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***Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends
in the
South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand***

REPORT

**Fifth Meeting of the Regional Working Group for
the Seagrass Sub-component**

Bintan, Indonesia, 24th – 27th August 2004



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Table of Contents

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING	1
1.1 WELCOME ADDRESS.....	1
1.2 INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS	1
2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING	1
2.1 ELECTION OF OFFICERS.....	1
2.2 DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE MEETING	1
2.3 ORGANISATION OF WORK	2
3. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA.....	2
4. BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS ON THE STATUS OF THE PREPARATORY PHASE OUTPUTS DUE 30TH JUNE 2004.	2
5. REPORTS FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATING UNIT REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS.....	4
5.1 STATUS OF MID-YEAR PROGRESS REPORTS, EXPENDITURE REPORTS, AUDITS AND BUDGETS ...	4
5.2 STATUS OF THE MOUS WITH EACH SEA	4
6. DISCUSSION ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AND POSSIBLE INPUTS TO THE SEAGRASS HABITAT COMPONENT OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.....	5
6.1 REVIEW OF NATIONAL ACTION PLAN CONTENTS	5
6.2 PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE TARGETS AND GOALS CONTAINED IN THE FRAMEWORK STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME (1999)	6
7. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE DEMONSTRATION SITES	7
7.1 PROGRESS ON DEMONSTRATION SITE PROPOSALS FOR APPROVED SITES.....	7
7.2 CONSIDERATION OF ACTIVITIES FOR SHARING EXPERIENCE AND INFORMATION BETWEEN DEMONSTRATION SITES	8
8. CONSIDERATION AND REVISION OF THE WORK PLAN AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS FOR THE PERIOD 2004 TO 2007	9
9. DATE AND PLACE OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS.....	9
10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.....	10
11. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING	10
12. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING	10

List of Annexes

ANNEX 1	List of Participants
ANNEX 2	List of Documents
ANNEX 3	Agenda
ANNEX 4	Content of Seagrass National Action Plans
ANNEX 5	Work Plan and Time Table for Regional Working Group on Seagrass Component till 30 June 2007

Report of the Meeting

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1.1 Welcome Address

1.1.1 Mr. Kelvin Passfield formally opened the fifth meeting of the Regional Working Group on Seagrass (RWG-SG). He welcomed participants on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Klaus Töpfer; the Assistant Executive Director, and Director of the UNEP Division of Global Environment Facility Co-ordination, Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif; and the Project Director, Dr. John Pernetta.

1.1.2 Mr. Passfield noted, that this fifth meeting of the RWG-SG was an important meeting, as the project entered the second phase. He further noted, as most of the national focal points had completed preparatory phase outputs, the meeting would need to decide the process to complete the second phase activities, the most important of which were the finalisation of national action plans, and contribution to the revision of the draft Regional Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea.

1.2 Introduction of Members

1.2.1 It was noted that since, there were no new members in the group, there was no need for self-introductions. The list of meeting participants is included as Annex 1 to this report. Mr. Passfield requested the members to check the contact information and make sure the PCU had the most updated contact information, as the PCU had experienced some problems with confirming the participation of one of the participants for this meeting.

2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Election of Officers

2.1.1 The Rules of Procedure state that, the Regional Working Group shall elect, from amongst the members, a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur to serve for one year. The rules state further that, officers shall be eligible for re-election no more than once.

2.1.2 Members recalled that Dr. Miguel D. Fortes was previously elected as Chairperson of the RWG-SG, Mr. Tri Edi Kuriandewa as the Vice-Chairperson and Dr. Chittima Aryuthaka as Rapporteur. However, Dr. Fortes had been replaced as the Philippines Focal Point for seagrass by Dr. Marco Nemesio E. Montaña and hence Mr. Kuriandewa had served for the remainder of the period of Dr. Fortes' term.

2.1.3 Members were invited to nominate a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur for 2004-2005. Mr. Kuriandewa nominated Mr. Kim Sour as Chairperson. Dr. Fortes seconded the nomination, and Mr. Sour accepted. Dr. Montaña nominated, and Mr. Kuriandewa seconded, Dr. Suvaluck Satumanatpan as Vice-Chairperson to the meeting. Dr. Montaña was nominated as Rapporteur by Dr. Satumanatpan, and was seconded by Mr. Kuriandewa. There were no objections, and Mr. Sour, Dr. Satumanatpan, and Dr. Montaña were elected as Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur by acclamation.

2.2 Documents Available to the Meeting

2.2.1 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to introduce the document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/Inf.2, containing a list of documentation available to the meeting. Mr. Passfield drew members' attention to an additional document, UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/9, *Seagrass distribution and area for the South China Sea region of participating countries*, which was not included in the provisional list as it was not available when the meeting documents were originally prepared. This map and table were provided by SEA START RC, and were based on the seagrass site characterisations, which had been submitted by focal points.

2.2.2 Additionally, the Philippines national seagrass report was distributed during the meeting, and Mr. Kuriandewa also distributed copies of the draft National Action Plan for Indonesia, though he

commented that this was now being revised to make it more site specific. It was noted that the Cambodia national report was submitted to the Secretariat upon arrival in Bintan, prior to the meeting, but multiple copies were not available. The complete list of documents is attached as Annex 2 to this report.

