

2. SUPPORT TO ASEAN STATES PROVIDED BY THE COMMONWEALTH

Summary of role: *The Commonwealth is an association of states with declared shared goals such as development, democracy and peace. It has now 53 Members with a total population of about 2.4 billion people. The Commonwealth adopted the Blue Charter in 2018 which recognises marine pollution from plastic as an ocean challenge across the Commonwealth.*

Summary of work: *A number of initiatives are being developed to support research in and limitation of marine plastic pollution such as the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework and the Commonwealth Litter Programme and ACU Blue Charter fellowships.*

Keywords/research fields: *Commonwealth; Commonwealth Blue Charter; The Common Clean Ocean Alliance; Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework; Commonwealth Litter Programme; ACU Blue Charter fellowships*

2.1 Background and aim

The 1949 London Declaration between Australia, Britain, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and Canada set the basis for the current association of 53 states named the Commonwealth. These include Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore. It is supported by more than 80 accredited organisations. The mandate of the Commonwealth is stipulated in the Charter of the Commonwealth, signed in 2018, which includes 16 values: democracy; human rights; international peace and security; tolerance; respect and understanding; freedom of expression; separation of powers; rule of law; good governance; sustainable development; protecting the environment; access to health; education; food and shelter; gender equality; importance of young people in the Commonwealth; recognition of the needs of small states; recognition of the needs of vulnerable states; and the role of civil society. Available: <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-charter>.

2.2 The Commonwealth Blue Charter

The Blue Charter of the Commonwealth was adopted in 2018. It focuses more specifically on the protection of the marine environment including from plastics. Available: http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/CommonwealthBlueCharter_0.pdf.

At the 2018 meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government, the following issues were highlighted: the importance of sustainable development of the oceans; threats posed from a number of sources including plastic pollution; and the importance of the Commonwealth Blue Charter. Available: http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/CHOGM_2018_Communique.pdf.

A number of initiatives are being developed to support research in and limitation of pollution from marine plastics in this context.

2.3 The Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA)

The CCOA focuses on plastic reduction. Led by the UK and Vanuatu and managed by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), this Alliance was first joined by New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Ghana and subsequently by Australia, Fiji, Kenya and St Lucia. This brought the total support to nine Commonwealth countries. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia, a Commonwealth country, does not appear to have formally joined alliance. CCOA members are asked to sign up to (and implement) the London Protocol, the UN Clean Seas campaign, and the GGGI as a means of meeting their commitments to SDG 14. Available: <https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/action-groups/marine-plastic-pollution/>.

The Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework and the Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP) is delivered by CEFAS (see [Part 1, Section 6.3.1](#)).

The Commonwealth awards ACU Blue Charter fellowships to 10 emerging scientists to spend six months in an Association of Commonwealth Universities to explore innovative ways to tackle plastic litter in the ocean. The second cohort of ACU Blue Charter was announced on 24 July 2019. None are from Southeast Asia.