

Biodiversity: A Major Focus in the East Asian Seas Congress in December

PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA -- The growing issue of biodiversity loss and the efforts needed to address it will be a major focus of discussion and action in the East Asian Seas Congress 2003, to be held on 8 to 12 December 2003, in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

East Asia is considered the center of global marine biodiversity. Its coral, seagrass and mangrove ecosystems in particular, support a high diversity of associated species of plants and animals many of which provide a major food source for the people in the region and consequently, contribute significantly to the region's social and economic development. For instance, it is estimated that one-fourth of the world's marine fish production is contributed by East Asia.

But the region's biodiversity is in the red. Coral reefs are at risk from destructive fishing practices, pollution, the endangered species trade, and overfishing. Mangroves are disappearing due to deforestation, pollution and conversion for coastal development, and the same can be said for what ails the region's seagrass beds. It is estimated that at the current rate of conversion, there will be no more mangroves by 2030.

A workshop on biodiversity will be held during the EAS Congress and will shed light on the value of marine biodiversity in the region and delve into the national and regional efforts put forth to protect its resources. The workshop will be under the guidance of the United Nations Development Programme-Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF) Regional Service Centre in Kuala Lumpur. Dr. Balakrishna Pisupati, Head of the IUCN-Regional Biodiversity Program will lend his expertise as Keynote Speaker for this workshop.

The Congress in Putrajaya is a significant event where environmental forerunners from across the East Asian region will join forces to seek ways in securing the welfare of coastal and marine environments in East Asia and ultimately, improve the quality of people's lives. A roster of highly distinguished speakers from different parts of the globe which includes Former President Fidel V. Ramos of the Republic of the Philippines; the World Bank's Environment Department Director, Dr. Kristalina Georgieva; and Chairman of Malaysia's Environmental Quality Control Council, Datuk Koh Wei Kiat will take part in the Congress, which will be a venue for the development of a common framework of action for the East Asian Seas, also known as the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia.

The East Asian Seas Congress 2003 is being organized by GEF/UNDP/IMO Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia, and the Department of Environment (DOE), Malaysia. It is hosted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (MOSTE), Malaysia.

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More and More Countries Joining Top Ministerial Forum

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Hon. Nabel Makarim, Minister of Environment of Indonesia, Hon. Hayao Hora, Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan, Hon. Datuk Seri Law Hieng Ding, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Malaysia, and Hon. Chang Seung-Woo, Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, will be representing their respective countries in the Ministerial Forum on the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia, scheduled on 12 December 2003 in Putrajaya, Malaysia. This brings to eight, the number of countries having officially confirmed participation in the forum. Other high-level participants include Hon. Mok Mareth, Minister of Environment of Cambodia; Hon. Wang Shuguang, Administrator of the State Oceanic Administration of PR China; Hon. Elisea Gozun, Secretary of the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources; and Hon. Pichate Satirachaval, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Transport of Thailand.

The Ministerial Forum is part of the East Asian Seas Congress 2003. It provides a venue to discuss the state of the region's environment and natural resources and to agree on a common framework of actions for the East Asian Seas. Other concerned ministers from the PEMSEA participating countries are also expected to attend the forum, which will consider the final draft of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) and a declaration of regional cooperation for adoption.

Aside from the Ministerial Forum, the Congress will also feature the International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the East Asian Seas: Towards a New Era of Regional Collaboration and Partnerships. Congress side events will include the 3rd Forum of the Regional Network of Local Governments (RNLG) Implementing Integrated Coastal Management, the Media Forum on Partnerships in Environmental Communication, and the Multidisciplinary Experts Group Meeting.

ICM Playing a Major Role in Danang Development

DANANG, VIETNAM -- Three years of integrated coastal management (ICM) practice in Danang has contributed to major improvements in the city's coastal areas.

According to People's Committee Vice-chairman, Mr. Hoang Tuan Anh, persistent ICM campaigning on environmental awareness and capacity building of local staff have resulted in a better understanding of the concept of integrating environmental protection with development and the building of stakeholder consensus.

Danang is currently undergoing major infrastructure development and the changes are not coming at the cost of the environment. Sandy beaches are being preserved with a buffer zone established; shorefront houses were removed with affected families relocated to new housing estates; daily city clean-up is being done; and a shoreline rehabilitation project is ongoing along the 12-km long Nguyen Tat Thanh Coastal road where a shorefront embankment, complete with beautifully paved and landscaped walkways, is being built.

Danang is a PEMSEA ICM demonstration site. The site is geared towards strengthening the local capacity to plan and manage coastal areas. A Project Management Office and a Project Coordinating Committee have been established. Major activities of the project include assessment of coastal resources and their utilization; evaluation of environmental risks to public and ecosystem health; formulation and implementation of strategies; functional zoning schemes; action plans; and institutional arrangements which ensure effective implementation and enforcement.

ICM An Eye-Opener for Cavite Stakeholders

TRECE MARTERES, PHILIPPINES -- In a meeting with local stakeholders and PEMSEA staff on 15 October, Cavite Provincial Governor, Irineo Malkisi expressed strong support for Cavite Province to develop its own integrated coastal management (ICM) site and committed “100 percent cooperation and assurance to ensure success of the project.”

