



Charting a New Decade of Healthy Ocean, People and Economies

1-2 DECEMBER 2021 • Hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia

Main Conference

1 December 2021, 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM (GMT+7)
Via Zoom with physical venue at the Independence Hotel
in Sihanoukville, Cambodia

ORGANIZERS:



Ministry of Environment, Cambodia



Provincial Administration of
Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia



Partnerships in Environmental
Management for the Seas of East Asia
(PEMSEA) Resource Facility

Main Conference

1 December 2021, 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM (GMT+7)
via Zoom with physical venue at the Independence Hotel in Sihanoukville, Cambodia

PROCEEDINGS

1.0 Introduction

Since 2003, the EAS Congress has served as an intellectual marketplace and forum on the sustainable development of the seas of the world's fastest-growing region. This triennial event provides a platform for ministerial and high-level technical discussions along with opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking between different sectors of society from international organizations, multilateral banks, and local governments down to the scientific community, youth sector, private firms, academe, civil society, and other development partners.

The 2021 EAS Congress came at a fitting time as the EAS region goes through a new normal while nearing the completion of the 2018-2022 Implementation Plan (IP) of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA). Armed with greater public awareness on the links between ocean health and human health, the region is one and aligned with the global recognition to act on pressing socioeconomic, ecological, and climate change issues, and sustain the momentum of building meaningful and transformative solutions for a sustainable ocean-based economy.

The 2021 EAS Congress:

- Shared the lessons learned, track the progress made, and scale up good practices in implementing the SDS-SEA at the regional, national, and local levels;
- Built on and recalibrated existing management interventions and fostered new opportunities for regional partnerships using innovative approaches, technologies, investments, and financing towards the sustainable development of the coastal and marine environment; and
- Set up a clear roadmap on transformative blue solutions for the next decade in accordance with the United Nations (UN) Decade of Ocean Science, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and other relevant international and regional commitments.

This was hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia and co-organized by the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Cambodia, Provincial Administration of Preah Sihanouk (SHV), and Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) Resource Facility.

The Main Conference of the EAS Congress 2021 featured a keynote address from the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia; a plenary consisting of TEDx style talks on a number of crosscutting topics, followed by a moderated discussion; the presentation of the conclusions and recommendations from the plenary and the six-month long collabs or knowledge-sharing sessions of the Congress; and a cultural presentation from Cambodia.

The Main Conference was chaired by H.E. Say Samal, Minister of Environment in Cambodia, Chairman of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Vice President of the National Committee of Cambodian Coastal Management and Development, and High Representative of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The Masters of Ceremonies were Ms. Phan Sopheak Nita, the Head of the Public Relations and International Cooperation Division of Phnom Penh Capital Administration (PPCA) of Cambodia, and Ms. Mitzi Borromeo, a Multimedia Communications Specialist and Former CNN Philippines Broadcast Journalist.

The program and link to the presentation materials and recorded livestream can be found in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

2.0 Welcome remarks from the host country

H.E. Eang Sophalleth, the Secretary of State of Cambodia's MOE expressed his gratitude towards H.E. Say for presiding over the opening ceremony of the Main Conference.

He welcomed everyone to the Main Conference and shared that the last two years have been a challenging period for the world due to COVID-19. While this pandemic wreaked havoc to many lives and livelihoods, it has made nations rethink and reset their relationship with nature. Building back better to overcome the pandemic and restore livelihoods and economic growth have been the top priority for all countries and would require synergy of efforts.

In the case of Cambodia, the country has formulated three priority strategies to return the economy to a high growth path by taking the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for more in-depth reforms, aiming at building stronger and more resilient economic and social systems against future crises.

The Congress was made possible despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. He thanked the EAS Partnership Council (PC), PEMSEA Resource Facility, and Provincial Administration of Preah Sihanouk for their efforts. Albeit virtual, given the ongoing risks and uncertainty of the pandemic, the event came at a right time considering the objectives of the Congress.

The theme for the 2021 EAS Congress is full of optimism and energy to carry forward. Despite differences in national culture, historical background, political system, and development status, the EAS region has demonstrated its firm commitment to the Partnership in carrying

out the sustainable development of the East Asian coasts and ocean in the service of and for the benefit of present and future generations and the planet.

In 2018, PEMSEA country partners met to reaffirm their shared commitment to reach their shared vision of a healthy ocean, people, and economies for the region. PEMSEA remains relevant and is well-positioned to continue performing its role as a regional platform that encourages the development of common policies; capacity-building; and implementation of joint actions and smart financing to deliver economic and social dividends and protect biodiversity.

H.E. Eang encouraged encourage to participate actively in the Conference and wished for a successful Congress.

3.0 Message from the host local government

The Governor of the Provincial Administration of Preah Sihanouk, H.E. Kuoch Chamroeun, shared an overview of the province and its ecological and socioeconomic potential. Covering an area of 2,659 square kilometers, two-thirds of which are forested mountains and plateaus, Preah Sihanouk is a coastal province with abundant natural resources, 32 small and large islands, and a coastline of 175.81 kilometers.

The province has great potential in the form of trade, tourism, and agro-industry to contribute to national economic development, including trade, tourism, and agroindustry. The province is home to the country's only deep seawater port, which serves as a commercial gateway to local and international trade. The beaches of the province are members of the Club of the World's Most Beautiful Bays.

The province is pleased to be a part of the PEMSEA family for the last two decades given the latter's continuing support on the implementation of integrated coastal management (ICM) in Cambodia. Through its engagement with PEMSEA, they have developed various policies and zoning schemes for the province and its capital, Sihanoukville in support of ICM, Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025, Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035.

With support from the national government, the province has re-constructed 37 city roads and improved other important infrastructure such as seaports, airports, expressways, and railways among others to transform Preah Sihanouk into a financial, commercial, and business center and industrial and tourism hub that is sustainable and inclusive.

Moving forward, the Royal Government of Cambodia has established a number of committees and technical working groups to develop Preah Sihanouk into a multi-purpose special economic zone in support of the Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025, which envisions a middle-income country for Cambodia by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050.

The Governor thanked the National Committee for Coastal Management and Development, provincial departments, non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society, development partners, and other stakeholders for their participation and commitment in strengthening governance and for their efforts on climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and habitat protection among others.

He also congratulated the organizers of the EAS Congress 2021 on the fruitful results of the collabs and wished the same for the 2021 PNLG Forum.

