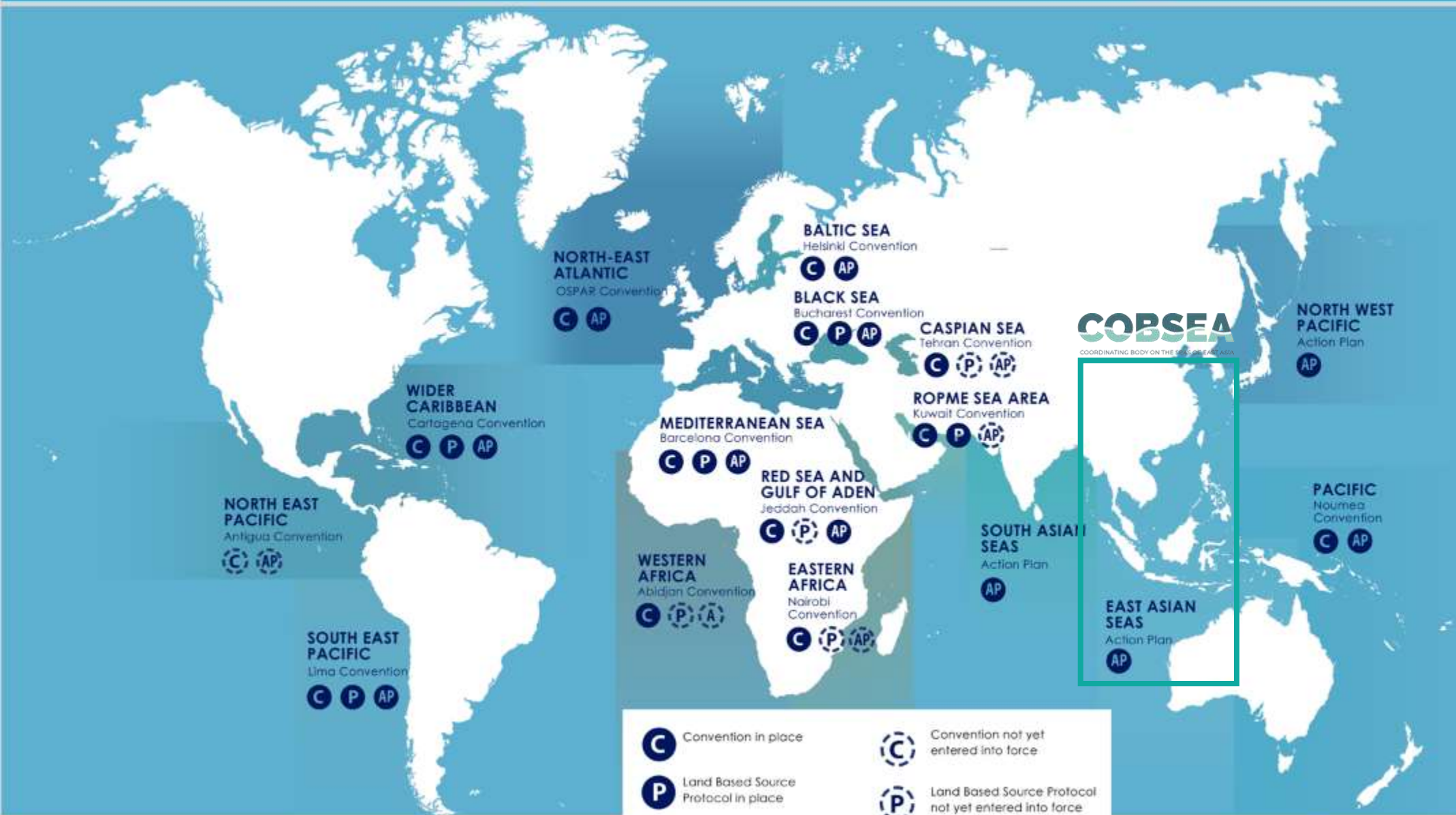
COBSEA countries

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



 Convention in place	 Convention not yet entered into force
 Land Based Source Protocol in place	 Land Based Source Protocol not yet entered into force
 Regional Marine Litter Action Plan in place	 Regional Marine Litter Action Plan is being developed
 Regional Marine Litter Assessments under preparation	



