Adherence to international law is essential to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is a fundamental instrument of international law. It provides the legal framework within which all activities in the maritime domain must be carried out. The Indo-Pacific region contains some of the world's most strategically, culturally and economically vital waterways. This makes UNCLOS critical to maintaining Southeast Asian and Australian ways of life.

ASEAN - Australia
1974 - 2024

> *To enjoy freedom of action and policy independence ... to have confidence in the integrity of our borders – including our maritime zones – and control of our own resources ... UNCLOS matters to all of us in this region. Its role is not simply to adjudicate on an incident-by-incident basis. It is to guarantee the security of our communications and our maritime trade and travel, essential for our shared prosperity.*
>
> The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Australian Prime Minister, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, 3 June 2023

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction

Around 60% of the global ocean is beyond national jurisdiction. These waters are some of the least protected areas on earth. Yet they provide essential services for the world's ecosystem.

Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, signing the treaty on behalf of Australia. Credit: DFAT

The use of areas beyond national jurisdiction has grown exponentially over recent decades, posing risks to the health and resilience of biodiversity in the high seas.

In June 2023, the United Nations adopted the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) or High Seas Biodiversity Treaty. Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Vietnam and Australia all signed the treaty on 20 September 2023 when it opened for signature.

Participants at the Southeast Asian Regional Workshop on BBNJ in Manila. Credit: Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs

BBNJ is a remarkable milestone for the protection of the world's ocean. The treaty will help maintain the ocean's potential to provide for current and future generations.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

ASEAN Member States and Australia played leading roles in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) negotiations. Singapore chaired the final negotiating rounds for UNCLOS and some ASEAN Member States were among those which drove the establishment of the archipelagic regime. ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste and Australia have all signed UNCLOS.

THE LAW OF THE SEA

Credit: UN | UNCLOS LOGO

The UNCLOS negotiations were prompted by the desire to settle, in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, all issues relating to the law of the sea. ASEAN and Australia have reaffirmed the importance of UNCLOS in every ASEAN-Australia Summit Chairman's Statement. This is consistent with our commitment to international law and respect for sovereignty.

Law of the Sea Training

Australia is assisting the region in building capacity and capability in international law and governance through Law of the Sea Training.

The Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS) has a strong history of delivering bespoke training to ASEAN Member States and ASEAN as a group. Over a thousand Southeast Asian officials have completed Australian short courses, while dozens have completed Master's and Doctorate degrees.

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political-Security Community Michael Tene attended the Training and delivered the Opening Remarks. Credit: DFAT

Law of the Sea

Background by Keith Lobo via Pexels.

International cooperation is essential to equitable and effective governance of the maritime domain. Australia supports ASEAN's maritime vision outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the ASEAN Maritime Outlook. Australia supports key multilateral development initiatives, such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

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> *The Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions are amongst the most dynamic in the world as well as centres of economic growth for decades. As a result, these regions continue to experience geopolitical and geostrategic shifts. These shifts present opportunities as well as challenges. On the one hand, the economic growth of the region opens up possibilities of cooperation to alleviate poverty and elevate living standards of millions of people. On the other hand, the rise of material powers, i.e. economic and military, requires avoiding the deepening of mistrust [and] miscalculation...*
>
> ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

Key ASEAN Perspectives

ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

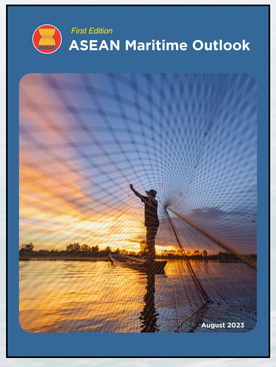
The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) identifies maritime cooperation as a key focus, closely connected to three other AOIP areas for cooperation: Connectivity, the Sustainable Development Goals and Economic Cooperation.

Australia is committed to the principles in the AOIP, including ASEAN centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, good governance, a rules-based framework and respect for sovereignty and international law.

In November 2023, Australia co-hosted with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia the first in a series of workshops on the implementation of maritime cooperation under the AOIP.

