

Implementation of NOWPAP activities since the 12th CEARAC Focal Points Meeting

Report of NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit

1. This report on the implementation of NOWPAP activities covers the period since the 12th CEARAC Focal Points Meeting (FPM) held in July 2014.
2. More details of CEARAC activities will be presented by the MERRAC Director under separate agenda item. The brief information on activities of all NOWPAP RACs is given below, highlighting both achievements and challenges which these RACs are facing.

CEARAC – Special Monitoring and Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre

3. The 18th NOWPAP IGM approved CEARAC workplan and budget for the 2014-2015, including the following main activities:
 - Pilot assessment of the impacts of major threats to marine biodiversity in selected areas of the NOWPAP region.
 - Trial application of the screening procedure of the NOWPAP common procedure for eutrophication assessment.
 - Case studies of seagrass and seaweed mapping in selected sea areas in the NOWPAP region using remote sensing.
4. Detailed work plans for all these activities have been discussed at the 12th CEARAC FPM held in July 2014. After that, all activities have been started (with slight delay) and being implemented successfully. In addition, CEARAC has completed the following report (as outcome of the project implemented in 2012-2013): *Application of the NOWPAP Common Procedure for Eutrophication Assessment in Selected Sea Areas in the NOWPAP Region*.
5. Host organization of CEARAC, Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center (NPEC), together with NOWPAP RCU, continued to maintain and enrich the Northwest Pacific Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML): (http://www.npec.or.jp/NWPacific_node/index.html).
6. In recent years, a person nominated as CEARAC Director has other responsibilities in NPEC and in the Toyama Prefectural Government. As a result, Director is not able to dedicate 100% of his time to CEARAC issues, which is obviously a challenge for smooth operations of CEARAC Secretariat.

DINRAC - Data and Information Network Regional Activity Centre

7. The 18th NOWPAP IGM approved DINRAC workplan and budget for the 2014-2015, including the following main activities:
 - Annual summary of major marine environmental data available in the NOWPAP region.
 - Annual updating of existing databases in order to share the latest data in the NOWPAP region.
 - Maintaining and updating marine litter data and information.

- Developing visualized DINRAC website and enriching the thematic maps in the web GIS system.
 - Collection of information on endangered/threatened species in the NOWPAP region.
8. In 2014, DINRAC has completed the following main activities:
- Annual summary of the major marine environmental data available for the NOWPAP region (2013 data were uploaded with expectation that 2014 data will be collected in 2015).
 - Summary of the policies and measures on the prevention of coastal and marine pollution in member states (database was uploaded on DINRAC website in late 2014).
 - Update, maintenance and enrichment of DINRAC website on a regular basis (this work is being continued in 2015 as well).
9. DINRAC has continuously developed and maintained the following databases (available at the DINRAC website):
- Database on major environmental data (with 2012-2013 data).
 - Database on NOWPAP Coastal and Marine Environmental Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) Applications.
 - Database on Marine Litter (updated with 2013 data).
 - Database on Coastal and Marine Nature Reserves.
 - Database on NOWPAP Publications.
 - Databases on NOWPAP Institutions and Experts
10. In recent years, host institution of DINRAC has been changed two times and DINRAC Director changed several times which interrupted DINRAC operations to some extent.
11. In July 2015, the 13th DINRAC Focal Points Meeting has agreed on the following activities for the 2016-2017 biennium (to be approved by the 20th NOWPAP IGM):
- Development of DINRAC website (maintenance and updating of existing databases, visualization of data through web-based GIS, etc.);
 - Annual summary of major environmental data (continued from 2014-2015);
 - Collection of information on endangered/threatened species in the NOWPAP region (phase 2, with expanded geographical coverage);
 - Compilation of marine environmental standards used in NOWPAP member states.

MERRAC – Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre

12. The 18th NOWPAP IGM approved MERRAC workplan and budget for the 2014-2015, including the following main activities:
- Risk assessment of oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substance (HNS) spills in the NOWPAP region.
 - Establishment of oil and HNS spill prediction system.
 - Establishment of HNS information network.
 - Expert Meeting to be hosted by Russia on technical issues related to marine pollution preparedness and response in the NOWPAP region (e.g. HNS issues).

