

Report of ASEM High-Level Meeting on Marine Sustainability
7-8 March 2019
Venue: Centara Grand at Central World, Bangkok, Thailand

I. Introduction

1. Marine sustainability and human society are intrinsically interlinked. The oceans are crucial for global food security, human health and climate regulation. The livelihoods of over 3 billion people world-wide depend upon services from marine and coastal biodiversity. Worldwide there is a growing recognition of promoting marine governance as one of the key drivers towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While Asia and Europe are progressively addressing policies and measures to protect and conserve the marine resources and marine environment, the two regions still face a number of challenging in achieving sustainable use of the ocean to ensure that marine resources are available for future generation while meeting the demands of human population growth and sustainable economic growth.

2. The ASEM High-Level Meeting on Marine Sustainability aimed to be a platform for sharing experiences and best practices between Asia and Europe on marine sustainability and to initiate action-oriented discussions pertaining to a marine sustainability strategy that is people-centric and environment-centric. The Meeting also provided an opportunity for both Asia and Europe to explore the priorities and challenges of promoting marine sustainability and its contributions to the attainment of Goal 14 (Life Below Water) of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The Meeting was attended by more than 170 participants comprising high-level government representatives and policy makers from relevant Ministries such as Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Public Health, experts from research institutes, representatives from local governments, regional and international organizations such as United Nation entities namely Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and International Environmental Technology Centre (UNEP-IETC) and Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) as well as from the private sectors and civil society organizations such as Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). Moreover, representatives from ASEM partners including Australia, Belgium, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, People's Republic of China, the Philippines, Portugal, Republic of

Korea, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Vietnam, ASEAN Secretariat and the European Union have participated the Meeting.

II Opening Ceremony

4. Welcoming the participants, **H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand**, emphasized that Thailand attached great importance to marine sustainability under the ASEM Framework, aiming to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. This was reflected in the 2017-2021 Pollution Management Plan and the National Master Plan on Waste Management 2016-2021. Additionally, Thailand has undertaken numerous activities to raise awareness and reduce the use of plastic as well as to enhance the research capacity in the field of plastic substitution and tackle the marine debris issue. Moreover, Thailand has undergone a complete reform of her fishing industries in an effort to combat IUU fishing. In April this year, Thailand will host an ASEAN Meeting on Combatting IUU Fishing in partnership with the European Union and to further discuss the possibility of establishing an ASEAN IUU taskforce to be the regional mechanism to combat IUU Fishing. To this end, Thailand seeks to strengthen partnership with ASEM partners in the pursuit of marine sustainability in all aspects.

III Keynote Addresses under the theme “Asia and Europe Leadership Commitment for Marine Sustainability”

5. **H.E. Mr. Neth Pheaktra, Secretary of States of the Ministry of Environment of Cambodia**, shared Cambodia's experience in marine management and conservation and Cambodia's efforts to protect the marine environment. He mentioned that the Meeting provided opportunities for Asian and European countries to set priorities and issues to promote maritime stability in contributing to the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He urged that all stakeholders including national, sub-national, private sector, civil society and regional organizations, especially scientists, researchers should cooperate together in exploring ways to ensure marine sustainability.

6. **Dr. Wijarn Simachaya, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand**, highlighted the problem of marine debris, especially plastic, which enters oceans from the land through streams or littering, adversely affecting human and marine species. On Thailand's part, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's National Strategy on Natural Resources and Environment (2017-2036), the Pollution and Waste Management Plan (Phase I, 2017-2021) and the Integrated Plastic Debris Management Plan

have been implemented to reduce plastic pollution. Furthermore, the Action Plan on 20-Year Plastic Waste Management contains measures to reduce and ban 7 types of single-use plastics by 2022. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has also been actively enhancing public outreach, such as organizing the ASEAN Youth Camp Stepping towards Environmental Sustainability in April 2018, as well as international cooperation, such as the recent 9th Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific and the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Marine Debris.

