



**Implementing the Strategic Action Programme  
for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand  
(SCS SAP Project)**

**First Meeting of the SCS SAP Regional Working Group on Wetlands**

Teleconference, 7 December 2021

**REPORT OF THE MEETING**



# **DRAFT REPORT OF THE MEETING**

## **1. Opening of the Meeting**

### 1.1 Welcome Address

1. Dr. Virginie Hart, SCS SAP Senior Project Manager, welcomed all the participants to the first Regional Working Group Meeting on Wetlands of SCS SAP project. She thanked the participants who attended the previous RWG meeting as it would ensure synergies of activities between habitat working groups, and the former focal points for joining the meeting since the working group was originally established in the first SCS project. The main purposes of this meeting were to: revitalize the working group; discuss and agree on mandates and responsibilities for the next three years; share some past works and present plans; and look and discuss together the next steps of the project. She looked forward to an open and dynamic dialogue and hear recommendation based on the wealth of experience in dealing with the wetland management and restoration, how countries integrate new emerging issues such as climate change as well as engage new technologies and tools on survey, monitoring and communications. She looked forward to having a face to face next year so the members can analyse and work more together.

2. Mr. Isara Chanrachkij, Head of the Project Planning and Management Division of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center welcomed the members of the RWG on seagrass and participants on behalf of Ms. Malinee Smithithee, SEAFDEC Secretary General and Chief of the Training Department. The wetland habitat is facing a global concern due to natural and man-made activities, which many institutions, agencies, universities, governments and non-government organizations are working very hard to protect and sustain the wetland habitat. The meeting is very important to initiate the project implementation and exchange information and experiences of the wetland conservation and activities in each participating country to achieve a sustainable wetland in the South China Sea. SEAFDEC is the Executing Agency of the project that is responsible for regional activities and hosting the Project Coordination Unit. SEAFDEC is an inter-governmental organization in fisheries for sustainable utilization and management of both fisheries and human resources. SEAFDEC support the project by linking between environment and fisheries. He thanked everyone and looked forward to receiving the fruitful result of the meeting which would be the first step to conduct the effective implementation of project activities in order to sustain the wetland habitat in the South China Sea.

### 1.2 Introduction of Members

3. Mr. Reynaldo Molina introduced the members of the regional working groups from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. There was no representative from Viet Nam. He also introduced the national lead agencies and project teams and experts including representatives from other regional organizations and initiatives. The participant list is attached as Annex 1 of this report.

## **2. Organization of the Meeting**

### 2.1 Designation of Officers

4. The draft rules of procedure for the Regional Working Group on Wetlands (RWG-W) requires the election of a Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Rapporteur. The membership of the RWG-W will be formally established at the first meeting of the working group, which will elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chair from among its members. The Chairperson of the RWG-W will represent the RWG-W on the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) and will attend the meetings of that Committee. The Vice-Chair shall act as Chairperson of meetings in the absence of the Chairperson.

5. The RWG-W members were invited to elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. There was no Rapporteur elected since the meeting was online and being recorded. Following deliberation, Mr. Anson Tagtag, National Focal Point for Wetlands in the Philippines and Mrs. Sumana Kajonwattanakul, National Focal Point for Wetlands in Thailand were elected as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively.

## 2.2 Organization of Work

6. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to brief the participants on the proposed organization of work, working documents and administrative arrangements of the meeting. Dr. Virginie Hart presented the summary facts of the project, which includes the background and objectives, components and outputs of the project. The meeting focused on Component 1 through Outcome 1.4 which is integrated management of 813,647 ha of coastal wetland at 19 sites, including habitat restoration and protection strengthened at priority locations, with three key outputs. The other activities related to wetlands that are coordinated at the regional level under Components 2 and 3 that are link with the national activities were also presented.

7. According to the Terms of Reference of the Regional Working Group on Wetland (RWG-W), adopted at the 1st Project Steering, the purpose of RWG-W has the responsibility “for coordinating the work of the National Wetland Committees established in each of the participating countries; for ensuring effective implementation of project activities undertaken in the context of the achievement of the mangrove management targets of the project; and to provide a mechanism for exchange of information and experience of mangrove management activities in each country”.

8. The objectives of this First Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Wetlands were to: present and discuss the SAP targets for wetlands, and selected sites; present the compiled information provided on the status of SAP implementation between 2008-2020, which will be further developed into a publication in 2022; present the compiled information on the national revisions to targets and sites, building upon recent and ongoing projects, initiatives and best practices; and discuss executing arrangement and workplans for 2021-2022. To access the organization of work presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

9. An inquiry was raised on Output 1.4.3 on the adoption of a regional estuary monitoring in terms of the process of developing and formulating the monitoring scheme including activities and budget especially for existing national monitoring mechanism. Dr. Hart clarified that this activity is based on the recommendations that were made in the SAP, which will be discussed separately with working group on the design of the activity as this is transboundary. She suggested that the meeting focus on the national level activities under Outputs 1.4.1 and 1.4.2, and in the next step, discuss and agree on the design and activities of Output 1.4.3. For national level monitoring, the countries can allocate activities and budgets. However, it should be designed in connection with the monitoring activities of other habitats since monitoring is cross-cutting between working groups.

## 3. Adoption of the Meeting Agenda

10. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to present the draft annotated agenda and list of documents prepared as document SCSSAP RWG-W.1/2, and invited members of the RWG-W for consideration. Dr. Virginie Hart presented the document and invited members for comments including any items to be added under Agenda 10 Any Other Business. With no further comments, the RWG-W members agreed and adopted the agenda. The annotated agenda is attached as Annex 2 of this report.