The meeting was made through an invitation of Governor Malkisi who wanted to learn more of PEMSEA’s activities, particularly on ICM and on how to develop an ICM parallel site. Around 90 stakeholders attended the meeting, which included representatives from government and non-government organizations, PEMSEA, and the Manila Bay Environmental Management Project. The meeting was seen as an “eye-opener” for the stakeholders in the province on the potential of ICM. Special emphasis was placed on Cavite’s location being one of the coastal provinces of Manila Bay, and on the strategies the province will use in order to fit well into the plans and objectives of the Manila Bay Environmental Management Project.

As a result of the meeting, the province is currently organizing a technical team to coordinate with local government agencies and with PEMSEA regarding the possible development of an ICM parallel site in Cavite, and consultations with local stakeholders.

Cavite province has ongoing activities to help sustain its environmental resources. These initiatives include: mangrove rehabilitation; riverbank and coastal cleanups; the establishment of a 6 ha. fish sanctuary in Maragondon coastal area; and the enforcement of all relevant environmental laws and ordinances. Other future activities currently being proposed include the establishment of a user’s fee for water use; the treatment and disposal of hazardous hospital wastes; and the enhancement of the province’s existing wastewater analysis laboratory. ICM is seen as a viable management framework for the province to orchestrate these numerous development plans.

Regional ICM Leadership and Capacity Given a Boost

PASIG CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Regional leadership and capacity in integrated coastal management (ICM) was strengthened with the recently concluded Regional Workshop on ICM Leadership and Capacity Building held on 22-30 September. Twenty-nine participants composed of managers, directors, and key project site personnel from PEMSEA ICM Demonstration and parallel sites in Cambodia, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, PR China, Thailand and Vietnam, attended the workshop.

The eight-day workshop was designed to build a strong core of ICM managers within the region, who can effectively establish and implement integrated environmental programs. The workshop re-examined the concept, framework and approaches of integrated management, and discussed effective tools and techniques for implementation and sustainability. The workshop also included field visits to PEMSEA ICM sites in Bataan and Batangas provinces.

The workshop was highly interactive, providing the participants with opportunities for sharing of experiences and lessons learned and discussion of implementation issues. The participants found that experiences gained over the past 2 1/2 years have generated a wealth of knowledge that can be distilled and shared. During the field visits to Bataan and Batangas, for instance, it was recognized that public-private partnerships are a significant element of ICM project implementation. To promote further knowledge sharing, workshop attendees recommended cross visits among PEMSEA ICM sites to promote a greater understanding of ICM program implementation under varying environmental, political, and economic conditions.

PEMSEA Exchanges Experiences with Chesapeake Bay

ANNAPOLIS, U.S.A. -- A sharing of experiences in coastal and marine environmental management between PEMSEA and Chesapeake Bay stakeholders was held from 1 – 16 September 2003. The initiative was a part of UNDP/GEF IW-LEARN's efforts in promoting inter-project exchange and knowledge sharing.

PEMSEA Senior Programme Officer, Dr. Huming Yu, attended a series of meetings with 16 government and nongovernment organizations, at the State and Federal levels, involved in the environmental management of Chesapeake Bay. The meetings provided PEMSEA with the opportunity to learn of Chesapeake Bay's achievements, experiences, and lessons learned in environmental management.

An effective feature observed from Chesapeake Bay was the management of pollution from non-point sources. Industrial and municipal sewage go through tertiary treatment, but storm water run-off is a major concern. State governments and other stakeholders also encourage good practices in land use such as reforestation, zero wetlands loss, soil erosion control, and environment-friendly construction practices in containing the negative impacts of urbanization. PEMSEA observed that the lessons learned from these practices would be very useful for East Asian countries, particularly in PEMSEA's efforts in Manila Bay and Bohai Sea.

PEMSEA also shared its experiences in integrated coastal management (ICM), subregional sea area management, and the sustainable development strategies at the local, national and regional levels. During the discussions, Chesapeake Bay stakeholders expressed an interest in the East Asian experiences, particularly in the development of cross-sectoral management mechanisms with a broad participation of stakeholders, integrated land and water use zonation, and sustainable aquaculture practices.

PEMSEA, Chesapeake Bay, and other partners are currently planning to develop further ways and means of promoting cross-site sharing in the integrated management of river basins and associated seas.

Batangas Stakeholders Declare Commitment to Support ICM

NASUGBU, PHILIPPINES -- The integrated coastal management (ICM) experiences of Batangas Bay in Batangas Province, have been replicated to the adjacent bays in the western part of the province. The Balayan and Adjacent Bays' Summit, held on 28 August 2003 presented and discussed a proposed ICM plan for the coastal areas along the bays of Balayan, Talim, Pagapas and Nasugbu in Western Batangas, and to mobilize support and commitment towards its successful implementation.

