

## **Report of the Eighteenth NOWPAP POMRAC Focal Points Meeting**

### **Background leading to this meeting**

1. The 16<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM was held in 2019 in Beijing to discuss the POMRAC activities for the 2020-2021 biennium. Regional Workshop “Microplastics abundance in river runoff and coastal waters of the NOWPAP region with a case study in the Russian part of NOWPAP area” was held back-to-back with POMRAC FPM with the aim to discuss in detail the problems of river pollution by microplastics not only in Russia, but also in other NOWPAP countries.
2. For the current biennium, 2020-2021, the 24th NOWPAP IGM was postponed and the adoption of the Programme of Work (PoW) for the 2020-2021 was delayed until June 2020 due to COVID pandemic. Following the adoption of PoW, POMRAC concluded Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) with UNEP for allocation of the budget for the 2020-2021 activities in June 2020. As the term of this funding agreement is for two years, the ending date of the contract is set at the end of June 2022.
3. The 17<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM was held in October 2020 virtually due to COVID pandemic and quarantine measures preventing any face-to-face meetings. Major goal of 17<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM was to discuss the progress in the implementation of POMRAC activities. POMRAC Secretariat has prepared working documents, uploaded them at the website, and documents have been adopted by POMRAC FPs by correspondence.
4. In 2019-2020 POMRAC and DINRAC met difficulties with transfer of the part of POMRAC budget allocated to DINRAC for the payments to POMRAC experts. Another mechanism of the individual contracts between nominated POMRAC experts and UNEP HQ was suggested by RCU. Ten experts have been nominated in summer 2020, RCU staff carried out huge volume of additional paper work, and continued to push the contracting process on a regular basis. Unfortunately, despite all efforts of RCU no contracts have been signed so far. In fact, POMRAC experts

worked in advance, and this situation is not acceptable and has to be resolved. Solution should touch upon current activities for 2020-2021 biennium, and another mechanism has to be elaborated and discussed for the implementation of POMRAC activities for 2022-2023 biennium and further.

5. The COVID 19 situation has not improved and strong restrictions of international travel and meetings are continued. Therefore, POMRAC Secretariat proposed to organize an online FPM, and the FPs agreed to organize the 18<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM virtually on 7 and 8 of December 2021 as two 3-4 hours online sessions from 14 pm Vladivostok time (13 pm Tokyo/Seoul, 12 pm Beijing).
6. 18<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM is expected to review the progress of POMRAC activities for the 2020-2021 biennium and discuss proposals of the activities for the next 2022-2023 biennium. Since the meeting time limitation, working documents were uploaded to POMRAC website in advance, and the FPs were asked to provide their comments and suggestions to the Secretariat before the meeting, to make discussion more efficient during the limited meeting time.
7. At the end of the meeting, only meeting resolutions will be prepared by the Secretariat for adoption by the FPs online during the meeting or after the meeting by correspondence. More detailed meeting report will be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated among the FPs and other meeting participants within one week after the meeting for further adoption. The decisions of the 18<sup>th</sup> FPM, including a draft workplan of POMRAC for the 2022-2023 biennium, will be reported at the next NOWPAP IGM for review and approval.

#### **Agenda Item 1 Opening of the meeting**

8. The 18<sup>th</sup> NOWPAP POMRAC Focal Points Meeting was opened at 2 p.m. (Vladivostok time) on 7 December 2021 by Dr. Anatolii KACHUR, Director of NOWPAP POMRAC. He greeted all participants and expressed hope for the fruitful work. The meeting participants were FPs of all four member states, POMRAC experts, representatives of CEARAC, MERRAC, and RCU.

## **Agenda Item 2 Organization of the meeting**

### **2.1 Election of the officers**

9. Chairperson and Rapporteur are rotated in every POMRAC FPM among the FPs of the four member states, and FP of Russia Dr. Vladimir SHULKIN was elected by meeting as Chairperson and Dr. Jongseong RYU, FP of ROK, as Rapporteur.