2.3 Organisation of Work

2.3.1 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to introduce the programme for the conduct of business contained in document, UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/Inf.3. Formal sessions of the meeting would be conducted in English and in plenary. Mr. Passfield also noted that some time out of the scheduled meeting sessions would need to be set aside for the PCU to work with each individual focal point for the amendment, and signing if possible, of the second amendment to the MoUs.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA

3.1 The Chairperson invited members to consider the provisional agenda prepared by the Secretariat as document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/1. Mr. Passfield noted, the additional document, UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/9 concerning distribution of seagrass sites, would be discussed under agenda items 4 and 6.2. There being no proposal for additions or amendment to the provisional agenda, the Chairperson proposed, and the meeting agreed, to adopt the meeting agenda as contained in Annex 3 of this report.

4. BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS ON THE STATUS OF THE PREPARATORY PHASE OUTPUTS DUE 30TH JUNE 2004

4.1 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to introduce document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/4 "*Current status of substantive reports on seagrass from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the Participating Countries*," which provided an overview of the current status of these reports from the perspective of the Project Co-ordinating Unit.

4.2 Mr. Passfield noted that most countries had completed their national outputs for the first phase of the project, with the exception of Malaysia. He further noted that no further funds would be remitted to focal points until the Project Co-ordinating Unit had received the anticipated outputs from the preparatory phase. The Chairperson invited each seagrass focal point to brief the meeting on the status of outputs anticipated from the preparatory phase of the project.

4.3 Mr. Sour reported that most of the preparatory activities had been completed in Cambodia, although the national report was completed behind deadline, and was only submitted to the PCU at this meeting. The national meta-database had been submitted to the PCU, and GIS seagrass site characterisation data had been submitted to the PCU and to SEA-START RC.

4.4 He further briefed the meeting that a workshop had been organised in June this year to develop a national action plan for coral reefs and seagrass management and conservation for Cambodia, to which several regional experts from the regional working groups on seagrass and coral reefs, and the PCU, were invited. He expressed his appreciation to the seagrass experts for their valuable contributions.

4.5 Professor Xiaoping Huang reported that, China's seagrass national report had been submitted to the PCU. A draft national action plan was submitted at the end of June of 2004, but, perhaps due to some electronic mail difficulties, the PCU did not receive it until it was re-sent at the beginning of August. He mentioned that the meta-database and GIS data of sites were sent to the PCU in the previous year, and data on an additional seven sites were also provided to the PCU, though not in the GIS format.

4.6 With regard to the disruption of email communication in submitting the national action plan, Mr. Passfield indicated that the UN email system had been far from perfect, and had proven to be unreliable on a number of occasions. He requested members to take note that, important reports sent through emails should be followed up with a fax to the PCU indicating that the reports had been submitted by email. Hard copies of these electronic reports should also be sent to the PCU by mail.

4.7 Mr. Tri Edi Kuriandewa informed the meeting that, Indonesia had submitted a review of national data and information, national meta-database, and review of past and ongoing projects in August 2003. A combined document based on all the reports, and in the format agreed at the fourth meeting of the RWG-SG in Guangzhou, was submitted to the PCU in July 2004. Due to lack of information on socio-economic valuation of seagrass in Indonesia, the report was delayed, but it had been completed prior to the meeting dates. He further informed the meeting, that two workshops were organised in Indonesia to prepare a draft national action plan. As he had already noted, the draft national action plan is general, without site-specific actions. He stated that the Indonesian Seagrass Committee was currently preparing a site-specific action plan.

4.8 Mr. Kamarruddin bin Ibrahim stated, that due to the delay in signing the MoU by his government, activities of Malaysia's seagrass sub-component were delayed. He informed the meeting that, Malaysia had recently managed to gain ground on the other countries in the preparation of national report and national action plan, which were sent to PCU just the day before the commencement of the meeting. He further informed the meeting that GIS data had been sent to the PCU shortly before the meeting. It was pointed out by Mr. Passfield that the PCU had not yet received the meta-database from Malaysia. He also stated that he had still not received the National Report and National Action plan in his email inbox, which he was checking daily during the meeting. Mr. Kamarruddin confirmed that he would take immediate action to address any outstanding outputs not yet submitted to the PCU, and to ensure reports were submitted to the PCU as soon as possible.

4.9 Dr. Montaña noted out that the Philippines had completed all required outputs during the first phase of the project, despite some delays in the process. He explained, that the reason why the Philippines was rather late in submitting the national action plan was that they had been required to wait for a meeting which was recently held with all Philippines habitat sub-components committees, to agree on a format of the national action plans.

4.10 Dr. Satumanatpan noted that, the GIS and meta-database of Thailand seagrass sites were finished and submitted to the PCU in 2003. A combined national report was completed and submitted to the PCU in July 2004, based on the review and comment of independent reviewers. She further pointed out, that the revision of chapters 4 and 5, on economic valuation and national legislation respectively, were the main reasons for the delay in finalisation of the report, as substantive comments were made on the draft by the Regional Task Force on Economic Valuation and the Regional Task Force on Legal Matters. She noted that, despite the various difficulties resulting from the late receipt of the comments, Thailand had benefited greatly from the work. The review of national legislation had provided a direction for the future development of legislation regarding the protection and sustainable use of seagrass, and the Pollution Control Department had used the valuation criteria developed under this project as guidelines for its own use. Dr. Satumanatpan reported that a draft NAP had been submitted to the PCU, but there was a need to rearrange the NAP to clearly indicate inputs to the revision of the Regional SAP.

