



US-Indonesia Maritime and Environmental Security Cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea

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This policy paper explores these challenges and the prospects for expanded policy cooperation between the United States and Indonesia on maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea as a microcosm of the wider issue of bilateral maritime security cooperation. The report's findings are informed in part by the results of the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea" held in Jakarta on April 23, 2024 and bringing together representatives of governments, academia, the private sector, and civil society. This project aims to advance holistic and integrated policy solutions that support sustainable development, reduce geopolitical instability, and increase stakeholders' resilience in addressing maritime security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea and beyond. This project and report are made possible by the generous funding and support of the Hollings Center, as well as the University of Strathclyde, the Indonesian Institute of Advanced Studies (INADIS) and the Universitas Indonesia.

Citation: Senia Febrica and Lucas Myers. (2024). *United States-Indonesia Maritime and Environmental Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Policy Paper*. Washington: the Hollings Center.

Policy Recommendations:

Maritime Security

- The United States should dedicate more resources and funding for regional Coast Guard deployments and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with Indonesia.
- To build Indonesian capacity in maritime domain awareness, the United States should provide further funding for Indonesia's Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla), including the provision of drones. The United States should also consider expanding the information available through SeaVision and Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) in particular, as some Indonesian experts have expressed that the information shared is less granular than is optimal.¹ Washington could also offer resources for establishing greater land- and sea-based intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in the Sulu-Sulawesi seascape.
- Indonesia should continue to centralize maritime law enforcement responsibilities and resources under Bakamla.
- United States funding and support for the Maritime Training Center in Batam is a good model for US support for Indonesia's efforts to improve its own capacity to enforce the law and combat threats to maritime security, such as armed robbery against ships; illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing; and terrorism. Due to Indonesia's sensitivities regarding sovereignty, it is not likely to be a good candidate for a bilateral Shiprider program.²
- The United States and Indonesia should consider increasing the frequency of Coast Guard training exercises, both bilaterally and via minilateral initiatives. For instance, the United States could propose sending a Coast Guard delegation to observe Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines (INDOMALPHI) trilateral patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.
- Considering Indonesia's preference to avoid escalating tensions with the People's Republic of China, naval and coast guard exercises with the United States conducted in less provocative regions, such as the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, are a good alternative to joint patrols in the South China Sea.

¹ A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

² Indo-Pacific Defense Forum Staff, "Long-standing Shiprider Agreements Boost Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Protect EEZs," Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, April 28, 2024, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2024/04/long-standing-shiprider-agreements-boost-free-and-open-indo-pacific-protect-eezs/>

- The United States should continue to encourage Southeast Asian states to demarcate their maritime boundary disputes, including those in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Washington should also support Indonesia's efforts to improve Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) capacity to defend maritime security.

Environmental Security

- Indonesia and its neighboring states should engage in peaceful negotiations to settle the pending maritime boundaries agreements. This development would contribute positively to conservation and sustainable management of marine resources in the region.
- The United States should provide capacity building and transfer of technology for innovation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea to detect destructive and IUU fishing. Technologies such as remote sensing, satellite imagery, and machine learning could be used to detect destructive and illegal fishing activities (e.g. bomb fishing) and the presence of IUU fishing vessels and its support ecosystems that may include bunker ships, transshipment ships, and offshore infrastructure.³ Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis or molecular techniques based on marine genetic resources, genomics and chemistry, and embedded in a forensic framework, also have great potential to reveal fisheries fraud, generate evidence in court trials, and support fish and fish product traceability “from ocean to fork.”⁴
- The United States and Indonesia should cooperate with private sector to improve certification and strengthen the traceability of marine products from fishers to consumers. The two governments need to strengthen cooperation to stop companies from committing destructive and IUU fishing and to collaborate with those that promote sustainable practices.

³ Two participants at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024; BBC, “How AI is being used to prevent illegal fishing,” BBC, April 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68564249>; A participant at the “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur.