REGIONAL MARINE LITTER FRAMEWORKS

COBSEA

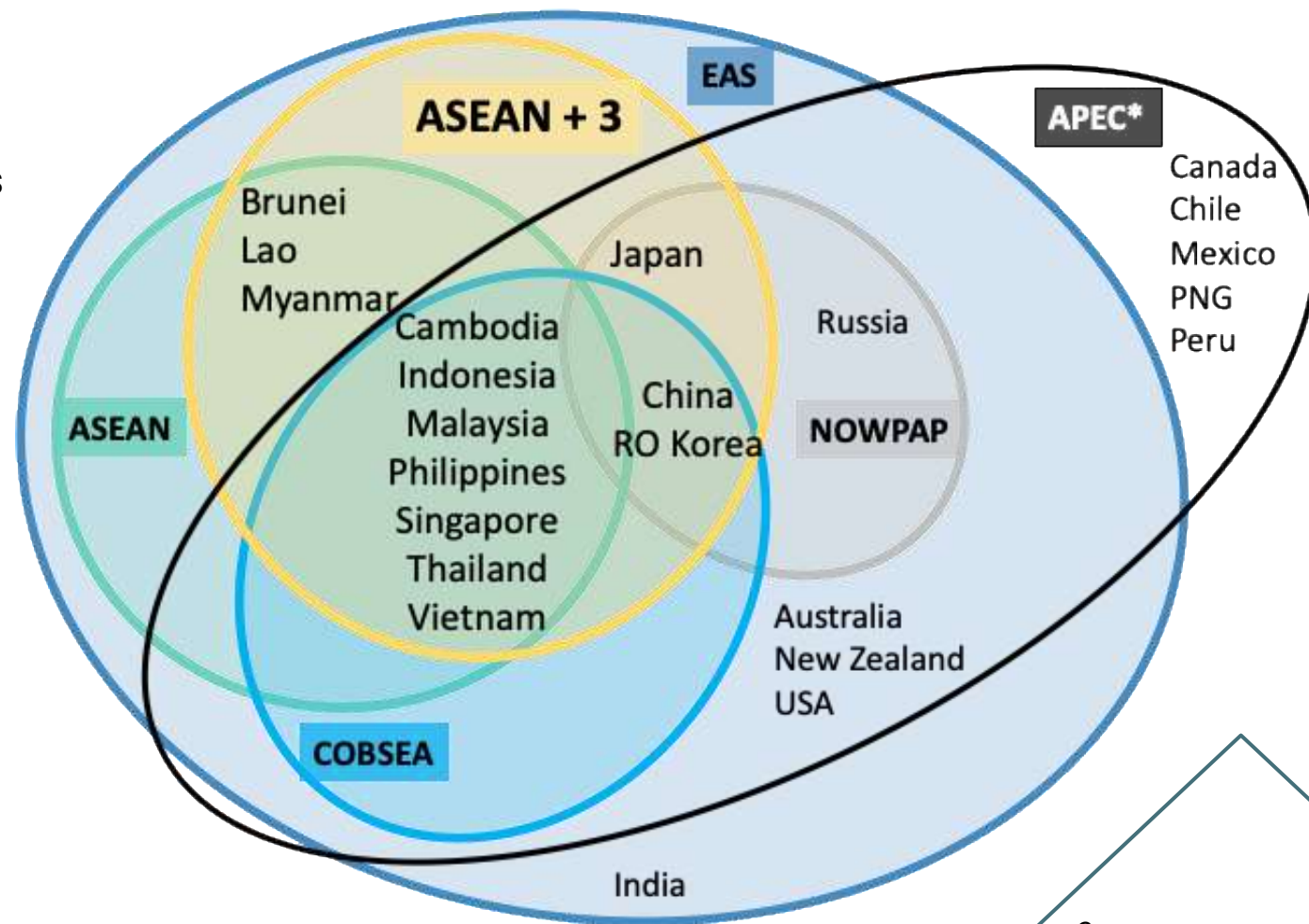
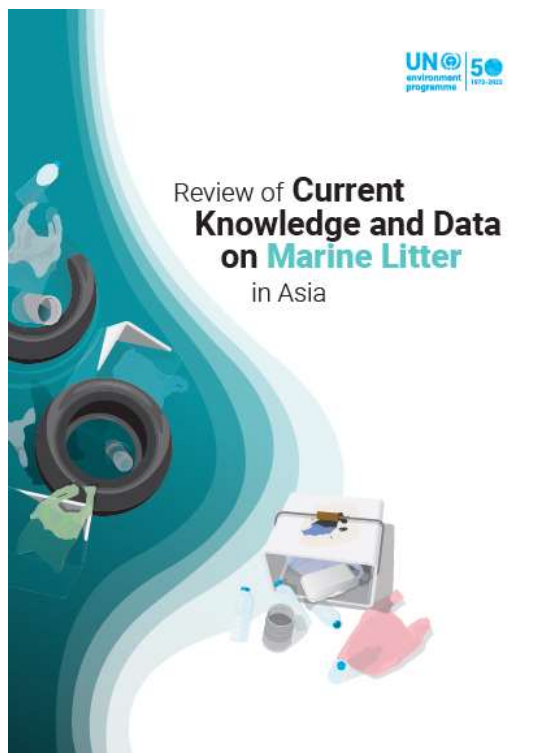
Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

