

SECTION 4 – REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND/OR TRACK 1.5 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

1. CHART OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

See [Figure 1.4.1.1](#) above.

2. ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

Summary of role: *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation that has institutionalised wide-ranging cooperation among the ten Southeast Asian states. The ASEAN also facilitates cooperation between its Member States and extra-regional nations/organisations through its ASEAN-Plus mechanisms such as the ASEAN-China Dialogue Partnership, the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The issue of marine plastics is addressed by different bodies within each mechanism.*

Summary of work: *The ASEAN and ASEAN-Plus mechanisms have issued a number of policy statements on marine plastics, including the 2019 Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region, and the 2018 EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris. ASEAN and the APT have marine plastic-specific action plans, such as the 2019 Framework of Action on Marine Debris, and the 2019 ASEAN+3 Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative respectively. Generally, these mechanisms recognise that marine plastic pollution is a regional challenge and have facilitated workshops on marine plastics since 2017.*

Keywords/research fields: *ASEAN; ASEAN-Plus; ASEAN-China dialogue partnership; ASEAN Plus Three; ASEAN-Plus dialogue, East Asia Summit; ASEAN regional forum; initiatives; Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris; Framework of Action for Marine Debris; ASEAN working group on coastal and marine environment; ASEAN Working group on chemicals and waste; ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity; ASEAN-EU; EU-ASEAN development cooperation; Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN dialogue instrument; ASEAN+3; Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative; EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris, Manila Plan of Action*

2.1 ASEAN and ASEAN-Plus mandate

2.1.1 ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional cooperative intergovernmental organisation. It currently has 10 member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia,

Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It was established in 1967 and has had its current make-up since 1999. It has a comprehensive institutional structure organised around three pillars:

- (i) The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)
- (ii) The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)
- (iii) The ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC)

Each pillar is headed by a Council Meeting and divided into several levels of seniority with reporting flowing up from the working groups and technical subject-matter centres. All three Councils report to the ASEAN Coordinating Council and then to the ASEAN Summit, the highest level. All three pillars have several bodies involved in issues related to marine environmental protection.

2.1.2 ASEAN-Plus

ASEAN has institutionalised interactions with a number of partner countries and international organisations through its ASEAN-plus mechanisms. Each mechanism comprises ASEAN plus a different configuration of its partners. ASEAN member states typically control the agenda for these mechanisms, which aim to harness the cooperation of ASEAN's partners to address regional issues.

The mechanisms that are of particular relevance to the protection of the marine environment in general, and marine plastics in particular, are the ASEAN-China Dialogue Partnership, the ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3 / APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). These mechanisms have similar reporting structures to those within ASEAN, with their working groups reporting upwards to the respective Summit bodies, or Ministerial body in the case of the ARF. (See [Chart 1.](#))

Also of note in this context is the development ASEAN-UN cooperation mechanisms. Following less formal dialogue and cooperation that started in the 1970s, the ASEAN Leaders and the UN Secretary-General adopted first an MOU in 2007 and then a Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN in Bali at the 4th ASEAN-UN Summit on 19 November 2011. Action plans have subsequently been adopted to implement this Joint Declaration. The 2016-2021 ASEAN-UN Plan of Action includes coastal and marine protection in its scope.

ASEAN-China Dialogue Partnership

It comprises ASEAN and China. The marine environment is discussed within the framework for ASEAN-China environmental cooperation, where officials from the ASEAN environment sectoral (i.e. ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment) meet with the Chinese officials responsible for environmental issues. Marine environmental cooperation in the South China Sea is also sometimes discussed under the ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (SOM-DOC), which reports to the ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers.

ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3 / APT)

It comprises ASEAN and the three Northeast Asian states of China, Japan and RO Korea. Environmental cooperation is institutionalised, with the environment officials from these countries reporting to the ASEAN+3 Environment Ministers, who have met regularly every one to two years.