⁴ Jann Th. Martinsohn, “Deterring Illegal Activities in the Fisheries Sector: Genetics, Genomics, Chemistry and Forensics to Fight IUU Fishing and in Support of Fish Product Traceability,” Joint Research Center, European Commission, (2011) p.4, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7997b95f-4fcf-4095-836f-c24b2edc3484>; Jann Th. Martinsohn et al., “DNA-analysis to monitor fisheries and aquaculture: Too costly?” *Fish and Fisheries*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2019), p.391-401, <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12343>

- Indonesia and the United States should explore opportunities to involve various stakeholders including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, small-scale fishers, women, and representatives of private sector in the co-design and co-management of MPAs in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.
- Indonesia and the United States should work to co-develop innovative climate finance mechanisms, including in marine insurance, to complement existing ones.
- Indonesia and the United States should collaborate more closely to protect children from the impacts of climate crisis “to human systems (e.g. food insecurity and poverty), which can in turn incentivize maritime crime (e.g. smuggling, trafficking).”⁵ There is a pressing need to study the extent of climate change impacts on maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi region, co-design practical opportunities to increase climate resilience, and protect children from risks of being groomed and coerced into criminal activities or becoming victims of such activities.⁶

⁵ James Brennan and Basil Germond, “A methodology for analyzing the impacts of climate change on maritime security,” *Climatic Change* Vol. 177, No. 15 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03676-0>

⁶ Senia Febrica, *Port Security and Preman Organizations in Indonesia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2023); Alexandra Amling et al., “Stable Seas: Sulu & Celebes Seas,” *Stable Seas*, 2019, p.47, https://safety4sea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Stable-Seas-Sulu-Celebes-Seas-2019_02.pdf; International Organization for Migration. (2016). *Report on Human Trafficking, Forced Labour and Fisheries Crime in the Indonesian Fishing Industry*, pp. 7, 32, 35-36, <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/country/docs/indonesia/Human-Trafficking-Forced-Labour-and-Fisheries-Crime-in-the-Indonesian-Fishing-Industry-IOM.pdf>; Discussion with a participant at the sideline of “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur. See also John Kwame Boateng, Harrison Kwame Golo, Sulley Ibrahim, and Bolanle Erinosh, “Reconciling conflicts between cultural beliefs, and human rights standards in coastal communities of Ghana: preserving cultural rights and promoting sustainable fishing practices,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2340427> for a comparison on a similar development in another region.

1. Introduction

Maritime security is an increasingly important bright spot within the US-Indonesia bilateral relationship. Indonesia is an archipelagic state, home to key international shipping routes, rich ocean ecosystems, and diverse communities across thousands of islands. Considering growing instability in the Indo-Pacific, the multiplying risks posed by climate change, and other transnational challenges—including illicit behaviors, such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU)—maritime security needs continue to expand. The growing challenge is both a threat and an opportunity for cooperation between Washington and Jakarta. This policy paper explores these challenges and the prospects for expanded policy cooperation between the United States and Indonesia on maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea as a microcosm of the wider issue of bilateral maritime security cooperation.

Map of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea



The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is of great importance for the Indo-Pacific and the international community as a whole. Spanning an estimated 900,000 square kilometers between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is vital for international navigation and connections between the three coastal states. Approximately 3,900 ships pass annually through

the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea carrying goods worth a total \$40 billion USD.⁷ The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is considered an optimal route for super tankers. Larger tankers navigating to and from East Asia and the Middle East have diverted through this waterway due to the depth constraints in the Strait of Malacca,⁸ making the route highly strategic and important for global supply chains, particularly amidst increasing great power competition.⁹

The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea's sea life is similarly important, playing host to a diverse array of corals, seagrass, mangrove forests and other rich environs that support numerous fauna, including fish, turtles, and mammals.¹⁰ The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea's biodiversity is world renowned. It provides numerous benefits to almost 40 million people residing along its shores, as well as climate regulation, food, and livelihood for others beyond.¹¹

Yet, there are growing problems facing maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Climate change, human activities, and increasing commercial fishing places tremendous pressure on marine ecosystems in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. In turn, these threats to biodiversity and the environment threaten small-scale fishers and local communities' livelihoods and food security.

Cross-border criminal activities—such as armed robbery against ships, terrorism, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing¹²—overfishing, pollution, and coastal development pose serious challenges to maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. For instance, acts of maritime terrorism, vessels hijacking, and crew kidnapping in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other militant groups based in the southern part of the Philippines have been a persistent security concern for two decades. Terrorists transiting from one part of Southeast Asia make use of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea as a key thoroughfare.¹³

⁷ Presentation by an Indonesian government official at the Indonesia-United States Sulu-Sulawesi Dialogue on April 23, 2024, Jakarta, Indonesia.

