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Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes in the Coral Triangle: Workshop #2 Concludes with Strategic Policy Recommendations

Bali, Indonesia, April 29, 2024 - Pacific Forum's second workshop on Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes in the Coral Triangle, sponsored by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Office of Women, Peace & Security and held in partnership with the Coral Triangle Center from April 23-25, 2024, concluded with significant strides toward developing gender-responsive policy recommendations for enhancing cross-border cooperation in combating maritime environmental crimes in the Coral Triangle.

Defense and security experts and civil society stakeholders from Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste convened both virtually and in person in Bali, Indonesia to tackle maritime environmental crimes from a gender perspective. "Maritime issues are observed to be a very masculine issue. When fishers' rights are infringed upon, it impacts the laborer's right. But the problem is, the decision-makers of all their rights are men, even though the problem also impacts the wife, daughter, or mother in their family. It is another problem when the solution is not based on the gender perspective," explained Jeanny Siriat of Destructive Fishing Watch.

The workshop aimed to develop a comprehensive list of policy recommendations incorporating Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) principles into cross-border responses to maritime environmental crimes, such as Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; wildlife trafficking; and pollution; ensuring effectiveness and inclusivity in addressing these crimes. The event commenced with an informal opening, setting the tone for collaborative discussions and interactive exercises.

Attendees explored common maritime environmental crimes occurring in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea, along with their co-illegalities and their impact on women and men. Distinguished speakers, including Hesti Widodo from Coral Triangle Center and Andreas Aditya Salim from the Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative, provided insights into detection initiatives and case studies highlighting the intersection of gender and environmental security.

Ruth Kissam of Advancing PNG Women Leaders Network commented: "There are many pressures on our maritime environments from our communities and other external pressures. What can we collaborate on and use our shared knowledge?"

Discussions also delved into the role of customary laws in maritime environmental protection and the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping legal frameworks. Speakers such as Nelson Carvalho Belo from Fundasaun Mahein and Joyce Maveria from Piku Diversity



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Network shed light on the challenges and opportunities in enforcing customary laws and coastal tenure. Dr. Dedi S Adhuri of the Research Center for Society and Culture, National Research and Innovation Agency noted: "The government acknowledges the rights of the traditional and local communities, but the practice is being supported only after long and complicated process/steps of verification The problem that arises is that there are a lot of practices, but only a fraction are formally recognized by the government."

"This unique workshop provided a forum specifically for maritime environmental practitioners to collaborate with others in the region to identify legal and policy gaps, opportunities, and resource requirements," commented Dr. Delaina Sawyers, Senior WPS Analyst at USINDOPACOM.

Foundational sessions also examined existing regional architectures for cross-border cooperation and strategized ways to improve collaboration between defense forces, government agencies, and civil society organizations. The workshop culminated in the development of a regional roadmap for enhancing cross-border cooperation, emphasizing the integration of WPS principles.

The WPS team at Pacific Forum remains committed to implementing the recommendations generated from this workshop, thereby fostering greater cooperation and resilience in addressing maritime environmental crimes in the Coral Triangle.