- NOWPAP Exercises (NOWPAP BRAVO, NOWPAP DELTA) to enhance regional capacity on marine pollution preparedness and response.
13. However, at the 17th MERRAC FPM held in June 2014, two of these activities were modified or replaced by different ones, while Risk Assessment project, Expert Meeting and NOWPAP Exercises remained in the MERRAC work plan for 2014-2015. Two new activities (instead of those approved by the 18th NOWPAP IGM) were:
 - Online pollution reporting system; and
 - Updating database of oil and HNS equipment and experts.
 14. In October 2014, NOWPAP DELTA joint oil spill exercise was organized near Vladivostok, Russia. Ships and helicopters from Russia and Japan participated in the exercise, while Korea was represented by several observers.
 15. Some activities from 2012-2013 biennium were completed in 2014-2015: a pamphlet on HNS database and spill response and a report on legislation and practice on marine pollution damage civil liability and compensation (both published in 2015).
 16. At the 19th NOWPAP IGM, it was noted that although activities related to ballast water management and climate change impacts and mitigation were suggested in the Medium-term Strategy 2012-2017, MERRAC Focal Points were reluctant to implement such new activities arguing that they are beyond the current capacity of the Focal Points and experts. The meeting suggested MERRAC to prepare a concrete proposal for the next IGM looking into the issue, including possible modification of the Terms of Reference for MERRAC and its Focal Points Meeting.

POMRAC – Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Centre

17. The 18th NOWPAP IGM approved POMRAC workplan and budget for the 2014-2015, including the following main activities:
 - Development of ecological quality objectives (EcoQOs) in the NOWPAP region with a regional workshop.
 - Practical application of NOWPAP Regional Guidelines for Integrated Coastal Planning/Management through regional workshop/training course.
18. The following publications were prepared as outputs of the activities implemented in 2012-2013 biennium:
 - The second *State of Marine Environmental Report (SOMER-2) for the NOWPAP Region*.
 - The *Regional Overview on Persistent Toxic Substances (PTS) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Issues of Ecological Concern in the NOWPAP Region*.
 - *Regional Guidelines for Integrated Coastal Planning and Management (ICARM)*.
19. In September 2014, POMRAC has held its 12th FPM and a regional workshop on ecological quality objectives (EcoQOs) where the preliminary list of EcoQOs was discussed with the participation of other RACs and NOWPAP partners (PICES, PEMSEA, YSLME and OSPAR).
20. In 2014-2015, POMRAC has faced two major challenges. First, POMRAC Secretariat staff members receive no salaries from the host country for their jobs with NOWPAP and they work as volunteers. Second, due to peculiarities of the Russian legislation, POMRAC is not able to arrange payments directly to foreign experts and organizations

which makes it impossible to implement their activities because the previous practice (payment arrangements through RCU/other RACs and UNEP Headquarters) is no longer available as the result of the new Umoja system in place.

21. In addition to specific projects carried out by NOWPAP Regional Activity Centres (RACs), several activities were implemented and coordinated by the Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) as described below.

Raising public awareness

22. According to NOWPAP Public Awareness Strategy, the following actions were taken by NOWPAP RCU and RACs:
 - NOWPAP homepage and RAC homepages have been maintained and constantly updated. News and information have been posted on the NOWPAP homepage in five languages (English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian) since 2006.
 - Electronic newsletter (NOWPAP Quarterly) has been distributed by NOWPAP RCU through e-mails to member states and partners since 2008.
 - Recent news and information about NOWPAP activities have been highlighted and shared on Facebook since 2011.
 - News about NOWPAP implementation were regularly posted at the partners' websites and introduced in their electronic newsletters (e.g., IETC, PEMSEA).
 - Information about NOWPAP activities was introduced to UNEP ROAP and GPA websites and contributed to the UNEP DEPI Dispatch regularly.
 - RACs and RCU staff members also delivered lectures/presentations at a local level.
23. While attending a few global and regional meetings (e.g., annual Global Meetings of Regional Seas, PICES Annual Meetings, etc.) as well as local events, RACs and RCU staff members contributed to increasing NOWPAP visibility and attracting public attention to marine environment conservation by introducing the NOWPAP activities.
24. NOWPAP also continued to maintain close relationships with civil society including NGOs such as Japan Environment Action Network (JEAN), Our Sea of East Asia Network (OSEAN), Ocean Conservancy (OC) and *Shanghai Rendu* (Environmental NGO in China) in order to raise public awareness on marine litter as well as strengthening cooperation between policy makers and civil society for enhanced marine litter management.

NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI)

25. NOWPAP member states have continued their efforts in organizing and supporting activities against marine litter such as ICC (International Coastal Cleanup) campaigns, the Green New Deal Fund (Japan) and the Comprehensive Marine Litter Management Plan (Korea).
26. Sponsored by the Korean government, Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and NOWPAP Trust Fund, the 2014 NOWPAP ICC campaign and marine litter management workshop were successfully held in Boryeong City, the Republic of Korea, in September 2014.
27. Host organization of CEARAC, Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center (NPEC), together with NOWPAP RCU, continued to maintain and enrich the Northwest Pacific Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML): (http://www.npec.or.jp/NWPacific_node/index.html).

