

# Foreword

Enclosed and semi-enclosed coastal seas, such as bays, inland seas and estuaries, have numerous natural resources of importance to humans. They have proven to be ideal places for human habitation, fisheries, industry, shipping and recreation. As a consequence, such seas richly support and foster a wide and varied cultural heritage.

The enclosed and semi-enclosed coastal sea environments have been consistently degraded. These environments are particularly vulnerable to water quality degradation, as limited seawater exchange with open water leads to the build up of pollutants and wastes. Such degradation has had global-scale impacts on enclosed and semi-enclosed coastal sea environments, resulting in habitat deterioration, a decline in biological abundance and diversity and a reduction in fisheries.

A fundamental step in communicating to future generations about the natural, healthy and bountiful status of enclosed seas is to better understand them today and to relate that understanding to the surrounding socio-economic and socio-cultural environment of each enclosed coastal sea. Recognizing this need, International EMECS Center published "AN ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDEBOOK ON THE ENCLOSED COASTAL SEAS OF THE WORLD" with the aim of promoting the environmental conservation of enclosed coastal seas by the synergistic interaction of nature and humans. Specifically, this Guidebook is a synthesis and analysis of environment-related information, to provide concerned citizens, NGOs, researchers, governments and development bodies with a common basis for harmonizing their efforts to achieve sound health for enclosed coastal sea environments.

We will continue to expand our activities of collecting, analyzing and disseminating information, not only on the 21 seas covered here, but on the many other areas around our globe. This publication was made possible through the financial support of a donation from the Ministry of General Affairs of Japan in 2003. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the relevant organizations for supporting the environmental conservation of enclosed coastal seas, by offering their valuable data and information for publication in this Guidebook.

International EMECS Center