⁸ Senia Febrica, "Explaining Indonesia's Participating in Maritime Security Cooperation," PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2014), pp. 64; Senia Febrica, *Maritime Security and Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁹ Lucas Myers, "China's Economic Security Challenge: Difficulties Overcoming the Malacca Dilemma," *The Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, March 22, 2023, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/03/22/chinas-economic-security-challenge-difficulties-overcoming-the-malacca-dilemma/>

¹⁰ Conservation International, "Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape," Conservation International, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.conservation.org/places/sulu-sulawesi-seascape>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Lily Schlieman, "Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing in Southeast Asia: Trends and Actors," *Asia Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2023), <https://www.nbr.org/publication/illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-in-southeast-asia-trends-and-actors/>

¹³ Senia Febrica, *Maritime Security and Indonesia*, (London: Routledge, 2017)



Moreover, China’s growing assertiveness in utilizing gray zone tactics to advance its claims to waters in the South China Sea and East China Sea risks regional maritime security. Such activities include state-supported IUU fishing, as well as direct standoffs between Indonesia and China in the South China Sea.¹⁴ Although the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is less impacted by tensions within the first island chain, the issue is increasingly relevant for US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation elsewhere.

This report aims to explore these issues and provide a variety of policy recommendations to enhance US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea and beyond. First, it explores traditional maritime security issues in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, the state of US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation, and then outlines the prospects for deepening the relationship and some of its challenges, along with a variety of policy recommendations.

2. Maritime Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea

The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea has a long history of threats to maritime security. This includes disputes over maritime boundaries between the three modern states bordering the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The unresolved Malaysia-Philippines dispute over Sabah, or North Borneo, dates to the mid-twentieth century and remains a source of occasional tension in the relationship.¹⁵ While a 2014 agreement demarcating Indonesia and Philippine

¹⁴ Erwida Maulia, “Jokowi vows ‘no compromise’ on Natuna standoff with China,” *Nikkei Asia*, January 7, 2020, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Jokowi-vows-no-compromise-on-Natuna-standoff-with-China>; Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2023), p.8.

¹⁵ Andreo Calenzo, Ravil Shirodkar, and Kok Leong Chan, “Malaysia Wins Respite in \$15 Billion Spat with Philippines. Here’s How the Fight Began,” *The Washington Post*, June 7, 2023,

Exclusive Economic Zones in the Sulawesi Sea addressed competing maritime claims further to the south,¹⁶ the sea space off the coast of Borneo remains contentious due to the Sabah dispute.¹⁷

In the aftermath of 9/11, the security of the Sulu and Sulawesi Sea garnered international scrutiny due to the threat posed by non-state actors. In the Sulu Sea, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), both based in the southern part of the Philippines, have carried out attacks against ships to generate income.¹⁸ The waters bordering Indonesia and the Philippines serve as a transport route for terrorist entities in the region. Members of the Jamaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terrorist group, and other Islamic militant groups from Indonesia reach training camps in the Philippines via the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.¹⁹ Their route often runs from Kalimantan Timur to Sabah (Malaysia) and then proceeds to Tawi-Tawi and Sulu/Mindanao (the Philippines).²⁰

These groups have proven a significant source of instability, particularly in the Philippines. For example, the September 2013 clashes between the Moro National Liberation Front and the Philippine military on Mindanao destabilized the Sulu area and displaced 30,000 civilians.²¹ In 2019, Philippine forces besieged Islamic State militants in the city of Marawi. In recent years, the terror threat has diminished somewhat,²² but the region remains a source of instability.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/energy/2023/06/07/malaysia-14-billion-fight-over-oil-rich-sabah-with-philippine-sulu-sultan-heirs/1603a176-0511-11ee-b74a-5bdd335d4fa2_story.html

¹⁶ United Nations, "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines concerning the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone boundary (with map)," United Nations Treaty Collections, May 23, 2014, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55946/Part/I-55946-0800000280562a05.pdf>

¹⁷ Jay Batongbacal, "Maritime Boundary Disputes in the Celebes Sea," *Melbourne Asia Review*, April 27, 2023, <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/maritime-boundary-disputes-in-the-celebes-sea/>

¹⁸ Ian Storey, "Triborder Sea is SE Asian Danger Zone," *Asia Times*, October 18, 2007 as cited in Senia Febrica, *Maritime Security and Indonesia*.

¹⁹ Ikrar Nusa Bakti, "Bilateral Relations between Indonesia and the Philippines: Stable and Cooperative," in *International Relations in Southeast Asia: Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism*, N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer (Eds.) (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010), pp. 299-300, as cited in Senia Febrica, *Maritime Security and Indonesia*.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 299-300 as cited in Senia Febrica, *Maritime Security and Indonesia*.

