

Third Meeting of the SCS SAP Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC-3)



SUPPORTED BY:



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RSTC3 Meeting
26-28 Jan 2026
Phú Quốc

***Governance:
How are collaborating to
protect a shared sea at risk?***

Regional TDA 2.0 Assessment: South China
Sea & Gulf of Thailand

Megan Knight



ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK



GLOBAL / INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS & SDGs

UNCLOS, MARPOL, UNFCCC, CBD, CITES, SDGs, London, Basel, Stockholm & Minamata Conventions

INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL SUPPORT AND ACTION

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT



ASSAM



IOCMESTPAC



MRC



PEMSEA



COBSEA



SCS-SAP



World Bank



ADB



AMRRC + Centre

ACMEWG

RAP for Marine Debris

Agree. on Trans. Haze Pollution

ASWGF/SEAFDEC

ASEAN +3

SDS-SEA

EAS Action Plan

Regional MPAs

Joint Ecosystem Based Management

Bilateral Agreements

UNEP Regional Seas Programme (EAS)

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) / FAO

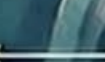
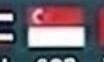
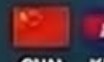
UNEP/GEF/UNOPS

SEA:LEARN / SEA GRANTS / CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION



- National Governments
- National Ministries (e.g. Env, CC, Marine, Fish, FA, Finance, Economic, Planning, Pollution, DRR)
- National Laws & Policies



CHN

KHM

IND

MYS

PHL

THAI

SGP

VNM

LOCAL / COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION



- Local Governments / CSOs/ NGOs
- Coastal Communities (LLMAs)
- Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Management/Co-management
- Fishers, Tourism, NGOs, Industry, Maritime, Blue Economy

Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)

Stakeholder Engagement

Gender, Indigenous, and Vulnerable Groups



Global coastal and marine treaties ratified by SC and GoT countries

	UNCLOS	CBD	CITES	MARPOL	OPCR	London Convention	London Protocol	Paris Agreement	Asean Nature Agreement
Cambodia	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green
China	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	n/a
Indonesia	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green
Malaysia	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Philippines	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green
Singapore	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Thailand	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green
Vietnam	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green



- Progress with SDG 14 is stagnating with **ALL** countries facing significant challenges and are “off track” for achieving by 2030.
- Most countries are struggling with
 - marine pollution (five of the top ten plastic polluters)
 - sustainable fishing