Other ASEAN-Plus Dialogues

In the context of the protection of the marine environment in general, and in particular in that of combating pollution from marine plastic debris and microplastics, two other ASEAN Dialogues are very active: the ASEAN-European Union Dialogue Partnership and the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Partnership. Several research projects have been deployed in the context of these Dialogues that seek to provide support to the ASEAN to combat pollution from marine plastics.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

It comprises ASEAN and eight of its Dialogue Partners i.e. Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the RO KOREA, Russia and the USA. The EAS addresses marine environment issues under its framework for maritime cooperation, rather than environmental cooperation. Progress on cooperation is to be reported annually to the EAS Foreign Ministers and Leaders.

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

It comprises ASEAN and 17 other countries. The ARF facilitates marine environmental cooperation through its Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM-MS) which recognises that maritime security requires tackling non-traditional security issues related to the marine environment. Unlike the other mechanisms, the ARF does not have a Leaders-level meeting. All cooperation is only reported to the ARF Foreign Ministers.

2.2 ASEAN's initiatives

ASEAN member states have acknowledged issues raised by pollution from marine plastics regionally and globally, and have launched a number of initiatives.

2.2.1 Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region

In June 2019, the ASEAN Leaders issued the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region, which affirmed member states' commitments to combatting marine debris through: (i) the strengthening of actions at the national level, as well as through collaborative actions at the regional level; (ii) encouraging an integrated land-to-sea approach; (iii) promoting inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination and private sector engagement; and (iv) strengthening and promoting innovation, research, education and public awareness. The Declaration is available at:

<https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/2.-Bangkok-Declaration-on-Combating-Marine-Debris-in-ASEAN-Region-FINAL.pdf>.

2.2.2 Framework of Action on Marine Debris

The Bangkok Declaration was accompanied by the Framework of Action on Marine Debris (FAMAD) (available: <https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/3.-ASEAN-Framework-of-Action-on-Marine-Debris-FINAL.pdf>). See also: <https://asean.org/chairmans-statement-34th-asean-summit/>.

The FAMAD comprises four priority areas and sub-items as follows:

- (i) Policy Support and Planning
 - Regional policy dialogue/discussion
 - Multi-sectoral policy (including waste management and circular economy as well as extended producer responsibility (EPR))
 - Implementation of relevant laws and agreements (e.g. MARPOL and Basel Convention)
 - Regional action plan development
- (ii) Research, Innovation, and Capacity Building
 - Regional baseline on status and impact (including baseline review and bridging gaps)
 - Capacity development for national action plans (including standardization of monitoring and evaluation methods and training)
 - Scientific knowledge, technology transfer and innovation solution (including knowledge sharing, partnerships and sharing networks)
- (iii) Public Awareness, Education, and Outreach
 - Public awareness on status and impact
 - Behaviour change and culture
 - Platform for knowledge sharing, innovative solutions and best practices (including an ASEAN platform)
- (iv) Private Sector Engagement
 - Collaboration with private sector and industry for implementation measures
 - Private sector investment and contribution

The FAMAD was developed at the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Meeting on Marine Debris, which was an ad-hoc meeting specially convened by ASEAN member states in Bangkok, Thailand in March 2019 to explore concrete actions to tackle the problem of marine debris in the region. Development of a draft ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Combating Marine Plastic Debris to improve efforts in managing plastic waste pollution in the oceans and prevent illegal transport of non-reusable, non-recyclable and hazardous waste is ongoing. For more information on the ASEAN FAMAD and comparison with other regional frameworks, see [Part 2, Section 1.2](#).

2.3 Relevant ASEAN working groups and centres

According to ASEAN's institutional organisation, the numerous ASEAN technical working groups and activity centres work on issues pertaining to a sector of activity within their mandate and make recommendations to higher bodies in the governmental hierarchy, within their pillar. There are at least six working groups and two activity centres which deal with marine and maritime issues, including issues of marine plastics. (See [Chart 1](#).) Another relevant working group which is not included in this analysis because it does not deal with coastal and marine issues is the ASEAN Working Group on Water (AWGW). However, it is a key stakeholder on river management issues. It is also the ASEAN body named as taking part in the Integrated River Basin Management Initiative jointly developed by PEMSEA, UNDP, ADB, GEF and the ASEAN (AWGW) which focuses on plastic debris taken by rivers to their mouth and into the sea.