Part of the objectives of the Forum is the adoption of the Preah Sihanouk PNLG Declaration to reaffirm the region's commitment to pursue blue economy through ICM and related initiatives and to implement the PNLG Strategic Action Plan 2022-2030, which outlines the objectives, actions, and targets of the network under 3 major programs, namely: strengthening governance and partnerships; implementation of management programs in support of UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 13 (climate action), and 14 (life below water); and enhancement of the network's monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system. The SAP is in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science (UNDOS) Implementation Plan 2021-2030, the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, and other relevant plans and commitments at the regional and global levels.

H.E. Kuoch then thanked everyone for joining the Main Conference and for the continuing support in coastal management towards sustainability.

4.0 Message from PEMSEA

On behalf of the EAS Partnership Council, Mr. Arief Yuwono, the Chair, expressed his utmost gratitude to the Royal Government of Cambodia, through the MoE, for their unwavering support for PEMSEA since its humble beginnings in 1993 and for hosting the 2021 EAS Congress.

Since 2003, starting with the first Congress in Putrajaya, Malaysia, this triennial event has played a vital role in PEMSEA's work as the regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the SDS-SEA. The Congress provides a platform for discussion, capacity-building, and networking between different sectors of society. This culminates in the EAS Ministerial Forum where Ministers from PEMSEA's 11 country partners convene to set future policy direction and commitments for the region.

The 2021 EAS Congress marks an important milestone. On the following day, the Ministers shall sign the Preah Sihanouk PNLG Declaration to reaffirm their commitment to champion blue economy in the region and chart points for action by the EAS Partnership in the new decade to achieve the shared vision of a healthy ocean, people, and economies and respond to the global call for green recovery through the adoption of the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030.

The Roadmap builds on the gains and lessons learned from implementing the SDS-SEA over the years as well as previous EAS Ministerial Declarations and will guide the formulation of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027, which will translate the agreed priorities in the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration into concrete actions. It also articulates the need for enabling policies to support the execution and regular reporting of progress in relation to the SDS-SEA and emphasizes the need for ensuring the financial sustainability of the PEMSEA Resource Facility, the Secretariat of the EAS Partnership.

Mr. Yuwono invited everyone to actively participate in the Main Conference and looked forward to the conclusions and recommendations of the plenary and collabs as these are vital inputs in the development of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027.

5.0 Keynote address

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, H.E. Say extended a warm welcome and thanked the participants for joining the Main Conference and expressed his sincere appreciation to the organizers for making this event possible despite the challenges brought by COVID-19.

He conveyed that the theme of the EAS Congress 2021 reflects Cambodia's priority to promote sustainable development in its coastal and marine environment and shared an overview of blue economy in Cambodia.

The country has achieved robust economic growth of 7.7 percent per annum over the last two decades, paving the way to turn the nation from a low-income country to a lower-middle income country. Playing a key role in this achievement is the marine sector, which covers fisheries, port, shipping, and coastal tourism. It accounts for approximately 16 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of which 85 percent is from coastal tourism alone. In addition, the country's commodities trade is heavily reliant on shipping.

One of its coastal provinces, Preah Sihanouk, has a large potential to be the country's new locomotive of growth. The Royal Government aims to transform this province into multi-purpose special economic zone that serves as an international gateway and logistics center linking the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and global markets in line with the principles of a smart, livable, and sustainable city.

To address the impacts of COVID-19, the Royal Government of Cambodia has been implementing various stringent health and social measures, providing timely care and treatments, and carrying out comprehensive vaccination programs to allow the economy to open gradually and facilitate socioeconomic recovery.

H.E. Say then underscored the importance of strong collaboration and multilateralism in sustainable development, especially in addressing shared issues such as climate change and marine debris.

As a regional coordinating mechanism, PEMSEA, through its partners and networks, has been effectively working with national and local governments, communities, research and scientific institutions, and other stakeholders. It has laid a strong foundation for moving forward the region's agenda to advance marine ecosystem protection, sustainable livelihood, and blue economy. With PEMSEA's support for example, ICM presently covers 40 percent of the region's coastline and contiguous watersheds.

The work being done by PEMSEA is crucial considering that the seas of East Asia contain one-third of the world's mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs. The EAS is responsible 40 percent of the world's capture fisheries and 80 percent of global aquaculture output. It transports 90 percent of the world's maritime trade and receives 26 percent of all international tourist arrivals.

H.E. Say expected that the Congress will usher in stronger and wiser regional initiatives that are aligned with the global ocean agenda. Likewise, he anticipated more coordinated efforts to respond to the global call for green recovery and achieve the SDGs and the vision of healthy ocean, people and economies for the region.

He looked forward to seeing the results of the EAS Congress 2021, including the PEMSEA Roadmap 2030, which forms an integral part of the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration.

6.0 Presentation 1: Promoting sustainable coastal and ocean governance in the run up to 2030

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Dr. Andrew Hudson, the Head of the Water and Ocean Governance Programme, welcomed everyone to the EAS Congress 2021 and thanked the Royal Government of Cambodia and PEMSEA Resource Facility for inviting him. He provided a comprehensive overview of where the EAS region is in terms of implementing the ten targets of SDG 14 (to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development), which is arguably one of the most ambitious of all the SDGs.

On SDG 14.1 (to reduce marine pollution). This target calls upon countries to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds—in particular, marine debris and nutrient pollution from land-based activities.

Since pre-industrial times, the global loads of nitrogen to the ocean have roughly tripled; these excess nutrient inputs have driven excess primary productivity in many parts of the world. The result has been a nearly exponential rise in the occurrence of hypoxic or low oxygen coastal areas, which the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimated to number well over 500, many of these in East Asia. Globally, recent analysis suggests that about two-thirds of the excess nitrogen reaching the ocean derives from the agriculture sector, specifically fertilizer run-off and poorly managed manure; the remaining third comes from untreated or poorly treated wastewater. Halpern et al. indicates that Asia accounts for nearly sixty percent of wastewater nitrogen emissions to coastal areas.

Tools that can be used to address nutrient pollution include pollution taxes, tradeable emission permits, and other incentives to optimize fertilizer use efficiency, reduce manure loss, and promote the recovery and reuse of nitrogen from wastewater.

Despite these figures, data on chlorophyll-a levels in coastal waters suggests that progress is being made on this target in East Asia with nearly a 50 percent decline in chlorophyll-a levels compared to the highs observed from 2006 to 2013.