4.11 Dr. Nguyen Van Tien reported to the meeting that the Viet Nam Seagrass Committee had submitted the review of data and information, meta-database, and GIS data to the PCU. Following the format of the national report agreed in Guangzhou, a combined national report was revised, finalised and submitted to the PCU. A draft NAP had been submitted to the PCU, and would be revised based on comments received from the PCU and also from this meeting.

4.12 In relation to the reporting of national focal points, Mr. Passfield pointed out that, no national meta-database should be considered finalised, as more information would become available since research and activities related to seagrass continue in each country. Therefore the specialised executing agencies should update the meta-database with new records as information became available. With regard to the GIS data, Mr. Passfield requested that members check the map of seagrass distribution and the table of area covered by each site, in document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/4, and update the information to be included in the map, if available.

4.13 It was noted that, the national reports should be printed both in English and in national languages. The PCU would be responsible for co-ordinating the English editing and printing of national reports in English. As for the publication of national reports in national languages, Mr. Kamarruddin proposed, and the meeting agreed that certain standards or common elements should be included in the cover and insider cover of the reports. The meeting agreed that, minimum elements

in the cover of the national reports in national languages should include: three uniform logos (UNEP, UNEP/GEF South China Sea Project, and GEF logos), the project title, seagrass sub-component and UNEP's standard disclaimer. The date of the report should also be clearly indicated.

4.14 Furthermore, the Associate Expert drew members' attention to an email sent by Mr. Passfield earlier this year regarding the disclaimer to be included in the inside cover of the reports to be printed in national languages. She noted that the Philippines report had not included the disclaimer in their printed national report. Mr. Passfield requested Philippines to print no further copies prior to the inclusion of the disclaimer. Dr. Montaña indicated that they could print the disclaimer on a sticker and insert into the copies that have been printed, and would ensure the disclaimer was included in future publications.

4.15 Professor Huang asked about the process for publishing the National Reports, now that the revised versions had been submitted to the PCU. Mr. Passfield advised that it was the intention of the PCU to have the reports edited for English, and once this was completed they would be published. He further stated that it was not the intention of the PCU to make further comments on the content, as this had been already completed by the PCU and the independent reviewers. It was further noted that the Philippines had already published 100 copies of their National Report, in English.

5. REPORTS FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATING UNIT REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

5.1 Status of Mid-year Progress Reports, Expenditure Reports, Audits and Budgets

5.1.1 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to introduce document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/5 entitled *"Current status of budgets and reports from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the participating countries"*. It was noted by Mr. Passfield that some countries had not submitted their six-monthly progress reports for the period of January-June 2004, despite the fact that focal points should have no problems with this task after the extensive experience obtained during the past two years in preparing such reports. He further noted the failure of many SEAs to report interest earned from the unspent money held in their bank accounts.

5.1.2 Members were invited to provide information and any clarification regarding the submission of six-monthly reports. Mr. Sour reported that he had brought with him to the meeting the draft progress report, expenditure report and cash advance request. Professor Huang informed the meeting that progress reports were being prepared, and should be submitted shortly after the meeting. Mr. Kuriandewa reported that all the required progress reports and audit reports had been submitted to the PCU. He also informed the meeting that, in Indonesia's case, all the components and sub-components were required, by the national focal point, to be audited by the same auditing company. This process resulted in the audit report for 2003 being submitted three months after the agreed deadline. Dr. Montaña informed the meeting that originals of the reports were submitted to the PCU during this meeting. Dr. Satumanatpan reported that Thailand is currently revising the budget for the next three years, and should submit the revised budgets after the meeting. Dr. Tien reported that Viet Nam had submitted the relevant reports one week prior to the meeting.

5.1.3 Regarding outstanding audit reports, six monthly reports, expenditure statements, and cash advance requests, the meeting agreed that these would be submitted, to the PCU within two weeks of the closure of the meeting. However, Cambodia indicated that they may not be able to submit the audit report within this time, as this was dependent on the National Technical Focal point.

5.2 Status of the MoUs with each SEA

5.2.1 The previous MoUs had been extended to June 30th 2004. In order to simplify the administrative process required for the project to continue to December 2007, the PCU proposed that these MoUs be further extended, to June 2007. Activities in the second phase of the project primarily focused on completing national action plans, and providing inputs to the regional SAP. Additional funds would be provided for the convening of regular meetings of the national seagrass committees to oversee the progress on these activities. Mr. Passfield noted, for those countries with demonstration sites, an additional Annex to the MoU would need to be prepared covering the activities and budgets associated with those sites.

5.2.2 Members were asked to review the text of the draft MoUs, including the work plan and budgets, and where possible sign this prior to the closure of this meeting. Mr. Passfield noted, as the budget would be limited in the second phase of the project, the Seagrass committee meetings should be carefully planned to adjust to limited funding resources. He further noted, time should be set aside during this meeting for the PCU to work with individual National Focal Points on the content and signature of the amendment to the MoUs.