#### **4. Consideration of the Terms of Reference of the Regional Working Group**

11. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to present the document SCSSAP RWG-W.1/3: Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Wetland UNEP/GEF SCS SAP Project". Dr. Virginie Hart presented the document based on the terms of reference of first SCS project working group, which was presented in the Steering Committee meeting in June 2021. The document already considered the comments and suggestions made by the previous regional working group meetings so as to have a similar and common approach for all regional working groups such as the rewording of the name "National Wetland Committee" to "National Wetland Committee/Working Group" to align with the other working groups suggestions. This is to have some flexibility as some countries prefer to establish a working group rather than committee due to its long and slow establishment process. The document was presented section by section where members were invited to provide their comments.

12. A clarification was raised as to the purpose of the TOR whether it is intended for already established wetland committee or for yet to be established committee, and how this committee can coordinate with other habitat committees. Dr. Virginie Hart clarified that this wetland committee or working group is built on the national wetland committee previously established in the first phase of the project. The aim is to revitalize this committee but it is up to each country how to establish it in a way that it will also serve multiple purposes at national level. If there are existing committees related to wetland, countries can integrate the SCS SAP committee especially if this approach is the most concrete and appropriate for countries to coordinate project activities on wetlands in particular with other national initiatives and plans. Currently, national committees or working groups are being established in different stages at the national level. As to coordination of the different habitat committees, Dr. Hart explained that there are a number of levels where these committees and working groups coordinates and overlaps. There is the national committee per habitat, the national technical working group committee which includes all habitats and land-based pollution, and the higher level inter-ministry committee which includes all the relevant ministries, for high level of coordination.

13. Another clarification sought is the duration of the elected chair of the meeting, whether the chair will be consistent for all the meetings or there will be a new chair elected in every meeting. The frequency of the meeting was already raised including some clarification on the targets provided in Section 5.1. Dr. Virginie Hart clarified that the duration of the chair of the meeting will be for a period of one year, where each year there will be new nomination. Given the importance to meet regularly and the remaining years to execute national activities, the plan is to meet every six months, either face to face or online depending on the situation and travel restrictions. As to the targets, Dr. Hart explain that the targets are based on the SAP. Since there was huge gap between the SAP adoption and implementation, the targets will be changed based on country review of existing and updated information from the national implementation reports. The workplan of meetings together with the revision of the TOR with track changes will be shared with the members of the working group. The revised terms of reference is attached as Annex 3 of this report.

#### **5. Review the SAP Targets for Wetland Focal Area**

14. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to present the review on the SAP targets on wetland including the objectives and outputs of the SCS SAP project. Dr. Vo Si Tuan presented the review of SAP targets for wetlands that was developed and adopted in 2008 including an overview of the SCS SAP project. Following adoption, the SAP and National NAPs started implementation of its activities at the national level, including the development of two proposals to support the SAP implementation, which is the Fisheries *Refugia* Network and the SAP implementation, both approved by GEF in 2016. Given the huge gap between the SAP adoption and implementation and the non-participation of Malaysia, the SAP targets were revised as contained in the Regional Inception Report prepared during the inception phase period. The detail of the targets to achieve Outcome 1.4 on the integrated management of 783,900 ha of coastal wetland was presented including the expected target sites and

areas from each country. A total of 19 priority sites from six participating countries were identified in the SAP.

## **6. SAP Evaluation at the National Level During 2008 – 2020**

15. Dr. Vo Si Tuan presented the evaluation of SAP implementations of the wetland focal area during 2008-2021. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide evidences on proactive contribution of the participating countries in the implementation of the SAP and their national action plans. Based on the evaluation, countries can calculate their co-financing contribution as well as provide updated baseline for developing relevant activities for the SAP SCS Project since many of the targets and activities were based on the SAP adopted in 2008. The evaluation, which can help adjust targets and outputs at the national level, will be further developed into publication in 2022.

16. The evaluation was based on the submitted National Implementing Reports from Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand. There was no information from China, Indonesia and Viet Nam since they have not yet submitted their national implementation reports. A SAP evaluation template was shared with the countries to gather information on SAP implementation in the last decade but no inputs were received from the countries. Using the information from the national implementation report, a summary table of key achievement from 2008 to 2021 under each regional output, which is part of the template, was presented. The table can also be used to evaluate the sites for implementation. The evaluation template was further presented in terms of site achievements, using China information as an example. The members were reminded and requested to focus more on the outputs and outcomes of the project, not much on the activities. To access the SAP implementation evaluation document (2008-2021), please click [\[LINK\]](#).

17. A question was raised on the submission date of the NIR and other related documents and data as countries are having difficulty filling up the forms because of the terms and definitions used, and availability of data and information on the sites and targets. There was difficulty in getting and deciding on the exact/total number of target areas. It was suggested that rough estimates be considered. Dr. Vo Si Tuan explained that the dates and schedules will be discussed in Agenda 9. In terms of site data, the information are quite poor as some countries have not yet established their working groups to work together on the needed information. For some sites with no activities in the last decade, countries can leave the table empty or put a notation. Dr. Tuan supported the suggestion to use the estimated value of target areas which was the same approach used by the national focal points and regional working group in the first phase of the project. He clarified that countries can estimate the exact value in terms of hectares of habitat restoration and protection or under MPA or under some form of management. The first phase of the project had thoroughly discussed on the types and definitions of wetlands to focus on to help and guide the working group. He suggested that an activity on wetland mapping be developed and implemented.

18. Dr. Virginie Hart highlighted the importance of the report for the GEF Secretariat, which has been supporting a number of projects in the development and implementation of SAP globally. The SCS SAP has been regarded as the most rigorous SAP ever prepared under GEF funding, and the GEF are keen to see on what has been implemented in terms of the SAP targets in the region. The document will be developed into a publication that will be shared in the region and GEF Secretariat, and will also serve as a good practice to other LMEs that are also in different stages in their SAP implementation. The template is flexible to allow both quantitative and qualitative data and information, which can provide updated baseline information. Based on the past discussions and presentations, a lot of activities has been done through other initiatives and projects in relation to wetland management, which can be reported and included as co-financing. There is a need to pool all the information together and develop into a very useful and informative publication. With the establishment of the regional working group and participation of experts, the countries will be able to provide further information for the completion of the report.