Participation in ASEAN working group meetings is not open to the public. The meeting agendas and meeting reports are often not published. However, some of their work is made public. These are highlighted below.

2.3.1 ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME)

The AWGCME is the main body dealing with coastal and marine environment issues within ASEAN. Its functions are to ensure that ASEAN's coastal and marine environment are sustainably managed and that its representative ecosystems, pristine areas and species are protected. The next meeting of the AWGCME (21st Meeting), which was planned for June 2020, has been postponed due to Covid-19 crisis. Marine debris including plastics were discussed at the previous meeting as summarised below.

- 20th Meeting of AWGCME, 29–30 January 2019 in Phuket, Thailand, which focused on marine debris. Projects discussed included:
 - E-READI Project on Circular Economy
 - ASEAN-Norway Proposal on Regional Capacity Building of Reducing Plastic Pollution
 - ASEAN CSR Network Proposal on Multi-Stakeholder Partnership to Tackle Marine Plastic
 - Japan's support to combat marine debris
 - NOAA's potential collaboration with ASEAN on marine debris
 - ADF's (Dc Fatiha Association) potential collaboration with ASEAN on marine debris. ADF is an active organisation on marine debris in the Mediterranean region.

See: <http://www.pcd.go.th/file/17-01-62-01.pdf>.

- 19th Meeting of AWGCME, October 2018 in Bali, Indonesia, which reviewed the current state of packaging value chains and packaging waste management in Southeast Asia, including their contribution to marine pollution in the region.

2.3.2 ASEAN Working Group on Chemicals and Waste (AWGCW)

This body was established to serve as a consultative platform among ASEAN member states to further strengthen regional coordination and cooperation in addressing chemicals-related issues under relevant multilateral environmental agreements such as the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention (see [Part 1, Section 3.7](#) above on the work done under these Conventions), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The 4th Meeting of AWGCW was held on 14–15 May 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Whilst little information is available online on the work of the AWGCW, a relevant report from 2017 is available online: Regional Programme Towards a Non-Toxic Environment in South-East Asia – Phase II (<https://www.kemi.se/en/files/96b822bbbfe745deb349438afa289238/progress-report-2017.pdf>).

Given the push from UNEP (see: <https://www.informea.org/sites/default/files/imported-documents/UNEP-CHW-LEAFLET-PUB-Brochure-MarineLitter-2018.English.pdf>) and the ongoing discussions at the global level on the regulation of plastic and microplastic through the Basel and the Stockholm Conventions (see: <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/MarinePlasticLitterandMicroplastics/Overview/tabid/6068/Default.aspx>), ASEAN projects and discussions on marine plastic are likely to extend more substantially to the AWGCW, if it is not already the case. Of note, some polymers are already listed under the Basel Convention and some plastic-associated contaminants (additives and adsorbed substances) are listed under the Stockholm Convention. Furthermore, all ASEAN member states are a party to these Conventions. For more details on these Conventions, see [Part 1, Section 3.7](#) above.

2.3.3 ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)

Pollution from marine plastic has become an important item on the ASEAN agenda and the ACB is in the right position to be a driver or repository of research on the impact of marine plastics on marine biodiversity. ACB's Director is clear on this topic.

However, the only visible project devoted to the issue, and is (partly) under their responsibility, is a joint project on marine litter with PEMSEA in the context of the September 2018 Letter of Cooperation between the two bodies. See: <http://www.pemsea.org/news/pemsea-and-acb-sign-letter-cooperation>.

2.4 ASEAN-Plus initiatives

With the growing global awareness of the problem of marine plastic pollution, ASEAN member states have pursued initiatives with its partners to address the issue.

2.4.1 ASEAN-EU

A selection of notable initiatives and outcomes are set out below.

For the period of 2014–2020, the EU has allocated a fund of €170 million for development cooperation across the three ASEAN pillars. Out of this fund, €10 million has been allocated to the Biodiversity

Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP, 2016-2021) project, which aims to enhance the conservation of biodiversity and effective management of protected areas in the ASEAN region. The programme is implemented in close coordination with the EU Delegation in Manila and the ACB in Los Banos, the Philippines. It is unclear whether marine plastics is included.

