

SECTION 1 – REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF ACTION

1. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS OF THE COBSEA RAP MALI

The revised 2019 COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) seeks to guide consolidated and coordinated action in the region towards integrated management of marine litter, including preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based and sea-based sources, promoting regionally coherent monitoring and assessment approaches, and creating enabling conditions for marine litter action. It seeks to address marine litter as a transboundary issue and to support COBSEA countries in their delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 14.1. This target aims to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution, as well as the relevant targets.

1.1 Objectives

Specific objectives of the COBSEA RAP MALI are to:

- (i) **Prevent and reduce to the minimum marine litter pollution** in the marine and coastal environment of the East Asian Seas Region;
- (ii) **Foster sustainable consumption and production** in a multi-stakeholder whole **lifecycle approach** to prevent and reduce leakage at source;
- (iii) **Remove** to the extent possible **already existent marine litter** by using environmentally acceptable methods;
- (iv) **Improve monitoring and assessment** of marine litter and its impacts for a science-based approach;
- (v) **Enhance knowledge sharing and awareness** about marine litter and its impacts amongst all stakeholders and all groups of society in the East Asian Seas Region; and
- (vi) **Support national efforts** towards adequate institutional, policy and implementation frameworks, cross sector coordination and regional and international cooperation.

A clear characteristic of the RAP MALI is its holistic approach to combatting marine litter pollution from upstream measures in sustainable consumption and production, waste management, monitoring, removal and education.

1.2 Guiding modalities for implementation

Eight guiding principles have been agreed:

- (i) **The integration principle** by virtue of which marine litter management shall be addressed across relevant sectors and as an integral part;
- (ii) **The prevention principle** by virtue of which measures should prioritize addressing the prevention of marine litter generation at source;

- (iii) ***The precautionary principle*** by virtue of which where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation;
- (iv) ***The polluter-pays principle*** by virtue of which the costs of pollution prevention, control and reduction measures are to be borne by the polluter, with due regard to the public interest;
- (v) ***The ecosystem-based approach*** by virtue of which the cumulative effect of marine litter on the marine and coastal ecosystem, habitats and species with other contaminants and substances that are present in the marine environment should be fully considered in management of marine litter;
- (vi) ***The principle of public participation and stakeholder involvement*** by virtue of which the general public including local communities, private sector, civil society organisations and local authorities will be involved in the development and implementation of efforts;
- (vii) ***The sustainable consumption and production principle*** by virtue of which current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production must be transformed to circular lifecycle models that decouple human development from environmental degradation; and
- (viii) ***The science-based approach*** by virtue of which marine litter management measures should be based on the best available scientific evidence.

1.3 Key actions

For achieving the specific objectives on regional marine litter management in the Seas of East Asia, the COBSEA RAP MALI provides for four key actions with guiding description (see Table 2.1.1.1). Table 2.1.1.2 below sets out examples of activities for each key action to guide the development of detailed biennial workplans for implementation of the RAP MALI, as developed by the COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML).

Table 2.1.1.1. Key actions and guiding descriptions for marine litter management in COBSEA RAP MALI.

Key action	Guiding description
Action 1: Preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based sources	1.1) Legal and economic instruments
	1.2) Integrated waste management
	1.3) Removal of existing marine litter and its disposal
Action 2: Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources	2.1) Legal and economic instruments
	2.2) Removal of existing marine litter and its disposal
Action 3: Monitoring and assessment of marine litter	3.1) Expert Group
	3.2) Regional and national marine litter monitoring programmes
Action 4: Activities supporting the implementation of COBSEA RAP MALI	4.1) Regional and international cooperation and reporting
	4.2) National planning and policy frameworks
	4.3) Research activities
	4.4) Information, education, outreach and involvement of stakeholders
	4.5) Training and capacity building

1.4 Envisaged activities

Table 2.1.1.2. COBSEA RAP MALI – Overall table.