7. H.E. Mr. Pirkka Tapiola, Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Thailand, expressed his appreciation for Thailand in hosting the Meeting, which underscores the shared responsibility of Asia and Europe in achieving marine sustainability. He congratulated Thailand on the lifting of its IUU yellow card and reiterated that the EU will continue to be a partner in this matter. He was of the view that land mismanagement was a source of marine pollution. He informed on the EU's measures, including the 2015 EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy with measures covering the entire life cycle from production and consumption to waste management to reuse and an agreement to ban single-use plastic products reached in December 2018. He reaffirmed the EU's commitment to foster ownership in the EU as well as assist international partners to achieve circular economy, such as the SWITCH projects, which foster sustainable consumption and production across Asia, entering a new phase.

8. H.E. Ms. Kjersti Rødsmoen, Ambassador of Norway to Kingdom of Thailand, viewed the meeting as a way to strengthen the bonds between Asia and Europe on marine sustainability, an issue that was among the highest on Norway's foreign policy agenda. Norwegian Prime Minister established a high-level panel on building a sustainable ocean economy, consisting of Presidents and Prime Ministers from a number of coastal states, committed to solving the challenges. Norway also has dedicated a number of funds to enable international partners to deal with marine sustainability. Norway's approach to combating marine litter and micro plastics was to "act locally, but think globally", emphasizing the importance of developing local waste management systems, and calling for greater responsibility from industries to create reusable products. She indicated that Norway would put forward a proposal for a stronger global framework at the 4th United Nations Environmental Assembly which would meet in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2019 and Norway would host the Our Ocean Conference in Oslo on 23-24 October 2019, to create momentum for action on clean, healthy and productive oceans.

9. Mr. Kazushige Endo, Director, United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), shared UNCRD's vision to achieve SDG14, a global plan to balance our relationship with the ocean, as the implementation arm of the UN's Division of SDGs. He emphasized that inadequate waste management of

plastic pollution led to rising levels of non-biodegradable microplastics in coastal and marine environments, threatening aquatic life, human food supply chain and health. He welcomed the adoption of the “Bangkok 3R Declaration towards prevention of plastic waste pollution through 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) and Circular Economy” at the 9th Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific, which emphasized the transboundary nature of plastic pollution in coastal and marine ecosystems, and the need for joint international actions at the sub-regional and regional level to promote 3R and Circular Economy principles. He informed that UN member states made strong commitments to conserve and sustainably use marine resources for sustainable development at the UN Ocean Conference in New York, 2017. He believed that a combination of policies and strategies were necessary for each country, depending on their socio-economic conditions.

IV Asia-Europe Paths for Achieving Marine Sustainability: Resources Efficiency and Technology Towards Circular Economy and SMART Ocean

10. The circular economy represents a fundamental driver towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and can play a role in meeting the challenges of the SDGs and marine sustainability. Every stakeholder, from governments to individuals, could contribute to help create a circular economy movement. Despite there is a steady progress in governmental legislation and policy development in many ASEM countries in promoting circular economy, there remain major gaps to achieve full scale utilization of plastic waste. The session, moderated by **Dr. Suparak Suriyankietkaew, Centre for Research on Sustainable Leadership, College of Management, Mahidol University, Thailand**, discussed on the opportunities and challenges for advancing roles and responsibilities of stakeholders for advance circular economy efficiency and took note that science and technology and innovation were drivers for sustainable blue economy and SMART ocean.

11. **Mr. Ryuzo Sugimoto, Director, International Cooperation and Sustainable Infrastructure Office, Ministry of the Environment, Japan**, shared efforts of Japan aiming to reduce marine plastic which were not only limited to waste reduction practices but also to improve the efficiency of 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) and proper waste management. Japan transformed waste policy into actions to promote circular economy and supported new innovation such as biodegradable polymer, plastics from limestone, wood straws, new recycle products. He called for international collaboration to improve management of plastic waste, promote awareness, increase research and education on marine plastic debris, stimulate policy reform, increase of incentives for private sector and establishment of regional knowledge hub on marine plastic debris.

