ASIA PACIFIC OCEAN WEEK
26–30 October 2026

Session:	**Science-informed and stronger together: Strengthening regional action and commitment for a more resilient South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand**
Organizer(s):	**UNOPS / SCS-SAP Project ; UNEP-COBSEA**
Date/Time:	**Tuesday, 27 October 2026, 13h30 – 16h00**
Location:	**UNCC, Meeting Room F**
Contact:	**Anders Poulsen (andersp@unops.org)**

BACKGROUND

The South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand sustain a quarter of the world's population and are among Asia's most biodiverse large marine ecosystems. After 25 years of regional cooperation across more than six countries in the East Asian Seas, the evidence is clear: the region's environmental trends need to move in a sustainable direction, and achieving this requires deeper, more sustained collaboration than what has been achieved so far.

This side event, organized by the Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP) Project, a six-country, GEF-funded initiative implemented by UNEP and supported by UNOPS, presents the case for stronger collaboration through three interlocking lenses.

First, what the science now tells us. The updated Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (2025-2026), the most comprehensive regional assessment of the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) since 2000, documents the current state of the two shared seas across climate, people, pollution, ecosystems, fisheries, and governance — and makes clear why a stronger regional response is needed, urgently.

Second, what regional cooperation has already delivered. The SCS SAP achievement record from 2008 to 2021, including 47 protected and managed areas, 2.1 million hectares across four coastal habitats, and hard lessons about where implementation fell short, shows what six countries working together can accomplish, and what a renewed strategic action must do differently.

Third, what local and regional action looks like. Coordinated national and community actions supporting a common goal. SEA:Grants grantees from seven countries demonstrating that effective marine conservation is stronger when built with communities and that their models are ready to scale. Regional organizations collaborating to sustain a momentum through a more synergized approach to protecting coastal and marine ecosystems, knowledge sharing, and financing.

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Tentative Agenda

Date	
Time	**Agenda**
13:30 – 13:40	**OPENING** ● Anders Poulsen, SCS-SAP Project Manager Master of Ceremonies: Khristine Gudczinski
13:40 – 14:10	**Session 1: Diagnosing the Seas – A social and scientific status update on the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand** **The updated Regional Transboundary Diagnostics Analysis (TDA)** ● Dr. Vo Si Tuan & Dr. Somboon Siriraksophon ● Q&A (10 mins)
14:10-14:40	**Session 2: Accelerated Conservation – Results and Achievements of the SCS SAP Project** ● Overview of Regional Outputs, *Reynaldo Molina, SCS SAP* ● Demonstrating Results from Thailand, *Ukkrit Satapoomin, Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR)* ● Reflections: UNEP Goodwill Ambassador for the Philippines *Antoinette Taus* ● Q&A (10 mins)
14:40 – 14:55	**Film showing: Stakeholders' Voices. Various films from the East Asian Seas**
14:55 – 15:55	**Session 3: Envisioning the Future - Regional Workshop on Best Practices and Sustainability** ● Designing a region-wide conservation programme based on what we know now ● Facilitators: Margarita Victoria Caballa and Jimin Hong
15:55 – 16:00	**CLOSING** ● Mahesh Pradhan, COBSEA Coordinator