



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

*Second Regional Inception Phase Meeting
10.00 – 12.30 Bangkok Time, Friday 4th December 2020*

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Report of the Meeting

Introduction and Attendance

The second meeting of the Inception Phase of the UNEP GEF Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP) Project was held via videoconference (MS Teams) on the 4th December 2020 from 10.00-12.30 Bangkok time.

The six participating countries of the SCS SAP project attended the meeting, with representatives from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. UNEP as Implementing Agency was represented along with executing agencies - United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC). A total of sixty-five participants attended the meeting. The complete list of participants is set out in Annex 3 to the present report.

Welcome statements

The meeting began with welcome statements from the UNEP GEF Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP) project main partners, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as Implementing Agency, and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) as Executing Agencies.

Ms. Isabelle Vanderbeck, UNEP Task Manager, welcomed and thanked the countries for their participation in the meeting. She emphasized the importance of the inception phase and the critical need to meet virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. She stressed that inception phase provides the opportunity to strengthen the project by further elaborating and aligning the activities with new national, regional, and global initiatives and integrate good practices and experiences from similar initiatives. The project team, together with UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC are committed to support participating countries in the execution of the project.

Ms. Katrin Lichtenberg, UNOPS Vienna Representative and Head of Programme thanked participants for their participation in the meeting, which shows that the project is a priority of countries. She emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement and encouraged participants to actively participate. She committed that UNOPS and project team will continue to reach out to countries to provide project management support.

Ms. Malinee Smithrithee, the SEAFDEC Secretary-General provided her welcome remark. She thanked the project team for the preparation and organization of the meeting and welcomed the participants to the meeting. She informed the meeting that the project office is already established and ready to accept project staff to start project implementation.

Meeting objectives and inception phase progress

Ms. Virginie Hart started with a brief presentation of the meeting objectives, and the general progress made both at regional and national levels on the implementation of inception phase activities since the first regional inception phase meeting held on 30 July 2020, with Mr. Reynaldo

Molina providing additional inputs and clarifications on the national implementation and contracting process. She informed the meeting that the main objectives of the meeting is to discuss and agree on work to be undertaken in preparation for the 1st Steering Committee Meeting provisionally planned for April 2021, and how best to use the Inception phase to strengthen the project in line with national, regional and global best practices and initiatives to achieve the SAP and project outcomes. She referred the participants to meeting document: SCSSAP IP.2/3 Inception Phase Workplan which elaborates all activities to be undertaken in preparation for the Inception Phase Workshop and 1st Steering Committee meeting.

Ms. Hart explained that these two back to back meetings will end the Inception Phase. The Inception Phase Workshop is a broader meeting to launch and present the SCSSAP project, where all key national, regional and global focal points, partners and organizations will be invited. The 1st Steering Committee meeting, which will be participated in by the chairs of IMC and NTWG from each country, UNEP Task Manager, with UNOPS, SEAFDEC and the PCU in support, will review and adopt the Inception Phase documentation including activities, workplan, budget, communication plan and monitoring and evaluation plan. Ms. Hart stressed that the Inception Phase documents, once adopted will supersede the project document. She informed the meeting that the SCS SAP Steering Committee has this authority as long as the objectives, outcomes and overall targets of the project are still maintained. Following these meetings, all contracts for execution of the project will be finalized in line with the adopted work-plan and budget.

As to the project progress, Ms. Hart referred the participants to meeting document: SCSSAP IP.2/2 Inception Phase Progress Summary and Recommendations. She informed the meeting that the Inception phase is fully underway with the support of participating countries to finalize detailed activities at the national and regional level. In spite of the challenges of COVID-19, all partners and national teams are able to initiate initial actions.

National teams organized their respective internal coordination and consultations with concerned agencies and institutions to discuss the project and inception phase activities. This includes the review and confirmation of national focal points of different project bodies including memberships, review and confirmation of intervention sites, and review and updating of the draft National Implementation Report. At the regional level, the project organized bilateral meetings and calls with: national teams to guide and provide details of the inception phase activities; implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC on project implementation progress and concerns; and regional projects and partners such as the Fisheries Refugia Project, COBSEA and PEMSEA on possible complementation and collaboration. The project has prepared, in different stages of progress, the following: draft Regional Implementation Report detailing the activities for regional execution, draft Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) for national execution, draft terms of reference for project staff and consultants, draft execution scheme between UNOPS and SEAFDEC, and documentation for the project inception/first steering committee meeting, including regular updating of project website (www.scssap.org) and progress reporting to UNEP and GEF. The project recruited and welcomed the engagement of one regional (Mr. Vo Si Tuan) and two national (Mr. Romeo Trono and Mr. Pituck Jongnarangsin) advisors to provide technical and scientific support in developing regional and national level activities.

