Project proposal for cooperation within the frameworks of NEASPEC

Project name:

Strengthening the subregional cooperation for the development of the marine and coastal specially protected areas network

Project duration:

Commencement: January 2014.

Completion: June 2015.

Total project cost:

US$ 120,000.

Major project goal:

Strengthening of the marine and coastal specially protected areas role in the marine biodiversity conservation to achieve the ecologically coherent, adequately presented and interlinked network of duly managed marine and coastal specially protected areas, which could become the model for further utilization.

Major implementing institutions in the Russian Federation:

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation;
- Pacific Institute of Geography of the FEB RAS;
- Institute of Marine Biology of the FEB RAS;
- ANO "Centre for International Projects".

Background

The North-East of Asia is currently facing the various environmental challenges resulted from the rapid economic growth. The majority of these challenges is of the transboundary nature, and thus is indicating of the need for the cooperation among all countries in the region. At this, the subregional countries and their respective governmental institutions and agencies responsible for environmental management and relevant studies do not provide for the adequate level of knowledge and expertise of the wider spectrum of issues that require

attention. To decrease the shortcomings and fill the gaps existing in different areas the new frameworks for cooperation in the subregion are proposed.

At the 16th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-16) held in September 2011 in Seoul, the Government of Republic of Korea presented a project proposal on "Strengthening Subregional Cooperation to Address Environmental Challenges related to Transboundary Marine Pollution", which recommended a new framework of cooperation in the subregion to address challenges in protecting marine environment. This new framework would entail the sharing of information and knowledge on issues and policies regarding transboundary marine pollution.

An Expert Consultation Meeting (ECM) was organized in June 2012 in Seoul in accordance with the decision of the SOM-16 that supported the proposal of convening an ECM to further elaborate the proposal for the decision of SOM-17. The meeting was attended by national experts from China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, and resource persons from the intergovernmental organizations and programmes, like NOWPAP of UNEP and UNDP/GEF Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project (YSLME).

The ECM facilitated exchange of views and ideas among national experts and other involved stakeholders on the scope of the project, modality of its implementation and required partnerships with relevant organizations working in the field of transboundary marine pollution in North-East Asia.

In particular, participants discussed and exchanged ideas and views on existing gaps in multilateral cooperation in North-East Asia and identified the following possible areas for joint subregional activities within the framework of NEASPEC:

- Marine litter;
- Marine Protected Areas (MPA);
- Influence of chemicals;
- Ecosystem assessment;
- Climate change.

Considering the existing programmes, scientific capacity and subregional needs for each topic, it was generally perceived that the facilitation of cooperation among MPAs could be the main focus of NEASPEC.

Following the ECM, the Secretariat conducted research on the situations of MPAs in the subregion as well as potentials of establishing a MPA network. Key points of the research are as follows.

MPAs are beneficial to both environment and economy. MPAs increase biodiversity, supporting the protection of species and ecosystems as well as the preservation of habitats and preventing outside activities from harming the ecosystem. Economically, MPAs stabilize fish populations in aggregated catch levels, providing a platform for job creation for instance through non-consumptive measures such as tourism.

In North-East Asia, a variety of MPAs can be identified. Considering only those MPAs that are located at the national level, in China as of 2011 there were 33 Marine Nature Reserves and 21 Marine Special Protected Areas; in Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 3 out of 81 natural parks and 10 out of total 74 reserves for protection of plant, animals or migratory birds have a character of marine protected areas; in Japan, 91 Marine Park Zones in National and Quasi-National Parks as well as 1 Marine Nature Conservation Area exist; in the Republic of Korea, there were 16 MPAs in 2011 of which 12 were Wetland Reserves and 4 were Marine Ecological Reserves; and the Russian Federation in 2011 had 35 national Marine and Coastal Protected Areas.

The MPAs in North-East Asia show, however, some severe limitations: (a) they all have a very short history of existence, most of them having been designed only within the last decade. In general, the protection of ecosystems and designated areas in North-East Asia is mostly concentrated in terrestrial but not marine areas, making MPAs a relatively new concept in the region; (b) another problem derives from the fact that the definition of MPAs differs concerning characteristics, purposes and regulations. Comparing the MPAs in the subregion, one can find examples of no-take marine nature reserves, national parks, wildlife reserves, wetland reserves, ecosystem reserves or habitat reserves. Along with this, there are also institutional differences in the management structure of the MPAs; (c) furthermore, statistical problems have surfaced concerning the actual amount of MPAs in the subregion. In comparison, national statistics tend to vary immensely from those conducted by international organizations and research institutes; (d) lastly, while there have been some attempts on the creation of national MPA networks, these remain limited due to the borderless character of the marine environment per se. International cooperation remains small and is focused only on a few areas such as monitoring.

Considering the transboundary character of marine ecosystems, it is proposed to establish the North-East Asian MPAs Network as the most effective way to further improve the management of various MPAs in the subregion. Benefits of such a network are manifold. Not only can it help protect biodiversity in marine and coastal areas more efficiently, it can also bring along sharing of information and experiences, collective training in various aspects and common guidelines for a more effective management.

Research on the global status of MPA networks shows various benefits of the regional networks for the conservation of biodiversity, a common and improved management of the areas, information and technology sharing, capacity building, efficient use of resources, as well as dialogue between stakeholders. A variety of international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 support the creation of MPA networks.

This activity could result in joint utilization of knowledge and information on various environmental issues, including the experience from ecosystem approach use in the NEASPEC countries, related to operation of the marine and coastal specially protected aquatic and land areas in the North-Eastern Asia, as well as provide for the ground for possible further measures in the form of a set of concrete activities.