ASEAN Maritime Outlook

The ASEAN Maritime Outlook (AMO) takes stock of cooperation undertaken by ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, mechanisms and processes to deal with various aspects of maritime related issues. It dovetails with the AOIP as a guide for ASEAN maritime cooperation in the region. Australia supports ASEAN's vision for the region as outlined in the AMO.



The ASEAN Maritime Outlook was released in August 2023. Credit: ASEAN | ASEAN Maritime Outlook

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

One of the areas of cooperation outlined in the AOIP, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a roadmap for global development efforts to 2030 and beyond. Several of the goals relate directly to the maritime domain and most require responsible maritime governance as part of achieving them.

Credit: UN | UN SDG Branding

"We want a world where we achieve our shared Sustainable Development Goals, for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership."

Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, UN General Assembly, 23 September 2023

"The SDGs targets are in line with those of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 as well as the wider East Asia Summit vision. This common objective of realising SDGs under ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific will be a major contribution of the region to the global community."

ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

SDG Goal 14: Life under the Sea

"Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"

Australia is committed to the protection of marine biodiversity and sustainable management of Australian marine assets. Australia has one of the world's largest marine jurisdictions and the second largest extent of marine protected areas in the world, including the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.

Australia's marine and coastal ecosystems provide food and nutrition, while facilitating trade, tourism and transportation and underpinning sustainable economic growth through the Blue Economy. Australia joins ASEAN Member States in their commitment to achieving Goal 14.

Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water. Credit: UN | UN SDG Branding

Maritime Governance

Background by Keith Lobo via Pexels.

Marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems provide food and nutrition, while facilitating trade, tourism and transportation and underpinning sustainable economic growth through the Blue Economy. They provide essential resources and are of immense cultural importance and value to all nations. The protection of marine ecology and biodiversity is essential to the Blue Economy, food security and combatting climate change.

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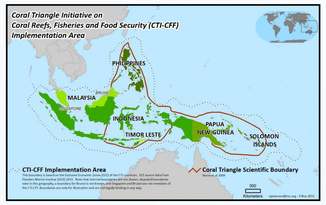
Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security

There is broad scientific consensus that the Coral Triangle represents a global epicentre of marine biodiversity. Immediately to Australia's north and spanning just 1.6% of earth's oceans, the Coral Triangle region holds:



Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security – Implementation Area. Credit: DCCEEW

- 76% of all known coral species
- 37% of all known coral reef fish species
- 53% of the world's coral reefs
- The greatest extent of mangrove forests in the world.

Recognising the need to safeguard the region's marine and coastal biological resources, the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI) was formed in 2007. The CTI is a multilateral partnership between the Governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Through the CTI, the Coral Triangle countries have agreed to support people-centred biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, poverty reduction and equitable benefit sharing. Australia provides funding, as well as technical and strategic support to the CTI as a Partner.

Improving catch management for international fisheries

Indonesia's archipelagic waters are part of the world's largest tuna fishery. Australia's Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) works with Indonesia and other international partners to develop advanced techniques for monitoring and testing harvest strategies in this important fishery.

CSIRO researchers are also pioneering innovative methods for monitoring and assessing fish stocks, focusing on highly migratory species like tuna, billfish and sharks. These migratory species cross national jurisdictions and international waters. Catch management demands international cooperation.

Importantly, this work in global fisheries management is fostering economic development in vulnerable Indonesian communities. It is also improving catch monitoring, understanding of tuna biology and the implementation of sustainable harvest strategies.

Safeguarding fish migration in Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR

Fish in the Mekong River Basin are vital for food and nutrition security for millions of people. Between 48-82% of total animal protein consumption in Lower Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam) comes from fish. But fish populations are under increasing pressure from expanding river infrastructure. Dams, weirs and hydropower construction impede migratory fish from reaching breeding grounds.

For over four decades, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) scientists have worked with ASEAN partners to protect vulnerable communities that depend on aquatic resources for food, nutrition and health security.