5.2.3 The Associate Expert proposed, and the meeting agreed, to collectively review each major item of the MoU to ensure members had a common understanding of what would need to be done in the next phase of the project. Mr. Passfield noted, as most MoUs were similar to each other, apart from some minor differences with the Malaysian MoU due to its delay in the preparatory phase activities, and the Cambodian MoU which combined the coral reefs and seagrass sub-components, that a review of text from only one of the MoUs would be sufficient. It was proposed to use the Philippines as an example.

5.2.4 Some questions and clarifications were made during the review of the text of the MoU amendment. In replying to a question raised by Professor Huang regarding what would be the main activities of the seagrass committee in the second phase of the project, as most activities would be completed fairly soon, and the budget was limited, Mr. Passfield replied, national Seagrass Committees should facilitate the finalisation, adoption and implementation of NAPs. They should also not limit their role to only supporting activities of the SCS project, but also be involved in other initiatives concerning the management of the seagrass habitat. The seagrass committees should aim to have a life beyond the completion of the project.

5.2.5 In discussing the role of the national seagrass committees in raising public awareness of the importance of seagrass, and related project activities, Ms. Chen pointed out that SEAs should conduct activities to increase public awareness of the outputs produced in the previous two and half years. Noting the limited funding sources, the meeting agreed that certain public awareness activities could be conducted at virtually no cost. Dr. Montaño informed the meeting that the Marine Science Institute had developed on website which could include a link to the project website, and could also include preparatory phase outputs. Dr. Fortes further pointed out, that the Sunday Times (Aug 8, 2004) in Philippines published a newspaper article on seagrass, in which the SCS project received a mention. Mr. Passfield noted that there had also been a recent article in the Viet Nam News on the project, and encouraged national seagrass committee to be pro-active in the search for sources of additional funding and methods for awareness raising.

5.2.6 As there were no changes to the proposed text of the MoU amendment, the Chairperson requested members to indicate their willingness to sign the amendment during or immediately after the meeting. Dr. Satumanatpan thought that the representative of the SEAs should sign after the project director had signed. Mr. Passfield pointed out that this would delay finalisation, as the documents would need to be mailed to SEAs, resulting in delays. Cambodia, China and Indonesia indicated that they could sign the MoUs during the meeting. Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand could not sign during the meeting since they were not authorised to sign the MoUs. Philippines and Viet Nam indicated the MoU amendment could be signed within two weeks of the close of the meeting, whereas Thailand and Malaysia indicated they could sign the MoU within two weeks of receiving the document with the Project Director's signature.

6. DISCUSSION ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AND POSSIBLE INPUTS TO THE SEAGRASS HABITAT COMPONENT OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

6.1 Review of National Action Plan Contents

6.1.1 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to introduce this agenda item. Mr. Passfield informed the meeting that draft national action plans had been received from all countries with the exception of Malaysia, although most of the national action plans were late in their submission. A preliminary review had been conducted by the PCU, and was included in the meeting documents as UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/6, *Review of the national action plans for seagrass*. Copies of all the plans received were also included in the meeting documents as UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/7.

6.1.2 Referring to document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/6, Mr. Passfield pointed out that, the purpose of the national action plans was to provide a concrete, operational plan for execution at the national level. It should therefore contain clear statements regarding “what is to be done, where it will be done, why it is to be done, when it is to be done, who will do it, and how much the costs will be”. Most draft NAPs already submitted were generic, lacking specific actions in specific sites. Mr. Passfield further noted, most NAPs were prepared independently, without consultation with the other habitat sub-components in each country. Members were invited to review the comments on their national action plans, and revise the plans based on the comments.

6.1.3 Mr. Passfield used the Cambodian national action plan as an example of the process the PCU had undertaken in analysing national action plans, in order to help focal points see that there should be clearly identifiable linkages between goal, objectives and actions. The meeting had a lengthy discussion of the differences between certain terminologies such as vision, mission, goal, objective, strategy etc. It was proposed that the NAPs should start with a goal, objectives and related activities/actions, followed by the rest of the plan.

6.1.4 The meeting further proceeded to agree on a general format for the next draft NAP. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding what needed to be included in this draft. During the discussion, Professor Huang raised the point that some actions would not be site specific, as in the case of legislation or awareness raising for a province. It was agreed that in that case, the “site” for action would be defined as “seagrass beds in Guangdong Province” for example. The agreed format to be followed is attached as Annex 4 to this meeting report.

6.2 Preliminary Review of the Targets and Goals Contained in the Framework Strategic Action Programme (1999)

6.2.1 Following an invitation from the Chairperson, Mr. Passfield presented to the meeting document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/8, consisting of extracts of the habitat relevant material from the Draft Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea.

6.2.2 Members were asked to consider the targets of the habitat sub-components contained in the draft SAP, and in particular the target of the section pertaining to seagrass. In light of the work they had completed over the past two and a half years, they were asked to decide whether the target would be achievable, or needed to be revised. They were also asked to consider the goals and targets of their NAPs, with a view to determining whether these were likely to contribute to the SAP targets decided upon during the discussion.