The national reports prepared under the first phase and the methodologies that were used to prepare the reports will be shared after the meeting considering that many of the participants are new and not familiar with the project. There is a need to have a separate meeting discuss concerns on GIS, data management, monitoring indicators, and support to data management and monitoring, which cuts across the different working groups.

## **7. Reviews and Revision of SAP Targets at the National Level**

19. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to introduce document SCSSAP RWG-W.1/5 SAP Implementation of the Wetland Focal Area (2021-2023). Dr. Virginie Hart presented the rationale of the document and the need to revise and finalize the targets and sites that will be included in the National Implementation Reports (NIRs), which will be the basis for cooperation agreement between UNOPS and SEAs. The document is a working draft that includes information from the NIRs, to be finalized once all NIR are completed.

20. In terms of the development and progress of the NIRs, Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand are well advanced with draft activities, workplans and budget. These countries were supported by UNOPS in terms of funding and consultancy support. China, Indonesia and Viet Nam are still under preparation. There is an urgent need to finalize all the information in the NIRs since this will be included in the project cooperation agreement to be finalized and signed by early 2022 to start national execution. A guidance document on the NIR development was developed and presented at the third inception phase meeting in March 2021 to assist and guide the countries, which will be shared after the meeting as some of the participants have not yet been involved with the project. The essential information needed for the legal agreement includes the sites and indicative targets, activities and budgets and workplan.

21. Some points were highlighted for consideration of the members such as the completion and finalization of the SAP Implementation document by end of 2021 for publication in 2022. Based on the review of available NIRs, there is an inconsistent approach in the development of activities between each country. The document enables the countries to review and harmonize the activities between NIRs. The development of activities should lead to the achievement of the outcomes and outputs, using the logical framework approach. The activities should also address the gaps and needs identified in the national reports and baselines, and would results to the long term sustainability of actions and activities beyond project life. The regional working group was encouraged to inform the project team of any challenges and additional project support needed by the group.

22. Dr. Virginie Hart presented in details the SAP implementation document and the information needed using Cambodia as example. These include the different regional outputs of the project, the proposed original and SCS SAP sites including indicative targets, the status and justification of proposed sites, and summary of planned activities per site including cross-cutting activities that will be executed at national level. Another version of the document will be shared with comments following the meeting. She strongly recommend to members of the working group to read the entire document to see the balance of activities that are currently being proposed. She also requested and encouraged the members to share the challenges encountered and the support needed in completing the NIR such as short online meetings to go through the NIR process including preparation and finalization of budget and workplan. The project can organize meetings to support these activities. To access the SAP implementation document (2021-2023), please click [[LINK](#)].

23. A challenge raised in the development of NIRs is the identification of areas and lack of data on the identified specific wetland type, which was eventually addressed through consultations and review of reports from other projects and initiatives. As to the support needed, the project was requested to provide their comments on the submitted NIR, and see what further assistance is needed to improve the NIR.

## **8. National Presentations on SAP Implementation and Future Planning**

## 8.1. National Presentations on SAP implementation

24. The Chairperson invited the National Wetland Focal Points and representatives from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand to present key achievement in SAP implementation between 2008-2021, including the current status of SAP implementation. There was no representative from Viet Nam.

25. Mr. Hong Chamnan of the Ministry of Environment of Cambodia presented SAP implementation in Cambodia. A total of about 50% of wetland areas were established in conservation area. Three sites were managed by the Ministry of Environment, namely: Koh Rong Marine Park, Ream National Park and Koh Kapik Ramsar Site, located in Preh Sihanuk province and Koh Kong province. The sites were established by Royal decree and sub decree and are important site for biodiversity conservation. The Koh Kapik site, a Ramsar site since 1993, is the only site with an existing management plan. Around 400 ha of mangrove was restored in the site including conservation of key species and habitats. The natural resources in the sites were regularly controlled and monitored with activities implemented such as research studies, patrolling and community development. In terms of achieving the SAP targets, the sites and areas under integrated management were Koh Rong Marine National Park with 52,448 ha, Koh Kapik Ramsar Site with 12,000 ha, and Ream National Park with 150,000 ha; One management plan developed and implemented for the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site; and one MPA established in 2019, the Koh Rong Marine National Park.

26. In terms of SAP implementation, the main site selected is the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site with 12,000 ha. The site, which is under MOE management, are mostly covered by mangroves with some grassland and evergreen forest. Activities proposed for implementation include the conduct of research on the natural resources along costal area focusing on flora and fauna; conduct extension and education activities on the results of the research to local communities; development of community by providing livelihood options and capacity building; conduct zoning and demarcation of sites; and law enforcement through SMART patrol. As a final consideration in the implementation of the project, the sustainable management of natural resources in the selected sites will have to evolve from local community including improving the livelihood of local community and establishing a natural resources monitoring program. To access Cambodia's presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

27. Mr. Yu Yunjun of the South China Institute of Environmental Sciences of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment shared some knowledge, experiences and lessons learned on wetlands in China. From 2002 to 2020, several developments happened in China. The National Wetland Protection Program (2002-2030) was issued in 2002. During this period, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> five year planning for national wetland protection implementation was issued. In the last five years, the government invested 1.5 Billion Yen for 53 major projects on wetland conservation. The six proposed pilot projects in China are all in good condition. The Marine Functional Zoning equivalent to marine spatial planning was revised and made into the National Spatial Planning. The 14<sup>th</sup> five year planning for wetland protection which includes national and provincial is on the way including the review of the Law of Wetland Protection by the standing committee of the National People's Congress (NPC). Several regulations were issued by the three coastal provinces bordering the South China Sea on wetland protection. In 2017, the Marine Ecological Red Line was also issued for the three coastal provinces. The National Forestry and Grassland Administration was established in 2018, in charge of wetland protection and protected areas. During the past years, NGOs have actively participated and been involved in the process of wetland protection, both international and national. Lastly, China is hosting the COP14 of Ramsar Convention in Wuhan in November 2022.