The other priority pollutant cited in SDG 14.1 is marine plastics. Globally, it is estimated that 5-13 million metric tons of plastic are entering the ocean each year from land-based sources as well as volumes that are still not fully quantified from lost and abandoned fishing nets. Asia is ranked as one of the leading sources of marine plastic pollution due to rapidly increasing production and consumption of plastics combined with inadequate management of solid waste.

In response, many nations, including some in East Asia, have taken steps to reduce and prevent marine plastic pollution such as bans on plastic bags and other single-use plastics and introduction of extended producer responsibility schemes. The Republic of Korea, for example, has roughly halved its marine plastic levels in the ten-year period ending in 2017.

Plastic pollution is increasingly being recognized as a global issue given its transboundary nature and the number of major sectors of the global economy involved in plastic production and management, from petrochemicals and producers of feedstock and resins to the diverse range of companies that use plastics in their products. This requires global solutions and has led many nations calling for the initiation of a negotiation process for a global treaty on plastics. Such instrument, which ideally should harmonize standards such as allowable plastic resins and product design that favors recovery, reuse, and recycling, can revolutionize the current linear plastics economy.

On SDG 14.2 (to manage and protect ecosystems). Marine habitats provide critical ecosystem services and yet globally, an estimated 20 percent of mangroves have been lost since 1980. Likewise, 27 percent of coral reefs and 29 percent of seagrass beds have disappeared.

Through the long running efforts of PEMSEA, East Asia has emerged as one of the global leaders in the piloting and scaling up of ICM to address habitat degradation and other coastal and marine issues. From a baseline of nearly zero in the mid-nineties, ICM covers approximately 40 percent of the region's coastline and contiguous watersheds.

On SDG 14.3 (to reduce ocean acidification). This particular target intends to minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification as a more acidic ocean impairs the metabolic functioning and behavior of many marine species. It is widely understood that around 30 percent of all carbon dioxide derived from the burning of fossil fuels dissolves in the ocean, forming carbonic acid. Average surface ocean pH, a measure of acidity that uses a logarithmic scale, has already decreased by .05 to 0.1 pH units, which represents a 30 percent increase in

acidity—the fastest rate in at least the last 25 million years. In a business-as-usual scenario, ocean pH could drop an additional 0.3 to 0.4 units by 2100 which would almost certainly be catastrophic for ocean ecosystems at a global scale.

The solution to preventing dangerous levels of ocean acidification is for all countries to meet their obligations under the Paris Agreement. The Asia-Pacific region has a key role to play in this measure as it is responsible for around half of global emissions.

On SDG 14.4 (sustainable fishing). This particular target aims to end illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and move towards sustainable fish stock levels. Data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) demonstrate the dramatic increase in the proportion of overexploited fish stocks worldwide—from around 10 percent in 1970 to 34 percent in present times. Regionally, a 5 percent decrease between 2015 and 2017 was observed in the proportion of stocks fished sustainably in the Western Central Pacific Ocean while sizeable decline was reported in the Northwest Pacific from 83 to 65 percent.

On a more positive note, in the Yellow Sea for instance, a series of projects financed by GEF through UNDP supported China and RO Korea in the development and ministerial adoption of the Yellow Sea Strategic Action Programme (SAP). As part of meeting their commitments under the SAP towards sustainable, ecosystem-based fisheries management, China and RO Korea succeeded in reducing fishing pressure on Yellow Sea stocks by 22 and 15 percent respectively over the last ten years.

On SDG 14.5 (to conserve coastal and marine areas). This target calls upon countries to conserve at least ten percent of their coastal and marine areas, consistent with international law and based on the best available scientific information. The indicator for this target is the coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.

While none of the countries in East Asia have achieved or exceeded this target, solid progress towards the 10 percent target is evident in Japan and China.

On SDG 14.6 (to end subsidies contributing to overfishing). Globally, an estimated USD 16 billion is spent every year on destructive fisheries subsidies that often overcapitalize the sector and drive overfishing in many areas. These subsidies include, for example, tax breaks; and below market prices for fishing vessel fuels and interest rates for fishing vessel construction and renovation.

Trends for the first decade of the 21st century showed solid progress in reducing destructive fisheries subsidies in Cambodia, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore. While less progress was seen in China, Japan, RO Korea, Philippines, and Thailand, more progress may have been achieved in the period after.

On SDG 14.7 (to increase the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine resources in small island developing states [SIDS] and least developed countries [LDCs]). Dr. Hudson shared that while the indicator mentions only the contribution of sustainable fisheries to GDP,

he believed the intent was for SIDs and LDCs to more broadly benefit from their blue economies.

While only two EAS countries, Cambodia and Timor-Leste, are considered LDCs, the ocean economy in each country contributes significantly to GDP, at 16 percent and 87 percent respectively. Nearly all the other countries in East Asia also show very high percentage contributions from their ocean economies: 28 percent in Indonesia, 21 percent in Viet Nam, 23 percent in both Malaysia and Thailand, and 10 percent in China.

These figures underscore the importance of a sustainable ocean economy in the region as a driver of economic development, poverty reduction, and inclusive growth. In relation to this, PEMSEA is helping the countries of East Asia realize their blue economy ambitions and identify trends, risks, and opportunities in a suite of nine ocean industries as well as governance, investment, and other key considerations needed to advance a blue economy.

On SDG 14.a (to increase scientific knowledge, research, and technology for ocean health). Specifically, this target aims to increase scientific knowledge, development of research capacity, and transfer of marine technology. Its indicator is the proportion of total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology.

Unfortunately, there is limited data available on the amounts of spending on ocean research and development (R&D) spending in East Asian countries. As a proxy however, one can look at overall spending on science, technology, and innovation. This is closely associated with the level of development, with some of the highest figures being reported in the case of China, Japan, RO Korea, and Singapore. Many other East Asian countries have shown rapid rates of growth in this area: Thailand more than doubled its R&D spending from 0.44 percent to 1 percent of its GDP from 2013 to 2017; Indonesia tripled its contribution from 2013 to 2018; while Vietnam increased its share from 0.37 percent to 0.53 percent from 2013 to 2017.

On SDG 14.b (to support small scale fishers). As much as half of the total fish catch in the developing world is done by small scale fishers. This underscores the important role of these fishers in economic development, food security, and poverty reduction. As such, SDG 14.B aims to provide small scale fishers with access to resources and markets. The indicator is the progress made by countries in the degree of application of a legal, policy, or institutional framework that recognizes and protects the access rights of these fishers.

East Asia is progressing well in this regard, with most countries where data is available showing moderate to strong protection.

