

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/>.