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Summary Report of NOWPAP Regional Activity Centres and Regional Coordinating Unit Meeting

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List of Acronyms

DINRAC	Data and Information Network Regional Activity Center
EcoQOs	Ecological Quality Objectives
FP	Focal Point
FPM	Focal Points Meeting
IGM	Intergovernmental Meeting
ICARM	Integrated Coastal and River Basin Management
NOWPAP	Northwest Pacific Action Plan
OSEAN	Our Sea of East Asia Network
POMRAC	Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Center
RAC(s)	Regional Activity Center(s)
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSFA	Small-Scale Funding Agreement
SOMER	State of the Marine Environment Report for the NOWPAP Region
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Agenda of the meeting

- Opening
- Session 1. NOWPAP State of Marine and Coastal Environment Report (SOMER-3)
- Priority area 1: Support ecosystem-based integrated coastal and river basin management (ICARM). SDG 14.2 and relevant SDG targets SDG 6.5, 6.6, 11.3, 11a, 13.2, 15.9.
 - Priority area 3: Prevent and reduce land- and sea-based pollution. SDG 14.1 and EcoQO 4 and 5. Related SDG targets SDG 6.3, 8.4, 14.1, 11.6, 12.5.
 - Priority area 4: Conserve marine and coastal biodiversity. SDG 14.2, 14.5, EcoQO 1, and 2. Related SDG targets SDG 6.6, 13.2, 15.1, 15.5, 15.8, 15.9.
 - Priority area 5: Regional cooperation through partnership building. This session focuses on the SOMER-3 approach to describe regional ocean governance. SDG targets SDG 14.c, 17.6, 12.8, 14.a, 17.14, 17.16, 17.17.
- Session 2. NOWPAP Approach to Data and Information Management
- Session 3. NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Session 4. NOWPAP Approach to Communication and Outreach
- Session 5. How to upgrade and strengthen relations/co-operation between RACs and RCU and between RACs themselves
- Session 6. MAJOR priorities for NOWPAP Integrated Programme of Work 2020-2021 (focus on substance)
- Session 7. Summary of the Meeting and preparation of the meeting report
- Joint preparation of Meeting recommendations
- Closing remarks

Annex 1: List of participants

Introduction

1. At the margin of the 23rd NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting (9-11 October 2018), it was proposed to organize a NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) and Regional Activity Centers (RACs) meeting in early 2019. The meeting was designed to discuss the development of a joint NOWPAP Programme of Work (PoW) 2020-2021, as well as a NOWPAP general approach to data and information sharing, principles, and priorities for the joint work between RCU and RACs and between RACs themselves, and the NOWPAP Communications and Outreach Strategy.
2. The NOWPAP RCU and all the four NOWPAP RACs participated in the meeting. The List of Participants is included in Annex 1.

Session 1. NOWPAP State of Marine and Coastal Environment Report (SOMER-3)

3. At the opening, it was pointed out that the goal of SOMER-3 was meant to form a partnership, get data, and only further - to develop the report. It was not to know what governments were doing.
4. POMRAC presented the possible structure of SOMER-3 proposed by POMRAC and the structure suggested by RCU. POMRAC pointed out that the only clearly understood and agreed arrangement for the POMRAC Secretariat was the timing of SOMER-3 preparation to be 2022-2023, with 2020-2021 as a time period for the development of a structure of SOMER-3, discussions and agreeing on an arrangement and the preparation of the background section (e.g. the Regional Overview on Atmospheric Deposition and Testing of the EcoQOs Targets).
5. MERRAC commented that the Korea SOMER report was understood to be more in-depth and broader. There was a need to check the inter-dependences between SOMER-3 and national SOMER reports. POMRAC responded that there could be two options: one was to add some additional chapters about existing experiences in the NOWPAP Member States and another - was to use the achievements of Korea SOMER during the preparation of the SOMER-3. It was suggested to invite leading national experts to present their results in the coming POMRAC Focal Point Meetings.
6. It was suggested that when SOMER-3 was discussed, the NOWPAP Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2023 should be taken into account. NOWPAP aimed to become the mechanism for the SDG implementation, since there was a pretty good alignment.
7. It was stated that PEMSEA and PICE all look at NOWPAP to provide coastal data. It was critical how RCU and RAC to create linkages with key national institutes. It was important that NOWPAP could help countries in collecting information on SDG 14 implementation as well.
8. It was commented that SOMER-3 was not the activity for any of the RACs alone. All RACs should be involved in this work. The timeline was tight. It was suggested that the SOMER3 would be discussed in each RAC Focal Points Meeting, and activities would be assigned accordingly.
9. It was commented that NOWPAP should look at what was available worldwide and at the national level, what needed to be studied, and then included in SOMER-3. NOWPAP had to start SOMER-3. The work should be done properly. At the same time, RCU would like to use SOMER-3 as a partnership-building process. MERRAC was the only center, which carried out project-related activities, like drills and exercises.