12. Ms. Katarina GRGAS-BRUS, Policy officer for ASEAN and Southeast Asia, Directorate-General for Environment, European Commission, presented that circular economy could help countries unfold alternative environmental and economic development opportunities. She shared the EU experience in developing Circular Economy Action Plan, Plastics Strategy and Single-use plastics measures with emphasis on marine litter. On the EU Plastics Strategy, she outlined the Strategy by giving examples on the EU actions and the plans to improve the economics and quality of plastics recycling, to drive investments and innovation towards circular solutions, to curb plastic waste and littering and harnessing global actions. On single-use plastics measures, she stressed on the keys issues, for instance, promotion of less harmful alternatives, prevention measures such as design requirements and consumption reduction, as well as better waste management and producer responsibility.

13. Dr. Lin Xianghong, Associate Research Fellow, National Marine Data and Information Service, the People's Republic of China, reiterated the importance of green and low-carbon technologies such as high-tech ship, marine renewable energy, green farming technology, recycling technologies and green port technology. She emphasized China's best practices in promoting science and technology to achieve marine sustainability including the implementation of the National Marine Economic Development Plan and the National Plan for Developing the Marine Economy with Science and Technology, the support of pilot and demonstration projects to promote the transformation of marine high technology such as desalination, marine biomedicine, and marine engineering equipment, as well as projects related to marine ecological protection and restoration. She reaffirmed China's commitment to cooperate with international community in establishing mechanism such as "International Blue Industry Alliance" to promote sustainable blue economy.

14. Dr. Karl Vrancken, Research manager sustainable materials management at VITO (Flemish Institute for Technological Research NV), outlined the data of current ocean plastics and underscored that there was a need to transform the world-wide plastics management system through a combination of measures, including prevention, reuse and recycling. He shared systems thinking that were in line with circular economy, including, regional aspects of plastics management, stop dumping, selective ban on single-use plastics, extended producer responsibility – e.g. packaging management, biodegradable materials, mechanical recycling and chemical recycling. He added that one of the blind spots in the current management system was that it focused less on the availability of chemical recycling.

15. Mr. Tjitte A. Nauta, Regional Manager Asia, Strategic Advisor Integrated Water Management, Deltares, the Netherlands, emphasized the importance of building an integrated knowledge base, development of ocean and

marine data, and observational activities for marine sustainability around the world. He highlighted how his institute actively engaged in data management and developing global models such as river flooding model, and storm surge model (Delft-FEWS) by collecting global datasets on river discharge and water level and surge height respectively. He also elaborated on how the early-warning system worked in predicting coastal flooding levels along the coast of Thailand. He pointed out the importance of global plastic modelling that would help identify key sources of mismanaged plastic waste and pinpoint hotspots and accumulation areas. He emphasized that data became more important in enabling technology development and cooperation among international communities should be strengthened.

V Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable and Responsible Blue Economy Development

16. The blue economy is determined to promote sustainable harnessing of ocean resources and sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources. Responsible blue economy, therefore, means to global sustainability. The session, moderated by **Mr. Stefanos Fotiou, Director of the Environment and Development Division, United Nations ESCAP, Thailand**, discussed how to advance responsible blue economy development sustainably and the important role of effective law enforcement towards the sustainability of global marine resources, and private sector in contributing towards innovations in the blue economy.

17. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Soparatana Jarusombat, Professor and Head of Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Political Sciences, Thammasat University, Thailand**, presented that the blue economy was very crucial and should become the sustainable approach to the oceans in global areas. She, however, indicated that compared to the European Union and its countries, the Asian region had conducted very few initiatives and had little cooperation in blue economy development. Although cooperating with researchers, private sectors and stakeholders is important, she, therefore, underlined that the governmental sector should be central to further development and collaboration with the above-mentioned sectors and particularly any attempt to conduct joint projects between Asia and Europe for exchanging inputs and sharing experiences.