6.2.3 During the discussion, it was realised that the data on economic valuation of seagrass in the draft SAP should be updated or revised, based on information collected during the first phase of the project. For example, Professor Huang informed the meeting that for China, newly obtained data on economic value of the Hepu seagrass bed put its value at US\$33,800 per hectare per year, in comparison to the figure of US\$22,400 contained in the draft SAP. The revised estimate for Hepu was obtained using the guidelines of economic valuation provided by the Regional Task Force on Economic Valuation.

6.2.4 Mr. Tri Edi noted that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining information and data on economic value of seagrass in Indonesia, as the seagrass beds were so dispersed. Members agreed to provide any updated data regarding the economic value of seagrass to Mr. Passfield, when available.

6.2.5 The meeting noted, the target set in the Regional SAP of maintaining, by 2010, “at least 80% of the present area of seagrass in good condition” was not realistic, and also difficult to monitor. This was largely due to the fact that there was still no realistic estimate of the total area of seagrass, despite the increased knowledge gained in the first phase of the project. Based on the best information available from the focal points the current known area of seagrass was determined to be just under 80,000 hectares. However, it was agreed that this figure needed to be further revised. For example, Viet Nam indicated that there were still 6 coastal provinces in southern Viet Nam which had not been surveyed, and the area documented for Indonesia was only from Bintan and Mapor. Mr. Kuriandewa indicated that, the rest of Indonesia’s South China Sea area could be estimated quite quickly using remote sensing on images already available, though ground truthing would not be feasible in the near future.

6.2.6 Given these difficulties associated with estimating the total area of seagrass for the South China Sea at this time, the meeting discussed at some length alternative realistic and measurable targets.

6.2.7 Dr. Hutomo proposed that the establishment of a certain number of seagrass sanctuaries or marine protected areas, for example, could be more realistic and achievable. Dr. Fortes concurred with the suggestion, and added that there were few laws specifically related to seagrass in the region. He suggested, and the meeting agreed, that the recognition of seagrass in national legislation could be another reasonable and useful target in the revised SAP.

6.2.8 Mr. Kuriandewa informed the meeting that, due to the activities of this project, Indonesia would soon be ready to pass the first law regulating conservation and management of seagrass beds. The Minister of Environment would sign a ministerial decree for seagrass in Indonesia by the end of 2004.

6.2.9 The members of the RWG then considered their draft NAPs, in respect to the number of sites in each country in which they expected to have specific actions related to seagrass management. A total of 29 sites were found to be under consideration for inclusion under the draft NAPs.

6.2.10 Based on these deliberations, it was eventually agreed that the targets for the seagrass component of the SAP should be revised to:

Thirty sites to be under management (i.e. with management plans) in the SCS, with a minimum of 2 managed sites in each of the 7 participating countries, by 2010. The total area to be set based on data for the 29 sites to be listed in the NAPs.

Recognition of the significance of seagrass by National Governments through national policy and planning or legislation in each country by 2010.

6.2.11 Because of its relevance to the SAP, Mr. Passfield presented to the meeting the map of seagrass distribution in the South China Sea produced by the SEA START RC, and contained in document UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/9 *Seagrass distribution and area from participating countries for the South China Sea region*. He noted there was a considerable difference between the data included in this map and those provided in the meeting, and also to the original map of seagrass distribution contained in the draft SAP. For example, the meeting noted that some seagrass sites in Malaysia and Indonesia in the map from the Draft Regional SAP were not included in the later map. Mr. Passfield requested, and it was agreed, that members provide further relevant available data and information on site characterisation for every site listed, to SEA START RC, with a copy to the PCU. The timeline to provide these data and information would be decided under a later agenda item.

7. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE DEMONSTRATION SITES

7.1 Progress on Demonstration Site Proposals for Approved Sites

7.1.1 The Chairperson recalled that the PSC, at its last meeting, had approved the selection of demonstration sites for seagrass, based on the top 3 ranked sites following the selection process that was undertaken by this RWG at its last meeting. These were Hepu (China), Cape Bolinao (Philippines), Bai Bon, Phu Quoc Island (Viet Nam). The PSC also recommended that the fourth ranked site, Trikora Beach in Indonesia, be funded under the GEF Medium Sized Project (MSP) mechanism, following the announcement at the Regional Scientific Conference Partnership Workshop in Bangkok, February 2004, that funding for an additional 7 sites would be available under the MSP programme.

7.1.2 The Chairperson invited Mr. Passfield to brief the meeting regarding the status and progress of the four selected demonstration sites. Mr. Passfield noted that the PCU had been working with the focal points of these countries to finalise the demonstration site proposals, and put them into a format and condition to satisfy the requirements of UNEP and the GEF before the funding could be provided. Much progress had been made in the revision of the Hepu seagrass site, as Mr. Yihang Jiang from the PCU visited China in June 2004 and worked with Professor Huang on the proposal. As Bai Bon,

Phu Quoc Island would be a joint managed site between Cambodia and Viet Nam, Dr. Pernetta had been working with Cambodia and Viet Nam focal points in finalising the proposal. As for the Cape Bolinao site in the Philippines, Mr. Passfield had made some comments on the proposal, and would work with the focal point from the Philippines during this meeting to further revise the proposal before it was finally approved. Mr. Passfield then invited Mr. Sour and Dr. Tien to brief the meeting regarding the development of the joint demonstration site between Cambodia and Viet Nam, and Ms. Chen from the PCU to brief the meeting regarding progress with the Trikora Beach site, as she had been communicating with the UNEP Division of Global Environment Facility Co-ordination (UNEP/DGEF) in Nairobi on all of the projects to be funded as MSPs by the GEF.

