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PEMSEA News

The 2008 PNLG Forum: Too Much Water; Too Little Water; Too Polluted Water

Sihanoukville, Cambodia – The PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development (PNLG), which held its seventh annual forum in Sihanoukville, Cambodia on 19-21 November 2008, tackled water resources protection, utilization and management issues and challenges at the local government level. In sum, for local governments across the region, water supply and management are regarded as increasingly critical aspects of sustainable development due to changing weather patterns, migration to coastal areas, pollution and overexploitation of freshwater sources, and changes in consumption and use patterns.

Dr. Mok Mareth, Senior Minister and Minister of the Environment opened the PNLG Forum with the message that, since the health and growth of a nation is anchored in its water resources, water resource management must be considered within the broader framework of economic and social development. Dr. Mok highlighted the critical role of the local governments in implementing national policies, strategies and programs on water resources management.

The forum included an exchange of experiences on water resource management among the experts and representatives from the various local governments. The experiences of Phnom Penh Autonomous Water Supply Authority in initiating a culture of change within the organization and transforming a decrepit water supply system into a model public sector water utility that provides round the clock drinking water to Phnom Penh's inhabitants is exemplary. Only a quarter of the population used to receive piped water in 1993. Water service now covers 90 percent of Phnom Penh area and its population. Dr. Ek Sonn Chan, General Director of PPWSA, emphasized that the support from the Government of Cambodia and its development agencies is crucial in allowing tariff restructuring and rendering PPWSA operational and financial autonomy.

Macao Water, on the other hand, shared its experiences in achieving sustainable water supply through private and public partnership. According to Dr. Fan Xiaojun, Executive Director, the partnership started in 1985 when Sino-French Holdings Ltd. bought 85 percent of Macao Water and signed a 25-year concession contract with the Macao government. The partnership boosted the utility's performance and infrastructures producing a 24-hour supply of safe drinking water to Macao residents in less than five years. By the 1990s, the entire water treatment and distribution system has been fully automated. Sino-French Holdings' successful experience in Macao has become an example of a good PPP model that is worthy of replication to the rest of China and in the region.

The case studies from Bali (Indonesia), Selangor (Malaysia), Shihwa (RO Korea), Chonburi (Thailand), and Danang (Vietnam) illustrated the different approaches taken by local governments for water management. Bali utilizes a traditional system called Subak in managing its water resources, particularly for agriculture. Subak is a socio-agricultural and religious community custom organization with the

authority to ensure equity of water allocation among its members. There are 1,610 Subak in the whole of Bali Province. Selangor, on the other hand, utilizes an integrated river basin management approach in ensuring sufficient and clean water supply, in improving storm water management as well as protecting and conserving the fireflies' habitat, which are touted to indicate good water quality. The Shihwa Lake experience focuses on improving the water quality of the lake through the construction of tidal power plant to increase seawater exchange and in managing non-point pollution sources for long-term watershed management. Chonburi and Danang are addressing challenges in water use management through the implementation of priority action programs identified in their respective coastal strategies. Activities ranged from raising awareness and building capacity on waste management within the communities and along the watershed areas and promoting sustainable water use to address potential water shortage problem. Despite the differences, all have a common goal, that is, to establish a water resource management system that serves society's needs efficiently and equitably, at the same time promoting the sustainable conservation of water resources.

The Municipal Government of Sihanoukville handed over the PNLG flag to the Province of Bataan (Philippines) who confirmed its commitment to host the 2009 Forum to carry on the tradition of rotating the hosting of the PNLG Forum among the member local governments. The 2009 PNLG Forum will be held as one of the side events of the East Asian Seas Congress 2009 in Manila.

Guimaras Province Joins the PNLG

Guimaras, Philippines – Following the establishment of Guimaras Province (Philippines) as a PEMSEA ICM parallel site showcasing management of an island ecosystem in August 2008, the Province became the newest member of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development. PNLG member local governments and participants to the 2008 PNLG Forum (see related article) witnessed the formal induction of Guimaras during its General Assembly Meeting in November. Guimaras Province is the 24th member local government of the PNLG.

The Honorable Felipe Hilan A. Nava, Governor of Guimaras, signed the PNLG Charter on behalf of the Province. In his statement, Governor Nava, expressed Guimaras' commitment to uphold the vision and mission of the PNLG, contribute to achieving the objectives of the Network, and abide by its Code of Conduct. Governor Nava recalled how the oil spill incident that occurred on 11 August 2006, which made Guimaras famous (aside from its signature product - the Guimaras mangoes), and provided the window of opportunity and realization for the Province to embrace an integrated approach to managing its coastal and marine areas and resources.

