Highlights from Quarter 4, 2022

2022 was a significant year for the GISEA Project, amidst a pandemic which continues to evolve across the region and globally. With the resumption of in-person activities from Q2, GISEA sought to renew our connections with key stakeholders and partners, and regain the momentum to strengthen oil spill preparedness and response in Southeast Asia. To this end, we have also expanded our reach to organisations and entities which share common interest, with the intent to chart future collaboration.

While GISEA expects the level of activity to increase with the recovery of the region, lessons learnt from the COVID-19 Pandemic to enhance programme delivery are not lost; the Project, guided by our vision and mission, remains committed to support our partner countries through the appropriate means. As GISEA enters the final year of the ‘2021-2023 Triennium’, we will leverage the experience and steer Project towards the next triennium.

Remote Legal Assistance: Completion

To recap, GISEA, with the assistance of the IMO and key technical partners, launched the ‘Remote Legal Assistance to ASEAN Member States on the Effective Implementation of IMO Conventions Relating to Oil Pollution and Liability and Compensation’ in October 2021. This activity has since been completed.

Following a series of engagements with the respective National Focal Points to study their national legislative framework and administrative arrangements, participating ASEAN Member States were provided with detailed assessments and broad recommendations to address gaps identified - these were acknowledged and accepted by the countries.

A close-out webinar was held on 17 Nov 2022 to share key findings, and highlight challenges common to the participating countries; following which, each country was provided the final report for their record and consumption. Going forth, further assessments on needs and priorities could be conducted to support the countries to better focus their effort on current and future obligations towards the effective implementation of the identified conventions.

GISEA would like to once again express our appreciation to the National Focal Points for their participation.
2022 In Review

2022 saw the resumption of in-person activities as the region recovers; the uptick in activity was especially evident in the latter half the year as countries refocus their attention on oil spill preparedness. Notwithstanding, remote, or hybrid delivery of activities continues to define the new normal. Activities completed under the auspices of GISEA, with the support of the IMO, through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), and key partners, are summarised as follows:

- Remote National Workshop on Managing Oil Spill Incidents, with the Philippines;
- National OPRC workshop in Timor-Leste (in-person attendance by participants, remote delivery by GISEA/IMO); and
- Completion of remote legal assistance to participating ASEAN Member States.

In addition, GISEA participated/presented in the following:

- 2 meetings of the ASEAN Maritime Transport Working Group (MTWG), hosted by Viet Nam (remote participation in 42nd MTWG Meeting; in-person attendance at 43rd MTWG Meeting);
- 13th Cooperation Forum, under ‘Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)’ framework;
- Sub-regional MAPPOLEX 2022, led by Indonesia under the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Oil Spill Response Network (SSRN) Plan;
- Sub-regional Exchange on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response, hosted by OSRL under the ATSEA-2 Programme;
- Sub-regional Training Workshop on Oil Spill Response Planning, hosted by Viet Nam under the Gulf of Thiland (GoT) Cooperation (remote delivery);
- 15th Annual Meeting of GoT Cooperation National Contact Points (NCP), hosted by Viet Nam (remote participation);
- National MARPOLEX 2022 in the Philippines;
- Joint Oil Spill Exercise (JOSE) 2022 in Singapore; and
- Poster Presentation at Interspill 2022.

Along with the IMO and our partners, GISEA also facilitated/supported the delivery of below activities:

- GISEA-ITOPF Webinar on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response; and
- Joint IOPC Funds-IMO Regional Workshop on Incident Response and Costs Recovery, hosted by Singapore (GISEA as delivery platform).

We are hopeful the year ahead will be even more eventful.
Regional Workshop on Incident Response and Costs Recovery

Between 9 and 11 Nov 2022, a joint IOPC Funds-IMO Workshop on Incident Response and Costs Recovery was successfully delivered through the GISEA platform, hosted by the Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) of Singapore.

The event, which also saw participation from the International Group of P&I (IG P&I) Associations and ITOPF, was attended by government representatives from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and Singapore.

It marked the first in-person regional activity held under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation Mechanism for Joint Oil Spill Preparedness and Response (ASEAN MoU) since the COVID-19 Pandemic began, as GISEA and its partner countries seek to continue the effort to operationalise the Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan (ROSCP). Notably, the participation of Timor-Leste -its first in an activity of such nature-, is significant, given the country's intent to join the ASEAN Membership.

Through discussion-led sessions, participants were introduced to the liability and compensation regimes, with focus on practical issues pertaining to the preparation of claims following and incident. In tandem, a table-top exercise, designed around plausible scenarios of oil spill incidents which could trigger the activation of the ROSCP, enhanced participants' understanding of the regional framework. The workshop would set the course for future activities on oil spill preparedness and response as the region recovers from the pandemic.

Inaugural National MARPOLEX in the Philippines

At the invite of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), GISEA observed the conduct of National MARPOLEX 2022 and its associated activities, held in Manila from 24-27 Oct 2022. The inaugural National Maritime Pollution Exercise (MARPOLEX) replicated the series of biennial sub-regional exercises, based primarily on the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Oil Spill Response Network (SSRN) Plan.

In the lead-up to the Communications Exercise (Table-top) and on-water deployment, a 2-day 'Incident Command System Executive Course' was first conducted by the Office of Civil Defence for participants from PCG and invited agencies.

The series of activities culminated in a coordinated demonstration which showcased the newest assets and enhanced capabilities of PCG, and reinforced their mandate on marine environmental protection.
GISEA-ITOPF Webinar on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response

With the support of ITOPF and the Marine Department of Thailand, GISEA hosted a webinar on oil spill preparedness and response on 28 Sep 2022, focused on lessons learnt from the 'Wakashio' and 'X-press Pearl' incidents.

Dr. Conor Bolas and Mr. David Campion of ITOPF shared with the audience, challenges faced in the response to the respective incidents, compounded by constraints brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Innovation and the effective use of technology featured strongly in the response to both incidents.

In addition, Ms. Soontharee Pirom of the Marine Department of Thailand presented 2 case studies on recent incidents that occurred along the Chao Praya River - 'Golden Bridge 2' and 'Dragon 2' -, which the Marine Department responded to, along with key agencies and the industry.

GISEA would like to express our appreciation to the presenters for their sharing.
Joint Oil Spill Exercise in Singapore

At the invite of Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) of Singapore, GISEA observed the conduct of a table-top discussion with industry stakeholders at the Port Operations Control Centre (POCC) on 3 Oct 2022. This was the second part of a Table-top Exercise which constituted the multi-agency Joint Oil Spill Exercise (JOSE) led by MPA - the first segment saw participation from key government agencies.

A seaward deployment was subsequently held on 7 Oct to validate the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan and test new capabilities.

JOSE 2022 was organised to coincide with the Singapore International Bunkering Conference and Exhibition (SIBCON), to demonstrate MPA's readiness to respond to oil spills.

43rd ASEAN MTWG Meeting

The 43rd ASEAN Maritime Transport Working Group (MTWG) Meeting was hosted by the Viet Nam Maritime Administration (Vinamarine) in Nha Trang, Viet Nam, from 20-22 Sep, and coordinated by the ASEAN Secretariat; this was the first in-person gathering of the MTWG since 2019.

GISEA attended the Meeting alongside the IMO as a Dialogue Partner under the IMO-ASEAN Partnership; updates on planned 2022 activities, supported by the IMO through the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), were provided.

The Meeting was also given a recap on previous discussions to steer the operationalisation of the Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan (ROSCP), namely: 1) to formalise a ROSCP Committee; and 2) to review and renew the roadmap to operationalise the regional plan. Noting the pause on further activity specific to the ROSCP - a result of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, a recommendation was put forth to the MTWG to consider the above actions.

In addition, a repeat call was made to the ASEAN Member States to inform and update GISEA on:

1. Requests for assistance on capacity building; and
2. National or regional activities on oil spill preparedness, to allow consideration for areas that benefit from technical support, collaboration and publicity.