ASEAN

Bangkok Declaration
Regional Action Plan on Combatting Marine Debris

APEC

Roadmap on Marine Debris



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

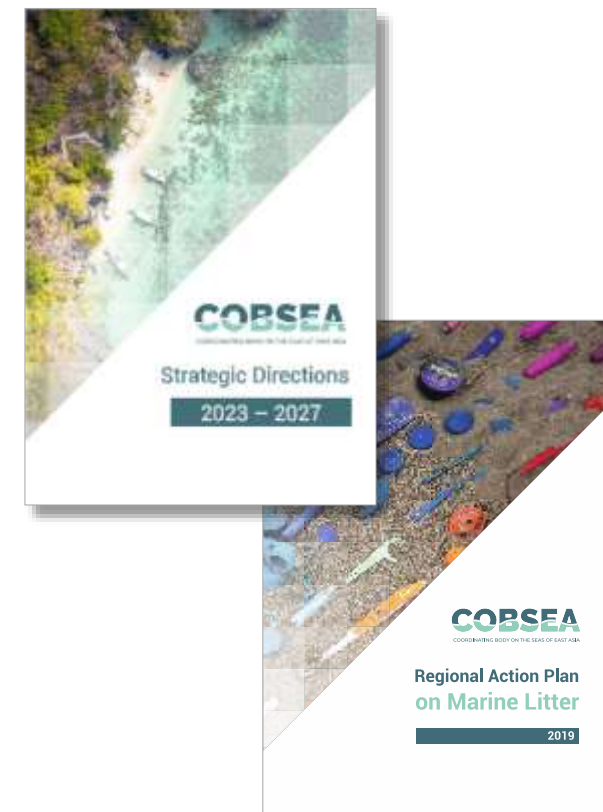
 **ACTION 1:** prevent and reduce marine litter from land-based sources

 **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



IMPLEMENTING THE RAP MALI

Global goals on marine litter (UNEA resolutions, SDGs, international instrument)

Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter



EAS Regional Node of the GPML

Knowledge hub:
policies, good practices;
ML research database;
capacity building;
Linked to Global Digital
Platform on Marine Litter



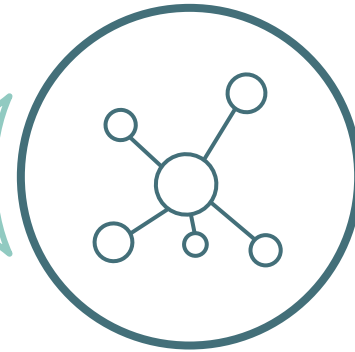
Monitoring for impact

Regional Guidance on
Harmonized National
Monitoring Programmes;
hotspot & baseline
assessments;
training on monitoring;
regional status & trends



Planning for success

National marine litter
plans; National Source
Inventories;
legislative guidance;
frameworks on sea-
based sources



Piloting action

Plastic pollution
demonstration sites;
integrated waste
management pilots



Solution sharing & partnerships

Working Group on Marine
Litter & Expert Group on
Monitoring;
SEA of Solutions annual
partnership event;
regional coordination



EAST ASIAN SEAS REGIONAL NODE OF THE GPML

Web platform launched 2022 linked to the Global Digital Platform

- Access to technical resources
- Map of good practices
- Research database of >700 scientific publications
- Capacity building resources and tools