28. The six SAP sites were introduced, namely Wenchang, Pearl River Estuary, Beilun Estuary, Shantou, Hepu and Danzhou, including the best practices for each site such as the establishing the sites initially as natural reserves and then declaring the sites as national, provincial or municipal natural reserve, the restoration of habitats and conservation of species, and issuance of the marine ecological red line. The selection of sites and identification of activities for implementation are undergoing the

consultation process and will be decided by IMC. The NIR is under preparation and the national experts group will be established soon. To access the China's presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

29. Mr. Eko Budi Priyanto of the Yayasan Lahan Basah, the SEA Wetland National Focal Point of Indonesia presented the status of SAP implementation achievements. The most notable achievements of Indonesia were: the Long-term Management Planning of Sembilang National Park 2020 – 2029; the establishment of multi-stakeholder forum which produced a Partnership Action Plan; the improvement of park management through capacity building, joint patrol and partnership collaboration; the merging of Berbak and Sembilang National Parks in 2016; the hosting of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership Meeting. Sembilang is a Flyway Network Site since 2012; and the designation of Berbak – Sembilang National Park as Man and Biosphere Reserve in 2018. Other declaration/designation of the site are as follows: National Park in 2003, Important Bird Area site in 2004, Ramsar site in 2011, Tiger Conservation Landscape Site, and National Strategic Area in 2017. Best practices identified include the integrated partnership development of the long-term management planning of national park, the multi-approached management reflected on the various dynamic research and observation, and the regular use of management effectiveness tracking tool. The challenges identified were the lack of management capacity and human and natural threats such as encroachment, wildlife hunting/poaching, illegal logging and forest fires.

30. In terms of SAP implementation, consultations were conducted on the development of the Long-term Management Planning of Sembilang National Park 2020-2029 and the development of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool. For site selection, there is a change of areas from 387,000 ha to 267,592 ha of overall Sembilang Sector of the national park including 6,687 ha of mudflat. The activities proposed for implementation were based on the management strategy of the long-term management planning of Sembilang National Park 2020 – 2029. These include the adoption of a regional estuary monitoring scheme and its national implementation based on SAP results framework through: Development of roadmap on the management of mudflat habitat as part of the Management Plan of Berbak – Sembilang National Park; Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness-raising activities for park stakeholders; Bio-physical Monitoring of Mudflat and Estuary; and Capacity building on mudflat management for national park technical staff and universities students. For final consideration, the SCS SAP to fill in the relevant activities under the long-term management planning of Sembilang National Park 2020 – 2029 which guide and approve sectoral planning and activities in the park. To access the Indonesia's presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

31. Ms. Joy Navarro of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources represented the SEA Wetland National Focal Point of the Philippines. She presented the status of SAP implementation of the Philippines coastal wetland component which includes beyond SAP targets and NIR. The key achievements include: policy initiatives at international, national and sub-national levels such as the CMS and Ramsar Resolutions authored by the Philippines on promoting the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats. At national level, strategies and actions towards wetland conservation were anchored in the National Wetlands Action Plan and the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program. A national policy on biological diversity have been signed including the technical guidelines on the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program was issued. The Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has specific targets for inland wetlands and coastal and marine biodiversity and ecosystem. Recognizing the interconnectivity of Marine Protected Areas and the benefits it provides, MPAs and MPA Networks were established. For the SAP targets and sites, the management plan for the Malampaya Sound has been developed, updated and implemented. The Manila Bay Inclusive Development Master Plan has also been elaborated. Five protected areas were legislated and three Ramsar sites were declared.

32. For the SAP evaluation, some outputs have been already achieved while some are currently being addressed such as Output 1.4.1 where existing management plans have been developed but undergoing revision. Under Output 1.4.2, eight wetland areas have been declared with protection status as Ramsar sites and as national protected areas. For Output 1.4.3, technical bulletins have been issued prescribing

guidelines for monitoring of protected areas and coastal and marine wetlands. Habitat monitoring is conducted regularly through the biodiversity monitoring system for protected areas. In terms of best practices, for LGU-declared MPA, the local stakeholders were involved, mobilized and capacitated through the institutionalization of a coastal resource management plan, strict enforcement of coastal laws, and enhancement of awareness campaigns. In promoting effective management and science based governance, best performing MPAs were recognized through awards. Local communities were empowered and engaged in resource assessment and monitoring. Gaps and challenges encountered during the SAP implementation were: Weak enforcement of policies such as easement regulations and foreshore policies resulting to lack of or premature issuances of certifications to uncontrolled reclamation projects and other development activities; Weak consideration of biodiversity concerns in the environmental impact system of development projects along intertidal wetlands; Inadequate knowledge of stakeholders on the ecological importance of intertidal wetlands such that their conversion is usually not given much attention in risk assessment processes; Persistent problem of sedimentation and pollution from land-based activities and mining and dredging activities; and Reduced water retention capacity of estuaries and other aquatic ecosystems resulting to an increased retention time of sediments and pollutants in its system.