On SDG 14.c (to implement and enforce international sea law). This aims to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources by implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The indicator for this target is the number of countries making progress in ratifying and implementing UNCLOS.

In East Asia, all countries are parties/signatories to UNCLOS. In addition, PEMSEA data illustrate that all PEMSEA country partners have made significant progress in ratifying other relevant regional and international instruments pertaining to the environment. China, Japan, Philippines, and RO Korea have been among the most active countries in joining international agreements on environmental protection, followed by Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

On moving forward. East Asia has been among the world's leading regions that are making tangible progress in achieving SDG 14 through integrated management solutions and strategic partnerships. Nonetheless, gaps and challenges remain for several SDG 14 targets. These highlight the importance of maintaining positive momentum and progress. Dr. Hudson therefore calls upon the countries of East Asia to:

- Upscale, replicate, and mainstream actions to reduce nutrient and plastic pollution;
- Engage in the ongoing global process through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) towards a global legal framework on plastic pollution;
- Maintain the significant progress that the region has made in scaling up ICM;
- Achieve national net zero emissions;
- Continue efforts to sustain the region's fisheries while recognizing the key role that small scale fishers play;
- Maintain progress on scaling up the designation of and improving the management effectiveness of marine protected areas (MPAs);
- Contribute to ongoing efforts through the World Trade Organization (WTO) to phase out destructive fisheries subsidies;
- Continue to increase investment in ocean R&D, science, and technology; and
- Ratify and fully implement all ocean-relevant international legal instruments.

7.0 Presentation 2: Harnessing private and public financing and investment to promote blue economy

On behalf of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Sir Danny Alexander, the Vice President for Policy and Strategy, expressed his gratitude towards PEMSEA for the speaking engagement.

He shared that the world's ocean provides many benefits: the seas and ocean cover more than 70 percent of the Earth's surface; hold 97 percent of all water; sustain 80 percent of all life forms on the planet; produce over half of the world's oxygen; and store 50 times more carbon dioxide than the atmosphere. Delving on the EAS region, its seas have profound importance to the economy and environment.

For this reason, advancing a blue economy is important as it would enable countries to obtain value from the ocean and coastal ecosystem while respecting their long-term ability to regenerate and endure development activities through the implementation of sustainable practices.

Relating this to AIIB, Sir Alexander shared that while the organization's mandate is essentially focused on land-based infrastructure, they are highly aware of the important interactions between the land and sea and the need to adopt a holistic approach. They have been working with countries across the region to promote blue economy development and have adopted various international best practices and organizational policies related to the environment in the course of five years since their establishment in 2016 around the same time as the Paris Agreement. These policies include:

- **Corporate Strategy** that clarifies the Bank's strategic choices for its growth phase in the next ten years and identified four thematic priorities, namely development of green infrastructure; improving economic connectivity and regional cooperation (such as in the case of maritime transport; adoption of technologies to make infrastructure more efficient, sustainable, and resilient; and mobilization of private capital through innovative financing and investment. All of these thematic priorities contain crosscutting benefits blue economy development.
- **Environmental and Social Framework (ESF)**. By applying this to the projects that the AIIB finances, the Bank assures that its support towards clients would achieve environmentally and socially beneficial outcomes in line international standards.
- **Climate Change Investment Framework**. This was established in partnership with Amundi and Climate Bond Initiative (CBI) to set a clear definition and approach to align capital markets with the Paris Agreement.
- **Sustainable Development Bond Framework**, which helps facilitate bond investors' assessment of AIIB's commitment to sustainable development and consequently increase the transparency of environmental and social impacts generated by AIIB's financing.

Project-wise, AIIB has delivered a number of initiatives that contribute to the development of blue economy, particularly in Asia. Examples include:

- **The Greater Male Waste-to-Energy Project in Maldives**, which aims to establish a sustainable solid waste treatment system in the Greater Male region to ensure the safe disposal or recycling of waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region, and generate electricity from waste-to-energy.
- **Mandalika Urban and Tourism Infrastructure in Indonesia**, which is expected to provide a wide array of environmental and social benefits to the communities by providing core sustainable infrastructure for the development of a new tourist destination in the Mandalika region of Lombok.

Sir Alexander also shared that AIIB is exploring ideas to develop greening ports and offshore renewable energy and that ocean infrastructure investment is possibly more complex than its land counterpart.

AIIB aims to direct at least 50 percent of its total approved financing towards climate finance by 2025.

The Bank looked forward to cooperating with other partners to promote blue economy. Sir Alexander anticipated learning from others as well as a fruitful discussion in the Main Conference.

8.0 Presentation 3: Empowering young scientists and promoting innovation under UNDOS

As the Philippine Focal Person for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), Dr. Gil Jacinto was grateful towards the PEMSEA Resource Facility for the opportunity to join the Main Conference as speaker.

UNDOS, which begins this year, recognizes the value of the ocean—an area with less known bottom features than the moon’s surface and with less investment than the space explorations pursued over the years. The Decade envisions a clean, healthy, productive, safe, accessible, inspiring, and engaging ocean and to this end, the Decade therefore aims to generate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the ocean, increase the use of ocean knowledge, and identify the required knowledge for sustainable development. Its priority R&D areas are:

- Comprehensive georeferenced map of the ocean;
- Comprehensive ocean observing system for all major basins;
- Quantitative understanding of ocean ecosystems and their functioning as the basis for their management;
- Data and information portal supporting the Decade outcomes;
- Integrated multi-hazard warning system;
- Ocean observation, research, and prediction system, supported by social and human sciences and economic valuation; and
- Ocean literacy, capacity-building, and accelerated technology transfer.

Dr. Jacinto then echoed as a caveat the viewpoint of Singh, et al. (2021) that *“Science does not inherently lead to sustainable or unsustainable (or equitable or inequitable) outcomes—the outcomes will depend on how, where, when, and by whom the science is designed, funded, conducted, and used. Our concern is that without an explicit consideration of ‘leaving no one behind,’ scientific research meant simply to ‘understand the ocean’ may inadvertently contribute to unsustainable and inequitable development.”*

If the EAS region is to pursue the science needed for the ocean that they envision, then it is important to ask who is doing ocean science and how much of ocean science is being done in the region.

The IOC published two important reports in an attempt to answer these questions, namely the Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR) 2017 and GOSR 2020. The findings state that:

- The countries with the most ocean science researchers in terms of GDP are Portugal and Norway. Only a few EAS countries, notably Japan and RO Korea, are represented in their research, possible due to the absence of or delayed submission of data by other countries.