Source: Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2025

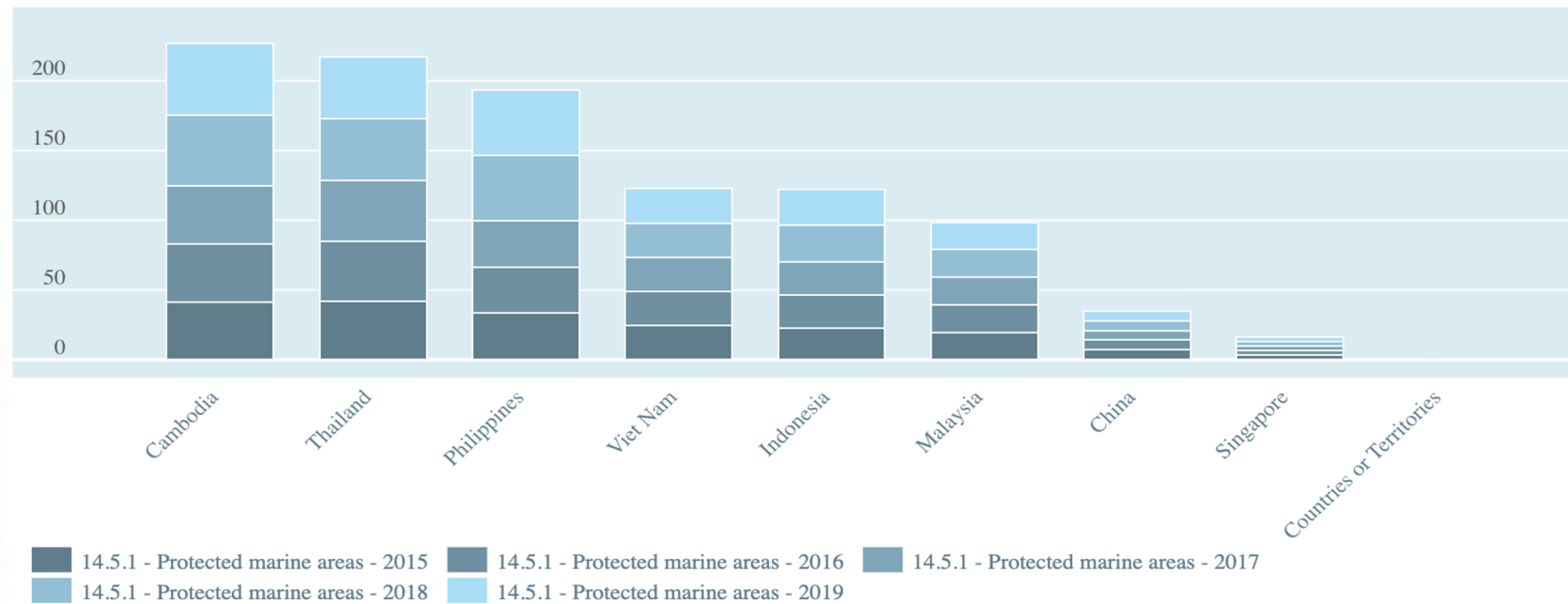


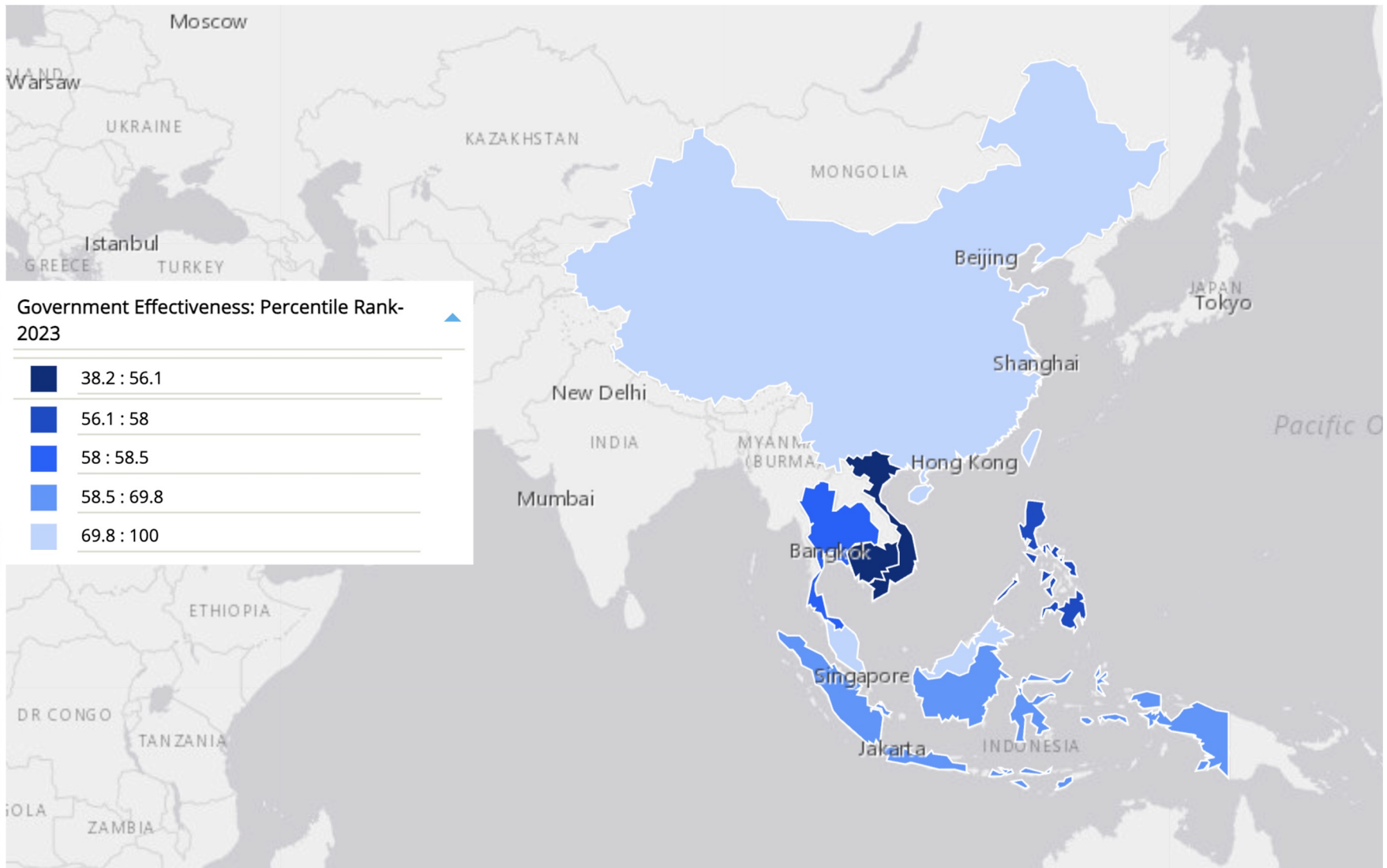
SDG: 14.5.1 Protected marine areas in SCS and GoT(2015-2019)