Action 1 PREVENTING AND REDUCING MARINE LITTER FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES	1.1) Legal & economic instruments	1.1.1) Enhance leadership, implementation and quality of government efforts	
		1.1.2) Solid waste management policies and agency coordination through policy-making mechanism	
		1.1.3) Develop and adopt instruments prevent/manage waste and towards circular economies including single-use plastics and deposit refund systems	
	1.2) Integrated waste management	1.2.1) Develop Industry dialogues for measures	
		1.2.2) Reduction, reuse & recycle as well as replacement to reduce amounts to landfill or incineration without energy recovery	
		1.2.3) Waste collection & separation systems	
		1.2.4) Take necessary measures to address illegal dumping	
		1.2.5) Cooperation with river authorities	
	1.3) Removal of existing litter and its disposal	1.3.1) Programmes & activities such as coastal clean-ups	
Action 2 PREVENTING AND REDUCING MARINE LITTER FROM SEA-BASED SOURCES	2.1) Legal & economic instruments	2.1.1) Encouragement to develop & adopt instruments consistent with UNCLOS & MARPOL	
		2.1.2) Reinforcement of national legal instruments on MARPOL Annex V, London and Basel Conventions & FAO Code of Conducts of Responsible Fisheries	
		2.1.3) Assistance on requirements of MARPOL Annex V on improving port reception facilities	
		2.1.4) Sectoral prevention & reduction guidelines on fisheries & tourisms	
		2.1.5) Legislation on identified fishing gears	
	2.2) Removal of existing litter and its disposal	2.2.1) Programmes & activities	
	Action 3 MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF MARINE LITTER	3.1) Expert group	3.1.1) Setup of Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group under COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter
3.2) Regional & national marine litter monitoring programmes		3.2.1) Regional guidance on harmonization in line with international standards e.g. GESAMP	
		3.2.2) Regional training & data management	
		3.2.3) National monitoring & assessment on marine plastic & microplastic	
		3.2.4) Report preparation for SDG target 14.1	
		3.2.5) Database management	
Action 4 ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COBSEA RAP MALI	4.1) Regional & international cooperation and reporting	4.1.1) Setup of COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter	
		4.1.2) Institutional cooperation e.g. MARPOL, London Convention, Basel Convention, CBD, GPA & FAO	
		4.1.3) City partnership for knowledge transfer	
		4.1.4) Regional conferences e.g. ASEAN	
	4.2) National planning & policy frameworks	4.2.1) National action plan development & implementation or on equivalent GPA land-based	
		4.2.2) Regional sectoral guidelines on waste management, tourism and plastic manufacturing	
		4.2.3) Reporting format of national planning & policy frameworks	
		4.3) Research activities	4.3.1) Research & development on technology as well as social & behavioural sciences
			4.3.2) Research on marine litter impacts
	4.4) Information, education, outreach & involvement of stakeholders	4.3.3) Effectiveness on market-based instruments	
		4.3.4) Trajectory modelling on marine litters	
		4.3.5) Plastic flows and relative contribution	
		4.4.1) Stakeholder involvement	
		4.4.2) Regular clean-ups for education, awareness, certain responsibility areas & international initiatives	
		4.4.3) Awareness raising campaigns	
		4.4.4) Information translated into national languages	
	4.5) Training & capacity building	4.5.1) Regional education & training for targeted groups	
		4.5.2) Technical capacity buildings to relevant staffs	

Appendix 2 of the RAP MALI (see Table 2.1.1.2 above) encompasses further detailed description of key actions to serve as a guide for the development of biennial workplans for implementation of the RAP MALI to be discussed by the COBSEA WGML. This initial prioritization of actions identifies where countries agreed to collectively pursue more specific activities through COBSEA, within its mandate, in line with the East Asian Seas Action Plan and the COBSEA Strategic Directions 2018–2022.

Of note, the RAP MALI envisages the development of some specific regional outputs such as the following guidelines, guidance documents, expert groups, report and research areas:

- Sectoral guidelines on the prevention and reduction of marine litter, particularly for fisheries, marine/coastal tourism, waste management and plastic manufacturing;
- Regional guidance on the development of harmonized national marine litter and microplastic monitoring programmes;
- COBSEA Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) (with national focal points and experts);
- Marine Litter Monitoring Expert Group under the COBSEA WGML;
- Regional report for SDG 14.1;
- Regional marine litter and microplastic monitoring meta-database to support periodic regional reports;
- Regional sectoral guidelines on the prevention and reduction of marine litter from land-based pollution;
- Regional education and training;
- Regional format on national planning and policy frameworks; and
- Research focus on social and behavioural science, impact on the coastal and marine environment and economy.