28. DINRAC has continuously updated its ML database with monitoring results provided by the NPEC (Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center, Japan) and MOF (Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Korea) as well as ICC results from China and Russia. All national ML monitoring data and related information, including the data from the SOA (State Oceanic Administration) of China, are available at the DINRAC website (<http://dinrac.nowpap.org>).
29. MERRAC has published the report on *Best Practices in dealing with Marine Litter in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Shipping Sectors in the NOWPAP Region* in 2015.
30. News and information related to marine litter have been posted on the NOWPAP homepage and continually updated by NOWPAP RCU, shared by e-mail with NOWPAP RACs and NOWPAP Marine Litter Focal Points.

Other developments, including restructuring the NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU), OIOS audit and new fund management system (Umoja)

31. At the 18th NOWPAP IGM held in December 2013 and at the first Extraordinary NOWPAP IGM (EO IGM) held in April 2014, RCU hosting countries (Japan and Korea) have suggested to reduce the number of UNEP RCU staff members from six to four and then to downgrade the levels of RCU posts. As a result, some RCU staff members felt insecure and three persons have left the RCU in July-August 2014.
32. As two staff members who have left in 2014 were responsible (among other things) for resource mobilization and project development, no new project proposals were developed.
33. In spite of the limited capacity of the RCU (due to decreased number of staff), activities related to public awareness and partnership building were continued.
34. Close partnership relations were maintained with many relevant organizations, programmes and projects in the region (in alphabetical order):
 - International Environment Technology Center (IETC) of UNEP.
 - North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Corporation (NEASPEC).
 - North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES).
 - Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA).
 - UNESCO/IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC).
35. At the 19th NOWPAP IGM held in October 2014 in Moscow (Russia), delegates from NOWPAP member states (China, Japan, Korea and Russia), RAC Directors and representatives from UNEP Headquarters reviewed the progress of NOWPAP implementation and agreed on the scale of contributions to the NOWPAP Trust Fund for 2015. After the meeting, member states approved the financial rules for the funds of NOWPAP. A symposium marking the 20th anniversary of NOWPAP was held at the same venue.
36. In order to continue the discussion held at the 18th IGM, 1st EO IGM and the 19th IGM, the second Extraordinary Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) was convened on 1-2 April 2015 in Seoul, Republic of Korea to address financial sustainability of the NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) offices in Toyama and Busan. Representatives of member states (China, Korea, Japan and Russia) as well as UNEP Headquarters attended the two-day special meeting. The extraordinary IGM focused on the issue of RCU restructuring aiming to keep the staffing costs within the current contributions of two RCU host countries (Japan and Korea). After intensive discussions, the meeting decided to revise staffing structure of the NOWPAP RCU offices as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Revised RCU structure

Toyama RCU office	Busan RCU office
P5 Coordinator	P3 Programme Officer
G6 Programme Assistant	G4 Team Assistant

37. UNEP will initiate the recruitment process to coincide, where possible, with the expiry of the existing contracts, to ensure that the staff of the revised RCU structure will be in place no later than the end of February 2016.
38. The meeting decided also that fund management support from UNEP Headquarters will be provided (up to about US\$ 50,000), to be covered by the NOWPAP Project Support Cost (PSC).
39. As requested by member states at the 18th NOWPAP IGM, UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted in 2014 an audit of NOWPAP RCU to ensure: a) efficient and effective operations; b) accurate financial and operational reporting; c) safeguarding of assets; and d) compliance with mandates, regulations and rules. The results of the audit have shown that there is no mismanagement found in the RCU operations. The audit report is available on the web at <http://www.nowpap.org/financial%20documents.php>.
40. As UNEP and the whole UN system are in transition from one fund management system (IMIS) which was in place for many years to another, more advanced one (Umoja), huge preparation work has been carried out within the UN system, including UNEP Headquarters and out-posted offices, such as NOWPAP RCU. With the help from UNEP Headquarters, the RCU has run routine operations smoothly during the transitional period helping NOWPAP RACs with their budget revisions, cash advance requests, settlement of outstanding issues with UNON (in particular POMRAC and MERRAC). Though substantial efforts are made at all levels within the UN system to embrace the new system, some delays of activities such as payment requests and other transactions have to be expected.
