Source : www.pib.gov.in Date : 2022-02-16

# INDIA, AUSTRALIA, AND SINGAPORE COME TOGETHER TO ADDRESS MARINE POLLUTION WITH A FOCUS ON PLASTIC DEBRIS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The Government of India, in partnership with the Government of Australia and the Government of Singapore, conducted an international workshop on combating marine pollution focusing on marine plastic debris on February 14-15, 2022. The workshop, held virtually, bought together the world's leading experts, scientists, government officials with policy expertise, and representatives from industry, innovation and informal sectors. It aimed to discuss research interventions toward monitoring and assessing marine litter and plausible sustainable solutions to address the global marine plastic pollution issue.

The workshop had four major sessions; the magnitude of the marine litter problem-monitoring program and research on plastic debris in the Indo-Pacific Region; best practices and technologies; solutions to prevent plastic pollution; and polymers and plastics: technology and innovations and opportunities for regional collaboration to remediate or stop plastic pollution. The sessions involved panel discussions and interactive break-out sessions to encourage discussion amongst participants from East Asia Summit countries.

The East Asia Summit (EAS) is the premier forum for discussions on important strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific and a leading confidence-building mechanism. Since its inception in 2005, the EAS has been advocating regional peace, security, closer regional cooperation and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean region. The EAS is uniquely placed to share expertise and lessons learned between regions and sub-regions faced with interlinked and similar challenges to develop sustainable transboundary solutions. EAS countries recognise the coastal and marine plastic pollution challenge. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, had announced the agenda of promoting maritime cooperation in the wider Indo-Pacific region at the 14th EAS held in Bangkok in November 2019. India, Singapore, and Australia are committed to implementing the EAS decisions.

This workshop provided an impetus to EAS countries for exploring and informing each other about the challenges, questions, and solutions to marine litter – especially plastic research, use, design, disposal, recycling, and future collaborations for a plastic-free and healthy ocean for sustainable development through knowledge partners – the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), Chennai, an attached office of Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), the Government of Singapore and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australia. Dr M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, delivered the keynote address at the workshop. He suggested considering the application of technological tools such as remote sensing, artificial intelligence and machine learning to map the distribution of marine plastics and developing models to understand the dynamics of plastics in the Indian ocean. He also emphasized that a well-designed and tailor-made management strategy considering regional distinctiveness will significantly reduce plastics in the environment.

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