7.1.3 Mr. Sour briefed the meeting on discussions that had been held between Cambodia, Viet Nam and the PCU in developing the joint site proposal of Bai Bon, Phu Quoc in Viet Nam and Kampot and Kep in Cambodia. It was decided that a joint proposal would be developed with two separate budgets one each for Cambodia and Viet Nam. Cambodia had submitted the proposal to Viet Nam National Technical Focal Point, Dr. Vo Si Tuan for him to combine with the Viet Nam proposal. Additionally, Cambodia had established 2 management boards, one in Kampot and one in Kep. He further noted, in the jointly managed site, Cambodia would mainly focus on seagrass, while Viet Nam would focus on both coral reefs and seagrass. Dr. Tien noted that a ministerial declaration for joint management between Cambodia and Viet Nam had been drafted, and would be signed by both countries in jointly managing the site.

7.1.4 Ms. Chen then informed the meeting that the procedure to develop the MSP proposals would be a little more complicated than that required for proposals to be funded under the SCS project directly, as all the MSP proposals would need to go through the UNEP/DGEF office in Nairobi and GEF Secretariat in Washington DC. The UNEP/DGEF had agreed to put the seven proposals into the new MSP format, with their comments inserted, and this would be finished by Mid-September 2004. After receiving the comments, the PCU would work closely with the respective focal points in finalising the proposals. Ms. Chen recalled that only 2 MSP sites could be funded this year, with the other 5 to be funded in 2005. According to the PSC decision, and based on an initial review of the proposals, the PCU recommended that Indonesia's Trikora Beach seagrass site and Thailand's Thale Noi wetland site should be funded this year.

7.2 Consideration of Activities for Sharing Experience and Information between Demonstration Sites

7.2.1 The Chairperson noted that the PSC considered and agreed on a framework for regional co-ordination, dissemination of experiences, and personnel exchange between sites. The Chairperson drew members' attention to annex 8 of the meeting report of the third Project Steering Committee meeting, UNEP/GEF/SCS/PSC.3/3.

7.2.2 With reference to annex 8, Mr. Passfield noted that the document outlined three possible modes of exchanging information and experience: 1) exchange of personnel between sites; 2) training courses and/or workshops based on the demonstration sites, and; 3) publication and dissemination of technical reports and/or public awareness materials. Additionally, he noted the document also provided some guidance to those countries with approved demonstration sites on the selection of a site manager and the establishment of a management board.

7.2.3 In reply to questions raised by several members in the meeting regarding the procedures to exchange personnel between countries, Mr. Passfield provided clarification that each demonstration site should develop a programme of activities, based on the purposes of demonstration sites, for the consideration of the National Seagrass Committee and the RWG-SG via the PCU. The PCU would circulate the programme of activities to the group through email. In line with the programme of activities, each country should consider their national needs, and nominate individuals whose participation would provide most benefit to the efforts for seagrass management in their country. All participating countries, no matter whether or not they had demonstration sites, would have equal opportunities to participate in the exchange programme.

7.2.4 Professor Huang noted, as demonstration sites would be in remote areas, it would be important to provide medical insurance to exchange personnel. Mr. Passfield noted, with reference to the report of the third meeting of the PSC, it was decided, costs of medical and other insurance would

be met by the employer of the individual participating in the exchange programme and would neither be the responsibility of the United Nations Environment Programme nor of the institution/organisation running the demonstration sites. He further noted that, the PSC did agree however that the individuals selected should receive an allowance that would enable them to purchase appropriate medical insurance since the existing government schemes in many countries were inadequate and would be unlikely to cover the costs of medical treatment in another country.

7.2.5 Several members expressed their concerns regarding the requirement for the command of English in selecting the exchange personnel. It was noted by Dr. Hutomo that in community-based and managed demonstration sites, people such as community motivators, who may be those likely to benefit most from the exchange programme, might not speak English well at all. He then proposed, and the meeting concurred, to include an additional criterion in selecting exchange personnel as following:

"In the case of exchange for increasing capacity in community based management, consideration should be given to selecting people from the community or stakeholders who would benefit, where possible."

7.2.6 In connection with the language problem, Dr. Fortes suggested that two individuals could be sent from one country, to a demonstration site, where one of the two has an adequate command of written and spoken English. The proposal was supported by some members of the working group, taking into account the difficulties that may be faced by a foreigner on his own, working in what may be a remote location, for several months.

7.2.7 Although seeing the merit in such an approach, Mr. Passfield pointed out that this would have obvious impacts on the available budget. He suggested that where a person may not have adequate English, they may still be nominated for consideration, with the nomination accompanied by appropriate justification for why they should participate, despite their difficulties with the English language.