Priority area 1: Support ecosystem-based integrated coastal and river basin management (ICARM)¹.

10. It was proposed to organize a workshop or a training course on the site to inventorized the best practices, for example, in China, or Korea, or Japan, where good experiences could be learned. The Integrated River Basin and Coastal Management (ICARM) was necessary for the Russia side. ICARM was presented to be at a reasonable level in China, Korea, and Japan, but not in Russia. After the workshop, an ICARM Working Group could be reorganized, and experts identified could help and organize relevant activities for the exchange of experiences.

11. If the workshop and training were combined, the report could become a part of the SOMER-3 process. The location should be identified later. RCU had received the nomination from China and Japan and was waiting for nomination from Korea and Russia. The nominated ICARM group would meet online.

12. CEARAC introduced a 5-year scientific project in Japan, which focused on coastal management. Through this project, the abundant impacts of global warming on the environment in the NOWPAP region were reported. According to the project forecasts, the water temperature might rise at the level of up to 3-4 degrees Celsius. NOWPAP had not dealt with climate change issues. However, NOWPAP should focus on climate change impact in the future. CEARAC would like to introduce new relevant activities in the future. The result would be published in June 2019, both in English and Japanese languages. The results of this research could contribute to SOMER-3.

Priority area 3: Prevent and reduce land- and sea-based pollution².

13. It was stated that sea-based pollution was a significant issue. Previously, SOMER had focused on shipping density. MERRAC had listed the biggest ports in the region and had collected information on spills of chemicals and oil. MERRAC had data on chemical and oil spills but not on fisheries and aquaculture. MERRAC would try to support SOMER-3, primarily based on the decisions made by POMRAC and RCU.

14. It was pointed out that the opportunity for MERRAC was addressing the environmental impacts of shipping beyond spills of oil and chemicals. SOMER-3 might help MERRAC to expand its mandate.

15. MERRAC responded that MERRAC could cover other issues related to IMO, but the main part would still be chemical and oil spills accidents.

16. CEARAC briefed the participants on the POMRAC-CEARAC experts meeting held in Vladivostok, Russia, in March 2019. POMRAC experts went more in-depth. CEARAC also introduced potential eutrophic zones in the NOWPAP region, frequency of red tides, hypoxia phenomena, the Marine Environmental Watch Project, and the NOWPAP Eutrophication Assessment Tool. CEARAC had a dataset and could provide these tools to be applied for the development of SOMER-3. CEARAC could take the lead in eutrophication assessments.

17. RCU briefed the meeting in on the progress of the development of the Third Overview of Marine Litter in the NOWPAP Region. A draft Overview would be circulated for comments in July, reviewed in the NOWPAP RAP MALI meeting in September 2019, and finalized by the end of 2019.

¹ SDG 14.2 and relevant SDG targets SDG 6.5, 6.6, 11.3, 11a, 13.2, 15.9.

² SDG 14.1 and EcoQO 4 and 5. Related SDG targets SDG 6.3, 8.4, 14.1, 11.6, 12.5.

18. It was suggested that NOWPAP should form a working group to decide what kind of information should be included. NOWPAP should narrow the scope of SOMER-3. It was also suggested to consider the inputs of the atmosphere and rivers to the marine environment. There is a well-developed modeling approach in the EU, which could be applied.

Priority area 4: Conserve marine and coastal biodiversity³.

19. CEARAC introduced the feasible types of assessment on 6 potential topics for CEARAC MTS, which include: Biodiversity assessment; harmful invasive; Specific migration species; Conservation of biological habitats; Plankton; and e-DNA. Three member countries had submitted their reports. The experts would discuss the priority of 6 potential topics, and CEARAC MTS would be reviewed at the next CEARAC FPM.

20. CEARAC stated that the Northwest Pacific Region had suffered from adverse impacts of global climate change. NOWPAP might have to work on the climate change issue and its impacts on various species. When selecting indicator species, NOWPAP had to think about the current and predicted impacts of climate change.

