

Minutes of the 2026 Steering Committee Meeting

North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN)

19 March 2026 (Virtual)

1. The 2026 Steering Committee (SC) Meeting of the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) was held virtually on 19 March 2026. The Meeting was attended by SC members from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, as well as the NEAMPAN secretariat.
2. The secretariat provided a progress report on NEAMPAN activities, including those implemented in 2025. The Meeting noted ongoing activities, including expert meetings, studies on MPAs and ocean-based climate action, and outreach efforts.
3. The secretariat also introduced the NEASPEC Strategic Plan for 2026-2030, focusing on the part related to MPAs. The secretariat further presented the planned NEAMPAN activities for 2026 and introduced several issues for consideration, including expansion of NEAMPAN sites, activity areas, and organizational arrangements under the respective Terms of Reference of NEAMPAN and its Steering Committee.
4. During the discussion, participants shared their views on NEAMPAN activities, expansion of sites, and organizational arrangements. Key discussion points include:

a. NEAMPAN activities and scope:

- i. It was noted that, considering the fact that NEAMPAN is an MPA network, it would be useful to clarify whether proposed discussions, such as marine mammal-related activities, would focus on MPAs or broader marine areas.
- ii. It was clarified that marine mammal conservation is already included in the Terms of Reference of NEAMPAN and that previous discussions aimed to explore possible areas for subregional cooperation.
- iii. It was also noted that reliance on the existing NEAMPAN sites (currently 12) may limit the scope of such activities, and that expansion of sites could support broader cooperation.

b. Expansion of NEAMPAN sites:

- i. Participants expressed general support for expanding NEAMPAN sites and emphasized the importance of identifying and analysing the factors that have hindered site expansion, in order to inform the consideration of appropriate ways forward.
- ii. It was noted that limited visibility of NEAMPAN, the relatively small number of nominated sites, and language barriers in English-based meetings have been constraints. It was also noted that limited practical benefits and low visibility and awareness at the site level may affect participation, and that outreach to and engagement with local governments and site managers would be useful.
- iii. It was indicated that there could be potential sites for inclusion in NEAMPAN, and clarification was sought on the nomination process.
- iv. It was clarified that the current process is based on the submission of site profiles by member States and SC members and reporting to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC.

c. Activity areas:

- i. Participants discussed possible activity areas, including marine plastic pollution, blue carbon, BBNJ-related issues, and marine and coastal OECMs. It was noted that, while these are important topics, some are still at an early stage and require further consideration before being included in NEAMPAN activities.
- ii. The planned workshop on marine and coastal OECMs was welcomed as a timely activity, particularly in the context of ongoing global discussions related to area-based conservation measures. It was indicated that relevant policy and technical developments on OECMs are ongoing at the national level, and that the workshop could provide a useful opportunity to share updates and experiences among member States, where possible.

d. Organization arrangements:

- i. Participants discussed the frequency of Steering Committee meetings, and it was suggested that meetings be held more frequently, such as annually. It was also noted that in-person meetings would be beneficial, while hybrid or virtual formats may be considered, considering budget constraints.
- ii. The Meeting also discussed the advisory committee mentioned in the NEAMPAN TOR and generally agreed on its importance. It was noted that further consideration would be needed regarding its composition and modalities for establishment and operation.

5. In conclusion, the Meeting agreed on the following action points:

- a. The secretariat will proceed with the planned NEAMPAN activities for 2026 and continue consultations with SC members.
- b. The secretariat will follow up on the comments received, including on the expansion of NEAMPAN sites, and the composition and operational modalities of the advisory committee.
- c. The secretariat will also share relevant outputs, including ongoing studies and country MPA profiles, and continue engagement with SC members and partners to strengthen participation and cooperation.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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