Since 2006, ACIAR has funded Charles Sturt University to work with research partners and hydropower companies in Lao PDR to find solutions to this problem. The collaboration has led to innovative fish passage structures – like the FishTech fish ladder – that help fish move past physical barriers, including high dams. This enables fish to migrate upstream to spawning grounds and downstream to nursery and feeding areas.

The fish passage at Sleng Dam, Siem Reap district, Cambodia Credit: ACIAR

With further investment from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the technology is being rolled out in Cambodia and Indonesia, helping fishing communities across Southeast Asia.

> *Australia's challenge in the next decades is to realise the potential economic benefits of the marine estate while maintaining social and environmental values... Oceans are inextricably linked to some of the most pressing challenges facing society, both in Australia and globally, in the next decades...*
>
> Oceans Policy Science Advisory Group, Marine Nation 2025: Marine Science to Support Australia's Blue Economy

Marine Ecology and Biodiversity

Background by Saad Alaiyadhi via Pexels.

For many countries, the marine environment underpins economic, social and cultural wellbeing. However, challenges such as coastal habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, coastal and marine pollution, and climate change threaten Southeast Asian and Australian marine environments. It is vitally important we cooperate to safeguard marine and coastal environments against these challenges.

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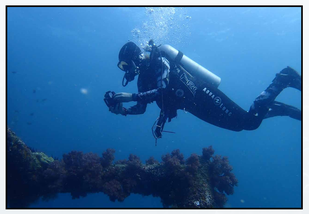
> *Recognising the importance of coastal and marine resources for the livelihoods of ASEAN people as well as socio-economic development in the ASEAN region, it is important for ASEAN Member States to discuss, coordinate and overcome above key challenges on coastal and marine environment to ensure ASEAN's coastal and marine environment are sustainably managed, representative ecosystems, pristine areas and species are protected, and economic activities are sustainably managed.*
>
> Joint Media Release: ASEAN and UNOPS sign Agreement to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution in Southeast Asia

Maritime cooperation to protect coral reefs

Coral reefs are a vital coastal marine habitat across Southeast Asia, underpinning economic and social wellbeing. Southeast Asian coral reefs account for almost one-third of the world's reefs and have the highest biodiversity of any coral reefs in the world.



Capturing coral reef images for use in ReefCloud. Credit: AIMS

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) provides knowledge to support the sustainable environmental management and protection of Australia's tropical marine estate. Much of their research and technology is directly applicable to Coral Triangle countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor Leste.

AIMS' ReefCloud technology is a digital platform that uses artificial intelligence to analyse underwater images of a coral reef. The platform rapidly extracts data about the reef's condition to provide comprehensive, standardised and easily understandable reports.

AIMS' ReefScan Transom is an autonomous device that can be attached to a vessel to take underwater images as the vessel travels and transfer these images to ReefCloud for analysis.

These technologies are easy to use, allowing the world's reef monitoring community to work together, sharing knowledge and data. They are helping ASEAN Member States to address challenges in managing marine ecosystems, especially coral reefs.

A network to help end plastic waste

Australia's Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) is working with partners across the Indo-Pacific to address regional plastic waste and other pressing environmental challenges.

Credit: Catherine Sheila | Pexels

The Indo-Pacific Plastics Innovation Network (IPPIN) is managed by CSIRO with the support of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and in partnership with government counterparts in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

IPPIN has supported entrepreneurs, start-ups and researchers to disrupt the traditional plastic waste lifecycle:

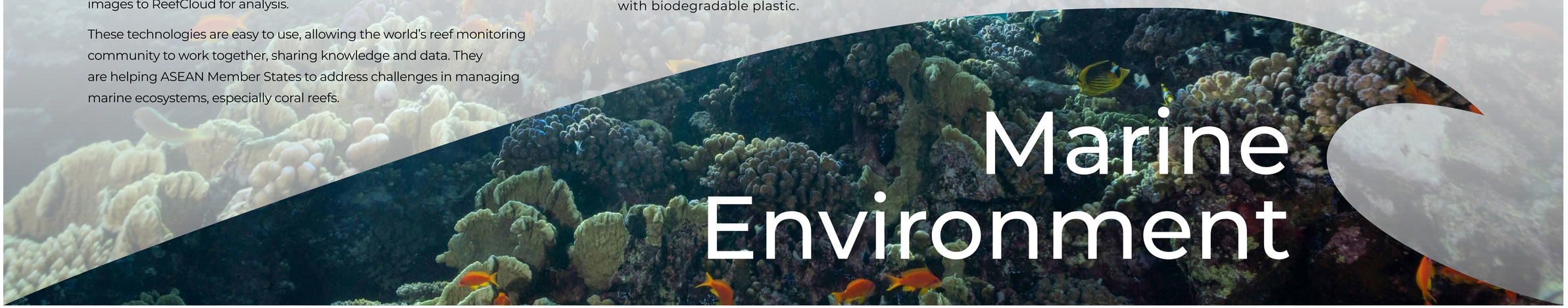
- Indonesia's Geo Trash Management (GTM), has designed and commissioned the first commercial plastic oil distillation plant in Indonesia. With support from an IPPIN seed grant, GTM have built a fully operational demonstration facility that can process more than 200 tonnes of plastic waste a year.
- IPPIN Indonesia Chapter 2022 Demo Day winner, Greenhope, has developed biodegradable plastic packaging made from cassava – already successfully replacing 12 billion pieces of conventional plastic with biodegradable plastic.

One Tree Island Research Facility Coastal and Nearshore Field Observation training

Coastal zones such as beaches, estuaries and coral islands are at the forefront of climate change impacts. Collecting high-quality coastal and nearshore field observations helps us understand how coastal zones respond to climate change.

In November 2023, the Australian Government hosted delegations from the Philippines and Vietnam on a five-day coastal monitoring and management training course on One Tree Island in the Great Barrier Reef. The skills attendees developed will allow them to conduct similar activities in their own jurisdictions.

Participants of the coastal monitoring and management training course on One Tree Island in the Great Barrier Reef. Credit: Geoscience Australia



Marine Environment

Background by Saad Alaiyadhi via Pexels.

Maritime connectivity is vital to Indo-Pacific countries. 60% of maritime trade passes through Asia, 95% of international communications and data travels through undersea cables, and approximately A$8.08 trillion worth of goods transit the South China Sea annually. ASEAN Member States and Australia are dependent on this vital network for all aspects of our daily lives. Australia supports ASEAN's vision for connectivity in the region, as outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

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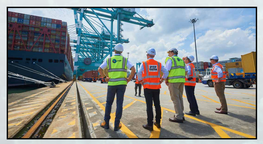
Partnerships for Infrastructure

Partnerships for Infrastructure (P4I) is an Australian Government initiative working with Southeast Asian governments and ASEAN to drive sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth through quality infrastructure.

In line with the ASEAN Transport Strategic Plan of 2016-2025 and Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, P4I is helping strengthen the region's maritime connectivity and supporting maritime transport decarbonisation. Through P4I, Australia supported the development of the Implementation Framework on Enhancing Container Processing and Circulation in ASEAN Member States, including its Action Plan. P4I is undertaking follow-on work on port digitisation and automation, and improving the enabling environment for port sector public-private partnerships.

Reducing maritime transport emissions is crucial to meeting international climate commitments. The shipping industry accounts for almost 3% of global emissions, which could double by 2050. Through P4I, Australia is supporting Malaysia's efforts to explore the development of a green bunkering hub and green refuelling sites, and sharing this work across the region.

Maritime leaders discuss the decarbonisation of Malaysia's maritime industry and green fuels future during a roundtable event in Putrajaya on 6 November 2023. Credit: Partnerships for Infrastructure



Port of Melbourne representatives travelled to Port of Tanjung Pelepasin Malaysia to discuss industry trends in the adoption of alternative fuels and implications for container ports. Credit: Partnerships for Infrastructure

Green and Digital Shipping Cooperation between Singapore and Australia

Australia and Singapore have commenced discussions to explore areas of cooperation in green and digital shipping and will establish a Singapore-Australia Green and Digital Shipping Corridor by the end of 2025.