Cooperative initiatives in marine plastics pollution are supported under the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI), a development cooperation programme that facilitates exchanges between the EU and ASEAN in priority policy areas of interest.

The identification of paths towards a circular economy has been a particular area of focus of the ASEAN-EU partnership, and has been the subject of a number of meetings and communiques. The most recent ones are listed below.

- The EU and the ASEAN Secretariat conducted a regional gap-analysis on the state of the circular economy in ASEAN member states. The analysis, conducted by a team of experts from the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) with support from the EU, developed a knowledge base for follow-up actions by the EU to inspire and assist circular economy approaches to plastic issues in the Southeast Asian region. See: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Overseas-Mission/ASEAN/Latest-News-in-ASEAN/2019/07/ASEAN-EU-to-enhance-coop-on-protection-of-Env-and-Climate-Change>.
- In August 2019, a Policy Brief titled 'Improved Governance of Plastics in the ASEAN Community: A Circular Economy Approach' based on the report 'Circular Economy and Plastics: A Gap-Analysis in ASEAN Member States (2019)' was published, providing an analysis of gaps in plastics management across ASEAN member states.
- On 11–12 June 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the EU and ASEAN hosted a regional workshop on circular economy for marine plastics. The workshop, conducted back-to-back with the European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment's Circular Economy Mission to Malaysia, emphasised the importance of collaboration between the EU and ASEAN towards a circular economy, and contributed to the EU-ASEAN High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change. See: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/64043/eu-and-asean-committed-towards-circular-economy-plastics-asean-region-kuala-lumpur-11-12-june_en.

2.4.2 ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3 / APT)

In November 2018, the Heads of State/Government of the ASEAN+3 (i.e. ASEAN + China, Japan and Republic of Korea) issued the ASEAN+3 Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative. See: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000419527.pdf>.

This initiative is intended to develop capacity for monitoring plastic waste in the ocean, enhance cooperation in preliminary research, and share best practices in each country. It also includes the following specific steps:

- Deliver ASEAN's initiatives and actions to the G20 process spearheaded by Japan
- Hold a Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Marine Debris in March 2019
- Seek the possibility of establishing a regional knowledge hub on marine plastic debris

2.4.3 East Asia Summit (EAS)

In November 2018, the Heads of State/Government of the EAS (i.e. ASEAN + Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, RO KOREA, Russia and the USA) issued the EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris. The statement emphasised that regional cooperation is necessary to encourage prevention and management of marine plastic debris, including buoys for aquaculture and ghost nets. See: <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-Manila-POA-to-Advance-PP-Decl-1.pdf> and <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-EAS-Stm-Marine-Plastic-Debris.pdf>.

In November 2017, the EAS Heads of State/Government adopted the Manila Plan of Action to Advance the 2012 Phnom Penh Declaration on the East Asia Summit Development Initiative (2018-2022). The Plan of Action promotes "cooperation on combating marine plastic pollution to effectively establish and implement a coherent and coordinated regional approach, focused on prevention and management of waste and litter and promotion of investments in waste management infrastructure also through cooperation with the private sector". See: <http://www.indonesianwaste.org/6-7-september-2017-east-asia-summit-conference-on-combating-marine-plastic-debris/>.

2.5 Events by ASEAN and partners

A selection of recent and notable events is listed below.

- 2nd and 3rd Workshop on Supporting the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Marine Debris in January and March 2020
- 2019 4th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Chemicals and Waste (AWGCW), in Myanmar
- 2019 ARF Workshop on Marine Debris Management for Sustainable Fisheries and Food Security in Southeast Asia in Nha Trang, Vietnam (13–15 May). Available: <https://vietnamnews.vn/environment/519713/vn-to-host-intl-workshop-on-management-of-marine-debris.html#mDRglz7LzclSa1Du.97>.
- 2019 Coordinating Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation in Addressing Marine Debris Pollution and Scoping Meeting on the ASEAN-Norway Project on Regional Capacity Building of Reducing Plastic Pollution in Phuket, Thailand (28–31 January). Available: <https://www.asean2019.go.th/en/meeting/20th-asean-working-group-on-coastal-and-marine-environment/>.