- Ocean science constitutes less than one percent of national R&D spending in majority of the 25 countries represented with Japan as the only country in the EAS region. The information is limited, with only 25 countries represented.
- When scientists collaborate, their work appears to improve in quality as measured by a metric called the average of relative impact factors.

Almost twenty years ago, PEMSEA examined academic programs in ocean and coastal governance that are available both within and outside of East Asia. Its findings reveal that most training courses in East Asia were delivered by universities, with a few delivered by training centers and others co-delivered by PEMSEA. The same study recommended that PEMSEA's role should be strengthened and a functional network of training institutions should be established. These suggestions were then carried out. Currently, PEMSEA has 15 Learning Centers and 3 Regional Centers of Excellence (RCOE) from nine countries in Asia.

Dr. Jacinto then emphasized the importance of linking science to policy formulation. One group that implements this is the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO), an academic consortium in America conducting research to advance understanding of the ocean within the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem and inform management and policies. PISCO states that *“interactions of science with decision-makers are ideally multidirectional – with policymakers or citizens influencing directions of science as well as scientific findings triggering new awareness, policy, and action.”*

He then gave the case of Manila Bay in the Philippines as an example of science-policy linkage. The bay houses forests, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other wetlands and is used for shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, recreation, tourism, and industries. It is also a pollution hotspot in East Asia.

PEMSEA's use of science-based ICM in Manila Bay has helped paved the way towards the Supreme Court decision ordering 13 line agencies to clean up the area. Another legacy is the creation of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Planning Framework as part of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan.

He also added that:

- People need to consider a future where local and indigenous knowledge is valued and everyone is given equal opportunities, regardless of gender or age group.
- Young scientists who are innovative, resilient, and committed are needed in the Decade of Ocean Science and the years to come. In the near future, there will be new technologies but even more challenges concerning. There will also be skills and areas of expertise that people may not be aware of today.
- Understanding and managing the ocean will require research and use of skills and expertise from different fields such as natural and social sciences, philosophy, law, policy, and education to name a few.
- There is a need to rely on best practices in ocean science while taking into account national and regional specifics and jurisdiction.

9.0 Moderated discussion

The panel comprises:

- Dr. Jacinto;
- Dr. Akiko Yamamoto, the Regional Team Leader for Nature, Climate and Energy at the Bangkok Regional Hub of UNDP; and
- Mr. Frank Belitz, Principal Officer at the Strategy and Policy Department of AIIB.

Question 1: Sir Alexander has cited the ecological importance and economic value of our ocean and yet, we have seen reports that SDG 14 is the least funded SDG by both official development assistance and philanthropic funding. How can the UN, development banks, and the scientific community work together to alleviate this situation? What can UNDP do to help governments ensure that “no one is left behind” in the coastal and ocean sector?

Dr. Yamamoto: The lack of financing for SDG 14 is possibly due to the inaccurate representation of the economic value presented by coastal and marine ecosystems—which oftentimes are underestimated or unquantified.

In the case of UNDP, we support governments by improving their technical, policy, and institutional capacity to strengthen their regulatory frameworks to protect and sustainably use their coastal and marine resources and create an enabling environment to attract private sector investment on blue economy. If done efficiently, then a notable portion of the investment can contribute to the achievement of SDG 14.

The following are highly important:

- Ensuring that any externalities are integrated in decision-making processes;
- Address policy-related inconsistencies; and
- Monitoring the progress and adopting a multi-sectoral approach in implementing SDG 14.

Question 2: For Dr. Jacinto, the announcement of an annual Ocean-Climate Dialogue as part of the Glasgow Climate Pack marks a huge step forward in the global recognition of the crucial role played by the ocean in tackling climate change. What opportunities can the region avail of to help strengthen the role of the ocean and ocean-based climate action in the UNFCCC process as we look to the new year and beyond? How can countries prepare for this? What role can the scientific community play?

Dr. Jacinto: The inclusion of ocean-related considerations will help strengthen climate action and vice versa. Prominent themes in the first of such Dialogue and the subsequent informal meeting on next steps include changing ocean impacts, carbon sinks, and the need for ecosystem resilience, biodiversity management, and improved understanding of institutional frameworks.

Some additional points:

- Ocean climate issues are life or death concerns for many countries.
- The ocean, climate, and biodiversity nexus must continue to be elevated through international collaboration, science, finance, and policies in order to address climate change.
- Countries should incorporate sustainable ocean-based climate solutions in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and stress the importance of sustaining momentum of climate action even after the Dialogue.
- For the scientific community, there is much to do in the lines of ocean acidification, sea level rise, carbon uptake, ocean deoxygenation, coral bleaching, and mangrove loss, to name a few.

Question 3: AIIB was in the Glasgow negotiations along with UNDP and we note that the Bank is working to make half of its total loan portfolio climate responsive by 2025 and by 2030 have the same percentage financed by the private sector. How can governments avail of this assistance to achieve their NDCs?

Mr. Belitz: The private sector has a crucial role to play in supporting governments in their efforts to achieve the NDCs, such as for example, mobilizing capital considering the large number of resources needed. AIIB can help leverage funds towards this end. The Bank's operations are client-driven.

Question 4 (as follow-up question): Can you tell us more about AIIB's safeguards to foster social inclusion and strengthen socioeconomic gains?

Mr. Belitz: As mentioned by Sir Alexander, the Bank was created around the same time as the Paris Agreement. Our Articles of Agreement state that our role is to promote sustainable development; as such, everything that we finance must address the need for sustainability in line with their ESF. Project gains need to be articulated and disclosed to the public.

We benefitted from the experience of and lessons learned by fellow multilateral banks such as the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). They helped us form our ESF.

As we are a young organization, we do not have any legacy roadblocks that may hamper the fast adoption of good practices.

Question 5: For Dr. Yamamoto: COVID-19 has created a shadow pandemic where for example, in the coastal and marine sector of the EAS region, women, youth, and informal workers have been found to be more vulnerable as is the case in the coastal tourism industry. How is UNDP helping countries address the impacts of COVID-19 in the coastal and ocean sector and help them build back better?

Dr. Yamamoto: In terms of pre-COVID numbers alone, about 68 percent of workers in the region are in the informal sector. It is therefore important to include these individuals in socioeconomic recovery. Women-led businesses are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 crisis.