With the emerging challenges posed by climate change and sea level rise, in addition to other local concerns, Governor Nava stressed that by joining the PNLG, Guimaras not only recognizes the benefits of forging partnerships with other local governments, which are faced with similar challenges, but also the advantage of sharing experiences and learning from each other.

Green and Go for River Basin Management in Xedone

Pakse, Lao PDR – It was the day before the annual boat racing festival in Lao and the crowds are ecstatic. People are flocking to the riverbanks - selling food, trinkets and various local goods. At close to midnight, people are still watching a group of dragonboat racers rowing their way along the Mekong. "The number of tourists is directly proportional to the water level in Mekong", explains one hotel manager. Indeed, days before the boat racing on Oct 16, booking a riverside hotel was almost impossible. The annual boat racing festival marks the end of the Buddhist "lent," one of the biggest annual celebrations in Lao.

Water resources play a central role in the socio-cultural and economic lives of the people in Lao. To protect these resources, a Decree on the Establishment and Activities of the Water Resources and Environment Administration was issued to consolidate initiatives and water resources, and strategically channel resources from national and international donors and agencies. Previously, the management of these resources was the responsibility of various agencies, making coordination and monitoring more difficult.

The implementation of the Xedone Integrated River Basin Management Project (XIRBMP) is one of effort, which is designed to promote an integrated management approach under the new institutional set up. The XIRBMP was formally adopted by the littoral provinces of Champasack, Saravanne and Sekong on 8 October 2008 through the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the three provinces, the Water Resources Department and the PEMSEA. The signing of the MOA is a culmination of the series of discussions and consultations with the provinces on the priority areas and issues. The focus of the project implementation would be the development and implementation of a riverbasin management strategy that would provide an overall platform for integrated management of the riverbasin. As part of the strategy development, the baseline report will be further refined to describe the current state of the riverbasin and identify the priority concerns for the riverbasin. The XIRBMP is also guided by the learning-by-doing approach on capacity development to strengthen existing capacity of local staff for implementation.

"There is no venue for the three provinces to gather and discuss the issues of the Xedone River Basin, so it is difficult to have a complete picture of what is happening. There should be an inter-provincial committee to make sure that there is coordination in addressing issues," said the Provincial Water Resource and Environment Office (PWREO) representative from Champasack.

"Sometimes the water level in Selabam area can go down to as low as 5 cubic meters, which results to conflicts among upstream and downstream users," he added.

This problem is confirmed by the provincial officials of Saravanne, saying that the small hydropower in Selabam can only produce 10 megawatts. Se Xet I can only run for four hours a day and Se Xet II only a few hours as well. With the limitations of these hydropower plants, Se Xet III will be constructed soon to generate more electricity for local consumption.

In Sekong, the implementation of a community-based waste management brings hope to clean up the area near the Thateng market. If implemented, it will be the first development project that targets pollution reduction through community initiatives in the provinces.

Strengthening of human resource capacity is a critical factor for PWREO staff. "About 70 percent of the river basin is located in Saravanne. In addressing the problems of the Xedone River Basin, it is important that our local staff have the capacity to deal with the situation in the river basin," the PWREO head of Saravanne mentioned.

As part of the project team's capacity development, the local staff from the three provinces participated in the Training of Trainers on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) organized by the Department of Water Resources and the French Development Agency (AFD). The weeklong training was conducted on 20-25 October in Paksan, Bolimxay Province, Lao PDR.

Cambodia Gears Up for 3rd Phase of SDS-SEA Implementation

Cambodia – Following almost a year of consultations and discussions, the Royal Government of Cambodia has officially confirmed its commitment to the three-year implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). The Memorandum of Agreement which identifies the key areas of partnership, was signed by Dr. Mok Mareth, Senior Minister and Minister of Environment, and Prof. Raphael P.M. Lotilla, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility on 19 November 2008.

The SDS-SEA implementation in Cambodia is part of the country's broader initiative to implement the Rectangular Strategy by addressing sustainable development issues such as governance and improving capacity of various sectors to promote poverty reduction measures. Despite Cambodia's long history in coastal management, tremendous pressure from the expansion of industries, tourism, and agriculture continually challenge sustainable development in the coastal areas.

The country's three-year work programme will focus on strengthening existing institutional mechanisms for coordination and implementation to harness available resources and strategically channel these to achieve national targets and sustainable development objectives. Capacity development among coastal provinces and communities, including the transfer of good practices, is an essential component in the national government's ICM scaling up programme.