33. In terms of SCS SAP implementation, the targeting and planning for the updating of SAP were conducted through desktop review and evaluation of existing data and information from field offices, validation and mapping of proposed/replacement sites and series of national and local consultations and workshops. For the selection of sites, based on consultations, the Pansipit River Estuary was dropped and replaced by Maragondon River Estuary due to natural hazards. Other target sites remained the same with the overall total areas have increased. Proposed activities to achieve the projects outputs are: Assessment and mapping of biodiversity and habitats of the intertidal wetlands which have not been widely studied; Capacitation of key stakeholders in terms of coastal wetland management; Development and/or updating of all types of management plans; Conduct of more intensive awareness campaigns and public consultations; Participation in the development and implementation of regional estuary monitoring scheme under the project; and More protection status of wetlands such as designation of the Malampaya Sound Protected Landscape and Seascape as a Ramsar Site, and establishment of a coastal wetlands in the municipality of Bulacan along Manila Bay as Critical Habitats. As a final consideration, lasting and sustainable change can be achieved within the duration of the project if COVID-19 restrictions will not delay the execution of activities and/or extension of project duration. Since the project is manage at national level, site level cooperation and involvement is essential. Finally, sustainability may be achieved through the: adoption of the Integrated Management Plan of the sites; inclusion of sustainable financial schemes in the management plan; budget sourcing from external sources should be considered; campaigns and call for actions should be digitized to keep up with time; capacitation of stakeholders such as Peoples Organizations on project operation skills such technical writing and grant proposal writing; reforms on local policies and laws including formulation and enactment of municipal ordinances for coastal habitat management is necessary; and rules and regulations should be clearly incorporated in the management plans for coastal and marine habitats. To access the Philippines's presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

34. Mr. Narongrit Lertkasetvittaya of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment presented the status of SAP implementation on behalf of the Thailand Wetland National Focal Point, starting with the National Action Plan vision and mission on wetlands. The status of the NAP implementation were also presented which includes the declaration of protection status for priority wetland areas of Koh Ra-Prathong and Koh Kra as new Ramsar sites and the development of ecological and socio-economic indicators for the monitoring of wetland management effectiveness, which were conducted in some marine national parks. In terms of SAP targets, two sites, namely the Thale Noi Wildlife Non-hunting Area, and the Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, were protected and managed by the Department of National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

35. For the selection of site, a new site is proposed for SAP implementation, the Don Hoi Lot mudflat, which covers an area of 41,600 ha. There is a cooperation between DMCR and Department of Fisheries

to manage Don Hoi Lot area, with the aims of enhancing local participation in sustainable harvesting of razor clams; providing artificial reefs to rehabilitate spawning ground for marine species; and supporting local and provincial regulations to enforce sustainable use. Proposed activities include: establishing measures to minimize impact from the utilization of marine and coastal resources; establishing conservation zones and set up monitoring programme; educating and raising awareness among local people and other resource users about the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources; and building collaboration among stakeholders and public participation. The expected outputs are: Development and implementation of an integrated management plans with associated policy, legal and institutional reforms; Declaration of wetland areas with protection status; and Adoption and national implementation of the regional estuary monitoring scheme. For final consideration, the Strategic Action Programme implementation will result in the adoption and implementation of management plan for Don Hoi Lot which includes the declaration of wetland areas with protection status and needed management reforms, and adoption of a regional estuary monitoring scheme for national implementation. To access the Thailand's presentation, please click [[LINK](#)].

36. Dr. Virginie Hart thanked all the presentations and noted that a lot of information are available and can be inputted in the SAP Evaluation and SAP Implementation documents. Some points noted for consideration of the working group include the harmonization between national activities proposed by the different working groups particularly activities that are related and have linkages such as the mangroves activities. The importance to have a discussion and consultation with other working group members was stressed. Significant progress in the development and implementation of wetland management plans was also noted but not much on the sustainability of the management plans developed. Members were requested to focus not only on the development and implementation of management plans but also ensuring the sustainability of the plans. Other points noted are the role of local stakeholders and local communities, sustainable financing schemes, data monitoring and information gathering, which will be discussed in a separate meeting. The absence of information on key pressures on wetlands that have changed since 2008, the key activities and land-based pressures encountered and measures to reduce such pressures.

37. Dr. Vo Si Tuan noted that the wetland focal area have a high level of achievements of SAP targets especially the establishment of many Ramsar sites and protected and conservation areas, including good practices. He suggested that the achievements and activities at national and site levels, including sites that were not selected in the SAP will be further reviewed, including the good practices that can be included in the best practices document.

38 A clarification was raised on bilateral coordination at national level to discuss activities and plans, whether a separate meeting will be organized. Dr. Virginie Hart explained that there will be different discussion at the national level to discuss specific concerns, depending on the completion level of each country. For example, in case of the Philippines where NIR is quite advanced, the discussion will be more on the legal agreement and key information, while other countries will be more focus on NIR information provided.

## **8.2. Best Practices in Wetland Management**

39. The Chairperson invited the Secretariat to introduce the agenda on best practices on wetland management in the region. Dr. Vo Si Tuan provided briefly the background and introduced document SCSSAP RWG-W1. Inf.2 on best practice in habitat management and the invited regional organization which was shared to the countries before the meeting. The document, which combined many resources on good practices, including those from the first phase of SCS project has three parts, namely: 1) Reducing habitat degradation and loss which includes mangrove and wetland practices, 2) Integrated management of habitats and land-based pollution, and 3) Transboundary management and regional cooperation. The members were requested to learn from the document as well as think how the working group can develop and exchange more good practices from each country practices. To access the best practice document, please click [[LINK](#)].