- 2018 ASEAN Meeting on the Management of Plastic and Packaging Waste in Bali, Indonesia (31 October–6 November) on packaging design and responsible production, packaging in retail and consumption, packaging waste collection, packaging waste sorting and recycling, the integration of the informal economy, as well as source-to-sea management for preventing marine pollution. Available: <http://environment.asean.org/asean-pushes-forward-on-marine-litter-prevention/>.
- 2017 ASEAN Conference on Reducing Marine Debris in ASEAN Region in Phuket, Thailand (22–23 November), organised by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of Thailand, in coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat and IUCN. The conference reviewed the current status of marine debris pollution at local, regional, and global scales, and provided an opportunity for participants to exchange knowledge on the most effective methods for addressing marine debris. Attendees: 250 pax (attendees from ASEAN member states, international conservation groups, government partners, researchers and local community members). Available: <https://www.iucn.org/news/thailand/201712/iucn-co-hosted-asean-conference-reducing-marine-debris>.
- 2017 EAS Conference on Combating Marine Plastic Debris in Bali, Indonesia (September). The Conference discussed proactive ways to increase action on the issue of marine plastic debris in the region. Available: <http://www.indonesianwaste.org/6-7-september-2017-east-asia-summit-conference-on-combating-marine-plastic-debris/>.

2.6 Comparison of research focus by different ASEAN fora

Table 1.4.2.1 below summarises the extent to which the ASEAN and ASEAN-Plus bodies are involved (on the basis of publicly available documents) in the 16 research topics which have been reviewed for this report.

Whilst it shows that ASEAN governments are concerned with pollution by marine plastics and are pushing for a better understanding of the issues, activity is recent and still at an early stage. Most of the research topics are mentioned as an area of interest but little as yet been implemented through active research efforts that has become public. The details of specific ongoing programmes of work being conducted under the technical bodies (AWGCME, AWGCW and ACB) are not publicly available. The general lack of visibility of work done by ASEAN specialised bodies makes their work difficult to assess by the public.

However, as shown in [Part 1, Section 2](#) of this report on the status of scientific knowledge on pollution from marine plastics in Southeast and East Asia, states have recently adopted a series of strong waste management measures and research on the understanding of sources, leakages and impacts. These measures and research are expanding fast. In particular, media coverage shows a very large number of initiatives being launched by governments, public interest groups, industries and partnerships between them all in the ASEAN. One of the early actions taken by many Southeast and East Asian governments has been focused on limiting the use of plastic bags in supermarkets.

Table 1.4.2.1. Research focus of different ASEAN fora with respect to marine plastics.

Legend: Red = no research or interest expressed; Light-green = expressed or inferred interest; Dark-green = active or proposed research.

Research Focus	ASEAN FAMAD	AWGCME	ACB	AWGCW	ASEAN+3 (APT)	EAS
Policy, laws, administrative measures, action plans, guidelines	Dark-green	Red	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Dark-green
Upstream research/circular economy/waste management	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Dark-green
Methodology for monitoring of marine plastic litter, survey and monitoring, pollution status	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red
Accumulation zones & hotspots	Light-green	Red	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green
Contribution from rivers	Light-green	Red	UNDP-PEMSEA-ADB-ASEAN Project (IRBMI)	Red	Light-green	Light-green
Source differentiation	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Light-green
Discharge from offshore infrastructures (incl. aquaculture)	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green
Contribution of fisheries/lost and abandoned fishing gear	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Light-green	Dark-green
Fragmentation and degradation	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Light-green	Red
Ecological and environmental impact	Dark-green	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Dark-green	Dark-green
Socio-economic impact	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red
Public outreach/beach clean-up	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red
Organic/inorganic contaminants associated with marine plastics	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Port reception facilities	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Light-green	Red
Fibre-reinforced plastic vessels	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Hull scraping and marine coating	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red