Australia's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) are jointly leading this cooperation. These authorities are working closely with port operators, jurisdictions and maritime and energy value chain stakeholders on both sides to galvanise action to decarbonise and digitalise the shipping industry.

Credit: Tom Fisk | Pexels

Undersea Cables

Undersea cables carry a greater value of trade, through financial transactions and information, than the value of goods carried at sea. The International Telecommunications Union estimates that increasing broadband penetration by 10% increases per capita GDP growth by 1.63% in the Asia-Pacific. The use of undersea cables in Southeast Asia will only grow, with global bandwidth demand forecast to nearly double every two years.

Protecting and repairing undersea cables is vital to maintain connectivity. Between 150-200 cable faults occur each year worldwide. Causes range from unintentional damage from fishing and shipping activities to natural disasters.

In the Fourth ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting in 2024, members agreed to:

> *"Build a secure, diverse and resilient submarine cable network for regional and global connectivity, in coordination with relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies, through recognition and strengthening of best practices and information sharing frameworks, to facilitate the expeditious deployment, repair, maintenance, removal, and protection of submarine cables, between ASEAN Member States."*

Australia shares ASEAN's commitment to support secure, resilient and reliable cable connectivity across the region.

Imagery of a cable laying activity – in this case, a cable laying project in Palau, June 2022. Credit: AIFPP

> *The ASEAN vision on Connectivity ... is to achieve a seamlessly and comprehensively connected and integrated region that will promote competitiveness, inclusiveness, and a greater sense of community ... the increasing integration and interconnection among Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean countries require investments and efforts to build connectivity infrastructures, including physical, institutional and people-to-people linkages.*
>
> ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

Maritime Connectivity

Background by Engin Akyurt via Pexels.

The Blue Economy is increasingly important to ASEAN Member States and Australia. Southeast Asia and Australia are home to some of the world's largest coastlines and marine areas. Coastal and marine environments are intimately linked to national economies, industries, arts, ways of life and cultural identities. Preservation and development of the Blue Economy is essential to the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

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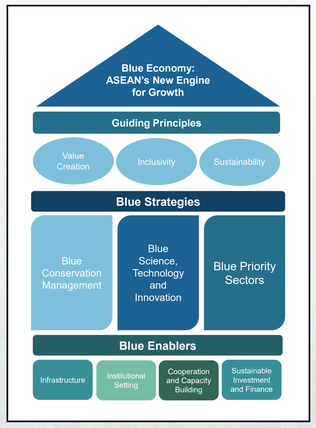
ASEAN Blue Economy Framework

In September 2023, ASEAN released the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework, which "affirms the ASEAN commitment to regional cooperation on the blue economy, advancing its priorities to facilitate value creation, resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability".



The framework is structured around three areas: (1) guiding principles for implementation of a blue economy in ASEAN, (2) blue strategies on which ASEAN Member States should focus, and (3) enablers that accelerate blue economy development and growth. Credit: ASEAN | ASEAN Blue Economy Framework Page 7

Sustainable Ocean Plan

Like many ASEAN Member States, Australia has a deep reliance on the ocean for income, food, transport, culture and heritage. However, oceans are under increasing cumulative pressure from climate change, pollution and habitat loss. To have a thriving blue economy, we need healthy and resilient oceans.

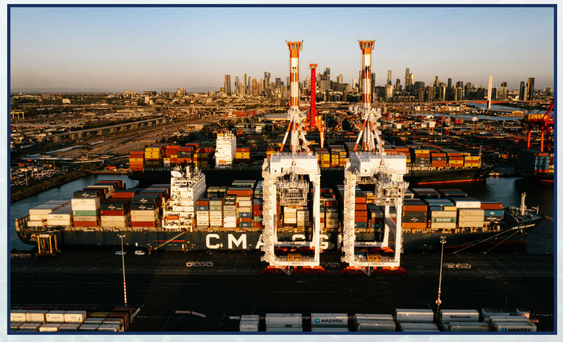
Similar to the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework, Australia is developing a national Sustainable Ocean Plan which will agree a shared vision for Australian oceans to 2040 and identify priority actions to support the sustainable growth of the ocean economy. In developing the plan, the Australian Government has engaged with First Nations people and a wide range of ocean users.