At UNDP, we provide targeted support to women entrepreneurs by facilitating, through policy and social norm changes, the removal of structural barriers for women to enter the labor force such as disproportionate, unpaid work burden at home. We also assess and incorporate different coping mechanisms and survival opportunities for women and men when designing interventions to strengthen coastal management. We also support women's leadership in communities so that they are fully and equally engaged in contributing to decision-making and resilience building. The organization is starting a few initiatives in the region, some of them in direct partnership with PEMSEA, that consider gender-related needs in their design.

In terms of the youth, we have supported the launch of the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform in February 2021. Through this platform, we were able to reach out to over 200 events and over 9,000 youth leaders in the EAS region to discuss climate action and inclusive recovery from COVID-19. From there, we are identifying highly active youth leaders from all the coastal areas in the region to make sure that they are engaged in UNDP's projects, including those under PEMSEA.

Question 6: For Dr. Jacinto: As you had mentioned in your presentation, one of the benefits of the global pandemic is that more research and data are being shared among the scientific community online. However, we also know that studying fisheries, climate, plastic pollution, etc. necessitates actual field work, talking to fishing communities, and going underwater to explore and learn. What alternative means, tools, or technologies would you suggest to complement online learning? How can local universities and students avail of these tools?

Dr. Jacinto: The COVID-19 pandemic has opened up new learning opportunities at an unprecedented rate. This demonstrates the importance of data sharing among countries. However, people cannot remain in a virtual world where problems and solutions necessitate physical presence. As countries navigate to a post-pandemic world, they should supplement online learning under a hybrid format.

For instance, one strategy is ocean citizen science, which can be pursued by various age groups online, onsite, or a mixture of both. It promotes awareness, encourages data collection, and boosts participation in terms of marine conservation to speed up the translation of research findings into policies. Conduct of science camps and educational tours and coastal habitat monitoring are just some examples of its application.

Question 7: This is related to Dr. Hudson's presentation. Is it true that fisheries only contribute 7 percent of total GDP in the Philippines?

EAS Congress 2021 Secretariat: The 7 percent figure is actually referring to the contribution of the ocean economy to total GDP in the Philippines.

Question 8: AIIB is relatively new in the development financing work. How would you describe AIIB's work compared to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank? What would be the most common characteristics, differences, and synergies, especially with regards to fostering blue economy investment?

Mr. Belitz: Starting off with key characteristics, AIIB, as mentioned, is a new organization and therefore has no legacy issues. We have a modernized outlook in terms of our mandate and we finance a wide array of projects from those involving sovereign bank loans to private capital and venture equity.

The core differences are:

- We are focused on one sector, namely infrastructure, and how it relates to the global economy and social development;
- We are geographically focused on Asia;
- We are driven by client demand; and
- We do not engage in policy dialogue and institutional strengthening in regulatory reform.

While blue economy is not part of our initial focus, our increasing involvement in climate and other environmental issues have made it clear that blue economy needs to be given emphasis.

Question 9: What message/advice can you offer to PEMSEA to help shape its future strategic direction. What relevant trends and outlook for the Seas of East Asia should PEMSEA note in the coming years? And how should PEMSEA position itself in charting a new decade of healthy ocean, people, and economies?

Dr. Yamamoto: As mentioned in the opening ceremony, a healthy ocean plays a key role in all SDGs. The role of the ocean has been increasingly recognized by intergovernmental organizations and most recently in the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC.

PEMSEA can make the following contributions in charting a new decade of healthy ocean, people, and economies:

- **Promotion of ICM.** In the last two decades, PEMSEA has improved the ICM model and brought much of the region's coastline under integrated management. Likewise, it has created networks of local governments, learning centers, and centers of excellence. These are strong assets that PEMSEA has to offer in the new decade.
- **PEMSEA's capacity to design and implement projects and secure financing to support the implementation of the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030.** PEMSEA's transition into an intergovernmental organization is a significant accomplishment

for the region as it allows PEMSEA to implement projects and other initiatives directly. Currently, with regards to UNDP projects, PEMSEA manages the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Phase II (ATSEA-2) and will execute two projects in the pipeline: (i) Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the EAS through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN Countries (IRBM); and (ii) Effectively Managing an Ecological Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Large Marine Ecosystems in the ASEAN Region with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ASEAN ENMAPS).

- **Partnerships** as exemplified by the collaborations fostered by PEMSEA throughout the years.

Mr. Belitz: Similar with UNDP, we highly emphasize the need for partnerships considering the strengths and weaknesses of individual organizations. Furthermore, there is a need to demonstrate the value and benefit of financing projects and issues. Too often, the things that are regarded as costs are things that we do not consider nor have the tools to demonstrate their benefits or value.

Dr. Jacinto: PEMSEA's strength lies on putting the adage "*think globally, act locally*" into practice. It can consider areas of convergence among stakeholders. A scan of endorsed UNDOS actions reveals a number of opportunities to expand PEMSEA's Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) in the region. These include 31 contributions, 40 programs, and 86 projects. Moreover, IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific has incubator initiatives that could be developed into programs on marine spatial planning, harmful algal blooms, plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and deoxygenation, among others.

Given its vast circle of partners and networks and familiarity with UN organizations and international conventions and commitments, PEMSEA is well-positioned to be a broker in elucidating the strengths and opportunities for engagement and complementation that different entities can offer to address the decade's objectives and outcomes.

10.0 Conclusions and recommendations from the plenary and collabs

As the Main Conference Chair, H.E. Say remarked that the EAS Congress 2021 comes at the receiving end of various developments within the region, from the recent signing of the new climate deal, the Glasgow Climate Pact, to the ongoing negotiations worldwide to finalize the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and jumpstart discussions on a possible global treaty on addressing plastic pollution. The world is also entering a new decade marked by UN's efforts to boost ecosystem restoration and leverage ocean science for sustainable development. This is also a reminder of the short time left to achieve the targets set in the UN SDGs by 2030.

In this regard, the Main Conference served as an avenue for the region to build on and contribute more to these ongoing discussions by taking into account the findings from the plenary and the six-month long collabs.

To present the findings, the Chair called on Ms. Aimee Gonzales, the Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility.

Ms. Gonzales explained that the theme of the EAS Congress 2021 was broken down into five interrelated subthemes:

- Securing food, income, and livelihood in line with a blue economy;
- Fostering social inclusion;
- Managing and restoring natural capital;
- Reducing marine pollution; and
- Averting climate change and promoting social resilience.