Mr. Jerker Tamelander, Coordinator of COBSEA Secretariat reaffirmed the importance of the project to the region and the East Asian Seas Action Plan. He noted that the SCS SAP is of high quality and complements and contributes to COBSEA's East Asian Seas Action Plan implementation. He

emphasized COBSEA's intergovernmental (IGM) process that could be used as a mechanism for project sustainability, and noted that most of the individuals involved in the project are also involved with COBSEA.

Country Updates on Inception Phase Implementation

The participating countries were invited to make a brief presentation on the progress of national implementation of inception phase activities (confirmation of national focal points and SEAs including chairs and members of the various national working bodies, confirmation of project sites, further development of the national implementation report, engagement of national consultants, PCA and contracting, national consultations, etc.) including issues and concerns and recommendations.

Mr. Than Monomoyith of the Ministry of Environment (MoE) of Cambodia, on behalf of the Cambodian participants informed the meeting that they are closely working with their consultant to finalize the budget and workplan, after which they will proceed with the contracting with UNOPS. He noted Cambodia's need to have a new guideline on sustainable marine management that could be supported by the project including data updating.

Mr. Yu Yunjun of the South China Institute of Environmental Sciences (SCIES), on the behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Ecology of China, made a presentation on the progress of inception phase implementation in China and informed participants of major restructuring in the Ministry since the adoption of the SAP in 2008. Relevant initiatives related to SAP implementation and NIR development include the new mangrove action plan 2020-2025, the plan on ecological restoration and pollution to establish a sustainable coastal ecosystem. Since adoption of the SAP many of the targets in China have been achieved with 9,000 ha of key habitats now protected. Mr. Yunjun also suggested some revision of the land-based pollution activities on nutrient carrying capacity and heavy metals which is too wide for a limited budget, and to establish links with work on marine litter and microplastics, climate change, blue economy, nature-based solutions as well as a careful review of national coordination arrangements.

Mr. Dida Migfar Ridha of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) of Indonesia informed the meeting that they are reviewing and providing inputs to develop the draft National Implementation Report including the workplan and budget, the proposed project focal and contact points of IMC, SEA and NTWG, making sure that they are all in line with national regulations. He informed the meeting that they are developing the implementation strategy of the project in Indonesia through internal coordination and consultation. This includes the guidance from the Ministry as to the lead agency for the project. He noted the challenges they are facing such as COVID-19, and the scope of project in national and regional coordination particularly the role of countries in regional coordination.

From the Philippines, Ms. Armida Andres of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), on behalf of the Philippine participants, expressed appreciation to be part of the project as the project will help support the local and national initiatives. She informed the meeting that inception phase activities are ongoing particularly on the proposed national working bodies and its composition, the proposed project sites, the development of national implementation report where updating have started in the different components, and the consultation meeting with implementing offices to present and

review the SAP and status of implementation. She informed the meeting of the various national priorities that will be considered in this project such as the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program, the National Greening Program, the National Action Plan on Marine Litter, the proposed legislations on wetlands, integrated coastal management, the GEF 6 and 7 projects related to coastal and marine management, and the other bilateral and multi-country initiatives. Ms. Andres noted the need and delays in getting the Special Presidential Authority (SPA) prior to project implementation, and the engagement of national consultant, Mr. Romy Trono, to assist in the inception phase implementation.

Mr. Ukkrit Satapoomon of Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), on behalf of Thailand participants, informed the meeting of the progress and actions taken to implement the inception phase activities in Thailand such as the bilateral meeting with the SCS SAP Project, the nomination of the Marine Resources Conservation Division of DMCR as National Focal Point, the composition of the various national working bodies, the proposed project sites where one site considered the Fisheries Refugia site, and the engagement of the national consultant, Mr. Pituck Jongnarangsin, to help develop the National Implementation Report and inception phase activities. He noted their plan to combine SEAs for mangroves and wetlands, coral reefs and seagrass, with one National Focal Point for each SEA.