21. It was commented that the participants were confused at various notions of SOMER, EcoQO, SDG, and MTS. The nature of SOMER was a report. SDG indicators were indicators. Why NOWPAP had to link different concepts in a parallel mode? SOMER had meaning in itself. MTS was the structure for future directions. NOWPAP had to increase partnership, but the participants were not sure about the linkage between EcoQO and SDG. SOMER and EcoQO just reported in line with global standards. The usual approach already had a standard process. What was the position of NOWPAP? NOWPAP was a programme for the Member States to sort out environmental challenges in the region.

Session 2. NOWPAP Approach to Data and Information Management

22. DINRAC presented “DINRAC vision for data and information management in the NOWPAP and its specific role as NOWPAP Data and Information Network Hub”. DINRAC recommended to strengthen the research on:

- the future directions of the DINRAC development and clarifying of options and advantages
- to strengthen the use of data information technology in DINRAC’s activities and develop the related data management tools and statistical modules for relevant thematic areas
- to enhance the analytical and research capabilities in the marine environment information platform management and marine environment Big Data technology

23. DINRAC also presented Case Studies on marine protected area Managerial Tools from an international and regional perspective. DINRAC mentioned the entire networks of NOWPAP MPAs across the Region and highlighted the next steps to protect marine biodiversity as follows:

- to better capture the biodiversity components protected within MPAs by developing integrated computer-program based statistical tool-kits

³ SDG 14.2, 14.5, EcoQO 1 and 2. Related SDG targets SDG 6.6, 13.2, 15.1, 15.5, 15.8, 15.9.

- to improve the understanding of how marine systems are interconnected to better designate and plan MPAs with indicators of NOWPAP MTS (2018-2023)
- to improve the connectivity of NOWPAP MPA networks
- to improve reporting mechanisms and data flows across NOWPAP Region, particularly in the areas with protected species and habitats of protected features and ecosystem components
- to share knowledge and experience of the response of NOWPAP marine life to pressures, and the results of management entities
- to accurately measure the degree to which MPAs and the network as a whole are achieving their intended purpose.

24. DINRAC also briefed about the development of the Northwest Regional Node. DINRAC recommended, relying on the platform of marine litter regional node:

- to improve the richness and visualization of data, and to enhance the related service functions and display of DINRAC
- to expand the data sources of coastal marine litter data, micro-plastic pollution and other data sources through marine litter, increase the data and case analysis of the extension of producer responsibility of multinational enterprises, the performance of enterprises in marine environment and social responsibility, and gradually realize multi-dimensional data and information collection, and promote the number of data channels

25. According to the coupling and comprehensive display, the Geographic Information System (GIS) module and mobile application program based on Web pages are developed at the same time to realize online and offline integration step by step, to promote the richness and visualization of data, and to enhance the service function and display degree of DINRAC in marine litter data and information management.

26. In line with the idea of follow-up work in the Mid-term strategy of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (2018-2023), it is suggested that the design and development of Regional node for marine litter should be strengthened to absorb more global and regional sources of marine litter data:

- Maintain close communication and coordination with Northwest Pacific Marine litter (RAP MALI) FPs, ensure the smooth collection of routine data and information, and promote the research and exchange of marine refuse in data and information standardization and norms
- By means of data modelling, integrating and dispersing marine litter data stored in databases and systems, organizing, querying, displaying, modelling and in-depth analysis of the data can enhance the technical support ability in institutional cooperation on marine litter

27. It was suggested DINRAC might use its mechanism to collect information for SOMER-3, EcoQO, and SDG reporting. DINRAC responded that DINRAC had collected information in eight categories. This work started in 2010 and could produce some graphs. As for mobilizing information,

it was questioned. At the same time, DINRAC could integrate marine environmental data into SOMER-3.

28. It was pointed out that the Member States needed to report the progress on implementing SDGs. DINRAC could play an essential role in the SDG reporting.

29. It was commented that NOWPAP needed to consider the purpose of collecting data and needs to collect specific data instead of generic data and information. Much of the data are openly available. NOWPAP needed to set robust political mechanisms and adopt required guidelines.

30. A fundamental question was about types of data and information needed in NOWPAP, including data and information needed by DINRAC. For the SDG reporting, marine-related information would go through the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. As for some specific information NOWPAP currently collected, DINRAC could play an intermediary role. NOWPAP needed to consider what data categories are needed. NOWPAP should analyze the current drivers. The Focal Points Meeting of DINRAC should access the information needs of NOWPAP.