The EAS Congress 2021 had the following key outputs:

- Signing of the Charter of the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) by 10 academic and research institutions across East Asia;
- Signing of the Preah Sihanouk PNLG Declaration adopting the PNLG SAP 2022-2030;
- Launch of the 2021 Regional State of Ocean and Coasts report for the EAS region and The PEMSEA Story; and
- Signing of the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration by 11 country partners of PEMSEA.

The 2021 EAS Congress had 35 main co-conveners coming from international organizations, regional initiatives and networks, local governments, universities, and other organizations.

Ms. Gonzales then shared the conclusions and recommendations as follows:

Main findings:

- SDS-SEA remains a powerful framework to achieve sustainable ocean and coastal development as well as facilitate a blue recovery from the impacts of the global pandemic and implement UN SDGs and other international and regional goals.
- Integrated coastal management is still acknowledged as a fundamental tool to build sustainable ocean economies but there are also other essential management approaches such as integrated river basin management (IRBM) and intermodal transport.
- Gender and climate response and actions need to be mainstreamed in coastal and ocean strategies and programs.
- More local adaptation of innovative tools and solutions, financing, and public-private sector partnership is needed for the management of the coastal and marine sector.
- Successful coastal and ocean programs/initiatives are often co-designed and/or co-managed, by local stakeholders and their co-benefits explicitly identified.
- Empirical and scientific evidence, policy options, tools, and information on good practices need to be accessible and adapted for local governments and coastal stakeholders.

- Conduct regular state of ocean monitoring to assess management interventions, address gaps thereof, and seize opportunities to transform towards a blue economy.
- Provide enabling policies and incentives to develop emerging sustainable industries such as offshore renewable energy, green ports, and marine biotechnology.

On ensuring food, livelihood, and income in line with a blue economy:

- Emphasize the interconnection between ocean-based economic activities, ecosystem services, and the values and benefits of well-managed marine and coastal habitats and fisheries resources.
- Institutionalize ocean monitoring and accounting.
- Harmonize policies, incentives, and financing modalities for the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.
- Work with the private sector as investors and partners in emerging and sustainable ocean economy investments.
- Use both ocean health data and traditional knowledge and practices to inform policy-making and project design and implementation.

On fostering social inclusion:

- Participation of women, minorities, and other disadvantaged groups is vital in any decision-making process to ensure an inclusive process.
- Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) involves looking at: differentiated capacity of men and women; segregated roles in household and community levels; access and control over resources (financial, fisheries equipment, and markets); cultural perception on gender roles and positions; gender participation; and equal benefits for men and women.
- The presence of the following enabling factors will help turn gender commitments into concrete actions: gender-sensitive baseline, indicators, and outputs integrated in development plans; gender budget and expenditure tracker; GESI experts; GESI-sensitive organizational/institutional architecture; and capacity-building activities for women
- Integrate gender concerns into the entire program/project cycle.
- There should be focused/targeted intervention for specific groups (there is no solution where one size fits all).

On reducing marine pollution, specifically plastic debris:

- National governments should implement national plans of actions to combat marine litter in a whole-of-government approach.
- Engage communities and the private sector in adopting a circular economy and sustainable consumption and production practices.
- Foster open dialogue and coordinated research action, including citizen science and capacity development programs.
- Share good practices/models of implementing extended producers' responsibility.
- Engage in the development of the global treaty to combat plastic pollution.

- Facilitate local government sharing of methods to gather data, apply monitoring tools, research on socioeconomic impacts of marine plastic pollution and good practices on implementing measures to reduce the issue.

On reducing marine pollution, specifically biofouling and invasive alien species (IAS):

- Producing country/region-specific biofouling assessment.
- National governments should develop policies to address biofouling and IAS.
- Private sector should demonstrate innovative technology and promote R&D.
- PEMSEA should coordinate the development of regional guidelines on ship biofouling in the EAS in line with the guidelines set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

On reducing marine pollution, specifically greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions:

- PEMSEA will work with IMO to address emissions from the maritime sector in the ASEAN region through an intermodal approach involving ports, ships, and hinterland transport) by establishing an emissions baseline, developing national roadmaps, and demonstrating innovative solutions for energy efficiency improvement and optimized processes.

On averting climate change and fostering coastal resilience:

- Link scientific information for concrete local application in terms of climate change adaptation and disaster response and preparedness at the local level through the PNLG and PNLC.
- Promote a co-learning and co-developing approach that addresses the needs of local stakeholders, responds to the local context, and support community-based restoration. Tailormade data sets, knowledge, and tools should be accessible.
- Communities should have access to climate financing.
- Continue research efforts on the contribution of mangroves, macroalgae, and seaweed beds to carbon sequestration and strengthen the restoration programs for these habitats and resources such as by promoting awareness on their conservation and restoration.
- Ensure that fisheries management takes into account projections on the impacts of climate change and is accompanied by integration of science-backed mitigation.
- Promote knowledge and capacity-building such as youth empowerment, citizen science, and community engagement.
- Incorporate climate lens in development plans, policies, and actions.
- Several tools or approaches such as ATSEA-2's guide for decision-makers, PEMSEA's ICM approach, and IGES' novel participatory coastal land-use management (PCLM) have been tested in pilot sites and should be replicated to scale up the best practices and lessons learned. To do so, collaboration and partnership between local governments, research institutions, donor agencies, and local communities are key. (PCLM) have been tested in pilot sites and should be replicated to scale up the best practices and lessons learned. To do so, collaboration and partnership between local governments, research institutions, donor agencies, and local communities are key.

On managing and restoring natural capital, specifically on the topic of ICM and marine spatial planning (MSP):

- Share the practical experiences of applying ICM and MSP in the region.
- Conduct joint training with PNLG and PNLC under the purview of the SDS-SEA and PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030.
- Utilize the SEA Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) for knowledge sharing and dissemination.
- Improve methodology assessments to help address the paucity of data in MSP.
- Use satellite data and/or ground survey to enhance the reliability and accuracy of marine spatial assessment for identifying ideal marine energy sites (e.g., tidal or wave energy).

On managing and restoring natural capital, particularly effective management of transboundary marine protected areas (MPAs):

- Accelerate collaborative efforts on protecting and restoring critical habitats as well as addressing transboundary issues related to the coastal and marine sector and find win-win solutions to improve the management effectiveness of MPAs.
- Pursue capacity-building activities for stakeholders managing transboundary resources.
- Communicate the multiple benefits of MPAs to the public.
- Improve joint scientific monitoring and research among regional large marine ecosystems (LMEs).
- Engage coastal communities in the co-design and co-management of MPAs.
- Validate the eligibility of areas of interest to become MPAs.
- Zone all MPAs in the region using scientific criteria and traditional knowledge and compile these zoning plans in a regional database.
- Convert abandoned, undeveloped, and underutilized fishponds into mangrove greenbelts, integrated eco parks, or protected areas to capitalize on the carbon sink potential of mangrove forests.

