



**The 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Project Steering Committee for  
the SEAFDEC/UNEP/GEF Project on Establishment and Operation of a Regional System of  
Fisheries *Refugia* in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand**

23 December 2022  
(08:30 – 11:30AM, UTC+7)  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom Platform

**PROJECT CLOSING MEETING**

**I. JUSTIFICATION**

The South China Sea is a global centre of shallow water marine biological diversity that supports significant fisheries that are important to the food security and export income of Southeast Asian countries. These fisheries are characterised by high levels of fishing effort from the small-scale sector. Accordingly, all inshore waters of the South China Sea basin are subject to intense fishing pressure. This situation of high small-scale fishing pressure and declining fisheries resources has contributed to the adoption of unsustainable fishing methods to maintain catch and increase incomes in the short-term. These include the use of destructive fishing gear and practices, such as the operation of demersal trawls and push nets in seagrass areas, and the detonation of explosives and release of fish poisons in coral reef areas. Small-scale inshore fishing pressure has therefore been identified as a significant cause of the degradation and loss of coastal habitats in the South China Sea.

Although action aimed at reducing the rate of loss of coastal habitats has been implemented by countries bordering the South China Sea. This continued decline in the total area of habitats critical to the life cycles of most aquatic species, combined with the high levels of coastal community dependence on fish, has raised serious concerns for the long-term sustainability of small-scale fisheries in the region. With fish production being intrinsically linked to the quality and area of habitats and the heightened dependence of coastal communities on fish, a need exists to improve the integration of fish habitat considerations and fisheries management in the region. This project entitled “*Establishment and Operation of a Regional System of Fisheries Refugia in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand*” has been developed to meet this need via implementation of the fisheries component of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea. The project was funded by GEF in 2015, implemented by GEF and executed regionally by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center in 2016 in partnership with the government agencies responsible for fisheries in the 6 participating countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Initially planned for 48 months from January 2017 until December 2020, the Project duration was extended until December 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the communities in the fisheries refugia project sites have been working towards enhancing the integration of habitat and biodiversity conservation into fishery management and practices for the economically important aquatic species. More than 100 multi-stakeholder groups from various institutions not only fisheries and environment agency but also the tourism department, public organizations, navy, coastguards, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSO), academia, research institutes, local government at provincial and state levels, fishing community, private sectors, etc. have been actively involved in the process of Fisheries refugia establishment. As of December 2022, about 7,000 persons are engaged, more than 300 activities conducted at national and regional levels. The initial results indicate the effective management of critical threats to 15 fisheries refugia areas of about 1,159,241 ha is expected to be adopted by 2022. It is about 4.3 folds higher than the proposed refugia areas (269,500 ha) adopted by the GEF/CEO.

The objectives of this Project Closure Conference/meeting are to progress the achievements throughout the improved stakeholder engagement and acceptance of the area-based approaches to fisheries in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand. In addition, the meeting is also aimed to share lessons learned on improved national management of the threats to fish stock and critical habitat linkages within fisheries *refugia*, and the enhanced uptake of good practice in integrating fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the design and implementation of transboundary management of fisheries refugia systems. It is expected that the feedbacks or recommendations from the stakeholders would be incorporating lessons learned into future programs.

## II. MEETING VENUE

The meeting will be held in 2023 at XXXXXXXXXX Hotel, xxxxxx, xxxxx (will be confirmed)

## III. PARTICIPANTS TO CLOSURE MEETING

- About 25 participants of the National Focal Point (NFP), the National Scientific and Technical Committee (NSTC), SEAFDEC executing agency, UNEP Implementing agency, and PCU.
- About 40 Stakeholders from project sites including community, local government, private sector, and local CSOs/NGOs (@6 persons per country)
- About 50 participants from the Project Steering Committee SCS/SAP Implementation Project and other institutions/partners (GEF, UNOPS, UNDP, FAO, PEMSEA, SEAFDEC/JTF, etc)
- Media and local supporting staffs

## IV. TENTATIVE AGENDA

|               |   |
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| 09:00 – 09:40 | <b>Opening:</b>   |
|               | Welcome speech by Malinee Smithrithee, SEAFDEC Secretary-General<br>Welcome speech by Isabelle Vanderbeck, UNEP Project Task Manager<br>Opening remarks by xxxx xxxxx, Host Country (if applicable)   |
| 09:40 – 10:00 | <b>Session I: Overview of progress and achievements</b>   |
|               | <b>Overview of the project progress to date</b><br>Project Manager<br><b>Supporting Documents:</b> Interim report on progress as of 31 December 2022  |
| 10:00 – 10:30 | <b>Interviews by media (will be updated)</b>  |
| 10:00 – 11:00 | <b>Session II: Social networking posters, group photography</b>   |
|               | <b>Poster presentations by three country partners</b><br>National scientific and technical focal points: Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia<br><b>Supporting Documents:</b><br>X-stand posters on highlight of country implementation, Brochure, VDO, etc. |
| 11:00 – 12:30 | <b>Session III: Good practices on integrated management of fisheries and marine habitats</b>  |

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|---------------|--|
|               | <p><b>Good practice by Cambodia (title will be updated)</b></p> <p><b>Good practice by Indonesia (title will be updated) by Malaysia (title will be updated) by Philippines (title will be updated) by Thailand (title will be updated) by Viet Nam</b></p> <p><b>Supporting Documents:</b> Country papers on good practices</p> |
| 12:30 – 14:00 | Lunch break  |
| 14:00 – 14:20 | <b>Session IV: Feedback and recommendations from the stakeholders</b>  |
|               | Relevant stakeholders are welcomed to express their feedback and recommendations on the project achievements to improve for future programs.   |
| 14:40 – 15:20 | <b>Session V: Social networking posters</b>  |
|               | National scientific and technical focal points: Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam<br><b>Supporting Documents:</b><br>X-stand posters on highlight of country implementation, Brochure, VDO, etc.   |
| 15:20 – 15:45 | <b>Session VI: Pecha Kucha Completion (12 slides x 20 seconds)</b>   |
|               | Each country proposed a Pecha Kucha presentation on country achievement or good practices within 12 slides, each slide present within 20 Seconds. The PowerPoint Presentation will automatically run 20 seconds for each slide.<br><br>The designated referee will select the best two presenters for award.                     |
| 15:45 – 16:15 | <b>Session VII: Commitments and Way Forwards</b>   |
|               | National lead agencies are welcomed to committing the support or ongoing project implementation as well as to scale-up the program at national level.  |
| 16:15 – 16:30 | <b>Day Session Closed</b>  |
|               |  |
| 18:30 – 21:30 | <b>Night Session: Reception Dinner</b>   |
|               | VDO Presentation<br>Announcement for Pecha Kucha Award<br>Announcement for Best Practices Award<br>Recognition to the host country   |