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Virtual

REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Item 5(c) of the provisional agenda)

Marine Protected Areas

Note by the Secretariat

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) was launched in November 2013 at the 18th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-18), aiming to strengthen subregional cooperation on the marine environment. With the adoption of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of NEAMPAN at the SOM-18, the Steering Committee was established upon the nomination of each member Government and convened its first meeting in March 2014 in Incheon, the Republic of Korea. The 1st Steering Committee clarified the national approaches to MPA, the strategic direction of the Network, target Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), network membership as well as organizational and managerial structures of the Steering Committee. The Committee also agreed that target MPAs be nominated by respective governments through Steering Committee members, and TOR of the Steering Committee was endorsed by the SOM-19 in 2014.

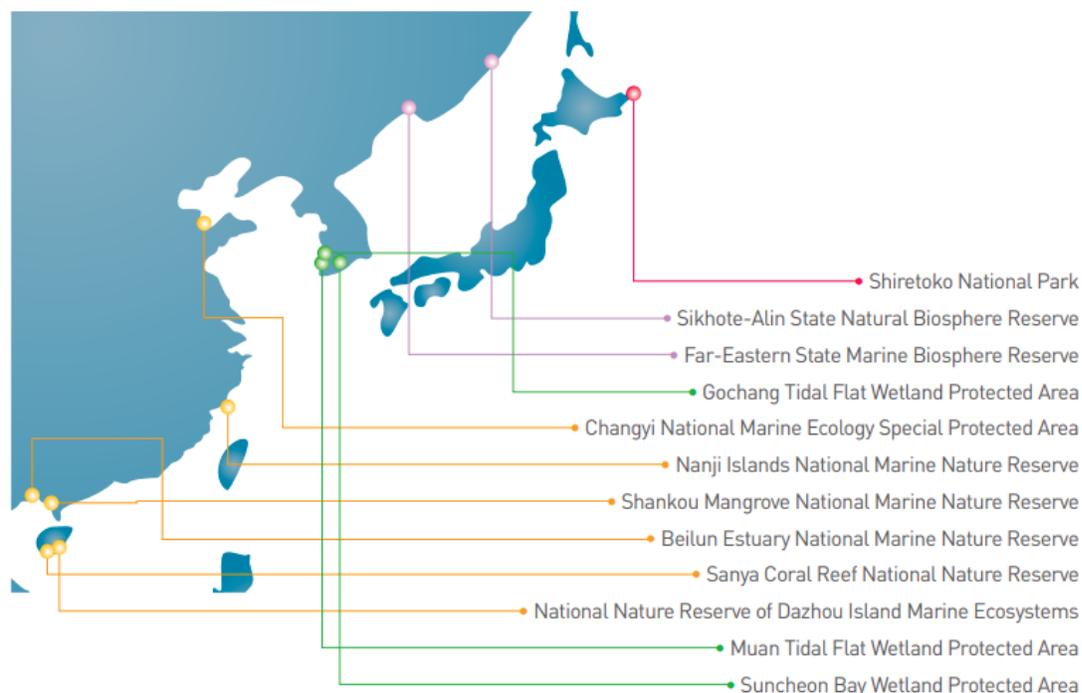
2. After the nomination of 11 target sites, the 1st NEAMPAN Workshop was held back-to-back with the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting in June 2016 in Suncheon, Republic of Korea, one of the target MPAs. As the first occasion where most of the Steering Committee members and managers from the target sites joined, the Workshop facilitated (1) sharing experiences of MPA management and partnership/networking among MPAs, and (2) exchanging views on common concerns and interests of the NEAMPAN members. Discussions included key protected species in each site, challenges of insufficient funding, interests in eco-tourism balancing the conservation with socio-economic needs, and areas of potential collaborative activities.

3. Given that NEAMPAN is a collection of relatively well-managed MPAs under the national-level administration in respective countries, their monitoring and management experiences can serve as beneficial knowledge products for effective management of MPAs, including the way to balance conservation and socio-economic objectives in MPA management. In this regard, the Secretariat has conducted a joint study project titled, “Strengthening the subregional cooperation through knowledge sharing on sustainable management of marine protected areas”, financially supported by the Russian Federation during 2018-2021. The project proposal was reviewed at the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting (2016) and endorsed by the SOM-21 (2017). Having identified seven national experts (one each from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; and four from the Russian Federation), the Secretariat supported the study project, including organizing the Expert Workshop to discuss on preliminary findings (2018) and the project review meeting to provide feedback and peer-review on the draft of the studies (2019) in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

4. In the meantime, NEAMPAN jointly organized an international seminar on MPAs with the Project Management Office of the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (YSLME) Phase II Project in Gangwha County, Republic of Korea, in 2017, which facilitated experience sharing around the designation and management of MPAs in North-East Asia. The Secretariat also planned to organize a NEAMPAN Workshop, a Steering Committee Meeting as well as a knowledge-sharing workshop to disseminate the study findings, but these were not organized due to the institutional restructuring of the intended host government and the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years.