31. It was commented that DINRAC FPM could not answer this question because they were technical people. It was not clear who was data collector, who use the collected data, who the data are provided for to make decisions.

32. DINRAC responded that it was quite challenging to facilitate data collection. What kind of data needed? There was a need to evaluate what was of high importance. There were two levels: the first one is the level of DINRAC. At this level, the DINRAC Focal Points could have further discussions at their focal points meetings. The second level, regional, related to NOWPAP as a whole. At this level there was a need to involve all RACs in the discussions on what dataset should be collected.

33. It was suggested to conduct an inventory of data that RACs possessed. The Member States might not be aware of the availability of data. It was also commented that nowadays, each RAC had collected data for specific purposes. For example, CEARAC collected eutrophication data, and MERRAC – oil spills data.

34. It was suggested that the newly built NOWPAP website had pooled all the NOWPAP publications. How about pooled the data to the NOWPAP website?

35. It was commented that RCU had taken notes of different suggestions. This meeting should send a strong signal to the Member States. This upcoming DINRAC Focal Points Meeting should review the concerns, and finally, to prepare recommendations for corresponding decisions of IGM. The focal point system had to be reviewed. DINRAC Focal Points had the mandate to review this issue, but this should not exclude other RACs. Someone had to do the “heavy lifting” work.

Session 3. NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

36. RCU presented the NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF). It was commented that some items were not apparent in this document, for example, what did it mean that RCU supported by RACs? Detailed activities implemented by RAC should be added. Additional activities should be inserted in each reporting system. There should be room to add new related activities.

37. DINRAC commented that for evaluation of progress, there should be a baseline. The document had MTS indicators, SDG indicators, and sub-indicators. If a new activity was added, how to evaluate it? If NOWPAP used international consulting approaches that had scores, methodologies to evaluate very detailed achievements. SDG was broader than MTS. It was challenging to combine such evaluations.

38. It was commented that the participants were confused by the current structure. There were EcoQOs, SDG, climate change issues, but the IGM had made the decision. It was not agreeable that NOWPAP had to include SGD framework itself in the process of evaluating of achieving MTS outcomes. NOWPAP, for instance, might insert indicators on by how many oil spill incidents decreased. Globally, SDG and EcoQOs were popular, if indicators should be applied, NOWPAP should redesign the MTS, in line with SDG and EcoQOs. Why NOWPAP had to mix these indicators? NOWPAP Focal Points had just approved the NOWPAP MTS. Several activities were related to SDG. NOWPAP might assess contributions to SDG. Member States had agreed SDG, but NOWPAP Focal Points did not agree to use SDG.

39. It was commented that if UNEP had an assessment methodology, it was useful to apply it.

40. It was also stated there was a need for 1 or 2 indicators to assess the effectiveness of RACs. RACs were the leading players, and there was no parameter and indicators to assess. NOWPAP had to assess and evaluate the progress, including financial and other support provided by hosting institutes like workforce, funding, and expertise. If NOWPAP had resources, there was a need to assess performance and capability of RACs. It was suggested to undertake a more detailed institutional assessment.

Session 4. NOWPAP Approach to Communication and Outreach

41. RCU presented the NOWPAP Approach to Communications and Outreach. It was pointed out that NOWPAP had done excellent work in the past 25 years, but not many people know about NOWPAP. There was the urgent need to improve communications and outreach effectiveness further.

42. It was stressed that there was a need to show how to implement and how to achieve it. Furthermore, there was a need to provide communications safeguards guidelines, such as "HELCOM privacy guideline". It was not necessary for a mid-term evaluation, for the mechanism was how to improve NOWPAP itself.

43. It was pointed out that if NOWPAP used twitter, Facebook, it should make sure that the Chinese audience can access it.

Session 5. How to upgrade and strengthen relations/co-operation between RACs and RCU and between RACs themselves

44. It was commented that the meeting was an excellent example of how to enhance the cooperation among RACs.

45. It was proposed to organize a NOWPAP week by combining RAC focal point meetings that would increase the impact of NOWPAP. A joint meeting of RACs would be more efficient and would also be a means to use the budget and time effectively. It could be a good idea to organize all the relevant meetings together with IGM. In this case, high-level officials could be invited.