40. Mr. Jerker Tamelander, Director of Science and Policy of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, made a presentation on behalf of the Senior Advisor for Asia and Pacific region, Mr. Beom Sik Yoo, who will be the main contact point of the SCS SAP Project. Some general information about the wetland convention and its relevance to the project was presented, including how the project leverage and benefit from the convention framework, and support contracting parties to meet their obligations under the convention. The convention, which is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has three core provisions, namely: 1) Designation and management of wetlands of international importance, 2) Wise use of all wetlands, and 3) Collaboration among countries on transboundary matters. In terms of structure and function, the convention is the same as other global MEAs with same type of decision making process. As part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, the UN General Assembly declared the World Wetland Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February as a UN observance and calls all UN agencies and other stakeholders to observe the World Wetlands Day. A campaign assets is available on the website. The counties were encouraged to do some activities with and around the World Wetlands Day. Also, a special edition of the Global Wetlands Outlook has been prepared by the scientific and technical review panel, to be launched on 15 December 2021.

41. In terms of the convention and the SCS SAP project, all project participating countries are contracting parties to the convention and have designated wetlands of international importance, totalling to about 108 sites, of which 41 are coastal sites. This already provides a strong basis to engage and to take opportunity of the international designation of sites, following a clear set of criteria, to apply for additional Ramsar sites. The definition of wetlands was also highlighted, which according to the definition of the convention, includes mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds, which is an important point to consider. As such, the convention is equally applicable to other habitats and working groups under the project. The project was requested to carry this information to the other working groups, and that whenever possible, the convention will join the working group discussions and meetings. In term of utility of the designation of sites, a lot has been done in terms of best practices, guidance and tools that can be used by the countries such as the Ramsar site management tool kit, handbooks, briefing notes and technical reports on various topics and issues. The countries were encouraged to look into these existing tools and guidance.

42. As to how parties to the convention benefit from actions under the project, Mr. Tamelander explained that when the project strengthens the management frameworks and practices, legislations and institutional capacities, this greatly contributes to meeting the parties' commitment under the convention including reporting to the convention framework. In terms of sites, the Ramsar site information system is an amazing tools with the largest network of protected areas in the world with about 2,500 sites. Maintaining up to date database is a great strength not only for the convention but other global targets such as SDG 14 and 15, and SDG 6 where the convention also focused on particularly 6.6.1 on the extent of water related ecosystem, a fresh water related SDG where parties report to the convention as part of their national wetlands inventories. There is also a great opportunity to enhance the use of coastal wetland in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Based on what countries have in terms of international designation, tools, institutional capacities and jurisdiction, countries can use these to move forward with the mitigation action and formal update of Nationally Determined Contributions. Several resolutions were adopted in the last Convention of Parties where the project and activities can contribute and support and create better foundation for these resolution by leveraging what has been done.

43. Mr. Tamelander briefly shared his role as Director of Science and Policy which deals with the process around scientific and technical review panel with subsidiary body providing support and guidance to parties on delivering convention obligations such as tools, guidance documents and policy advice with strong science basis, including policy coordination across the secretariat and engagement with other global and regional processes.

44. Dr. Virginie Hart noted some points on the presentation made by the Ramsar Secretariat. The project noted the definition of wetlands as covering all the working groups under the project and will follow up and discuss further coordination between the Ramsar Secretariat and the project. The members were requested to work with other working groups to get all the resources that are available in terms of guidelines, tools and best practices, including having joint capacity building and training to combine resources. On climate change, the project has specific activities under component 2 on the role of coastal habitats in climate change adaptation and sequestration and storage of carbon, which could be coordinated together by the Ramsar Secretariat and project. On the next Convention of Parties in November 2022, the project expressed interest to participate in the side events. Dr. Hart added the ongoing coordination with UNEP and World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) to present their activities, tools, guidelines and best practices in a separate meeting back-to-back with the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee meeting tentatively by the end of February 2022.

45. Dr. Vo Si Tuan noted that a lot of information related to good practices are available for documentation based on country presentations. The focal points and experts on wetlands were requested to prepare and compile their good practices, and arrange to join and work together with other countries and international organizations such as UNEP, WCMC and Ramsar Secretariat.

## **9. Execution Arrangement and National Work Plans**

46. The Co-Chairperson invited the Secretariat to present the next steps in the RWG towards execution of activities under the SCS SAP, including next meeting of the RWG-W. Dr. Virginie Hart presented the follow up actions as discussed and agreed in the meeting.

The Project Coordination Unit will:

- Share NIR guidance documents that was used on the 15 March 2021 meeting for the finalization of the NIR including resharing the national reports and national action plans produced in the first phase of the project.
- Revise the RWG-W TOR based on comments provided with track changes, and share by 10 December 2021 for final comments, to be received by 24 December 2021. Then adopt the document via silent procedure.
- Draft the meeting report by 17 December 2021, after all the meetings have been conducted.
- Further review on the submitted NIRs to ensure harmonization.

At national level, the RWG-W members were requested to:

- Adopt the RWG-W TOR by 24 December 2021 via silent procedure
- Submit pending Wetland NIRs by 17 December 2021
- Confirmation/reconfirmation of the Wetland focal point by 17 December 2021 as not all of the participants in the meeting are chairs of the national Wetland committee/working group
- Complete the RWG-W.1/4 (SAP Evaluation 2008-2020) document and discuss at national wetland committees/working groups by 31 December 2021.
- Complete the RWG-W.1/5 (SAP Implementation 2021-2023) document and discuss at national wetland committees/working groups by 31 December 2021.

47. Other follow up actions requested from countries include:

- Establish national wetland committees/working groups and share workplan of meetings. It is recommended to include Fisheries Refugia Project and experts as well as key wetland initiatives and projects.
- Establish the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) with all habitat focal points and conduct first meeting to ensure synergies between habitats.