5. NEAMPAN currently has 12 sites nominated by the member States, including six in China, one in Japan, three in the Republic of Korea, and two in the Russian Federation (Figure 1). Gochang Tidal Flat Wetland Protected Areas was added following the announcement of the nomination by the Republic of Korea at the SOM-22 (2018).

Figure 1. NEAMPAN Sites



6. In line with the designation of the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve and the Rason Migratory Bird Reserve as Ramsar Sites, as well as Kumya Wetland Reserve and Mundok Wetland Reserve listed as Flyway Network Sites (FNS) of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) in 2018, it was encouraged for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to join the activities of NEAMPAN.

II. UPDATE ON THE NEAMPAN PROJECT AND ACTIVITIES

Publishing the report, “Management Plans, Monitoring and Assessment of Marine Protected Areas”¹

7. As the main outcome of the project, “Strengthening the subregional cooperation through knowledge sharing on sustainable management of marine protected areas”, the Secretariat published the report of studies on MPAs of the four countries, which analyzed the environmental and socio-economic status of the NEAMPAN’s target MPAs and their connection to the management plans and strategies. The study revealed varying approaches to MPA management in the countries. The report also found differences in purpose, scope and authorities responsible for planning and implementing management plans across the countries and indicated challenges in assessing the impact of and on socio-economic activities in and around the MPAs and linking it with MPA management plans and monitoring of ecological status.

8. While the Secretariat planned to hold a knowledge-sharing workshop to disseminate the study findings and provide an opportunity for field visit to a NEAMPAN site, particularly for NEAMPAN site managers in conjunction with the project, it could not be arranged due to travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. Instead, the Secretariat translated the report into the languages of the NEAMPAN members (Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian) and distributed copies of the report and NEAMPAN brochure to the Steering Committee members and MPA management offices.

The 3rd Steering Committee Meeting

9. Virtually organized on 23 April 2021, the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting discussed NEAMPAN activities and progress on a NEAMPAN Workshop plan. Recalling the repeated postponements of the Workshop over the years due to various constraints, the Meeting agreed to organize the Workshop virtually with language support to increase the interests of local participants. The Meeting also discussed the procedures for nominating new MPAs to NEAMPAN, which was raised at the SOM-24 in 2020. The Steering Committee members pointed out the need to raise awareness of NEAMPAN and increase its activities to give a clearer picture and benefits of joining NEAMPAN before having the procedural discussion. The details of the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting were included in the Annex I of the document.

¹ The report is available at: http://neaspec.org/sites/default/files//REPORT_North-East%20Asian%20Marine%20Protected%20Areas%20Network_web.pdf; Also other language versions are available on the NEASPEC website.

NEAMPAN Workshop 2021

10. NEAMPAN's first virtual Workshop was organized on 15 July 2021. Attended by more than 90 participants including Steering Committee members, NEAMPAN site managers, experts, local stakeholders and international organizations, the Workshop provided simultaneous interpretation services in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian to facilitate wider and active engagement from local MPA stakeholders.

11. The Workshop facilitated (1) sharing key findings from the NEAMPAN study project focusing on sustainable MPA management and (2) sharing of experiences and lessons learned on sustainable MPA management from NEAMPAN sites, followed by open discussion among Steering Committee members and site managers for future activities. Discussions included the following:

- (a) Despite the need for well-structured management plans and measures on MPAs, the collection and assessment of socio-economic data are not normally under the purview of the MPA management offices or integrated as parameters to monitor the health of MPAs.
- (b) Many of the NEAMPAN sites see the importance of the sense of ownership by the active participation of stakeholders and operate a governance structure involving administration, citizen groups and academia. Some sites highlighted the benefits of local community involvement for MPA conservation, management and planning through annual meetings, regular training programmes and a visitor's center for education and awareness-raising.
- (c) Scientific research, regular ecological monitoring and restoration projects on rare and endangered species were also presented. In general, the Workshop noted that more efforts had been put into MPA management and conservation since the first NEAMPAN workshop in 2016.
- (d) However, the Workshop noted challenges and threats of insufficient funds, insufficient management, anthropogenic risks (e.g., poaching and overfishing), climate change and ocean acidification.
- (e) Considering ongoing difficulties in setting up physical meetings, it is suggested to organize more NEAMPAN activities in a virtual or hybrid mode with a more focused topic. Some participants suggested a specific theme-based meeting focusing on such as climate change on marine ecosystems, key species and protected targets, and some proposed a NEAMPAN event on a marine-related special day.
- (f) Some Steering Committee members indicated the need to expand NEAMPAN sites and requested the Secretariat to regularly communicate with NEAMPAN members.

- (g) Suncheon Bay Wetland Protected Area expressed interest in hosting a NEAMPAN Workshop in conjunction with the Suncheon Bay International Garden Expo scheduled for April-October 2023.