Following the initiative made by the NEASPEC Secretariat and aimed at its further development the Russian party has developed the current project proposal taking into account the previously implemented activity and proposals made by the other parties.

Main project objectives

1. General analysis of state of biodiversity in the NEASPEC-NOWPAP region (at both the national and the regional levels, including the transboundary).

2. Analysis of the dynamics in the state of biodiversity in connection with the climate changes and growth of economic activity in the NEASPEC-NOWPAP region, correspondence of the existing ICARM (ICZM-IRBM) system to the biodiversity management tasks.

3. Adaptation of the scientific criteria on identification of ecologically and/or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection to the marine and coastal areas based on the CBD COP decisions.

4. Programme for monitoring of the vegetation, representatives of the animal world of marine and coastal natural complexes of the marine and coastal specially protected areas, including studying of the processes and mechanisms of their biota adaptation to climate changes.

5. Development of the recommendations on improvement of the environmental management system in near-border areas, basins and coastal marine zones considering the transboundary context.

Project implementation stages

1. Formation of the Project Work Group.

2. Analysis of the current biodiversity state, identification of trends related to both the global climate changes, and the alteration of anthropogenic stress in the North-Eastern Asian region (NEASPEC-NOWPAP area). That includes assessment of resilience of marine and coastal-marine ecosystems to the global climate changes and anthropogenic activity.

3. Identification of problems and environmental hot spots in the region, including the prioritization of problems at the national and international levels.

4. Assessment of effectiveness of the modern marine and coastal specially protected areas network (national and regional), its ability and possibility to address identified problems.

5. Development of recommendations on improvement of the environmental management system in the near-border areas, basins and coastal marine zones considering the transboundary context in the NEASPEC-NOWPAP region, and proposals on interaction

with other intergovernmental organizations in this area области (GEF, UNESCO/IOC, UNEP, CBD, IUCN, UNESCO/MAB etc.).

6. Development of the draft (strategic) Action Plan for the development of the subregional network of the marine specially protected areas, including the coastal areas.

Project implementation outcomes

1. Review of the current state of biodiversity, including the trends connected with both the global climate changes, and the alteration of anthropogenic stress in the in the North-Eastern Asian region (NEASPEC-NOWPAP area), including the assessment of resilience of marine and coastal-marine ecosystems to the global climate changes and anthropogenic activity.

2. Recommendations on improvement of the environmental management system in the near-border areas, basins and coastal marine zones considering the transboundary context in the NEASPEC-NOWPAP region, and proposals on interaction with other intergovernmental organizations in this area области (GEF, UNESCO/IOC, UNEP, CBD, IUCN, UNESCO/MAB etc.).

3. Draft (strategic) Action Plan for the development of the subregional network of the marine specially protected areas, including the coastal areas.

Proposed project progress

There are meetings and/or workshops of expert groups, including the video-conferences, to take place on the main issues aimed at the development of common approaches, formats, as well as assistance in sharing knowledge and information among the countries.

To avoid duplication and to use the positive experience gained under the project there will be discussions of the project materials with both the experts in the countries and national focal points for this activity, and the relevant institutions performing its activities in this field.

The case study areas could be selected in each country, where the work methods, formats for provided materials, and concrete recommendations are suggested to be elaborated.

The joint studies could take place under the NEASPEC with the assistance from its Secretariat to eliminate informational gaps, as well as promotion to the cooperation with the relevant national organizations of the region and international partners, such as UNESCO/IOC, UNEP, CBD, IUCN, UNESCO/MAB etc.

Moreover, if there will be aspects identified in the course of the project that were not initially envisaged for the achievement of the major goal of this project the participants in the work

could supplement the project with new directions considering their endorsement by the NEASPEC Secretariat and national focal points for this activity.

Brief presentation of the project work schedule and cost estimates

№	Activities	Implementation period	$
1	Development of the review of the current state of biodiversity, including the trends connected with both the global climate changes, and the alteration of anthropogenic stress in the in the North-Eastern Asian region (NEASPEC-NOWPAP area), including the assessment of resilience of marine and coastal-marine ecosystems to the global climate changes and anthropogenic activity	February – June 2014	25.000
2	Development of the 2.Recommendations on improvement of the system of nature use and environmental management in the near-border areas, basins and coastal marine zones considering the transboundary context in the NEASPEC-NOWPAP region, and proposals on interaction with other intergovernmental organizations in this area области (GEF, UNESCO/IOC, UNEP, CBD, IUCN, UNESCO/MAB etc.)	September – December 2014	20.000
3	Holding of the work main subregional stakeholders meeting to develop the draft (strategic) Action Plan in the field of biodiversity restoration and protection, including in the form of the development of the subregional marine and coastal specially protected areas network	October 2014	13.000
4	Development of the programme for monitoring of the vegetation, representatives of the animal world of marine and coastal natural complexes of the marine and coastal specially protected areas, including studying of the processes and mechanisms of their biota adaptation to climate changes	October 2014 – February 2015	10.000

№	Activities	Implementation period	$
5	Development of the draft (strategic) Action Plan in the field of biodiversity restoration and protection, including in the form of the development of the subregional marine and coastal specially protected areas network	November 2014 – April 2015	40.000
6	Reporting	Entire project	5.000
7	Translation of reporting materials (if necessary)	Entire project	5.000
8	Communication	Entire project	2.000
	GRAND TOTAL		120.000