SDG indicators dataset

Indicators by SDG: 14.5.1 - Protected marine areas ●

Series: Proportion of marine key biodiversity areas covered by protected area status (Percentage)





Source: World Bank Governance indicators (data.worldbank.org)



TWAP Governance Architecture Assessment Framework (Fanning et al 2017)

Risk Rank	Completeness Range	Integration Range	Engagement Range
Very Low	80-100%	0.8-1.0	80-100%
Low	60-80%	0.6 -0.8	60-80%
Medium	40-60%	0.4-0.6	40-60%
High	20-40%	0.2-0.4	20-40%
Very High	0-20%	0.0-0.2	0-20%

LMEs and National Governance Architecture Assessment

	Completeness	Integration	Engagement
SCS	Yellow	Red	Green
GoT	Yellow	Red	Green
Cambodia	Yellow	Orange	Yellow
Indonesia	Blue	Yellow	Yellow
Philippines	Yellow	Blue	Blue
Thailand	Yellow	Red	Green



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ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

South China Sea & Gulf of Thailand
Triple Planetary Crisis

POLLUTION HOTSPOT

- Marine Plastic Pollution
- Coastal Development
- Shipping & Agriculture

Critical global point for plastic leakage into ocean and nutrients due to agriculture and aquaculture

HABITAT LOSS & FISHERIES

- Coral Reef Destruction
- Mangrove & Seagrass Loss
- Overfishing & Biodiversity

Fish: fundamental protein source, above global average
Biodiversity loss of **intrinsic and ecosystem values**

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Sea Level Rise & Erosion
- Ocean Warming
- Extreme Weather & Acidification

Increased impact on vulnerable people & ecosystems

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE INDICATORS

Supporting Environmental Governance

- Poverty Decreased**
Enabling sustainable practices
- Higher HDI**
Supporting sustainability efforts
- Gender and Inclusivity**
Education and representation improving, room to grow

Where environmental governance is already challenged in the SCS-GoT LMEs, the new circumstances including impact of climate change, coastal development, illegal fishing, agriculture, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, energy and regional and international trade.





Transformative, integrated and cooperative Governance is key to a sustainable future for the SCS-GoT LMEs

Urgent proactive, integrated and cooperative action is needed that addresses the triple planetary crisis for a sustainable future in the SCS-GoT.

Global and regional treaties (UNCLOS, SDGs and ASEAN) set high level legal and policies, need strengthening and shared commitment.

Regional mechanisms (COBSEA, PEMSEA, ASEAN, ect) need to be strengthened with clear agenda-setting, coalition building, leadership supported by a robust institution, with systemic integration to amplify efforts.

Political commitment, sustained investment, and capacity, is necessary, at all levels, through strong integrated national governance, incentives, legitimacy and cost benefit realism.

A Source to Sea approach adopted, with harmonized policies and laws, and inclusive and participatory decision-making, planning and management.

Technology, infrastructure, adaptation, knowledge sharing, monitoring, evaluation, control and surveillance are tools that need to be adopted.



**THANK
YOU**