cobsea.gpmarinelitter.org

MARINE LITTER POLICY AND MANAGEMENT



KNOWLEDGE LIBRARY

National & regional policies and initiatives

EXPLORE >



CASE STUDIES

A map of good practices

EXPLORE >

MARINE LITTER SCIENCE



RESEARCH DATABASE

Data sets on plastic pollution and marine litter

EXPLORE >



RESEARCH NETWORK

Directory of organizations

EXPLORE >

MARINE LITTER CAPACITY-BUILDING



LEARNING CENTRE

Learning and capacity-building resources

EXPLORE >



EVENTS

Upcoming sector events

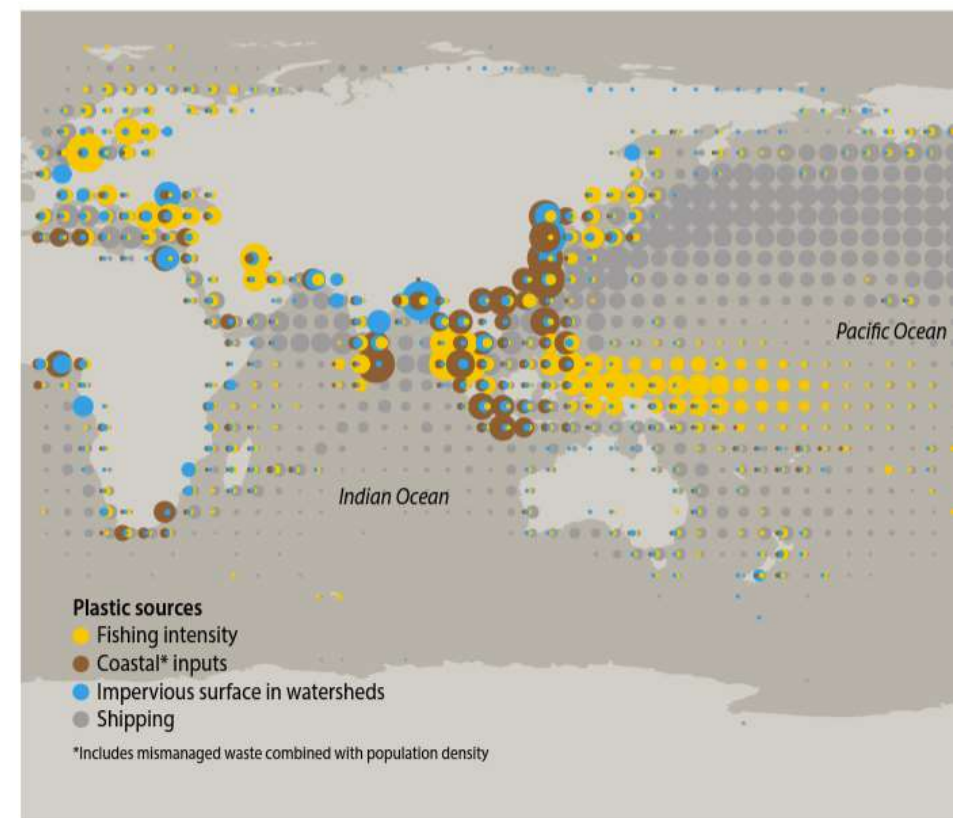
EXPLORE >

Ghost gear toolbox

Best practice case studies

CHALLENGES IN THE EAST ASIAN SEAS REGION

- Lack of an integrated lifecycle approach to prevent, reduce, and manage marine plastic pollution
- Existing efforts focus largely on waste management, yet lack evidence-based and circular design considerations
- Need for robust and comparable evidence on the sources, flows, and impacts of marine plastic pollution, **harmonized monitoring approach**
- Need for inter-agency and inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration for an **integrated approach to plastic pollution from all sources**
- Gaps exist in **knowledge sharing** and dissemination across the region, **capacity building** and **collaboration**
- Lack of coordination among partners and agencies, hindering harmonization of efforts



Source: Map produced by GRID-Arendal (2016a) based on data from Halpern et al. (2008), Watson

