

4. PARTNERSHIPS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA (PEMSEA)

Summary of role: *The Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) is a partnership arrangement including state and non-state parties, to address the “identified threats to the environment and sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia.”*

Combating marine plastics is one of the key areas of work under the Pollution Reduction and Waste Management Programme of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA), PEMSEA’s management framework.

Summary of recommendations and work status: *PEMSEA’s 2018-2022 implementation plan uses a source-to-sea approach. A key initiative is the UNDP/GEF Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM). Much of PEMSEA’s work is focused on local governments and communities. In November 2019, the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) announced a Marine Debris Prevention Initiative during the PNLG General Assembly.*

Keywords/research fields: *Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia; PEMSEA; function and mandate; relevant policy statements; work on marine plastics; Source-to-sea approach; Pollution Reduction and Waste Management; Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia; Integrated River Basin Management; Iloilo Ministerial Declaration; Marine Debris Prevention Initiative; PNLG; Manila Bay Area Integrated Information Management System*

4.1 Function and mandate

The Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) originated in the GEF/UNDP Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East Asian Seas project, with the IMO as an executing body. It is a partnership arrangement including state and non-state parties, to address identified threats to the environment and sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia. See: <https://iwlearn.net/documents/legal-frameworks/partnerships-in-environmental-management-for-the>.

PEMSEA has 11 country partners (i.e. Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, DPR Korea, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Vietnam). Of these, Japan, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste are not members of COBSEA. It notably does not include three South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand coastal states (i.e. Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei) as members, although they can participate in meetings as observers. Thailand has been the subject of PEMSEA projects despite not being a member and Malaysia attends most meetings as an observer.

Combating marine plastics is one of the key areas of work under the Pollution Reduction and Waste Management program of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). The SDS-SEA is the management framework used by PEMSEA and its country partners to guide the

sustainable development of oceans and coasts. According to the latest Implementation Plan 2018-2022, partner countries and local governments have responsibilities to reduce marine debris, plastic and microplastics, using the 'source-to-sea' (S2S) approach. See: <http://pemsea.org/publications/reports/sds-sea-implementation-plan-2018-2022>.

4.2 Relevant policy statements by member states

On 29 November 2018, the East Asian Seas Iloilo Ministerial Declaration identified marine debris as a globally-recognized problem and committed to tackling both land and sea-based sources of marine pollution. It is signed by Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, DPR Korea, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. See: http://pemsea.org/sites/default/files/Iloilo_Ministerial_Declaration.pdf.

In November 2019, the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) announced a Marine Debris Prevention Initiative during the PNLG General Assembly. See: <http://www.pemsea.org/publications/agreements-and-declarations/pemsea-network-local-governments-sustainable-coastal>.

4.3 Work on marine plastics

PEMSEA uses the 'source-to-sea' approach to combat marine plastic pollution. A key initiative in this context is the UNDP/GEF Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) project which aims to assist local governments in ASEAN countries to reduce pollution, including those of plastic, and preserving environmental flows in the river basins of the East Asian Seas through 'Integrated River Basin Management'. This five-year project commenced in mid-2019 and concerns primarily Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam. See: <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=20940>.

A presentation of the project by PEMSEA's Executive Director, Aimee Gonzales is available at: <https://events.development.asia/system/files/materials/2018/10/201810-opportunities-and-constraints-addressing-marine-pollution-east-asia.pdf>.

With a similar approach, the Manila Bay Environmental Atlas published by PEMSEA in 2007 and the Manila Bay Area Integrated Information Management System have been further updated in 2018 by the Philippines government.

PEMSEA is also working on pilot projects specifically tailored to address marine plastic pollution through the prevention and management of such waste reaching the ocean in the Philippines. One is a partnership with The Coca-Cola Company Philippines and CARITAS aimed at recycling wastes from several municipalities in Cavite, the Philippines and converting them into school chairs and tables through a highly-scalable participatory process. The other is a partnership with ASEAN and Norway to build capacity to reduce plastic waste in the river systems in ASEAN countries. In this partnership, PEMSEA is the coordinator for the Philippine component, covering the Imus and Ylang-Ylang Rivers, a major tributary of Manila Bay.