18. **Mr. Peter Lawrence Southen, Senior MCS Advisor, OceanMind, United Kingdom**, outlined the importance of Monitoring, Control, Surveillance and Enforcement to managing fisheries. He also praised Thailand's vast improvement to MCS and E after the issuance of the 'yellow card' but cautioned against complacency. He reminded the Meeting that IUU fishing was not confined only to commercial fishing but also encompassed artisanal fishermen as well. Thus, in order to achieve a true IUU free status, everyone needed to be on board. At the end of the Meeting, he summarized that while MCS and E measures were often

viewed as being expensive and unproductive, they were at the core of fishery management and cannot be overlooked.

19. **Dr. Maria Corazon Ebarvia, PEMSEA, the Philippines**, presented a comprehensive overview of the blue economy by providing an introduction of the ocean economy and the ocean crisis. She illustrated how the ocean could become a crucial driver of innovation and economic growth and displayed the blue economy initiatives in many fields including Fisheries and aquaculture, Ports and shipping, Tourism, Energy and Emerging industries in Southeast Asian countries. These projects can not only contribute the global economy but also achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. She also underscored the importance of promoting and supporting the blue economy as she mentioned that ocean health plays a vital role in sustaining human security of food, energy and climate.

20. **Mr. Supot Katetopragran, Commercial Director, Dow Chemical Thailand and SCG-Dow Group, Thailand**, presented the private sector's perspective on finding solutions for a sustainable marine industry. He emphasised that in order to end the threat of marine debris, everyone needed to embrace the circular economy and not just pursue a ban of plastic as we cannot guarantee that any alternatives to plastic would not generate other pollution. He gave examples of how businesses could take the initiative to become more sustainable such as the formation of the 'Alliance to End Plastic Waste' composed of 25 global leading companies and the 'Thailand Public Private Partnership for Plastic and Waste Management' which represented 15 entities to solve the plastic waste issue.

21. **Mr. Piya Thedyam, President of the Artisanal Fishermen Network of Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, Thailand**, opined that the concept of 'blue economy' has existed for a long time. However, local communities have not given the opportunity to take an active part in managing their natural resources. He went on to share his vision for new generations of artisanal fishermen by forming 'Smart Fisherfolk' to educate young people on how to fish sustainably. He presented grass roots initiatives such as the Crab Bank and a locally made Imitation Reef. He even advocated the need for MCS measures to be applied to artisanal fishermen. He finished by stating his support for the fishing reforms undertaken by the government. However, he presented his case for some amendments of the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries B.E. 2558 in order to allow for more flexibility.

VI Waste Management and Pollution-free Ocean: Practical Solutions

22. Despite there is progress in legislation and policy development related to waste management and control of the manufacture and use of plastics, many countries are also faced with a number of issues and challenges. These include

lack of proper collection, transportation, and treatment capacity for waste, lack of land for sanitary landfill, a lack of legal arrangements and rules for waste management, lack of technical know-how to promote recycle and lack of involvement by the private sector. Moreover, marine debris and marine pollution generated by plastics also lead to environmental threats. The session, moderated by **Dr. Sunil Herat, Associate Professor, Griffith University, Australia**, discussed on concrete actions should be taken by international communities and local communities to reduce plastic pollution in the people's daily lives and in operations of related industries and how to protect the ocean from all pollution.

23. **H.E. Mr. Georg Schmid, Ambassador of Germany to Thailand**, underscored that governments played an important role in reducing plastic litter. As important as voluntary actions, price signals were necessary to switch behavior. He stressed that there was urgent need to reduce plastic and other waste, recycle waste in a circular economy and clean up the oceans because pollution of the oceans did not stop at political borders. Successful marine protection can be achieved only by intensive international cooperation at regional and global level. Germany – as a strong and long-standing partner of Thailand and ASEAN in combating climate change – stayed committed to support the region in developing and implementing policies for a sustainable management of coastal economic spaces and marine conservation.

24. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thon Thamrongnawasawat, Kasetsart University, Thailand**, in his presentation, highlighted threats of marine debris and marine pollution to endangered species, aquatic animals and marine environment. He also pointed out the tourism trash problem in Thailand and in many islands which were tourist destinations. Thailand received more than 34 million tourists annually and the island such as the Phi Phi Island had been visited by more than 2 million foreign tourists. Such numbers was exceeding the island's population of around 1,000 people and the large number of tourists was the major generator of lots of waste, with higher rate than that of the local islanders. As European tourists were among the largest tourist demographic of the country, they should act like the “ambassador” to showcase the European environmentally-friendly best practices such as reducing plastic waste in the country. He also elaborated on the activities of local communities in the islands and National Parks in the Andaman sea, in collaboration with Kasetsart University, in raising awareness on combating the marine debris problem.