- Establish the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) and conduct the first meeting to confirm workplan and budget of NIRs.
- Provide best practices on wetland management/restoration (2008-2021)

48. The next steps and meetings for 2022 are as follows:

- January 2022: Signing of legal agreements (PCAs) between UNOPS and SAP Specialized Executing Agency (SEA). There is a need to complete the key information such as sites, targets, workplans and budget. As soon as signed, funds will be transferred to start on the ground activities.
- February 2022: First Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) Meeting, back to back with workshop/training on best-practices, tools and guidelines
- Data and monitoring workshop to coordinate the regional and national activities on data management and monitoring. The date to be confirmed with the support of a regional consultant.
- April 2022: Second RWG-W Meeting to present and discuss the 1) Methodology for revising the National Wetland Reports, 2) Progress in the execution of activities, 3) Monitoring and data management and indicators, 4) Any revision to work plans and budget, and 5) Compiling best-practices. The plan is to organize the meeting twice a year (online and face to face).
- June 2022: Second Steering Committee Meeting.

49. Dr. Hart also presented some consideration in the implementation of the project as follows:

- Assessment on travel restrictions whether meetings in first half of 2022 can be held in person.
- Assess and identify what additional support is needed from PCU in terms of finalizing national activities including capacity and training needs.
- Start the process of developing the revision of TDA including key impacts on wetlands, and consider these impacts and new issues such as climate change.
- Compilation of wetland resources from regional and global level.
- Launch of the Small Grants Program in 2022, following the good practices done in the first project. This will be coordinated at the regional level. A call for proposals from NGOs and CBOs will be launched and shared with the countries. The review and approval of projects will be the responsibility of the NTWG and IMC.

To access Dr. Hart presentation on follow up actions and next steps, please click [\[LINK\]](#).

## **10. Any Other Business**

50. The Chairperson invited members to consider and discuss any items of business introduced under agenda item 3. There were no issues and additional items raised.

## **11. Closure of the Meeting**

51. The Chairperson invited the Co-Chairperson, Mrs. Sumana Kajonwattanakul of Thailand to give some closing statement. She expressed thanks to the Chairperson for the smooth meeting and to the project team for the clarifications and advises for improving the national implementation report.

52. The Chairperson, Mr. Anson Tagtag of the Philippines, thanked the members of regional working group on wetlands for the active participation including the project team headed by Dr. Virginie Hart for the excellent preparation and documentation of the meeting. He hoped that the next meeting would be face-to-face meeting. He noted the non-participation of Viet

Nam and hoped that the meeting through the report will be able to inform Viet Nam of the developments. The Chairperson moved to close the meeting.

53. Dr. Virginie Hart thanked the Chairperson for the observations and guidance made throughout the meeting. She thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and expressed happiness to see this technical working group being established and hoped to learn and exchange more with the members of the working group. She wished everyone good health and hoped to meet everyone in person in 2022.

54. With no other concerns raised, the meeting ended at 5:19 pm.

## ANNEXES

1. List of Participants
2. Annotated agenda and list of documents
3. Revised Terms of Reference

## Annex 1. List of Participants

### National Focal Points / Representatives

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### National Team and Experts

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### UN and Other Regional Organizations and Projects

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<p>Ms. Nora Kogel Intern, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Email: <a href="mailto:norak@unops.org">norak@unops.org</a></p>	<p>Mr. Jerker Tamelander Director of Science and Policy Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Email: <a href="mailto:tamelander@ramsar.org">tamelander@ramsar.org</a></p>

### Project Coordination Unit

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## Annex 2. Annotated agenda and list of documents

*Tuesday 7 December 2021, 13.00 – 17.00 Indochina time (ICT)*

12.40-13.00 Participants are requested to login to the zoom meeting at least 10 meetings before the meeting.

<b>1. Opening of the meeting</b>	
13.00-13.10	1.1 Welcome address The SCS SAP Project Senior Manager will open the meeting and deliver the welcome address.
13.10-13.20	1.2 Introduction of members The Secretariat will be invited to introduce the members of the Wetland Working Group and other participants.
<b>2. Organization of the meeting</b>	
13.20-13.30	2.1 Designation of officers In accordance with the draft rules of procedure for the Regional Working Group on Wetlands, participants will be invited by the Secretariat to elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur.
13.30-13.40	2.2 Organization of work The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to brief participants on the proposed organization of work, the list of documents available to the meeting and administrative arrangements for the conduct of the meeting. The meeting will be conducted online in plenary. The meeting will be conducted in English.
<b>3. Adoption of the meeting agenda</b>	
13.40-13.50	The Chairperson will invite participants to consider the draft agenda prepared by the Secretariat as document SCSSAP RWG-M.1/2, propose any amendments or additional items for consideration, and adopt the agenda.
<b>4. Consideration of the Terms of reference of the Regional Working Group</b>	
13.50-14.20	The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to introduce document SCSSAP RWG-M.1/3: Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Wetlands UNEP/GEF SCS SAP Project, previously circulated. The RWG-M is invited to consider, amend and adopt the Terms of Reference as outlined in this document.
<b>5. Review the SAP targets for wetland focal area</b>	

14.20-14.30	The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to briefly present the SAP targets on wetlands and the objectives and outputs of the SCS SAP project.
<b>6. SAP evaluation at the national level during 2008 - 2020</b>	
14.30-14.40	6.1. Introduction and rationale The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to briefly introduce document SCSSAP RWG-M.1/4 Evaluation of SAP Implementations of the Wetland Focal Area During 2008-2021.
<b>7. Reviews and revision of SAP targets at the national level</b>	
14.40-14.50	7.1. Introduction and rationale The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to briefly introduce document SCSSAP RWG-M.1/5 SAP Implementation of the Wetland Focal Area (2021-2023).
<b>8. National Presentations on SAP implementation and future planning</b>	
14.50-16.00	8.1. National Presentations on SAP implementation The Chairperson will invite National Wetland Focal Points from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam to present key achievement in SAP implementation between 2008-2021 and the current status of consultations towards the revision of national targets and sites and NIRs.
16.00-16.30	8.2. Best practices in Wetland management Presentations from invited experts on best practices on wetland management in the region.
<b>9. Execution arrangement and national work plans</b>	
16.30-16.40	The Chairperson will invite the Secretariat to present the next steps in the RWG towards execution of activities under the SCS SAP, including next meeting of the RWG-W.
<b>10. Any other business</b>	
16.40-16.50	The Chairperson will invite members to consider and discuss any items of business introduced under agenda item 3.
<b>11. Closure of the Meeting</b>	
16.50-17.00	The Chairperson will call for a formal motion to close the meeting.

