

**Summary of
ASEM High-Level Meeting on Marine Sustainability
7-8 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand**

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the ASEM High-Level Meeting on Marine Sustainability on 7 March 2019 in Bangkok.

2. The meeting was a follow up to the ASEM Meeting on Sustainable Marine Environment: Marine Debris, hosted by Thailand on 3 August 2018 in Bangkok. It was organized as part of a series of international meetings hosted by Thailand on marine sustainability, including the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Marine Debris and the 9th Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific during 4-8 March 2019. Thailand hosted these meetings as part of the country's commitment to the issue of sustainability in all dimensions, which was a key point in the Prime Minister's remarks at the ASEM Summit in October 2018. Approximately more than 170 participants, representing the ASEM members, international organizations, government agencies, private sector, academia, local communities and youths, attended the meeting.

3. The meeting was designed to serve as the 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.

4. The meeting comprised four sessions, namely: (1) High-Level Session on "Asia and Europe Leadership Commitment for Marine Sustainability"; (2) Session II on "Asia-Europe Paths for Achieving Marine Sustainability: Resources Efficiency and Technology Towards Circular Economy and SMART Ocean"; (3) Session III on "Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable and Responsible Blue Economy Development"; and (4) Session IV on "Waste Management and Pollution-free Ocean: Practical Solutions".

5. In his opening statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand stressed that Thailand attaches 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.

6. The meeting discussed and concluded with the following points:

6.1 The meeting acknowledged that marine resources and oceans are increasingly threatened, degraded or destroyed by human activities. Important classes of threats are climate change, marine pollution, unsustainable extraction of marine resources and physical alterations and destruction of marine and coastal habitats and landscapes. The deterioration of marine ecosystems is negatively affecting human well-beings worldwide.

6.2 The meeting underscored that good governance, sustainable land and marine based human activities, and adequate legislative measures are essential to reduce the negative impacts on the marine environment. For instance, to enable more sustainable use of resources, governments need to encourage changes in production and consumption patterns and improved management and control of human activities.

6.3 The meeting recognized the innovative roles of various stakeholders including national and local governments, private sectors, civil societies, regional and sub-regional groups as well as scientists, researchers, and youths in formulating sustainable ways of achieving marine sustainability.

6.4 The meeting agreed that the circular economy could play a role in meeting the challenges of the SDGs and every stakeholder, from governments to individuals, could contribute to help create a circular economy movement. The meeting also underlined that science and technology and innovation could be promoted in the service of sustainable blue economy and SMART Ocean. Initiatives that improve the marine knowledge of all stakeholders is key for fostering innovation and technology support and commercialization. Asia and Europe should promote the holistic and integrative research, ecological efficiency of ocean harvest, biological ecosystem observations, as well as marine data infrastructure and the systematic management of marine data to support marine sustainability.

6.5 The meeting discussed how to advance blue economy development sustainably and called for a universal definition of the term “blue economy” and more joint research to provide well rounded recommendations between Asia and Europe. The meeting discussed the important role of effective law enforcement to ensure compliance, utilising the example of Thailand’s success in combatting IUU fishing. At the same time, the Meeting heeded the advice for flexibility and pragmatism to be taken into account when laws are applied in order to not further discriminate or alienate those affected. The meeting also discussed the role of the private sector in contributing towards innovations in the blue economy. Most importantly, it highlighted the urgent need for governments to work together to realise the full potential of the ocean through responsible, sustainable approaches to economic development.

6.6 The meeting realized the threats of marine debris and marine pollution and underscored that concrete actions by the international community and local communities should be taken to reduce plastic pollution in the people’s daily lives and in operations of related industries. The meeting supported 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. The meeting also highlighted that Asia and Europe could work together to enhance cooperation towards pollution-free oceans such as a 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.

6.7 The meeting appreciated Thailand’s role and leadership in promoting a sustainable marine environment and recognized the importance of partnership and collaboration among ASEM members and the promotion of ASEM’s roles as a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices on marine sustainability.

7. On the same occasion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand organized a field trip for participants of the Meeting to visit the Klong Khone Mangrove Forest Conservation Centre in Samut Songkhram Province on 8 March 2019. With the participation of 50 persons, the trip provided an opportunity for ASEM members to learn and exchange best practices from Thailand’s community-based mangrove conservation methods and the promotion of the Blue Economy model, emphasizing the sustainable and balanced use of marine and coastal resources.