8. CONSIDERATION AND REVISION OF THE WORK PLAN AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS FOR THE PERIOD 2004 TO 2007

8.1 In the light of the discussion under prior agenda items, and with reference to individual work plans included in the draft second MoU amendment, members were requested to provide a work plan and timetable for the project activities in the second phase of the project, with particular emphasis on the development of national action plans and contributions to a revised SAP. In addition, those countries that had not yet finalised their National Reports were requested to advise the date when these reports would be provided to the PCU.

8.2 In considering the work plan for the project to June 2007, the RWG-SG agreed that the second draft of the national action plan, taking into consideration the discussions and decisions made at this meeting, be submitted to the PCU by December 2004. The meeting noted that some activities would be continuous throughout the second phase of the project, such as updating data and information, maintaining the meta-database, providing inputs to the regional SAP etc. They also agreed that GIS questionnaire data should be updated as it became available. The agreed work plan and timetable is attached as Annex 5 to this report.

9. DATE AND PLACE OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS

9.1 Members were invited to consider and agree upon the proposed time and place for the sixth meeting of the RWG-SG. Members recalled that the PSC had decided at its second meeting that future RWG meetings could only be convened at demonstration sites. It was noted that meetings in this second phase of the project were to be held once per year, hence members were asked to consider a date approximately 12 months from the current date. Transportation and logistics for the sixth meeting of the RWG-SG were discussed for Kampot in Cambodia, Phu Quoc Island in Viet Nam and Bolinao in Philippines.

9.2 Following this, Dr. Montaña kindly offered Bolinao as a venue for the sixth meeting of the RWG-SG and further noted another GEF funded project was ongoing in the site, and possibly facilities and equipment associated with this project could be utilised for the convening of the meeting. He recommended that the meeting be held some time between October and February, after the peak of the wet season, which would make transportation difficult during that time.

9.3 The meeting accepted Dr. Montaña's invitation with gratitude. Based on the recommendation of Dr. Montaña, and considering members' individual schedules and national holidays, the meeting tentatively agreed that the sixth meeting of the RWG-SG to be held during the last week of September 2005, noting extra time might be needed to be set aside for travel from Manila to Bolinao, a trip of approximately 6 or 7 hours by bus.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Members were invited to consider and discuss any further items of business under this agenda item. Members advised they had no other project related business to discuss. Dr. Fortes took the opportunity to remind members that the Seagrass 2004 Conference and the sixth International Seagrass Biology Workshop would be held in Townsville, Australia, in September-October 2004, noting that while the RWG-SG focused its work on the South China Seagrass, it would be similarly important for the group to be in touch with what is happening to seagrass worldwide.

10.2 Dr. Fortes further recommended that members join the World Seagrass Association, and noted the annual fee for the membership was reasonably low for professionals from developing countries, and there were benefits in being a member. For example, the association was funding 15 young scientists, especially from developing countries, to the conference in Townsville. Members were informed they could join the Association through the internet.

11. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

11.1 The Rapporteur, Dr. Montaña, presented the draft report of the meeting for consideration and adoption by the members. The meeting report was considered, amended and adopted as it appears in this document.

12. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

12.1 Dr. Montaña expressed his appreciation to Ms. Chen for her assistance to him as the Rapporteur. The Chairperson thanked Dr. Montaña, the PCU and all other members of RWG-SG for their hard work, and he, on behalf of the group, thanked Mr. Kuriandewa and Dr. Hutomo for their hospitality.

12.2 Mr. Passfield expressed the PCU's appreciation for the assistance provided by Mr. Kuriandewa and his team to the successful convening of the meeting. He requested Mr. Kuriandewa to also pass the RWG-SG's appreciation to the local government for their assistance towards the goal of the project through their obvious support for the Trikora Beach demonstration site. He noted, the field trip was successfully organised, and had contributed to members' understanding of seagrass and threats in the Trikora site.

12.3 There being no other business, the Chairperson called for a motion to formally close the meeting at 16:30 on 27 August 2004.

ANNEX 1

List of Participants

Focal Points

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ANNEX 2

List of Documents

Discussion documents

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/1	Agenda
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/2	Annotated Agenda
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/3	Report of the Meeting
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/4	Current Status of Substantive Reports on Seagrass from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the Participating Countries.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/5	Current Status of Budgets and Reports from the Specialised Executing Agencies in the Participating Countries.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/6	Review of the National Action Plans for Seagrass
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/7	Draft National Action Plans for Seagrass from the Participating Countries. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Action Plan for Coral Reef and Seagrass Management and Conservation in Cambodia 2. National Action Plan for Seagrass of China 3. Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Management of Seagrass Ecosystem in Indonesia 4. Philippine National Seagrass Management Program 2002-2012 5. Thailand Seagrass Management Action Plan 6. Draft of National Seagrass Action Plan in Viet Nam to 2010
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/8	Extracts from Draft SAP, Feb 1999, Relevant to Habitats
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/9	Seagrass Distribution and Area for the South China Sea Region of Participating Countries

Information documents

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/Inf.1	List of Participants
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/Inf.2	List of Documents
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.5/Inf.3	Draft Programme