The country's SDS-SEA implementation programme will engage various agencies and institutions, including the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the Merchant Marine Department for the implementation of the Framework Statement on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response in the Gulf of Thailand, and the Royal University of Phnom Penh for the facilitation of capacity development initiatives. In collaboration with the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, community participation will be further broadened to implement projects of immediate benefit to impoverished coastal communities.

World Ocean Week in Xiamen Highlights Marine Ecological Civilization

Xiamen, PR China – The Xiamen Municipal Government, in coordination with the State Oceanic Administration, PEMSEA and the United Nations Development Programme (China), has successfully organized and conducted the 2008 World Ocean Week in Xiamen (XWOW).

The 2008 XWOW revolved on the theme "Promoting Marine Ecological Civilization", which advocates the harmonious co-existence of human beings with the seas and oceans, in the process promoting a balance of environmental sustainability and human and economic development. The XWOW featured a range of activities, which included the International Forum, an Exhibition on Marine Industries, including Yachting and Sport Fishing, and Marine Cultural activities with significant public involvement.

The International Forum included relevant presentations on climate change, biodiversity, ocean agenda and relevant ocean policies, water resource management, marine ecological protection, ecosystem-based and integrated coastal management, international cooperation and marine scientific research. Several key points emerged from the forum, which included the need for stronger coordination and collaboration at all levels and sectors; the need for a comprehensive policy framework that promotes integration; the need to step up scientific and technological research to support and inform policy and management decisions; and the need to invest in capacity development to help achieve ecological sustainability.

The 2008 XWOW also witnessed the signing of the letter of intent between Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the XWOW Secretariat, establishing a 'sister week relationship' between XWOW and World Water Week. The relationship is expected to strengthen cooperation and mutual exchange between SIWI, organizer of the World Water Week in Stockholm, and the World Ocean Week in Xiamen.

The XWOW, held annually, commits itself to providing a working platform for international cooperation and communication among the governments of coastal cities and municipalities, national agencies, experts in marine science and technology, representatives from the UN and other international organizations as well as members of relevant marine industries, enterprises and institutions.

With the successful conclusion of the 2008 XWOW, Xiamen once again demonstrated its key role in catalyzing discussions on issues related to sustainable coastal development. PEMSEA Resource Facility Executive Director, Prof. Raphael P.M. Lotilla expressed PEMSEA's continuing support to XWOW as part of its commitment to promote sustainable coastal development in the East Asian Region.

Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for Coasts and Oceans

Manila, Philippines – An Experts' Forum held at the Philippines' Senate brought together the academe, policymakers, government officials, nongovernmental entities and other stakeholders to examine issues, priorities and strategies relating to climate change adaptation. Presided by Senator Pia Cayetano, former Chair of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, the forum objectives were to: (1) identify the consequences of climate change on coasts and oceans and relevant measures for adaptation; (2) facilitate the sharing of information on adaptation strategies addressed by various concerned institutions; and (3) build consensus on the urgent need for adaptation actions among stakeholders including policy and law makers.

Session 1 of the forum focused on the "Impact of Climate Change on Coasts and Oceans." As climate change is a cross-cutting issue which severely affects wider sustainable development issues including poverty, equity and governance, communities living along the coast and in the uplands must be prepared to meet challenges to the environment, their livelihoods and their homes. Being an archipelagic developing country composed of more than 7,000 small islands, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards, including an average of 20 tropical cyclones each year and frequent El Niño-Southern Oscillation events.

"With the impending disasters which will be exacerbated by climate change, we need to act responsibly," noted session chair Fr. Jose T. Villarin, President of Xavier University and Head of the Climate Studies Division of the Manila Observatory.

Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) was referred to as the most appropriate process to deal with climate change, sea level rise and other current and long-term coastal challenges. "Adaptation must proceed at several levels simultaneously. ICM offers a holistic approach to climate change adaptation as also advocated by IPCC," emphasized Prof. Raphael P.M. Lotilla, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility, during Session 2 which delved on Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for Coasts and Oceans.

"Adaptation is in essence inherently local, hence, response measures must be tailored to local circumstances. To be most effective, efforts must have teeth - guided and supported by national policies and strategies," summarized Senator Cayetano.