On managing and restoring natural capital, specifically mainstreaming ICM:

- Establish a comprehensive, systematic, planned, participatory, documented, and codified ICM system in more local governments, which are considered as the main actors of sustainable coastal development.
- Build local management capacity on ICM through “learning by doing” approach. Policy briefs, guidelines, codes, and case studies can serve as key reference materials for this to happen.
- Promote the adoption of relevant legislation and regulations, multi-stakeholder partnership, and public awareness campaigns to help facilitate and strengthen ecosystem restoration (e.g., mangrove rehabilitation).
- Encourage the use of remote sensing, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and other data- and web-based ICM tools such as the Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Information Platform (AP-PLAT) to help with ICM decision-making.
- Strengthen capacity development and knowledge exchange on marine environmental research and monitoring (e.g., pollution monitoring, coral reef restoration, eco-engineering).

- Adopt the Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool (MEAT) in more MPAs as a means to gauge management effectiveness.

11.0 Cultural presentation from Cambodia

To give the audience a cultural taste of Cambodia, the royal ballet was shown. This is a courtly art performed in the palace or for royal festivals to call upon the gods and spirits and express respect to the royal courts and guests. Many of the dances involve performing a fragment of the Ramayana, the ancient Indian epic. Dancers wear intricate costumes and the music is performed by the Pinpeat orchestra, made up of traditional xylophones, metallophones, horizontal gongs, drums, and cymbals.

12.0 Closing remarks

H.E. Say congratulated everyone for a successful Conference and the collabs that happened prior and reminded everyone that Ministers from PEMSEA country partners will sign the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration the following day in recognition of the key coastal and marine related issues of the time and the need to combat the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministerial Forum was also the avenue to reaffirm the commitment of country partners to advance climate action and blue economy.

He mentioned that the latest IPCC report reveals that the temperature increase since pre-industrial times has already reached roughly 1.1 degrees Celsius. Worldwide, the current NDCs would lead to a disastrous increase of 2.4 degrees Celsius. The adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact is therefore a much-needed change as it requests Parties to the UNFCCC to strengthen the 2030 targets in their NDCs by 2022 while taking into account different national circumstances.

The year 2030 will also be a crucial period worldwide as countries hope to achieve the SDGs by this time. Recalling Dr. Hudson's presentation, he reiterated that while East Asia has been among the world's leading regions making tangible progress in relation to SDG 14 (life below water), several challenges remain that require increased commitment and actions if countries are to achieve this particular goal.

Cambodia and its other PEMSEA country partners reviewed and recalibrated their respective policies and measures to emerge as a stronger and resilient EAS region in the wake of COVID-19. Aside from its potential to facilitate economic recovery in the new normal, coastal and marine resources also serve as seedbeds for nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation as emphasized in the recently concluded climate change negotiations in Glasgow.

As mentioned in the Ocean Roundtable Dialogue last June, the region's transformation into a blue economy is doable given the availability of innovative and cost-effective technologies and practices as well as existing programs and projects that can be scaled up further.

H.E. Say looked forward to future collaborations and a healthier, resilient EAS.

ANNEX 1. PROGRAM.

East Asian Seas (EAS) Congress 2021: Main Conference

Hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia and co-organized by their Ministry of Environment (MoE), Province of Preah Sihanouk (Cambodia), and Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) Resource Facility

Date and Venue:

1 December 2021, 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM (Cambodia time)
via Zoom with physical venue at the Independence Hotel in Sihanoukville, Cambodia

Chair:

H.E. Say Samal, Minister of Environment; Chairman of the National Council for Sustainable Development; Vice President of the National Committee of Cambodian Coastal Management and Development; and High Representative of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

Masters of ceremonies:

Ms. Phan Sopheak Nita, Head, Public Relations and International Cooperation Division, Phnom Penh Capital Administration (PPCA)

Ms. Mitzi Borromeo, Multimedia Communications Specialist and Former CNN Philippines Broadcast Journalist

Time	Session	Speakers
OPENING CEREMONY		
	Opening video	
1:00 pm – 1:10 pm	Welcome remarks from the host country	H.E. Eang Sophalleth Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia
1:10 pm – 1:15 pm	Message from the host local government	H.E. Kuoch Chamroeun Governor, Provincial Administration of Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia
1:15 pm – 1:20 pm	Message from Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)	Mr. Arief Yuwono Chair, EAS Partnership Council (PC)
1:20 pm – 1:40 pm	Keynote Address	Main Conference Chair

Time	Session	Speakers
PLENARY SESSION		
1:40 pm – 1:55 pm	Presentation 1: Promoting sustainable coastal and ocean governance in the run up to 2030	Dr. Andrew Hudson Head, Water and Ocean Governance Programme, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
1:55 pm – 2:10 pm	Presentation 2: Harnessing private and public financing and investment to promote blue economy	Sir Danny Alexander Vice President for Policy and Strategy, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
2:10 pm – 2:25 pm	Presentation 3: Empowering young scientists and promoting innovation under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science	Dr. Gil Jacinto Philippine National Focal Person for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and Retired Professor, Marine Science Institute (MSI), University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD)
2:25 pm – 2:55 pm	Moderated Discussion	Dr. Akiko Yamamoto Regional Team Leader for Nature, Climate and Energy, Bangkok Regional Hub, UNDP Mr. Frank Belitz Principal Officer, Strategy and Policy Department, AIIB Dr. Gil Jacinto
CLOSING CEREMONY		
2:55 – 3:05 pm	Conclusions and recommendations from the plenary and collabs (knowledge-sharing sessions)	Main Conference Chair With Ms. Aimee Gonzales Executive Director, PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF)
3:05 pm – 3:20 pm	Cultural presentation from Cambodia	
3:20 pm – 3:30 pm	Closing remarks	Main Conference Chair

ANNEX 2. LINK TO THE PRESENTATION MATERIALS AND RECORDED LIVESTREAM.

Presentation materials - <https://tinyurl.com/MainConference-Presentations>

Recorded livestream - <https://youtu.be/m3SIDB9v4Ck>