Over 156 participants from government and nongovernment organizations, people's organizations, volunteer groups, fisherfolks, industries, and the media attended the summit, which served as a venue for presenting the ICM plan for the watershed, coastal areas, and municipal waters along the four bays. The plan identifies various programs and projects, which will be pursued through integrated efforts of the stakeholders for the next 25 years. The plan's programs include livelihood and enterprise development, information base improvement and management, habitat restoration and management, and governance and community mobilization. To signify their support for the ICM plan, a declaration of commitment was signed by representatives of all participating stakeholders.

The plan was developed from several studies to assess the real conditions in the area and through various consultations among a wide array of stakeholders. The plan, upon legitimization and final approval, will serve as a guide for all stakeholders in the area to ensure the sustainable use of the four bays. The Provincial Government – Environment and Natural Resources Office will act as the lead provincial government department in spearheading the project in partnership with the WorldWide Fund (WWF) for Nature – Philippines.

Batangas is seeing possible amendments to provincial ordinances created when ICM was first applied in the province, since ICM application is no longer confined to Batangas Bay alone.

Initiated in 1994, a PEMSEA ICM demonstration site was developed in Batangas Bay to demonstrate the application of ICM for effective prevention and management of marine pollution.

PEMSEA Builds Capacity in Safe and Efficient Port Operations

PORT KLANG, MALAYSIA -- PEMSEA conducted a set of trainings on Port Safety and Environmental Management System (PSEMS) in Port Klang, Malaysia on 8-12 September, and on Port Auditing in Bangkok, Thailand on 15-19 September as part of its new initiative of developing an integrated management system for ports known as PSEMS.

The PSEMS training workshop in Port Klang was organized by PEMSEA in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization and the Port Klang Authority (PKA). The training familiarized port personnel on the process of establishing a port safety and environmental management system. Given that there are no internationally recognized standards, guidelines or codes which provide an overall safety and environmental management framework for port authorities and operators, the PSEMS is designed to fill the gap in safety and environmental management of ports.

The training was also meant to make Port Klang a working model for the application of PSEMS in the East Asian region. Seventeen individuals composed of the PKA's PSEMS project team, port operators in Port Klang, and safety, health, and environment officers of other major ports in Malaysia participated in the training, where an action plan for establishing the PSEMS in Port Klang was developed.

The Port Audit Training in Bangkok, Thailand, familiarized its 15 participants with international and national regulations related to the transport and handling of dangerous cargoes, port safety auditing techniques, and the conduct of an actual port safety audit exercise. Individuals from the Port Authority of Thailand and Laemchabang port participated in the training. One of the products of the training was the establishment of port audit teams, which for the next four months will conduct an initial port audit of Bangkok port and Laemchabang port.

The port audit of Bangkok and Laemchabang is a first step in establishing a PSEMS. The audit is meant to determine the present situation in the port or company where they stand in comparison to national and international rules and regulations, standards and practices. The audit will provide the port authorities with the necessary information as to the sectors requiring improvements and will enable them to define the objectives to be achieved in their PSEMS.

The development of PSEMS is seen as a step to enhance the quality and safety of operation and pollution prevention in ports, factors which PEMSEA considers important for social, economic, and environmental well being of countries in East Asia.

PEMSEA Participates in International Global Placement Program

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES -- Mr. Stacy Belbin and Ms. Karla Pope are PEMSEA's newest interns, funded by the Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland's International Global Placement Program. Both are young professionals from Canada who are eager to apply themselves to new and unique experiences.

Mr. Belbin will assist in enhancing the GIS databases of PEMSEA integrated coastal management (ICM) demonstration sites, and in the collection, analysis, and packaging of information to be used for the development of integrated coastal use zoning for Bataan Province, under the Manila Bay Environmental Management Project (MBEMP). Ms. Pope will be involved in the implementation of the information, education and communication program, and civil society mobilization for MBEMP. She will also be assisting in publicity and material requirements of the East Asian Seas Congress 2003.

The Global Placement Program aims to provide recent graduates with valuable work experience to aid in the transition from school to the work force; assist in the operations of host organizations; and strengthen linkages between Canadian institutions and partner agencies abroad. PEMSEA is one of nine organizations that has partnered with the Global Placement Program and will provide challenging and rewarding experiences for both interns, throughout the duration of their six-month internship.

The program complements PEMSEA's objectives in providing young professionals with hands-on training in specific areas of coastal and marine resource management.

Xiamen Regional ICM Training Center Goes Online

XIAMEN, PR CHINA -- The Xiamen International Training Center for Coastal Sustainable Development (CSD-Train International) has developed its own website in an effort to bring information and experiences in integrated coastal management (ICM) online.

CSD-Train International was established with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the State Oceanic Administration (SOA), The Xiamen Municipal Government, and Xiamen University on 30 July 2001.

Designated as a PEMSEA Regional Center for Integrated Coastal Management, CSD-Train International aims to meet domestic and international training needs on the enhancement of sustainable development awareness and ICM. Its pool of expertise and experiences are derived from the experiences of Xiamen University and other research and education institutions, the ICM practices in Xiamen, and the experiences of PEMSEA ICM demonstration sites.

CSD-Train International can be visited at <http://icsd.xmu.edu.cn/en-ctc/>.

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