

ASEAN CONFERENCE ON REDUCING MARINE DEBRIS IN ASEAN REGION

22-23 NOVEMBER 2017, PHUKET, THAILAND

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The ASEAN Conference on Reducing Marine Debris in ASEAN Region, organised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand in coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat, was held on 22-23 November 2017 in Phuket, Thailand.

The Conference brought together over 200 participants consisting of representatives from ASEAN Member States, dialogue and development partners, international organisations, private sector, researchers and academe, civil society, and local communities, for information exchange, knowledge sharing, and constructive discussion on the challenges and opportunities in addressing the issue of marine debris pollution in ASEAN region through Plenary and Thematic Sessions.

The Conference reviewed the status of marine debris pollution in ASEAN region from the global, regional and local perspectives; exchanged information on the existing national policies, initiatives and best practices; identified gaps and challenges; and discussed two main approaches toward solution, namely (i) policy and management solutions and (ii) innovative policy and technology solutions.

The Conference therefore:

1. Recognises that coastal and marine habitats and resident species provide vital ecosystem services which includes climate regulation and source of livelihoods of the coastal communities, and that marine debris pollution is increasingly becoming a global concern as it poses serious threats to the health of the world's oceans, marine biodiversity, environments, and the peoples;
2. Notes the mandates from, and complementarities of, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 14, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 for ASEAN Member States to integrate the UN and ASEAN's commitments into national plan and policy, especially to promote cooperation for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of coastal and marine environment, respond and deal with the risk of pollution and threats to marine ecosystem and coastal environment, in particular in respect of ecologically sensitive areas;
3. Acknowledges the existing global, regional and national initiatives, platforms, and action plans addressing marine debris pollution such as Global Partnership on Marine Litter, International Marine Debris Conference, and the commitments and efforts of ASEAN Member States to contribute to the implementation;
4. Underlined that while research on marine debris already undertaken reflects level sources and impacts of marine debris, and provides sufficient evidence for immediate action, further research is needed on marine plastic debris and microplastics including biodegradable alternatives, waste management, and especially on environmental and social impacts – including on human health.

5. Also acknowledges that the majority of marine debris originates from land-based sources, and therefore preventive approach, in line with the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society¹, as well as integrated and coordinated response to the existing marine debris pollution, that involve all relevant stakeholders is key to solve the issue holistically;
6. Recognises the transboundary nature of the issue and hence the urgent need for a collective and coordinated action among ASEAN Member States and partners to address the marine debris pollution in the region;

In view of the above, the Participants agreed to recommend the following:

Policy Support and Strengthening

- (a) Mainstream measures to address marine debris in national and ASEAN's development agenda and priorities
- (b) Consider integrated land-to-sea policy approach by developing and implementing a regional action plan addressing marine debris in the ASEAN region to enhance coordination at the regional and international levels for achieving sustainable management of coastal and marine environment and in responding to marine debris issue;
- (c) Promote regional policy dialogue on marine debris pollution issue to promote information and knowledge exchange and regional coordination (e.g. indicative Thailand-led ASEAN-China Workshop on Marine Debris Pollution in South China Sea)
- (d) Encourage ASEAN Member States to implement relevant international laws and agreements – such as MARPOL Annex V ship generated waste,
- (e) Explore the possibility of developing an ASEAN agreement on sustainable management of marine debris pollution
- (f) Explore the possibility of setting up an ASEAN centre focusing on addressing marine debris pollution or expanding the current mandates of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

Capacity Building

- (a) Secure technical support to strengthen capacity at local and national level to implement national action plans / initiatives to address marine debris pollution
- (b) Develop and implement regional projects to replicate or upscale identified local and national best practices in addressing marine debris pollution (e.g. on solid waste management, integrated river basin management, integrated coastal management, plastic waste management) through pilot projects in selected cities in AMS (e.g. USD 8-million ASEAN/UNDP/GEF Project on Integrated River Basin Management, UN Environment /COBSEA Project on Reducing Marine Litter by Addressing the Management of Plastic Value Chain in Southeast Asia)

¹ <http://asean.org/asean-declaration-on-culture-of-prevention-for-a-peaceful-inclusive-resilient-healthy-and-harmonious-society/>

Education, research and Innovation

- (a) Conduct regional baseline study on the status and impacts of marine debris pollution in ASEAN region
- (b) Intensify efforts to educate private and public sectors on the impacts of marine debris, in particular marine plastics pollution
- (c) Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, and promote innovative solutions, in order to understand the status, trends and impacts of marine debris for informed decisions and policies;
- (d) Enhance the engagement of private sector in education, research and innovations
- (e) Urge ASEAN Member States and partners to support research work on marine debris.
- (f) Promote partnership with research institutions (e.g. Centre for Southeast Asia Studies (CSEAS)) to provide science-based policy recommendations
- (g) Promote city-to-city exchange to identify and replicate innovative solutions

Private Sector Engagement

- (a) Promote partnership with private sector or industry associations to implement measures to address marine debris issues (e.g. sustainable consumption and production, solid waste management, etc)
- (b) Encourage the application of circular economy concept for plastic manufacture and management
- (c) Encourage investment in redesigning products / packaging and alternative materials
- (d) Engage value chain stakeholders to establish enabling mechanisms / infrastructure to increase plastic waste recovery and recycling rates.

Public Awareness and Outreach

- (a) Strengthen advocacy (e.g. beach clean-up campaign, photo competition, etc) to promote consumer behaviour change toward the Culture of Prevention, youth leadership and general public understanding and participation in addressing marine debris pollution.
- (b) Incorporate marine debris issue into ASEAN's Culture of Prevention initiative