

A critical review of 25 years of land reclamation in East Asia

In East Asia today, coastal land reclamation is emerging as an attractive option to provision land for real-estate development. This is concerning because coastal land reclamation inevitably degrades the health of the coastal and marine ecosystems and threatens the livelihood, culture, and traditions of fishing communities. With sea-level rise, coastal waterfront development also increases the risk of natural hazards such as tsunami and storm water flooding. Land reclamation should be seriously concerned regarding long-term resilience of the coasts and the people of East Asia. In this regard, this session reviewed various dimensions of land reclamation: history and current status, political economic drivers of land reclamation, the importance of preserving wetlands as migratory bird habitats, wetlands restoration, and policies. Panel discussion following the presentations discussed a possibility for creating a regional reclamation watch program to share knowledge on land reclamation among PEMSEA's member countries. There was a consensus that, as reclamation becomes a profitable business, economic impact assessment alone is not sufficient to assess the real costs and long-term impacts of land reclamation. The session concluded that equity and sustainability, the two main goals of SDGs, should be the leading principles in evaluating the feasibility of present and future reclamation projects.