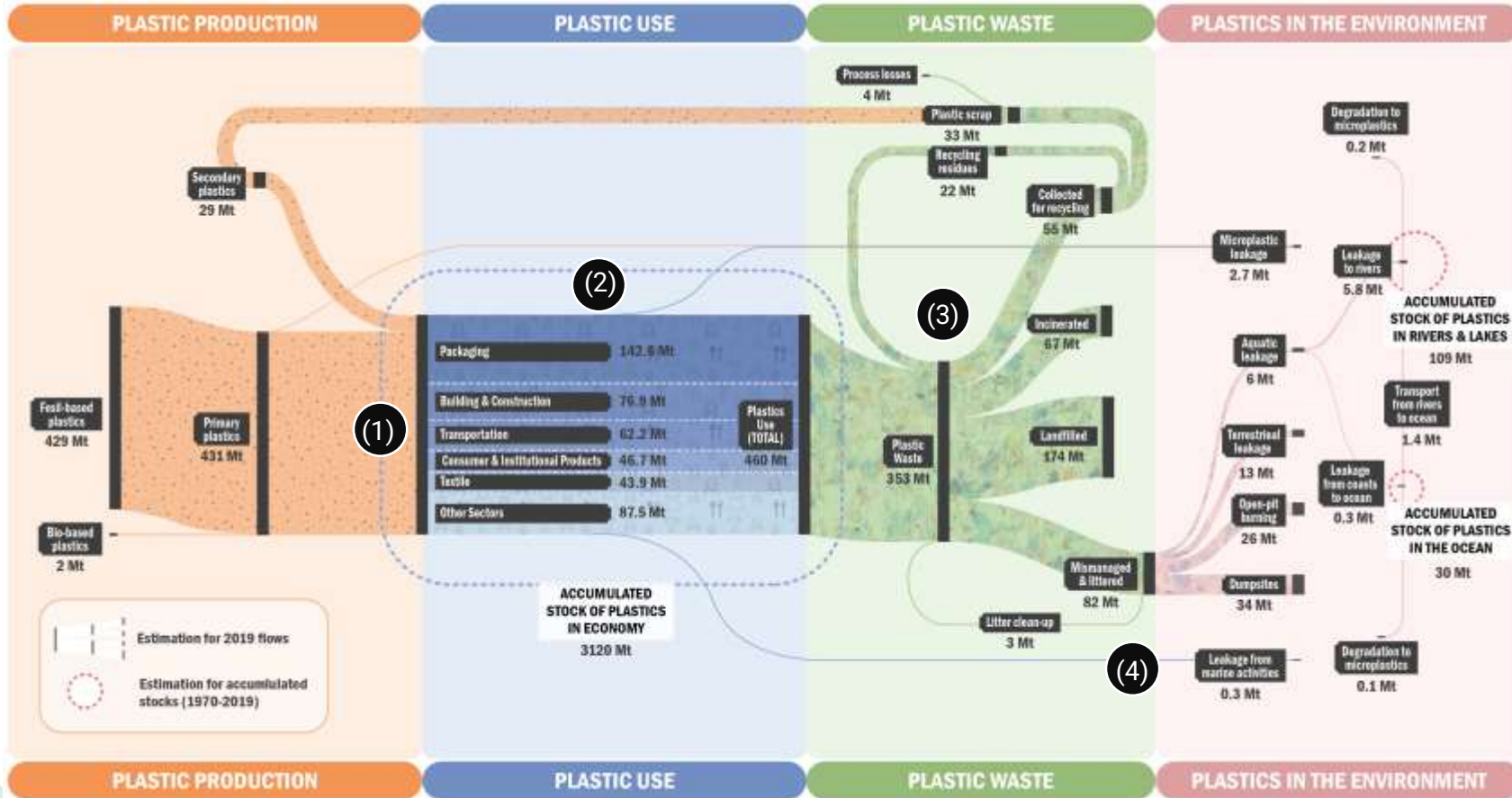
OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION IN EAS REGION

- Build on existing mechanisms, incl. UNEP, Regional Seas, COBSEA and other regional networks and expertise to align with global commitments and avoid duplications
- Implement ASEAN RAP and COBSEA RAP MALI to support countries in achieving the GPT commitments, providing relevant resources, training and policy support
- Strengthen and harmonize marine litter monitoring, incl. national baseline surveys, regional assessment of plastic in the environment
- Strengthen regional collaboration and coordination among stakeholders and government agencies
- Expand impact into the region, promote information exchange across Regional Seas, foster cooperation among countries
- Track progress and inform action at national, regional, global level



Four Strategic Goals to shift to a circular plastics economy

Policy and legislative tools across the life cycle



Built from OECD, *Global Plastics Outlook: Economic Drivers, Environmental Impacts and Policy Options* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2022).