2. THE ASEAN FRAMEWORK OF ACTION FOR MARINE DEBRIS (FAMAD)

The ASEAN Leaders adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris (FAMAD) at the 34th ASEAN Summit on 23 June 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. For further information on the context of their adoption, refer to [Part 1, Section 4.2](#). The ASEAN FAMAD is summarized in Table 2.1.2.1 below.

The overall structure of ASEAN FAMAD contrasts with that of the COBSEA RAP MALI in that it is structured very differently. Whereas the COBSEA RAP MALI is divided into four main categories focusing on the final objective of the action plan (i.e. reduction of land-based sources of marine plastics, reduction of sea-based sources of plastic, monitoring and assessment, and a general category of mixed activities necessary to support implementation), the four categories of the ASEAN FAMAD are structured around types of government engagements (i.e. policy support and planning, research and capacity building, public education and outreach, and private sector engagement). This difference in approach makes the conceptual comparison challenging. Each of the four categories of government engagement can be included in each of the four objectives of the COBSEA RAP MALI.

The comparison and gap analysis below are therefore dependent on the examples of actions provided for in each sub-category of action in both action plans.

Table 2.1.2.1. ASEAN FAMAD – Overall table.

1) POLICY SUPPORT & PLANNING	A. Regional policy dialogue	1.A.1) Regular regional policy dialogue/discussion
	B. Multi-sectoral policy	1.B.1) Long-term waste management & circular economy 1.B.2) Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies e.g. design for environment, deposit refund and take-back for reusing and recycling 1.B.3) Government & business to promote product sustainability addressing single-use plastics 1.B.4) Upstream policies on land-based & sea-based leakages 1.B.5) Inter-sectoral initiatives through ASEAN-led mechanisms 1.B.6) Prioritization for national & local governments
	C. Implementation of relevant laws & agreements e.g. MARPOL Annex V, Basel Convention & UNEA Resolution on marine litter & microplastic	1.C.1) Incorporation of international laws and agreements related to waste management into regional platforms 1.C.2) Enabling conditions for implementation 1.C.3) Regular dialogue on Basel Convention Regional Centre on SE Asia (BCRC-SEA)
	D. Regional action plan development through integrated land-to-sea policy	1.D.1) Taskforce on the development of regional action plan 1.D.2) Best practices from Regional Seas Programme 1.D.3) Feasibility of ASEAN Agreement 1.D.4) Feasibility of ASEAN Centre on combatting marine debris 1.D.5) Contribution to East Asia Summit effort on regional action plan
2) RESEARCH, INNOVATION & CAPACITY BUILDING	A. Regional baseline on status & impacts	2.A.1) Baseline review & report development 2.A.2) Assessment & bridging gaps
	B. Capacity development for national action plans/activities implementation	2.B.1) Standardize monitoring & evaluation methods 2.B.2) Capacity assessment of ASEAN member states and needs 2.B.3) Trainings on monitoring and management
	C. Scientific knowledge, technology transfer & innovation solution	2.C.1) Research & knowledge sharing 2.C.2) Cooperation & Partnership across institutions 2.C.3) Innovative solutions by cities 2.C.4) Research & studies on plastics & microplastics 2.C.5) Possible sharing networks 2.C.6) Research on environmentally - friendly alternatives
3) PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION & OUTREACH	A. Public Awareness on status & impacts	3.A.1) Science-based communication materials 3.A.2) Information dissemination to the public
	B. Behaviour change & culture	3.B.1) Communication plan development 3.B.2) Best practices & campaigns 3.B.3) Sharing of alternative solutions & practices 3.B.4) Integration of scientific findings 3.B.5) Multi-stakeholder engagement
	C. Platform for knowledge sharing, innovative solutions & best practices	3.C.1) Expert exchange platforms and/or study trips 3.C.2) Establish ASEAN information platform
	D. Integration of scientific knowledge for science-based decisions	3.D.1) Science-policy interface 3.D.2) Dissemination of scientific knowledge 3.D.3) Involvement of Scientists into policy-making process 3.D.4) Incorporation of policy making views in scientific communications
4) PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT	A. Collaboration with private sector & industry association	4.A.1) Support to private sector for implementation measures
	B. Private sector investment & contribution	4.B.1) Private sector engagement with circular economy, product life-cycle management, sustainability & 3R 4.B.2) Mainstream private sector to support research & as well as CSR activities 4.B.3) Private sector investment for product redesign/packaging & alternative materials 4.B.4) Value chain stakeholders for increasing waste recovery & recycling rates