# LIST OF DOCUMENTS

## Meeting documents

The Regional Working Group on Wetland members are required to review these documents

SCSSAP RWG-M 1/1	Provisional Agenda
SCSSAP RWG-M 1/2	Annotated Provisional Agenda
SCSSAP RWG-M 1/3	Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Wetlands UNEP/GEF SCS SAP Project
SCSSAP RWG-M 1/4	Evaluation of SAP Implementations of the Wetland Focal Area During 2008-2021
SCSSAP RWG-M 1/5	SAP Implementation of the Wetland Focal Area (2021-2023)
SCSSAP RWG-M 1/6	Report of the Meeting (to be prepared following the meeting)

## Information documents

SCSSAP RWG-M 1/Inf.1	Draft List of Participants
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.3	Cambodia Summary Profile (draft)
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.4	China Summary Profile (draft)
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.5	Indonesia Summary Profile (draft)
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.6	Philippines Summary Profile (draft)
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.7	Thailand Summary Profile (draft)
SCSSAP PSC.1/Inf.8	Vietnam Summary Profile (draft)

## Reference documents

SCS SAP full project document (see [www.scssap.org](http://www.scssap.org))

SCS Strategic Action Programme (see [www.scssap.org](http://www.scssap.org))

SCSSAP IP 3/5	3rd Regional Inception Phase Meeting – NIR Development and Completion <a href="#">[LINK]</a>
SCSSAP PSC.1/9	1st Steering Committee Meeting of the UNEP/GEF Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP) Project <a href="#">[LINK]</a>

## **Annex 3. Revised Terms of Reference**

### **Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Wetlands**

#### **1. RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF A REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON WETLANDS**

1.1 To facilitate the achievement of the Strategic Action Programme targets for wetlands, a Regional Working Group on Wetlands (RWG-W) shall be established with overall responsibility for: co-ordinating the work of the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups established in each of the participating countries; for ensuring effective implementation of project activities undertaken in the context of the achievement of the wetland management targets of the project; and to provide a mechanism for exchange of information and experience of wetland management activities in each country.

#### **2. MEMBERSHIP**

2.1 The RWG-W of the SCS SAP Project shall consist of the Chairpersons of the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups together with one member of the SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit and selected regional experts. The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit in consultation with the National Technical Focal Points for the project shall nominate no more than four such experts to ensure a balance of expertise and specialisation consistent with the mandate of the working group.

2.2 The membership of the RWG-W shall be formally established at the first meeting of the Working Group, which shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chair from amongst its members, which will be for the period of 12 months (unless otherwise agreed). The Vice-Chair shall act as Chairperson of meetings in the absence of the Chairperson. The Chairperson of the RWG-W will represent the RWG-W on the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) and will attend the meetings of that Committee.

#### **3. SECRETARIAT**

3.1 The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit shall act as Secretariat to the RWG-W, and shall ensure that reports of the meetings are circulated to all members of the working group, and are copied to the members of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee. The National Wetland Committees/Working Groups shall serve as the principal source of national scientific and technical data and information to the RWG-W.

#### **4. MEETINGS OF THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP**

4.1 The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit in consultation with the Chairperson shall convene meetings of the RWG-W according to an agreed schedule, which will form part of the agreed work plan and timetable for the work of the Committee/Working Group. The first meeting of the RWG-W will agree on the detailed activities, workplan and timetable for the first year project execution.

#### **5. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**The RWG-W shall:**

5.1 Provide direction, and strategic guidance to the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups regarding the integrated management of 813,647 ha of coastal wetland at 19 sites, including habitat restoration and protection strengthened at priority locations, including the achievement of the following targets:

- Development and implementation of integrated management plans for 2 lagoons (21,818 ha), 10 estuaries (639,418 ha ha), 5 tidal flats (96,903 ha), 1 peat swamp (45,700 ha) and 1 non-peat swamp (9,808 ha)
- Declaration of at least 7 wetland areas with protection status (i.e. non-hunting area, nature reserves, protected areas, Ramsar Sites).
- Development, adoption and implementation of a regional estuary monitoring scheme at the national level

5.2 Assume overall responsibility for the timely execution of project activities in support of the achievement of the abovementioned targets;

5.3 Update, in close collaboration with the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups, the regional wetland meta-database and GIS, including meta-data on biodiversity and the results of wetland research pertaining to this project.

5.4 Develop, in close collaboration with the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups, public awareness and information materials concerning the national and regional importance of such ecosystems;

5.5 Receive, and review reports, data and information from the National Wetland Committees/Working Groups and compile the regional syntheses regarding wetland management needs and priorities;

5.6 Develop guidelines regarding best practices for sustainable wetland management for adoption and application at national level in participating countries;

5.7 Develop, review and recommend for adoption by the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee the proposed targets and timelines that may be included in a revised Strategic Action programme in order to achieve, sustainable management of wetlands bordering the South China Sea in the longer-term;

5.8 Prepare a regional review of national experiences in wetland restoration with a view to developing widely applicable guidelines concerning best practices in wetland restoration and rehabilitation;

5.9 Review and evaluate, at the regional level, progress in implementation of the wetland activities of the project, and provide guidance for improvement when necessary; and

5.10 Develop annual workplans and provide periodic progress reports to the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee.