

PRESS RELEASE



Group photograph at Microtel Garden

SIMSEA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM 2016: Designing a holistic socio-ecological research program on the marginal seas for sustainability in Asia

The **Sustainability Initiative in the Marginal Seas of South and East Asia (SIMSEA) Regional Symposium 2016** was convened last September 26th to 28th of 2016 at Microtel by Windham, Diliman, Quezon City to promote inclusive and transdisciplinary research on the sustainability of marginal seas of South and East Asia. The event was organized by the Scientific Steering Committee of SIMSEA and hosted by The Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines-Diliman.

The symposium was commenced by Dr. Gisela P. Concepcion, Vice-President for Academic Affairs of University of the Philippines-Diliman (UP Diliman) on her opening keynote speech. Also present were the Director of International Council for Science-Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ICSU ROAP), Professor Emeritus Nordin Hasan and the Technical Advisor of SIMSEA Programme Office, Professor Emeritus Lourdes J. Cruz.

The theme of the event was to “**design a holistic socio-ecological research program on the marginal seas for sustainability in Asia**”. This was achieved by a mix of keynote speakers who are distinguished international scientists; they were **University Professor Emeritus Edgardo D. Gomez**, founding director of the Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines –Diliman, **Professor Emeritus Toshio Yamagata**, director of Japan Agency of Marine-Earth and Technology

Application Laboratory (JAMSTEC APL.), **Professor Emeritus Yasuhiko Naito**, affiliated with National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) in Japan, and Dr. Lily Ann D. Lando, Scientist at WorldFish, Philippines. 63 research presentations were given in 11 break-out sessions and three focused groups resulted to ideas and collaborative efforts to meet the goals of sustainable development.

Members of the group had a thorough discussion and brainstorming to come up with the proposed concept notes and research topics to enhancing coastal communities' resilience to climate change, developing alliances for resilient marine ecosystem and nations, studying coastal socio-ecological systems for sustaining food, and studying ocean-atmosphere interactions, including bio-logging for better prediction of climate.

Participants recommended suggestions on various steps to sustain not only marginal seas but SIMSEA itself. One of the recommended actions is strengthening collaborations among various disciplines as well as helping them access funds for future research collaborations. A directory will be built also after the symposium to be up-loaded in the SIMSEA website, containing the participants, their affiliations, and their fields of expertise and interests. Another suggestion mentioned was fostering young minds to being involved in sciences as well as provide incentives for them to keep stay and pursue research. This is one way to improve communication in the public which can also generate interest among young minds regarding what are the new fields of sciences that are being pursued, and what are the questions that need to be investigated. Developing priority programs or core programs with the elements of transdisciplinary/interdisciplinary and cross boundaries with support structure of people who will work together towards the goals of SIMSEA within respective countries was also brought up for the growth of SIMSEA. Lastly, to have an indicative timeline of what are the next activities for succeeding years.

Dr. Marie Antonette Juinio-Meñez, former Director of the Marine Science Institute of UP-Diliman, closed the three-day symposium on behalf of the Marine Science Institute. She wrapped up the event by thanking the delegates and speakers for participating in the collaborative discussions and the organizers for a well-run symposium.

"Few initiatives are driven within Asia", according to Dr. Meñez. There were so many interesting ideas that emerged in the SIMSEA symposium and passionate scientists who have expressed interest to build on the SIMSEA scope of integrative research in the marginal seas of South and East Asia and collaborate across the seas.

Based on the data presented by Dr. Meñez, there were 125 participants attended the symposium. A greater percentage of the population was local delegates garnering 60.8% (76) while 39.2% of the population was composed of foreign participants from 11 countries.

Dr. Meñez challenged everyone in the closing remarks to have their own networks to disseminate the information to convince in new science to help make decision-makers more responsively toward sustainability.



Professor Emeritus Toshio Yamagata on his Keynote Address