25. **Dr. Keith Alverson, Director, UNEP-IETC, Japan**, discussed challenges on global plastic production and consumption. Since 1950s, growth in the production of plastic had largely outpaced that of any other materials and in 2018, 300 million tons of plastic waste was generated. To date, 60 countries had introduced regulations to control the manufacture and use of plastic bags and Styrofoam products. He underlined that to reduce plastic pollution, action should

be taken in line with sustainable waste management and circular economy approach, to minimize plastic waste generation and strengthening the recycling industry and ensure safe disposal of waste. He also highlighted that Asia and Europe, locally and internationally, could promote strong cooperation between various initiatives related with the waste management policies, raising awareness, technology development and stakeholder engagement. Governmental and funding agencies needed to work and collaborate more closely to ensure that the results and recommendations of various streams of work are coordinated and synchronized.

26. Mr. Vaughan Levitzke, Chief Executive, Green Industries South Australia, Australia, highlighted the policies on waste management and plastic waste control, as far as single use plastics were concerned. He mentioned that the policies dealing with the plastic waste problem should consider a mix of cost, new business opportunities, risks and its impacts. He deliberated that the governments, with the collaboration of all stakeholders, had to regulate and incentivize change for plastic and waste management such as single use plastic ban, invest in alternatives, mandate recycling targets, build better extended producer responsibility, institute container deposits on beverage containers, mandate labelling for recycling and impose tax on virgin plastics.

27. Mrs. Mona Arnold, Principal Scientist, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd, Finland, underscored that plastic waste floating in the waterways was a global challenge, directly affecting marine and coastal life, ecosystems, economies and human health. More than 180 metric tons of plastics have accumulated in the world's oceans and increased by 4.6-12.7 metric tons annually, mainly from land-based sources, associated with poor waste and waste water management. To reduce plastic pollution, action should be taken to improve the state of solid waste collection process and waste management system. Collective actions to strengthen partnership between public and private sectors should be promoted including supporting eco-friendly alternatives in order to phase out single-use plastics, introduction of economic incentives for recycling industries and social awareness and education, etc. She also presented the KELMUVEX - concept for plastic free oceans, lakes and rivers to demonstrate solutions for identifying, quantifying, recovering and recycling of floating plastic debris in waterways together with local stakeholders.

28. Ms. Antika Sriraksa, General Manager of Pakasai Resort (the Representative of Thai Hotels Association), shared an example of sustainability performance in hospitality industry by giving Pakasai Resort as example. She stressed that innovative features and upstream efforts from hotels and hospitality industry could help prevent environmental impact. For example, Pakasai Resort, located in Krabi Province of Thailand, paid high attention to its environmental friendly level, including, energy consumption, water management, waste

minimization, community support and etc. The resort had a zero discharge policy, organic waste free operation, single use plastic free service and operation as well as applying bio-compost fertilizer.

29. During the discussion on the roles of stakeholders in protecting the ocean from all pollution, the forum urged that there was an urgent need to support the implementation of strategies and best practices to minimize pollution such as “polluter pays” principles, holistic waste management and plastic recycling, integrated water resources management approaches to improving water quality, “green” tourism concepts, and promoting small-scale business for turning waste management into business opportunities.

30. The session also highlighted that Asia and Europe could work together to enhance cooperation towards pollution-free oceans. Those included raising awareness campaign of the threats of marine debris and a plastic ban, implementing multinational initiatives such as industry standard development and regulatory frameworks, and promoting research and development, particularly on micro plastic and nanoparticles, and mechanical and chemical recycling and commercialization of new innovations. The engagement of the business community to create business in the recycling and waste management is also seen as high priority.