Like the RAP MALL, the FAMAD also envisages the development of some specific regional outputs, in particular:

- Best practices from Regional Seas Programme;
- Feasibility study of an ASEAN Agreement;
- Feasibility study of ASEAN centre on combatting marine debris;
- Regional baseline report on impacts of marine plastics in the ASEAN;
- Standardization of methods for the measurement and monitoring of marine debris;
- Network for sharing marine debris data (tentative);
- Communication materials on status and impacts of marine debris;
- Expert exchange platforms (tentative); and
- ASEAN information platform to exchange information and share innovative solutions and best practices.

3. THE ASEAN+3 (APT) MARINE PLASTIC DEBRIS COOPERATIVE ACTION INITIATIVE

In parallel to the ASEAN work on the FAMAD, the ASEAN+3 (or APT, see institutional mandate in [Part 1, Section 4.2.1.2](#)), adopted their own Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative in 2018 with the triple aim of:

- Improving management of plastic waste by environmentally sound waste management and 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle);
- Promoting awareness, research and education on marine plastic debris; and
- Strengthening regional and international cooperation.

This Declaration of ASEAN+3 is short and focuses on the development of capacity and cooperation processes. However, it also includes some specific objectives:

- Delivering ASEAN's initiatives and actions to the G20 process spearheaded by Japan;
- Developing the capacity for monitoring of marine plastic debris and introduction of harmonised and standardised methods;
- Leveraging institutions such as the Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA);
- Holding a Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Marine Debris in March 2019; and
- Seeking the possibility of establishing a regional knowledge hub on marine plastic debris.

4. THE EAS MANILA PLAN OF ACTION, 2018 LEADER'S STATEMENT ON COMBATING MARINE PLASTIC DEBRIS AND 2019 CHAIRMAN STATEMENT OF THE 14TH EAS

Following the 2017 EAS Manila Plan of Action to Advance the Phnom Penh Declaration on the EAS Development Initiative (2018–2022), the EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris was adopted in November 2018 in Singapore (see [Part 1, Section 4.2.1.2](#)).

This Leaders' Statement is structured like a legal instrument with a preamble and operative provisions. Importantly, the preamble emphasizes implementation of international law including UNCLOS as well as the SDGs. Operative provisions include the same three components as the ASEAN+3 Marine Plastic Debris Cooperative Action Initiative, with more specific content:

(i) improvement of management of plastic waste; (ii) promotion of awareness, research and education; and (iii) strengthening of regional and international cooperation. It also adds reference to incentivization of the private sector, an element which is common to all action plans in ASEAN+3.

In November 2019, the Chairman Statement of the 14th EAS noted that a draft EAS Regional Plan of Action on Combating Marine Plastic Debris (RPoA) is currently being developed as a follow-up to the EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris. The RPoA is framed as complementing the ASEAN-led initiatives and aiming to:

- Improve communication and collaboration among countries and multi-stakeholder entities at the regional and international scale; and
- Facilitate the transition to a more systems-based approach to marine plastic debris management.

See: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000535021.pdf>

It also emphasises ongoing work to enhance cooperation in preventing illegal transboundary movement of hazardous chemicals and wastes, working towards the goals set in the G20's 'Osaka Blue Ocean Vision', as well as the establishment of the Regional Capacity Centre for Clean Seas in Bali, Indonesia.

5. THE 2019 APEC ROADMAP ON MARINE DEBRIS

The APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris (for further details on the institutional setting for this instrument, refer to [Part 1, Section 5.1](#)) articulates the objective of a collective and coordinated vision which includes regional cooperation, research and innovation, sharing of best practices and increased access to financing. Cross-fora collaboration is envisaged in particular within the APEC mechanism and specifically for monitoring methodologies.