Paper presentations were delivered by a roster of experts including Dr. Edgardo Gomez, Professor Emeritus of UP Marine Science Institute; Dr. Rosa T. Perez, noted meteorologist; Dr. Rex V. Cruz, Dean of UP Los Baños College of Forestry and Natural Resources; Dr. Laura T. David, Associate Professor and Oceanographer of UP Marine Science Institute; Atty. Analiza Rebueta-Teh, Assistant Secretary of DENR; Atty. Angela Consuelo Ibay, Program Coordinator of KLIMA, and Dr. Won-tae Shin, Program Specialist of the PEMSEA Resource Facility.

An exhibit on Manila Bay, organized by PEMSEA and the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), aimed to catalyze action and response to rehabilitate the Bay in light of various threats to sustainability, including climate change. The Bay's watershed areas remain to be a valuable economic source to 9 provinces, 28 coastal municipalities, and approximately 23 million inhabitants. Senator Cayetano, UNDP Country Director Renaud Meyer, Prof. Lotilla and DENR Undersecretary Lucille Sering led the opening of the exhibit. Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel F. Zubiri also joined the ceremony.

Go to the PEMSEA website (<http://www.pemsea.org>) to download proceedings, presentations and other materials.

Laem Chabang Port Develops Port Safety and Management Policy

Responding to the challenges facing the port authorities and operators regarding sustainable development, the Port Authority of Thailand (PAT) has embarked on the development of a Port Safety, Health and Environmental Management System (PSHEMS) on its Laem Chabang port.

Eleven participants representing the different departments of Laem Chabang Port participated in the PSHEMS workshop on 13-17 October 2008, organized and conducted by PEMSEA. The five-day training workshop is the first in a series of trainings, which is designed to enhance the participants' knowledge and understanding on the PSHEM Code and provide them with the necessary skills to establish, implement and improve the PSHEMS of Laem Chabang Port.

During the workshop, the participants developed the PSHEMS Policy for Laem Chabang Port. The policy expresses the Port's commitment to: prevent accidents, comply with applicable regulations, prevent pollution and improve safety, health and environmental performance.

The workshop also equipped the participants with the necessary skills to identify safety, health and environmental hazards and perform risk assessment to assess the significance of the different hazards found in the port. The workshop also covered the development of a regulatory register and the establishment of PSHEMS objectives, targets and improvement programs. These skills enabled the participants to perform the Strategic Planning Phase of PSHEMS development in Laem Chabang Port.

Mr Thongchai Thammapredeedee, Director of Port Operations Division of Laem Chabang Port emphasized the need for a concerted effort between Laem Chabang Port (as the Port Authority) and its Operators to achieve the goals expressed in their PSHEM Policy.

The next set of PSHEMS training workshops scheduled next year will cover the Documentation and Implementation of the PSHEMS, Monitoring PSHEMS Performance, PSHEMS Auditing and Continual Improvement, and will be attended by representatives from Laem Chabang Port and Private Companies operating inside the port.

Water to Run Dry by 2025

Manila, Philippines – Water is an indispensable resource for human existence. It is needed for living, livelihoods, sanitation, agriculture and industry, among others. A resource traditionally viewed to be with an inexhaustible supply, the increasing population, high urban poverty, unabated pollution and other factors, including climate change, are symptoms and causes of a serious water shortage in the next 20 years.

To lead the discussion that will explore the exemplary cases of good governance and local actions through the partnership/participation of various stakeholders regarding the impending water crisis, the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2009 has devoted a workshop on "Good policies and practices in water resources protection, restoration, utilization, conservation and management." The Korea Water Forum, German Institute of Science and Technology Pte. Ltd. (GIST) and Philippines' Manila Water and National Water Resources Board (NWRB) have agreed to co-convene the workshop.

The EAS Congress 2009 will be held on 23-27 November at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Manila with the theme: "Partnerships at Work: Local Implementation and Good Practices."

To know more about the Call for Papers/Abstracts, go to pemsea.org/eascongress/participation-details. To register for the Congress, go to pemsea.org/eascongress/registration.

Registration Now Open for the East Asian Seas Congress 2009

Quezon City, Philippines – Registration has opened for the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2009, a pioneering region-wide platform for capacity building, strategic action and cooperation for the sustainable development of the seas of East Asia to be held on 23-27 November 2009, in Manila, Philippines. Described as an intellectual marketplace, the EAS Congress brings together policymakers, senior government officials, scientists and technical experts, academics, private sector, local communities, nongovernmental entities, the youth and other stakeholders from local, national, regional and international levels together to share knowledge/experiences and engage in dynamic discussions regarding trends, issues and concerns related to coastal and ocean governance, locally, regionally and globally. Key events for the Congress include the Third Ministerial Forum on "Adaptation to Climate Change through Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management; and the International Conference on Sustainable Coastal and Ocean Development.