On behalf of Vietnam participants, Mr. Nguyen Kien of the Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands (VASI) informed the meeting that their department is undergoing change in human resources and in the process of recruiting new personnel and experts to beef up the office, including revising relevant laws and policies and developing new national action plans related to coral reefs, seagrass and marine plastics. This includes collecting data and information and establishing team.

Mr. Tamelander, COBSEA, also highlighted the links to the work of COBSEA with regards to Marine Litter, including the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and working group on marine litter and the importance of coastal ecosystems in relation to climate change including carbon storage and restoration.

Inception Phase Workplan and Next Steps

Ms. Hart presented the workplan and next steps towards the SCS SAP First Project Steering Committee/Inception Meeting, including recommendations regarding the project outputs and budget. She referred the participants to meeting documents: SCSSAP IP.2/3 Inception Phase Work-Plan, SCSSAP IP.2/4 Project Outcomes and Outputs, and SCSSAP IP.2/5 Project Budget.

Ms. Hart explained that the workplan provides the description of key activities and sub-activities including the timelines, outputs and final products to be delivered within a seven month period. The key activities include the following: 1) National Coordination and National Implementation Reports (NIRs); 2) Regional Coordination and Regional Implementation Report (RIR); 3) Revised detailed budget and co-financing; 4) Partnerships and integration of best practices and innovation; 5) Inception Phase Workshop and First Steering Committee Meeting; and 6) Project Coordination and Reporting.

The project outcomes and outputs includes some proposed minor changes to the outputs including some brief comments regarding execution. This will be fully elaborated in the Regional Inception Report (RIR) currently under development. Ms. Hart requested participants to review, discuss and

confirm the minor edits and reordering of project outputs including providing information on any relevant initiatives, projects, recent reports relevant to each output that should be considered, and recommendations on key partnerships and stakeholders to be engaged in execution of the project output. The project budget, on the other hand, is presented mainly based on the original budget as approved by GEF, including the current expenditures incurred, for the participants' information and reference.

Responses and clarifications

Following all presentations, further clarifications were made by the inception team on the statements and concerns raised by countries and participants.

Ms. Hart observed that a common concern raised is the project duration and timeline. She informed the meeting that the project will run from 2020 to 2023 with a possible no cost extension until June 2024. The project will prepare and share the overall workplan for comments.

In terms of co-financing, Ms. Vanderbeck informed the meeting that the project will recalculate the co-financing contributions committed and come up with a detailed co-financing estimates for tracking and monitoring.

The Project Team supported the suggestion made and encouraged countries to include and involve the Fisheries Refugia Project and Fisheries Departments in national consultations and implementation, particularly habitat components under their jurisdiction such as coral reefs and seagrass, similar to SCS Phase 1 implementation approach.

As to the inception phase workplan, all countries agreed on the proposed workplan and activities. On the proposed outcomes and outputs, all countries agreed in principle on the outcomes and outputs subject to further review. Ms. Vanderbeck proposed to include marine plastics in the Strategic Action Programme under COBSEA's Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP-MALI) framework. Mr. Tamelander informed the meeting that aside from RAP-MALI, a Regional Working Group on Marine Litter is in place. He further added that coastal ecosystem restoration in relation to climate change is one of COBSEA priorities.

Mr. Yu of SCIES informed the meeting that China conducted a study on remote sensing and coastal zone which could be used by the project under Component 2. He suggested that the regional component should be integrated in the National Implementation Report. In terms of knowledge sharing, Mr. Yu suggested to consider local experiences in regional activities.

As to project budget, Ms. Hart informed the meeting that the project will prepare a budget revision to reflect the final budget details. This includes the regional and national budget based on the regional and national implementation reports.

Conclusion and Closing Statements

Ms. Hart expressed appreciation to all the participating countries on the significant progress made in the implementation of inception phase activities, and thanked countries and partners for supporting the proposed inception phase workplan and activities including the proposed changes on the outcomes and outputs. She assured national teams that the discussions and

recommendations in the meeting will be taken into consideration by the project, and that the project team together with the regional and national advisors will continue to provide help and support to the countries to implement the project and its activities. Ms. Hart reiterated to the countries the need to contact and communicate with the project team any matters concerning the project.