46. It was also pointed out that NOWPAP Focal Points might not be interested in participating in scientific meetings.

47. It was suggested that RACs could consult with their focal points for the proposal, or RCU could directly submit the proposal to NOWPAP Focal Points for approval.

Session 6. MAJOR priorities for NOWPAP Integrated Programme of Work 2020-2021 (focus on substance)

48. CEARAC introduced CEARAC's Potential activities for the 2020-2021 biennium, which included a project on marine biodiversity conservation, a project on eutrophication assessment; training course on remote sensing data analysis; an activity on marine litter.

49. DINRAC introduced the proposed DINRAC work plan, which included:

- Comprehensive evaluation of the marine health;
- Marine fisheries eco-environmental monitoring data;
- Marine hydrological data and climate change in air-sea system;
- Comprehensive assessment of marine environmental impacts by primary sources of marine litter;
- A survey on public concern in marine environment; and NOWPAP Marine Biodiversity-with prospects in COP15 Marine Environmental Ecology Survey/Research.

50. DINRAC stated that the Northwest Regional node would be officially launched in April 2019. Links can be set on RCU and RACs websites.

51. MERRAC pointed out that the current mechanism was not suitable for collecting information. DINRAC should negotiate with the Member States on how to manage the platform.

52. DINRAC responded that UNEP headquarters had supported the Node. There was a need for further coordination of data collection and analysis. DINRAC expressed interest to get a connection with OSEAN, European Environmental Agency, etc.

53. It was commented that the Node should be a central portal for sharing data, but the protocol should still be set. DINRAC's capacity was limited. RAP MALI focal points should provide support.

54. It was pointed out that OSEAN circulated weekly marine litter news. NOWPAP should work with NGOs. If there was a need for financial support, NOWPAP might explore the possibility. Generally, it was imperative to get data from different sectors.

55. MERRAC introduced a MERRAC Brainstorm workshop and proposed activities for 2020-2021. Apart from meetings, workshop, routine tasks, training exercises, marine litter activities, MERRAC proposed two specific projects which include:

- (DRAFT) Development of cooperative mechanism with globally recognized organization in the use of oil spill modeling in case of oil spill incidents occur around the NOWPAP region, and

- Development of regional cooperative mechanism for the prevention of illegal marine pollution in NOWPAP region.
56. POMRAC introduced a draft work plan for POMRAC for 2020-2021, which include
- the Third State of the Marine Environment Report for the NOWPAP region (SOMER-3)
 - the second phase of POMRAC activity "Development of regional EcoQO targets aligned with SDG indicators"
 - Integrated Coastal Area and River Basin Management (ICARM)
 - microplastic pollution in Russian part of NOWPAP Region
57. Concerning the revision of RAP MALI, it was suggested to think about the direction of RAP MALI and collect information at the national level because there were many activities that have been implemented at national level.
58. RCU presented the analysis of SWOT of NOWPAP. It was that RAC Secretariat should be upgraded, including workforce and financing. NOWPAP should study PEMSEA approaches, especially on the secondment of governmental officers.
59. It was pointed out that the science and policy interface did not exist. The significant value of NOWPAP was information collection, but the information had not been translated into policy.
60. It was suggested to invite high-level officers to combined meetings, using such an opportunity to create a convention.
61. It was commented that it would be useful for NOWPAP to form agreements on and a common understanding between scientists of methodologies and methods. MERRAC was an excellent example within NOWPAP. But it was also somehow narrow and addressed a single sector, and environmental activities are multi-sectoral combatting a multitude of problems. NOWPAP existence was a good thing. On the other hand, it was challenging to change. RACs just could do their job to create some signals to the Member States.
62. It was commented that it was necessary to think about the future of NOWPAP. RACs might set some agenda items in the upcoming IGMs, to discuss a Long-Term Strategy and evolution of NOWPAP. RACs might propose member states to think future of NOWPAP, for example, like other Regional Seas. In this region, it might be a good time to launch cooperative mechanisms and change RCU into a stronger secretariat. It was time to innovate NOWPAP.
63. It was pointed out that RACs needed professional support, to implement international cooperation, RAC Staff covered scientific issues, and needed the support and guidance from RCU.
64. In designing the plan and strategy, NOWPAP might invite experts from other regions. If RCU provided some more well-developed strategies, RACs were based on localized frameworks, and there were some gaps, RCU might support RAC.
65. The meeting closed at 18:00 on 2 April 2019. The list of participants is presented in Annex 1.