Carrying the theme, "Partnerships at Work: Local Implementation and Good Practices," the EAS Congress 2009 is organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Philippines) and PEMSEA, supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Coastal Management Center (CMC).

To know more about the Call for Papers/Abstracts, go to pemsea.org/eascongress/call-for-abstracts. To register for the Congress, go to pemsea.org/eascongress/registration. For other Congress Side Events and activities, go to pemsea.org/eascongress/registration.

PEMSEA, HP Philippines Extend EAS Congress 2009 Regional Photo Contest

Quezon City, Philippines – The deadline for submission of entries for the East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2009 Regional Photo Contest has been extended to 28 February 2008. Open to nationals of the East Asian region, three grand prizewinners (one from each category: Youth, Hobbyist, and Professional) will receive complimentary registration to the EAS Congress 2009, with free roundtrip airfare, accommodation and allowance. The complimentary registration includes free attendance to the EAS Congress events and workshops, including conference kits/materials, field trip and select meals. Grand prizewinners will also receive a printer from HP Philippines.

The theme "The Coast, The Ocean, My Community" emphasizes the importance of turning knowledge and concern about the coastal and marine environment into on-the-ground actions. It aims to generate awareness on local and national ocean-, coastal-, and environment-related initiatives of each country and to increase participation of the communities in these activities.

Photographs must demonstrate local actions/implementation and good practices in sustainable coastal and ocean protection, development and management. These can show local and national initiatives that address: natural and man-made hazard prevention and management; habitat protection, restoration and management; water use and supply management; food security and livelihood management; and pollution reduction and waste management. There is no limit to the number of entries an entrant can submit.

Photos must be high-quality prints or digital files and can be in color or black & white. These should not have been previously published, printed or sold commercially, displayed or won any prize or distinction in another competition. Entries will be evaluated based on the following criteria: relevance to the theme, composition/creativity and technical quality.

The contest will consist of two rounds of evaluation. The initial screening will be conducted by the PEMSEA National Focal Points, who will choose the top 3 entries in their respective countries on 31 March. The country finalists will then move on to the final round of judging on 9 May and vie for the grand prize.

Please go to the EAS Congress website (<http://www.pemsea.org/eascongress>) to download the contest mechanics and entry form or email congress@pemsea.org for details.

NOWPAP Takes Action in Recent Activities and Intergovernmental Meeting

The Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) has organized and participated in various activities including the 13th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting and a training course on remote sensing data analysis.

The Second NOWPAP training course on remote sensing data analysis was organized jointly by the NOWPAP Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre (CEARAC) and the Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute (KORDI) at Cheju National University (Korea) on 1-5 November 2008.

The training course was conducted for 23 selected trainees, including postgraduate students, professional researchers and local government officers working in the field of marine sciences, from China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, France and Thailand. 12 lecturers from the NOWPAP countries (China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation) and Germany, India and USA delivered lectures on remote sensing applications for monitoring and assessment of the marine and coastal environment in the Northwest Pacific Region.

Intergovernmental Meeting in Korea

The 13th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting was held on 20-21 October 2008 in Jeju, RO Korea. The meeting was attended by representatives of the NOWPAP member states (China, Japan, Korea and Russia), UNEP (Marine Ecosystems Unit and Division of GEF Coordination) and NOWPAP partners (COBSEA, PEMSEA and YSLME). The IOC/WESTPAC and PICES provided written statements to the meeting for enhancing cooperation with NOWPAP.

The meeting reviewed the programme of work for 2007-2008 and approved the report of the Executive Director of UNEP on the progress of the implementation of NOWPAP activities and budget; adopted the NOWPAP Regional Oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substance Spill Contingency Plan; and approved the new directions of work for NOWPAP Regional Activity Centres for 2008-2011. The meeting encouraged member states to facilitate and promote the implementation of the NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI).

The next NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting will be held in Japan in 2009.

The NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit also participated in the 3rd Workshop of the Yellow Sea Partnership (YSP) in Changwon, the RO Korea on 2 November. The meeting was attended by about 30 people from more than 20 organizations. Participants shared information on activities that have been implemented or are being planned in relation to the protection of the Yellow Sea. The 12 presentations focused on regional efforts and local actions taken in the Yellow Sea region and beyond. NOWPAP delivered a presentation introducing recent NOWPAP activities on marine litter, harmful algal blooms, oil spills and integrated coastal and river basin management.