### **2.2 Organization of work**

10. It was proposed by POMRAC Secretariat that, for the purposes of the POMRAC FPM, the rules used in the meeting will be basically those of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), adjusted as appropriate to suit the nature of the meeting. Decisions should be made by consensus and English was the working language of the meeting.

## **Agenda Item 3 Adoption of the agenda**

11. POMRAC Director briefly explained the Provisional Agenda (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/1) with the Annotated Provisional Agenda (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/2) and the meeting adopted both documents.

## **Agenda Item 4 Report of the Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) on the progress of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)**

12. Dr. Ning LIU, Programme Officer of NOWPAP RCU, reported the progress of the entire NOWPAP activities since the 17<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM held on-line in October 2020. He explained that all RACs except POMRAC had already finished their FPM online this year, and the meeting acknowledged the report.

## **Agenda Item 5 Reports on POMRAC activities for the 2020-2021 biennium**

### **5.1 Overall progress report of POMRAC activities**

13. Dr. KACHUR briefly reported the implementation and the expenditure of POMRAC activities for the 2020-2021 biennium as of November 2021 (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/4). Then, more detailed reports of respective intersessional projects were followed (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/5 - 18/7). Dr. LIU asked about the report on 17<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM, and Dr. KACHUR responded accordingly. The meeting adopted the report in general.

## **5.2 Report on the activity “Microplastics abundance in river runoff and coastal waters of the NOWPAP region”**

14. Dr. Yana BLINOVSKAYA, senior researcher of Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), reported the progress of the project on the assessment of microplastic contamination of river runoff and coastal waters of the NOWPAP region (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/5).
15. Dr. SHULKIN expressed appreciation to the experts on this activity and especially to Dr. Fujio KOJIMA who agreed to compile the Regional Overview in advance by the end of January. Dr. KOJIMA replied that middle of February is more realistic. POMRAC FPs have adopted the report on this activity.
16. Dr. SHULKIN, FP of Russia, presented the progress in the preparation of the Overview “Development of NOWPAP EcoQO targets aligned (where possible) with SDG indicators, phase 2” (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/6). Prof. Hongjun LI asked about possibility to review the Regional Synthesis by the nominated POMRAC experts. Dr. SHULKIN replied that in accordance with NOWPAP rules (agreed upon at the 16<sup>th</sup> IGM in 2011) POMRAC FPs, RCU and RACs are responsible for the quality assurance of all Regional Overviews, but POMRAC Secretariat agreed that experts should be involved in the process. After discussion the meeting adopted the report.
17. Dr. SHULKIN, FP of Russia, presented the progress in the preparation of draft SOMER 3 (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/7). Dr. LIU asked about perspectives to get inputs from other RACs to the Chapter 2. Dr. SHULKIN replied that structure has been adopted in general, and RACs agreed in principle that Chapter 2 should reflect the vision of the RACs on the environmental problems, and therefore can be presented as summary outcomes of their activities. Dr. LIU noted that demand to the funding for the next biennium for the RACs should be presented well in advance. After general discussion the meeting adopted the report.

## **Agenda Item 6 Proposals on POMRAC activities for the 2022-2023 biennium**

### **6.1 . Proposal on the finalization of SOMER-3.**

18. Dr. SHULKIN presented the proposal on the finalization of SOMER 3 (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/8). He stressed that payments to the experts abroad and international consultants cannot be realized through POMRAC account in the host organization (PGI FEBRAS). Dr. Takafumi YOSHIDA of CEARAC noted that contents of Chapter 3 should reflect somehow the on-going “UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development” activities. The meeting agreed with this suggestion. Dr. Genki TERAUCHI of CEARAC noted relevance of the “A Global Manual on Measuring SDG 14.1.1, SDG 14.2.1, and SDG 14.5.1” to the Chapter 3 and 4 of SOMER 3 and suggested making clear link between them. Dr. LIU stressed the necessity to enhance the consultation with other RACs about joint work on the Chapter 2, especially on the marine litter and plastic pollution. After lengthy discussion the meeting has adopted the proposal in general.

