



**Fifty-sixth Meeting of the Council  
Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center**

**6–9 May 2024  
Tagaytay City, Philippines**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

1. At the kind invitation of the Government of the Philippines through its Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources as the host, the Fifty-sixth Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council (56CM) was convened on 6–9 May 2024 in Tagaytay City, Philippines.

2. In attendance at the Meeting were the Council Directors and delegates from the SEAFDEC Member Countries, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Fifty-sixth Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council was held on 6 May 2024 and presided over by the Undersecretary for Fisheries of the Department of Agriculture (DA) of the Philippines and Council Director for the Philippines, *Ms. Drusila Esther E. Bayate*. The Council unanimously elected the Council Director for the Philippines, *Ms. Bayate*, as the Chairperson of the SEAFDEC Council for the Year 2024–2025, succeeding, *Mr. Wai Lin Maung*, SEAFDEC Council Director for Myanmar who served as the Chairperson of the SEAFDEC Council for the Year 2023–2024.

3. Recognizing the need for continued efforts in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the Council noted the significant regional initiatives undertaken by SEAFDEC, including the Regional Fishing Vessels Record (RFVR) Database, electronic ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme (eACDS), and enhancement of national capacities in port State measures (PSM) implementation. While noting the priority areas for future action to combat IUU fishing in Southeast Asia, the Council requested SEAFDEC to collaborate with relevant agencies, including the Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices Including Combating IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) and the ASEAN Network to Combat IUU Fishing (AN-IUU), among others in its future efforts for combating IUU fishing.

4. The Council congratulated SEAFDEC for coming up with the preliminary results of stock and risk assessments of Indo-Pacific king mackerel (*Scomberomorus guttatus*) and narrow-barred Spanish mackerel (*S. commerson*) in the Southeast Asian waters. The Council further recommended that after obtaining the final results, the ASEAN Member States (AMSs) shall discuss the holistic management of the species before endorsing the results to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries (ASWGF<sub>i</sub>) in 2025.

5. Noting the progress made by SEAFDEC in revising the Regional Framework for Fishery Statistics in Southeast Asia, the Council approved the “Regional Framework for Fishery Statistics of Southeast Asia (2024 Edition)” for further submission and endorsement under the ASEAN mechanism. It is expected that the Framework (2024 Edition) will be applied by SEAFDEC for the compilation of regional fishery statistics data for 2024 onwards.

6. The Council took note of the CITES-related issues and reiterated the important role of SEAFDEC to continue supporting the Member Countries in utilizing scientific evidence and developing common positions in response to proposals for listing of commercially exploited aquatic species (CEAS) into CITES Appendices. Moreover, SEAFDEC was requested to continue to provide capacity-

building activities to address the challenges faced by the AMSs, *e.g.* species identification, data collection of catch, stock assessment, and traceability of critical CEAS.

7. The Council recognized the significance of global biodiversity and environmental conservation frameworks, *i.e.* the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Treaty); Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM); and the new international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. In light of these frameworks, the Council recommended that SEAFDEC provide updated information to support the Member Countries in navigating and implementing these global frameworks effectively.

8. The Council recognized with appreciation the longstanding support extended by the Government of Japan through the Japanese Trust Fund (JTF) to projects and activities that addressed the priorities of the AMSs for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Council expressed gratitude to the Government of Japan for the continued commitment to supporting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development of the region through the new phase of the JTF (JTF-7) which will be implemented from 2025 to 2029.

9. The Council appreciated the cooperation and collaboration between SEAFDEC and other regional/international agencies/organizations, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO/RAP), Network for Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in undertaking activities toward sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Southeast Asian region.

10. On the utilization of M.V. SEAFDEC 2 which was granted by the Government of Japan to SEAFDEC in 2004, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam proposed to utilize the vessel for the conduct of fishery resource and environmental surveys in their respective waters in 2025.

11. This Fifty-sixth Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council was successfully concluded. The Council noted the progress and achievements of the SEAFDEC programs and projects in 2023 and approved the proposed programs of activities to be undertaken in 2024. The Council encouraged SEAFDEC to effectively implement programs and projects responsive to the priorities and needs of the Member Countries. Moreover, the Meeting signified the continued commitment of the Member Countries to continue working with SEAFDEC as well as collaborating with partner organizations towards the sustainable contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security, economy, and well-being of the people in the Southeast Asian region.

For more information, please contact:

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