The following documents are supplied on CD-ROM and in published form.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-M.4/3	Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Mangroves Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"</i> . Report of the Meeting. Beihai, China, 14 th – 17 th October 2003 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-M.4/3.
UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-CR.4/3	Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Coral Reefs Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project <i>"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"</i> . Report of the Meeting. Guangzhou, China, 27 th - 30 th November 2003 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-CR.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.4/3

Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Seagrass Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Guangzhou, China, 29th November – 2nd December 2003 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-SG.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-W.4/3

Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Wetlands Sub-component for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15th – 18th December 2003 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-W.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.4/3

Fourth Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Pattaya, Thailand, 15th - 17th February 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RSTC.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/PSC.3/3

Third Meeting of the Project Steering Committee for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Manila, Philippines, 25th - 27th February 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/PSC.3/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-LbP.4/3

Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Land-based Pollution Component for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Guangzhou, China, 30th March – 2nd April 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-LbP.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.4/3

Fourth Meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Fisheries Component for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Manila, Philippines, 26th – 29th April 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RWG-F.4/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RTF-L.2/3

Second Meeting of the Regional Task Force on Legal Matters for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Phu Quoc Island, Viet Nam, 3rd - 6th May 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RTF-L.2/3.

UNEP/GEF/SCS/RTF-E.2/3

Second Meeting of the Regional Task Force on Economic Valuation for the UNEP/GEF Project *"Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand"*. Report of the Meeting. Siem Reap, Cambodia, 31st May – 2nd June 2004 UNEP/GEF/SCS/RTF-E.2/3.

UNEP SCS/SAP Ver. 3

Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea (Draft Version 3, 24 February 1999).

Documents received during the meeting

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| Cambodia | - | National Report for Seagrass, 47pp. |
| Indonesia | - | Draft National report for the Indonesia Seagrass, 96 pp. |
| | - | Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Manangement of Seagrass Ecosystem in Indonesia, (<i>in English, 12pp and Bahasa, 13pp.</i>) |
| Malaysia | - | National Seagrass Metadata of Malaysia, 153pp. |
| | - | The contract for National report. |
| | - | The National Seagrass report, 21pp. |
| Philippines | - | 6 monthly progress report (Jan - 30 Jun 04), 6 monthly expenditure (Jan- Jun 04), Cash Advance request (Jan - Jun 04) and copy of contracts. |
| | - | The Audit report as of June 2004, 2 <i>sheets</i> . |
| | - | National Report included the national action plan as annex, 130pp. |

ANNEX 3

Agenda

- 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**
 - 1.1 Welcome Address
 - 1.2 Introduction of Members
- 2. ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING**
 - 2.1 Election of Officers
 - 2.2 Documents Available to the Meeting
 - 2.3 Organisation of Work
- 3. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA**
- 4. BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS ON THE STATUS OF THE PREPARATORY PHASE OUTPUTS DUE 30TH JUNE 2004.**
- 5. REPORTS FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATING UNIT REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS**
 - 5.1 Status of Mid-year Progress Reports, Expenditure Reports, Audits and Budgets
 - 5.2 Status of the MoUs with each SEA
- 6. DISCUSSION ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AND POSSIBLE INPUTS TO THE SEAGRASS HABITAT COMPONENT OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**
 - 6.1 Review of National Action Plan Contents
 - 6.2 Preliminary Review of the Targets and Goals Contained in the Framework Strategic Action Programme (1999)
- 7. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE DEMONSTRATION SITES**
 - 7.1 Progress on Demonstration Site Proposals for Approved Sites
 - 7.2 Consideration of Activities for Sharing Experience and Information between Demonstration Sites
- 8. CONSIDERATION AND REVISION OF THE WORK PLAN AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS FOR THE PERIOD 2004 TO 2007**
- 9. DATE AND PLACE OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS**
- 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 11. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING**
- 12. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

ANNEX 4

Content of Seagrass National Action Plans

- 1. OVERVIEW OF SEAGRASS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA FOR EACH COUNTRY**
(2-5 pages 1500 to 3000 words)
 - 1.1 Seagrass and associate key species present in the seagrass beds**
 - 1.2 Distribution of seagrass (incl. a map of distribution as an annex)**
 - 2. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN**
 - 2.1 Total Value of seagrass**
 - 2.1.1 Use Value**
 - 2.1.2 Non-use Value**
 - 2.2 Priority threats to seagrass**
 - 3. CURRENT EFFORTS RELATED TO SEAGRASS MANAGEMENT**
 - 3.1 Existing management (e.g. SCS project, others?)**
 - 3.2 Legal basis and institutional arrangements**
 - 4. ACTION PROGRAMME**
 - 4.1 Goal**
 - 4.2 Objectives**
 - 4.3 Actions (Where, Why, Who, Cost, When)**
 - 4.3.1 Site(s)**
 - 4.3.2 Criteria for selecting site(s) for management**
 - 4.3.3 Responsibility**
 - 4.3.4 Estimated budget**
 - 4.3.5 Time frame**
 - 4.4 Possible sources of funding for implementation**
- ANNEX TABLE TO SUMMARISE THE ACTIONS**
MAP

ANNEX 5

Work Plan and Time Table for Regional Working Group on Seagrass Component till 30 June 2007

Figure 1 Work Plan and Time Table for Seagrass Component till 30 June 2007.

[illegible]

Figure 2

[illegible]