Annex 1. List of Participants**CEARAC****Mr. Takafumi Yoshida**

Senior Researcher

NOWPAP CEARAC

5-5 Ushijimashin-machi, Toyama City, 930-0856, Japan

Tel: +81 76 445 1571

Fax: + 81 76 445 1581

Email: yoshida@npec.or.jp

Mr. Genki TERAUCHI

Senior Researcher

NOWPAP CEARAC

5-5 Ushijimashin-machi, Toyama City, 930-0856, Japan

Tel: +81-76-445-1571

Fax: +81-76-445-1581

Email: terauchi@npec.or.jp

DINRAC**Mr. Feng YAN**

Director

NOWPAP DINRAC

No.5 Houyingfang Hutong, Xicheng District, Beijing 100035

Tel: +86-10-8226-8262

Fax: +86-10-8220-0579

Email: yan.feng@chinaaseanenv.org

Mr. Fang TIAN

Project Officer

NOWPAP DINRAC

Building A, No.1 Yuhuanlu Chaoyang District, Beijing 100029, P.R.China

Tel: +86-10-8466-5597

Fax: +86-10-8466-5969

Email: tian.fang@chinaaseanenv.org

MERRAC**Mr. Seong-Gil KANG**

Director

NOWPAP MERRAC

Korea Research Institute of Ships & Ocean Engineering (KRISO)

32, Yuseong-daero, 1312 beon-gil, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 305-343

Tel: +82-42-866-3620

Fax: +82-42-866-3630

Email: kangsg@kriso.re.kr**Mr. Tae-Hwan JEONG**

Senior Consultant

NOWPAP MERRAC

Korea Research Institute of Ships & Ocean Engineering (KRISO)

32, Yuseong-daero, 1312 beon-gil, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 305-343

Tel: +82-42-866-3964

Fax: +82-42-866-3630

Email: lsy@kriso.re.kr**Ms. Si-Yeon LEE**

Consultant

NOWPAP MERRAC

Korea Research Institute of Ships & Ocean Engineering (KRISO)

32, Yuseong-daero, 1312 beon-gil, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 305-343

Tel: +82-42-866-3654

Fax: +82-42-866-3630

Email: lsy@kriso.re.kr**Ms. Jung-Yun LEE**

Consultant

NOWPAP MERRAC

Korea Research Institute of Ships & Ocean Engineering (KRISO)

32, Yuseong-daero, 1312 beon-gil, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 305-343

Tel: +82-42-866-3690

Fax: +82-42-866-3630

Email: jylee@kriso.re.kr

POMRAC**Mr. Anatoly KACHUR**

Director

NOWPAP POMRAC

7 Radio Street, Vladivostok, 6900041, Russia

Tel: +7-914-790-7957

Fax: +7-423-231-2159

Email: kachur@tig.dvo.ru**Mr. Vladimir SHULKIN**

Head of Lab

NOWPAP POMRAC

Laboratory of Geochemistry

Pacific Geographical Institute Far Eastern Branch Russian Academy of Sciences

7 Radio Street, Vladivostok, 6900041, Russia

Tel: +7-4232-320652

Fax: +7-423-231-2159

Email: shulkin@tigdvo.ru**UNEP NOWPAP RCU****Mr. Lev NERETIN**

Senior Coordinator

NOWPAP RCU

United Nations Environment Programme

5-5 Ushijimashin-machi, Tower 111-6F, Toyama City, Toyama, Japan 930-0856

Tel: +81-76-444-1611 Fax: +81-76-444-2780

Email: lev.neretin@un.org**Mr. Ning LIU**

Programme Officer

NOWPAP RCU

United Nations Environment Programme

16 Gijanghaean-ro, Gijang-eup, Gijang-gun, Busan 46083, Korea

Tel: +82-51-720-3001 Fax: +82-51-720-3009

Email: ning.liu@un.org

Ms. Jihee YI

Programme Management Assistant

NOWPAP RCU

United Nations Environment Programme

16 Gijanghaean-ro, Gijang-eup, Gijang-gun, Busan 46083, Korea

Tel: +82-51-720-3003 Fax: +82-51-720-3009

Email: jhee.yi@un.org

Mr. Nam Kyu Ha

Intern

NOWPAP RCU

United Nations Environment Programme

16 Gijanghaean-ro, Gijang-eup, Gijang-gun, Busan 46083, Korea

Tel: +82-51-720-3002 Fax: +82-51-720-3009

Email: nam-kyu.ha@un.org