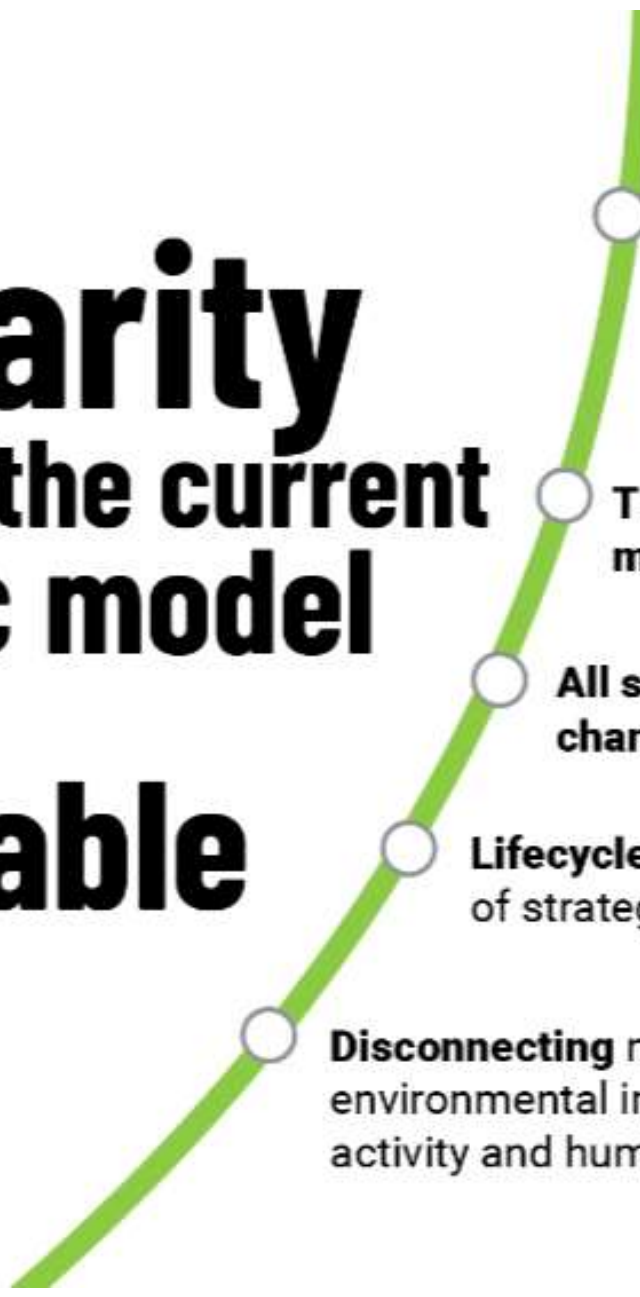
① SG1. REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM: The elimination of problematic and unnecessary plastic, including hazardous additives.

② SG2. DESIGN FOR CIRCULARITY to ensure that the plastics used in the economy are reusable, recyclable or compostable.

③ SG3. ENSURE CIRCULARITY IN PRACTICE of all the plastic used, to keep it in the economy and out of the environment (reused, recycled or composted).

④ SG4. DEAL WITH THE LEGACY: Collection and responsible disposal of plastics that cannot be recycled or have accumulated in the environment.

Circularity challenges the current economic model towards a sustainable future



Disconnecting natural resource use and environmental impacts from economic activity and human well-being is essential

Lifecycle thinking enables the identification of strategic intervention points

All stakeholders are engaged in changing the system

The entire value chain matters, more than each stage individually

Inspired by nature based solutions, **circular models keep materials at the highest possible value** along the value chain

New Treaty – Possible core obligations...

- 1 Primary plastic polymers
- 2 Problematic & avoidable plastic products
- 3 Chemicals & polymers of concern
- 4 Microplastics
- 5 Waste management
- 6 Design for circularity
- 7 Reduce, reuse, repair of plastic products & packaging
- 8 Safe, sustainable alternatives and substitutes
- 9 Release to water, soil and air
- 10 Existing plastic pollution
- 11 Just & inclusive transition
- 12 Human health

EXPECTED ISSUES FOR INC-5: POINTS OF CONVERGENCE/DIVERGENCE

- **INC-5** will take place from 25 Nov – 1 Dec 2024 at Busan, Republic of Korea.

- **Expected issues and considerations at INC-5:**
 1. Addressing **existing and legacy plastics**, aiming for a toxics-free circular economy
 2. Redesigning systems, products and packaging
 3. Strengthen the transparency of pollution **control, monitoring and reporting** of the plastic industry, incl. laboratory, certification/verification centre and labelling
 4. **Shared recognition** of the need for **improved plastic waste management and measures for a just transition**
 5. General agreement on implementing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and mandatory product design requirements for **recyclability** and **reusability**.
 6. Convergence on innovative funding for implementation, both through the public and private sector
 7. **Challenges** remains whether the treaty will enforce **common global rules** or allow for **voluntary measures** based on national action plans

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Turning off the Tap

How the world can end plastic pollution and create a circular economy



#BeatPlasticPollution



Webinar: the Global Plastics Treaty
and Implications for Southeast Asia

12 September 2024 • webinar

Thank you for your attention!

  UNEP_COBSEA

 COBSEA Secretariat

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