

## MANILA BAY COASTAL STRATEGY – DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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A silent witness and party to many of the country's historic events, Manila Bay has, and still continues to contribute heavily to the patrimony – contributing 55% of the national GDP; providing 63% of industries, 28% of agro-fisheries and 60% of services. However in recent years, the Bay (with nearly one-third of the country's population) has shown its inability to withstand the stress impacts of these development pressures.

The continuation of unsound development practices and policies, alongside rapid industrialization and ballooning population of 23 Million (comprising one-third of the country's population) has gravely diminished the integrity of the Bay. Presently, Manila Bay is considered as a pollution hotspot.

In response, various stakeholders have developed the *Manila Bay Coastal Strategy (MBCS)*, as the key framework toward the sustainable development of the bay area. Through the auspices of the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), the MBCS has evolved into a dynamic document, which was born out of more than a year of continuous networking, focused meetings, technical contributions and consultative workshops. The MBCS is the synergy of expressions and desires that would address the different concerns and issues in the Bay through action programs and stakeholder partnerships.

The lessons learned in coming out with the Strategy are not new. More importantly, a common vision and realistic perspective has been defined for dealing with the myriad of problems besetting the Bay. Among other lessons, the local government units and the communities have emerged as major partners in solving crucial issues.

The challenge now is implementing the Strategy. Stakeholders have to determine their respective roles and exert responsibilities in relation to the action programs at the national, regional and local levels. Now more than ever, implementation remains daunting in the face of the perennial funding constraints and the ever-distracting political milieu.