

Developing an East Asian Seas Knowledgebase for Coastal and Marine Information and Resources

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Currently, there are many institutions, projects and programmes dealing with coastal and marine management in the East Asian Seas Region, producing valuable outcomes at both national and regional levels. However, it is difficult to get a comprehensive overview of all the ongoing activities and it is not easy to access the large amounts of data produced in each country.

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) consists of ten member countries bordering the East Asian Seas. COBSEA was formed in 1981 to oversee the implementation of the 'Action Plan for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the East Asian Seas region'. UNEP East Asian Seas Regional Coordinating Unit (EAS/RCU) acts as the secretariat of COBSEA.

Information management and state of marine environment reporting are some of the main components of the Action Plan. The development of the East Asian Seas (EAS) Knowledgebase has been initiated to serve as a one-stop-shop for accessing data and information on coastal and marine environment in the region at both regional and national levels. The development of the EAS Knowledgebase has started with two main components:

- 1) Development of a regional database on existing programmes, projects and activities; and
- 2) Development of a pilot national database on national data and information regarding the coastal and marine environment.

The regional database is intended to facilitate the access to information on regional programmes and projects in a systematic manner. It will provide users with tools and resources that can assist COBSEA member countries in identifying potential overlaps and gaps while implementing new programmes and projects. The national databases are intended to collect national data and information on the state of the coastal and marine environment in order to increase the access to the scientific information required for policy recommendations and for identification and evaluation of emerging issues. In the long-term, the regional and national databases would be linked using best available Internet technologies, allowing users to visualize and access data and information over the Internet in a secure manner.

The paper will focus on the efforts in developing an EAS Knowledgebase that would offer a platform to share information in the form of directories, resources by themes, metadata on coastal and marine related projects and activities, project reports and lessons learned.

For overall development of the EAS Knowledgebase, UNEP EAS/RCU has engaged the Tropical Marine Science Institute (TMSI) at the National University of Singapore. The pilot national database has been initiated through the Center of Environmental Monitoring, Data and Information (CEMDI), Vietnam Environmental Protection Agency.