Ms. Vanderbeck, Ms. Lichtenberg and Ms. Smithrithee expressed thanks and appreciation to all the participants for attending the meeting and providing updates on project progress, and expressed their full support and commitment to help all countries in the implementation of the project. They thanked the project team for preparing and organizing the meeting, and welcomed the engagement of the regional and national advisors, who together with the project team will help and support to implement the SAP and project at regional and national level.

Ms. Hart and Mr. Molina thanked all the participants and looked forward to working closely with all the countries.

With the no other concerns raised, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Agenda

Annex 2 Meeting and Reference Documents

Annex 3 List of Participants

Annex 1 Agenda

1. Welcome and introduction by UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC

A general welcome address and introduction will be provided by the SCS SAP Implementing and Executing agencies: Isabelle Vanderbeck, UNEP GEF Task Manager, Katrin Lichtenberg, UNOPS Head of Programme for Water and Energy and Malinee Smithrithee, SEAFDEC Secretary General.

2. Meeting objectives and Inception Phase progress

A brief presentation by Virginie Hart, SCS SAP Inception Phase Team Leader, on the objectives of the meeting, general progress made both at regional and national levels on the implementation of inception phase activities since the first regional inception phase meeting held on 30 July 2020, with further clarifications from Reynaldo Molina on the national implementation and contracting process. This will be followed by a discussion with all participants.

Reference Document: Inception Phase Progress Summary and Recommendations (SCSSAP IP.2/2)

3. Updates from participating countries on inception phase implementation

This will particularly focus on the progress and actions taken on the next steps discussed following the first inception phase meeting. Each participating country is expected to provide brief highlights or a presentation (10 minutes maximum) on the progress of national implementation of inception phase activities (confirmation of national focal points and SEAs including chairs and members of the various national working bodies, confirmation of project sites, further development of the national implementation report, engagement of national consultants, PCA and contracting, national consultations, etc.) including issues and concerns and recommendations.

Reference Document: Inception Phase Progress Summary and Recommendations (SCSSAP IP.2/2)

4. Inception Phase Workplan and Next Steps

A presentation will be given on the next steps towards the SCS SAP First Project Steering Committee/Inception Meeting, detailed workplan, and recommendations regarding the project outputs and budget.

Reference Documents: Inception Phase Work-Plan (SCSSAP IP.2/3), Project Outcomes and Outputs (SCSSAP IP.2/4) and Project Budget (SCSSAP IP.2/5)

5. Any Other Matters and Conclusions

Annex 2 Meeting and Reference Documents

Meeting documents

- SCSSAP IP.2/1 Meeting Agenda
- SCSSAP IP.2/2 Inception Phase Progress Summary Report
- SCSSAP IP.2/3 Inception Phase Work-Plan
- SCSSAP IP.2/4 SCS SAP Project Outcomes and Outputs
- SCSSAP IP.2/5 SCS SAP Project Budget
- SCSSAP IP.2/6 Report of the Meeting

Information documents

- SCSSAP IP.2/Inf.1 Draft List of Participants
- SCSSAP IP.2/Inf.2 Online Meeting Guide using MS Teams
- SCSSAP IP.2/Inf.3 Terms of Reference for the Inception Phase National Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA)
- SCSSAP IP.2/Inf.4 SCS SAP UNEP GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR) Fiscal Year 2020
- SCSSAP IP.2/Inf.5 SCS SAP UNEP GEF Quarterly Progress Report (Q3 2020)
- SCSSAP IP 2/Inf.6 Draft Structure and Organogram
- SCSSAP IP 2/Inf.7 Inception Phase Guidance for Countries

Reference documents

- SCSSAP IP.1/4 First Regional Inception Phase Meeting Report [[LINK](#)]
- SCS SAP full project document (see www.scssap.org)
- SCS Strategic Action Programme (see www.scssap.org)

Original SCS reports

Available at the SCS repository (<http://www.unepscs.org/remository.html>) including:

- Technical Publications and Guideline [[LINK](#)] (particularly Technical Publication 1-4)
- For more details on the site selection, see the 3rd Regional Working Group reports which includes a summary ranking as presented in Annex 7, Tables 1 and 2
 - Mangrove [[LINK](#)]
 - Coral reef sites [[LINK](#)]
 - Seagrass [[LINK](#)]
 - Wetlands [[LINK](#)] <http://www.unepscs.org/remository/startdown/370.html>
- Reports of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee [[LINK](#)]

Annex 3 List of Participants

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