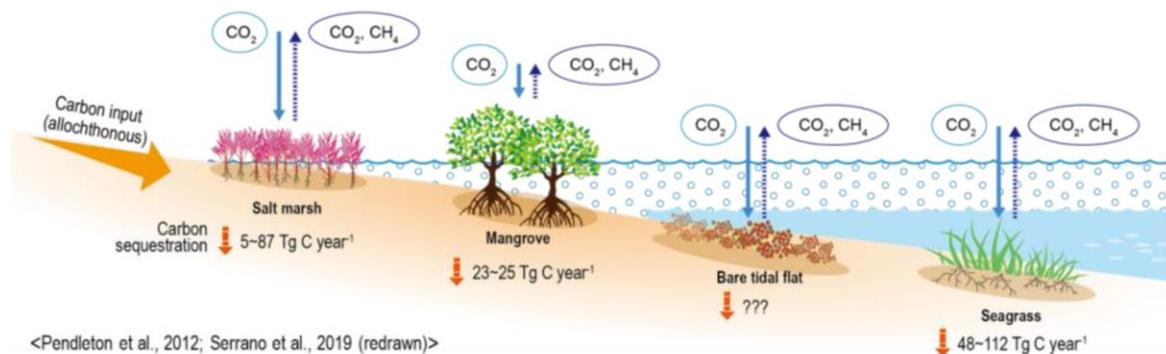
Workshop on Marine Protected Area Management and Networking: Experiences and Opportunities for Collaboration in East Asia

12. After the 3rd Steering Committee and Workshop, the Secretariat extended an invitation to the Steering Committee for proposals of joint events with NEAMPAN and received an invitation from the China-Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) Sustainable Coastal Management Cooperation Center (CPC) to jointly organize a Workshop on MPA Management and Networking in conjunction with the East Asian Seas Congress 2021. With aims to promote sharing and exchange of experience and practices in MPA, the Workshop was organized on 13-14 October 2021 in a hybrid format, and the Secretariat shared MPA management and networking in North-East Asia.

Fourth Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean

13. The Secretariat supported the Fourth Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean on 27 October 2021 by organizing a session on “Ocean-climate nexus: blue carbon” with the Environment and Development Division of ESCAP (Figure 2). Starting in 2018, to support ESCAP member States and key stakeholders through dialogues on priority areas and challenges in the region, the Fourth Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean was organized in line with the mandates contained in the ESCAP Resolution 76/1 on “Strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific” (2020) and to serve as a regional review mechanism throughout the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

Figure 2. Coastal Wetland as Blue Carbon



14. The session had presentations by experts from IOC-UNESCO, NOWPAP/CEARAC, the National University of Singapore and the Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation, followed by an intervention from a youth representative from Fiji. Presentations first overviewed the role of coastal blue carbon ecosystems responding to climate change and introduced ongoing projects and studies on seagrass, mangrove, salt marsh and wetland blue carbon, respectively. The session emphasized the importance of blue carbon monitoring capacity and inclusion of blue carbon into such as Nationally Determined Contributions to widen carbon neutrality approaches.

NEAMPAN Webinar on Climate Change and MPAs

15. The Secretariat held the NEAMPAN webinar on climate change and MPAs on 20 July 2022 in a virtual modality. More than 60 participants joined the webinar to discuss interlinkages of climate change impact and the roles of MPAs.

16. Experts² shared the experience and lessons learned in the following aspects:

- (a) National- and local-level policies, plans and management of MPAs related to climate change in countries of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States;
- (b) Mediterranean Protected Areas Network (MedPAN) activities on climate change and MPAs including capacity-building programmes for local practitioners;
- (c) The initiatives to drive investment in blue carbon markets;
- (d) The need for quality training and capacity building for MPAs managers and local communities on climate change impact; and
- (e) Potential cooperation activities (e.g. knowledge sharing, expansion of MPAs, data collection and monitoring) for NEAMPAN countries, as well as among regional MPAs networks.

Fourth Steering Committee Meeting of NEAMPAN

17. Back-to-back following the NEAMPAN webinar, the 4th Steering Committee Meeting of NEAMPAN was held in a virtual modality. The Steering Committee noted the NEAMPAN activities in 2021 and discussed the activity plans for 2022 and 2023 prepared by the Secretariat. The Steering Committee supported proposed activities, including workshops for MPAs managers and webinars on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and sustainable management of UNESCO World Heritage sites in MPAs. The Steering Committee also supported conducting a study on climate change impacts and MPAs. The details of the 4th Steering Committee Meeting were included in Annex II of the document.

² Expert speakers who attended the webinar are from the Mediterranean Protected Areas Network (MedPAN), Office of National Marine Sanctuaries affiliated to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States (NOAA), First Institute of Oceanography affiliated to the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, University of Tokyo, Japan and Korea Maritime Institute.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

18. In light of the increasing emphasis on ocean-related issues and management of marine resources for sustainable development at regional and global levels, the Meeting may wish to request the member States the following:

- (a) Propose NEAMPAN activities which are in line with the scope of the Network, as contained in the Terms of Reference, NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030);
- (b) Indicate their interest in hosting or jointly organizing MPA-related activities; and
- (c) Take the continuity and familiarity of NEASPEC Steering Committee members into consideration when replacing the members.

19. The Meeting may wish to reiterate its encouragement for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to participate in NEAMPAN activities by nominating Steering Committee members, nominating MPA sites, and/or participating in the NEAMPAN Workshops.

20. The Meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed activity plan for 2022-2023 (Annex III).

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