### **6.2 Proposal of activity on the use of invertebrates as potential indicators of contamination by microplastic and nanoplastic in the marine and coastal areas within NOWPAP region**

19. Dr. SHULKIN presented the proposal of activity on the use of invertebrates as potential indicators of contamination by microplastic and nanoplastic in the marine and coastal areas within the NOWPAP region. After that Dr. SHULKIN mentioned the written comments sent by Japanese FP. Dr. YOSHIDA noted about possibility of overlapping of this proposal with NOWPAP Special Project on Marine Litter proposed from Chona National Marine Environment Monitoring Center. Dr. LIU suggested to invite the Chinese experts for the discussion on the structure and contents of this activity to avoid duplication. The meeting agreed with this suggestion, and adopted the proposal in general.

### **6.3. Proposal on the development of marine spatial planning (MSP) in the NOWPAP Member States as mechanism to reduce pressure on the coastal and marine environment**

20. Dr. BLINOVSKAYA presented proposal on the development and implementation of marine spatial planning methodology within the NOWPAP region (UNEP/NOWPAP/POMRAC/FPM 18/10). Dr. LIU asked about connection of MSP proposal with ICARM activities. Dr. KACHUR answered that MSP is a continuation

of POMRAC ICARM activity, and it was supported during the joint activity with PEMSEA. Dr. Yegor VOLOVIK supported this proposal, but stressed that MSP and ICARM are not exactly the same. Concerning the implementation of this activity Dr. VOLOVIK noted that there is some time to find out proper consultant for the compilation of National Inputs. After lengthy discussion the meeting adopted the proposal stressing the necessity of more close cooperation with other countries. Dr. SHULKIN mentioned the Japanese peculiar approach “Sato-umi” was some kind of MSP which distributed human activities in coastal area.

**Agenda Item 7.** Discussion of possible modalities of the implementation of POMRAC activities in the 2022-2023 and further.

21. POMRAC Director briefly explained the peculiarities in operation of POMRAC due to features of Russian financial legislation, difficulties with payments to the experts abroad, and proposed possible options, based on discussion with the RCU and other RACs. Two major schemes are possible: 1) hiring experts by the RCU and 2) contracting all national experts through each of NOWPAP RACs. Dr. LIU stressed the necessity of agreement between RACs for the implementation of the second option. Dr. YOSHIDA noted the principal difficulties in the hiring of international consultants through RACs. Dr. VOLOVIK suggested that both options of the financial arrangement of the POMRAC activities should be presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> IGM.

**Agenda Item 8.** POMRAC activities on marine litter

22. POMRAC Secretariat shared with POMRAC FPs for their reference a proposal on marine litter “Using of artificial intelligence in the detection, identification and counting of marine debris elements in the monitoring of pollution in the NOWPAP region” (POMRAC/FPM 18/Inf 3) adopted at the Marine Litter Focal Points (MLFP) Meeting in September 2021.

**Agenda Item 9.** Potential collaborative areas with other RACs and/or NOWPAP partners

23. POMRAC Secretariat or representatives of other RACs were expected to introduce their on-going activities and potential collaborations with POMRAC. No suggestions have been made by the meeting participants.

**Agenda Item 10.** Draft workplan and budget of POMRAC activities for the 2022-2023 biennium.

24. After explanation and discussion of respective projects, and the future modality of POMRAC operation, the meeting was invited to review and discuss a draft workplan as a whole with budget plan prepared by the POMRAC Secretariat (POMRAC/FPM 18/11) for submission to the 24th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting. Dr. LIU noted the necessity to modify some budget lines for the consistency, and to prepare two options of budget in case of different scale of funding. Dr. KACHUR agreed, and promised to present two variants of budget along with draft meeting report (Annex 1).

**Agenda Item 11.** Arrangement of the 19<sup>th</sup> NOWPAP POMRAC FPM

25. POMRAC Secretariat has proposed the venue and the time of the 19<sup>th</sup> NOWPAP POMRAC FPM as Vladivostok in June or September 2022 depending on the results of 24<sup>th</sup> IGM and arrangement of SSFAs. The style of the meeting: online or face-to-face, will be decided in accordance with pandemic situation.

