



UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE NICE, FRANCE 2025

UNOC3 Conference Side Event

Scaling Collective Action for 30x30: The East Asian Seas Regional Collaborative Network of MPAs Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)

9 & 13 June 2025, Nice, France

Organized by:

Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)

Background

Since the East Asian Seas Congress (Xiamen, 2024) followed by Our Ocean Conference (Busan, 2025), organizations in the East Asian Seas have been discussing ways to improve synergies, joint action, and cooperation towards accelerating 30x30 in the region.

- Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program (ATSEA)
- ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)
- Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)
- Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF)
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission - Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC-WESTPAC)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia-Pacific
- North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN)
- Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
- South China Seas – Strategic Action Programme (SCS-SAP) Project

The East Asian Seas (EAS) is home to the richest marine biodiversity on earth, driving decades of conservation leadership. Despite this, less than 5% are considered as MPAs in the EAS across 15 countries from nine regional organizations. In response to Cambodia's call for greater regional collaboration at the EAS Congress, key partners are working towards the Regional Collaborative Network of Marine Protected Areas for the East Asian Seas.

Key Issues

The **East Asian Seas Regional Collaborative Network of MPAs** was launched through two Green Zone side events. These events discussed approaches for connected, inclusive, and effective region-wide marine protection. The Regional MPA Network will serve as a platform for joint action, knowledge exchange, and capacity building to accelerate progress toward SDG14 and 30x30.

PART 1 - joint action, knowledge sharing, and capacity building (9 June; 14h00-15h00, #ForCoral Pavilion, La Baleine

Regional partners reiterated their commitment to actively participate in this Network, indicating that the region has the strength, resources, and capacity to achieve the 30x30 global target if they work together. The status of conservation in the East Asian Seas and the journey of this Network were presented, followed by discussions on respective roles and contributions of the different organizations, identifying goals, expected outcomes, challenges, and approaches for collaboration.



PART 2 - reflections and synergies, fostering strategic partnerships, and enhancing regional collaboration (13 June; 12h45-13h30, Room Orca, La Baleine)

Brought in additional perspectives to establish and support this Regional Collaborative Network of MPAs.

Learned from the experiences in other regions and institutions on transboundary cooperation for large marine protected areas and seascape governance. Discussed recommendations and potential future partnerships to effectively advance this regional Network from different organizations, which included ADB, GFCR, UNEP, Barcelona Convention, UNDP, SwAM, Global Network of MPA Networks, and Ocean Innovation Challenge.



OUTCOMES:

- Launch of the “East Asian Seas Regional Collaborative Network of MPAs”
- Exchanged best practices, tools, learnings, and experiences, and capacity building
- Discussed approaches for transboundary cooperation for large marine protected areas and seascape governance.
- Concrete follow-up activities: 1) EAS mapping exercise with seascape approach; 2) OECM regional workshop; and 3) resource mobilization - towards regional marine conservation efforts.

Voluntary commitments

The regional organizations in the East Asian Seas Regional Collaborative Network of Marine Protected Areas are committed towards collective action in the achievement of SDG 14 and the 30x30 target. Collaborative initiatives include:

1. transboundary cooperation for large marine protected area and seascape governance,
2. platform for learning exchanges, capacity building, and knowledge sharing on tools and best practices,
3. joint project development and resource mobilization towards regional marine conservation efforts.