Credit: DCCEEW

Port of Melbourne

Port of Melbourne is Australia's largest container and general cargo port, handling more than 3.2 million shipping containers a year – more than one-third of Australia's container trade. The port helps generate more than A$11 billion in revenue for the Australian economy yearly, contributing over A$5.6 billion to Australia's GDP. As trade continues to grow, the port is working to ensure trade flows continue sustainably and to decarbonise shipping supply chains.

ASEAN Member States play a significant role as key source markets and export destinations. Southeast Asia accounted for 28% of the Port of Melbourne's exports in Financial Year 2022-2023. The port is working to strengthen its cooperation with ASEAN Member States as trade partners and stewards of sustainability.



Aerial still of the Port of Melbourne. Credit: Port of Melbourne

> *ASEAN defines the Blue Economy as an integrated, holistic, cross-sectoral, and cross stakeholder approach that creates value-added and value-chain of resources from oceans, seas and fresh water in inclusive and sustainable way[s], making the Blue Economy the new engine for ASEAN's future economic growth.*
>
> ASEAN Blue Economy Framework

The Blue Economy

Background by Engin Akyurt via Pexels.

Maritime security underpins every country's use of the maritime domain. All countries share a responsibility to preserve maritime peace, stability and security. Engagement through regional processes and architecture is crucial to maintaining communication, and to achieving common understanding. ASEAN and Australia have jointly committed to deepen engagement on maritime safety and security, particularly through relevant existing ASEAN-led mechanisms.

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Maritime Security Cooperation

ASEAN-led Regional Architecture

East Asia Summit

The East Asia Summit (EAS) is the Indo-Pacific's premier forum for strategic dialogue. It is the only Leader-led forum at which all key Indo-Pacific partners meet to discuss political, security and economic challenges facing the region, and has an important role to play in advancing closer regional cooperation.

Australia participated, as a founding member, in the inaugural EAS held in Kuala Lumpur on 14 December 2005. As outlined in the EAS Plan of Action (2024-2028), maritime cooperation remains a vital EAS work stream. Australia is committed to further strengthening the EAS to advance closer regional cooperation.

Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum

The Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) is an important ASEAN-led annual dialogue for regional countries to discuss and strengthen maritime cooperation. Australia is working with the Philippines on two projects to strengthen the institutional capacity of the EAMF: a permanent Forum website, which will serve as a repository of EAMF documentation; and a panel of experts to support research requested by the EAMF Chair.

The EAMF was established in 2012 as a Track 1.5 platform for ASEAN to engage stakeholders, Dialogue Partners and other external parties on important maritime issues of common interest in pursuit of maritime cooperation.

ASEAN Regional Forum

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific. The ARF allows members to discuss current security issues and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the region. Maritime security is an ARF work stream. Australia has co-chaired or co-organised several recent activities

- In 2021, Australia co-chaired with Indonesia and India the ARF Workshop on the Law of the Sea and Fisheries
- In 2022, Australia co-chaired with Vietnam and the European Union the 4th ARF workshop on Enhancing Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation
- In 2022 and 2023 Australia co-chaired the 4th and 5th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues.

ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus

Maritime security is one of the seven areas of practical cooperation under the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The 2021-2024 Experts Working Group on Maritime Security has convened: a Maritime Security Conference; Planning Conferences for the Table Top Exercise; the Future Leaders Programme under the theme of "Women, Peace, and Security in Maritime Security for Sustainable Blue Economy Development"; and the Maritime Security Roadmap Workshop and Table Top Exercise.

Australian Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, participating in an 'ASEAN Way' handshake at the ASEAN-Australia Summit in Jakarta 2023 Credit: © DwiPrasetya, Media Centre KTT ASEAN 2023.

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, the Hon Richard Marles MP, meeting with Indonesian Defence Minister, His Excellency Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta, Indonesia, 5 June 2023. Credit: Department of Defence | Jay Cronan.

Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, visiting Philippine Coast Guard Headquarters, Manila, Philippines, 17 May 2023. Credit: DFAT | Sarah Friend

> *The test for all of us is not predicting when [the next] challenge will arise – it's how we respond when it does. Recognising our collective agency and our shared responsibility. Understanding that there is no security to be found in isolation. No growth or prosperity to be gained from closing ourselves off from the world. No stability without respect for sovereignty. No lasting peace without engaging with each other – and working together. That's why Australia is invested and engaged and committed to Asia and the Indo-Pacific.*
>
> The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Australian Prime Minister, IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, 3 June 2023

Background by Francesco Ungaro via Pexels.

Strong, ASEAN-led regional security architecture has laid the foundation for maritime security cooperation. Australia unwaveringly supports ASEAN centrality and is committed to working with ASEAN Member States to enhance regional maritime security.

ASEAN - Australia
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Combatting Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing and Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia Program

Sustainable fish production and consumption in Southeast Asia is critical to the livelihoods and food supply of people in the region. Overfishing threatens marine biodiversity and the sustainability of global fish stocks and is exacerbated by illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

Australia has committed A$14.4 million to combat IUU fishing in Southeast Asia.

The Australian Government's Combating IUU Fishing and Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia Program (2022 to 2026) helps Southeast Asian countries combat IUU fishing by improving:

- Monitoring, control and surveillance capabilities
- Regional cooperation in combating IUU fishing
- Gender inclusivity in fisheries management.

Regional Participants on a site visit to a local port near Nha Trang, Vietnam, during the first Monitoring Control and Surveillance Training Course run in 2023 as part of the Australian Government's Combating IUU Fishing and Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia Program (2022 to 2026). Credit: CSIRO

Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing and Maritime Surveillance

As global population growth escalates, the rising demand for fish protein has fuelled illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, contributing to overfishing and the depletion of global fish stocks. Over the past decade, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) has spearheaded research, activities and capacity building in maritime domain awareness, sustainable fisheries, and the fight against IUU fishing in the region.

These endeavours have facilitated long-term monitoring and collaboration with ASEAN Member States, resulting in enhanced regulatory oversight, sustainable fisheries management, and improved surveillance of IUU fishing activities. The initiatives have supported the implementation of regional surveillance strategies and operational activities crucial to sustainable fisheries management.

AFMA's ongoing collaboration with the Australian Government's Combating IUU Fishing and Promoting Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia Program involves training regional officers through innovative courses, such as the Monitoring Control and Surveillance Training Course in partnership with Nha Trang University, Vietnam.

Blue Security Singapore Early Career Workshop

The Blue Security Singapore workshop held in May 2023 brought together emerging early career researchers from seven ASEAN Member States to discuss maritime governance capacity in Southeast Asian countries. Supported by the Australian Government, the workshop provided participants the opportunity to present to regional maritime security experts.

Blue Security is a collaboration between La Trobe Asia, Griffith Asia Institute, University of New South Wales Canberra, University of Western Australia's Defence and Security Institute, United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue. It produces working papers, commentaries, and scholarly publications related to maritime security for audiences across the Indo-Pacific.

Participants at the Blue Security ECR Workshop. Credit: Blue Security

Women in Maritime Security Network

In 2023 the Australian Government partnered with the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security to deliver the inaugural Women in Maritime Security Network course. This network brings together Southeast Asian women working in maritime policy, civil maritime agencies and naval forces for training and dialogue on maritime security, the law of the sea and management.

This network strives to make meaningful progress towards gender equality in the maritime sector and promote opportunities for women in maritime security. These exceptional women bring their own comprehensive skills and experience from across the region and actively share their perspectives and insights to support their colleagues.

> *We reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, safety, security, stability, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the maritime sphere of Southeast Asia, particularly the South China Sea.*
>
> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on Maintaining and Promoting Stability in the Maritime Sphere in Southeast Asia, 30 December 2023

Maritime Security Cooperation

Background by Francesco Ungaro via Pexels.