**Agenda Item 13.** Adoption of the resolutions of the meeting

26. Draft resolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> NOWPAP POMRAC FPM were prepared by the POMRAC Secretariat with the help of the Rapporteur. The meeting adopted the resolutions and agreed that the POMRAC Secretariat will prepare a more detailed draft meeting report and will circulate it within two weeks after the meeting.

**Agenda Item 14.** Closure of the meeting

27. The 18<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM has been closed by the chairperson at 16:20 (Vladivostok time) on 8 December 2021.

## **Resolutions of 18<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM (Project)**

### **The 18<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM:**

1) Adopts the reports on the POMRAC activities for 2020-2021 biennium, and appreciates the high-quality work of national experts from the NOWPAP Member States despite the delay with contracting encountered.

2) Adopts the proposals on POMRAC activities for the 2022-2023 biennium in general, and recommends presenting the proposals for consideration and further approval to the 24<sup>th</sup> IGM with minor editions in accordance with comments from POMRAC FPs

3) Proposes to inform the NOWPAP National Focal Points at the 24<sup>th</sup> IGM about the necessity to modify financial arrangements for joint regional activities of POMRAC due to the impossibility to execute payments to international experts and consultants from the existing POMRAC accounts in the host organization (PGI FEBRAS).

4) Requests RCU to ask IGM to enquire UNEP HQ in Nairobi about a possibility to arrange the payments to international experts and consultants through RCU. Another possible measure would be to allow UNEP to transfer a part of the POMRAC budget funds to other RACs (for the activities on joint projects like SOMER 3, or, if needed, for the arrangement of international meetings).

5) The meeting requests RCU to further develop potential options for alternative financial arrangements for POMRAC within the NOWPAP Institutional Analysis being initiated by RCU.

**Annex 1. Budget 2022-2023 from Trust fund of NOWPAP**

<b>Budget USD</b>		
	<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>
<b>Results/Outputs</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	
<b>Activity 1 Finalization of SOMER-3</b>		
On-line Workshop on SOMER-3 structure	4,000	4,000
Preparation of the chapter 2 of SOMER-3	20,000	20,000
Preparation of the chapter 3,4 of SOMER-3	15,000	15,000
Compilation of chapters 2,3,4 of SOMER 3	5,000	5,000
Finalization and printing of SOMER 3	4,000	4,000
Total	48,000	48,000
<b>Activity 2. Development mechanisms MSP in NOWPAP Member States as mechanism to reduce pressure on the coastal and marine environment</b>		
On line Workshop on MSP review structure	4,000	4,000
Preparation of the different chapters of MSP review (national inputs)	28,000	32,000
Preparation and compilation of MSP review (International consultant)	5,000	6,000
Publication	2,000	2,000
Total	39,000	44,000
<b>Activity 3. Invertebrates as potential indicators of contamination by microplastic and nanoplastic of marine and coastal areas within NOWPAP region</b>		
On line Workshop	4,000	4,000
Preparation of the National Inputs	15,000	18,000
Study of the influence of microplastic on the key species	10,000	10,000
Study of microplastic in hydrobionts from the areas with most notable plastic pollution	8,000	8,000
Compilation, finalization and publication of Regional overview	8,000	8,000
Total	45,000	48,000
<b>Activity 4 - Strengthen regional capacity on pollution monitoring through knowledge and information sharing and capacity building</b>		
To organize the 19th and 20th Focal Points Meeting	30,000	30,000
Preparation of meeting reports	3,000	3,000

Communication expenses	5,000	5,000
Inputs to NOWPAP RAC activities and technical reports, contributions to national, regional and global meetings and processes	5,000	10,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>43,000</b>	<b>48,000</b>
<b>Activity 5 - Update, maintain and enrich POMRAC website</b>		
New design of the website	9,000	8,000
Maintenance and regular updates of the website	1,000	1,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>9,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>185,000</b>	<b>197,000</b>