²¹ United States House of Representatives, "H.A.S.C. No. 108-21: Hearings on National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005-H.R. 4200 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs before the Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives," March 31, 2004. http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has091000.000/has091000_0.HTM.

²² Roel Pareno, "Downgrade Abu kidnap threat in Sulu-Celebes seas," *The Inquirer*, January 11, 2024, <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/01/11/2324866/downgrade-abu-kidnap-threat-sulu-celebes-seas>

Regional states have an interest in ensuring that this ocean space remains open and secure for the local population, international trade, and the health of the ecosystem. Despite interstate disputes, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have taken steps to increase security in the waterways through sub-regional and regional cooperation agreements. These include the 2002 Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication, the 2007 Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Establishing and Promoting Efficient and Integrated Sea Linkages; and the 2009 BIMP-EAGA MoU on Transit and Interstate Transport of Goods and the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism.

The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia's Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures agreement on May 7th, 2002,²³ to which Thailand and Cambodia later acceded to, requires a variety of measures designed to enhance information sharing. These include sharing passenger lists, providing access to each other's fingerprint databank, consulting each other on visa waiver lists of third country nationals, sharing blacklists at visa-issuing offices, conducting joint efforts, supporting training and exercises to combat terrorism, strengthening border control through designating entry and exit points and sea lanes, and harmonizing legislation to combat terrorism and conduct joint public diplomacy to counter terrorists' propaganda.²⁴ The agreement also designates each countries' Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the implementation point of contact.

Despite Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia considering in the early 2000s to adopt a trilateral coordinated maritime patrol agreement, a cooperative mechanism did not come to fruition until 2016. The Abu Sayyaf Group's rising number of attacks on civilians in 2016 led Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines' Defense Ministers to announce a plan for a coordinated patrol framework in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea on the model of the Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP), which had been ongoing since 2004.²⁵ Widely viewed as a successful model of cooperation, the MSP reduced the number of criminal activities in the Strait of Malacca. On June 19, 2017, three nations formally launched the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea Patrol on North

²³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, May 7, 2002, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/17346.pdf>

²⁴ Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and Maritime Security*.

²⁵ Hadyu Ikrami, "Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol: Lessons from the Malacca Straits Patrol and Other Similar Cooperative Frameworks," *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 33 (2018), p. 801.

Kalimantan, Indonesia.²⁶ That same year, they initiated a joint air patrol on October 12, 2017. In recent years, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have continued pressing forward on trilateral maritime security patrols with INDOMALPHI in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.²⁷ In a sign of some success, there have been zero kidnappings in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea since 2020.²⁸ Given this success, the three countries continue to institutionalize the trilateral patrol framework.²⁹



The Sulawesi Sea viewed from Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia

There are a few other regional multilateral agreements with relevance for the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and the Philippines launched the BIMP-EAGA initiative in 1994 to lessen gaps in development within Southeast Asia. Although the BIMP-

²⁶ *Ibid*; Kompas, “Komunikasi Antar-negara Berjalan Lancar: Tak ada permasalahan signifikan terkait kerja sama patroli maritim Indonesia, Malaysia, dan Filipina,” Kompas, June 23, 2017, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/utama/2017/06/23/komunikasi-antar-negara-berjalan-lancar>. Last accessed 20 April 2024.

²⁷ Yurizki Aliyah et al, “Strategy for Securing Indonesia’s Border Sea Area in the Sulu Sea Through Trilateral Maritime Patrol Indomalphi,” *Jurnal Multidisiplin Madani*, Vol. 4: No. 2 (2024), <https://journal.formosapublisher.org/index.php/mudima/article/view/8030>; John Bradford and Scott Edwards, “Coast Guard Cooperation: Heading Off a Troubling Storm,” *Pacnet*, 42, June 6, 2023, <https://pacforum.org/publications/pacnet-42-coast-guard-cooperation-heading-off-a-troubling-storm/>

²⁸ John Eric Mendoza, “Zero Kidnapping Incidents in Sulu Sea Since 2020 Due to Trilateral Cooperation,” *Inquirer.net*, April 5, 2020, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1578740/https-globalnation-inquirer-net-203420-zero-kidnapping-incident-in-sulu-sea-since-2020-due-to-trilateral-cooperation>

²⁹ Prashanth Parameswaran, “Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines Consider Expanding Sulu Sea Trilateral Patrols,” *The Diplomat*, April 19, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/indonesia-malaysia-philippines-consider-expanding-sulu-sea-trilateral-patrols/>

EAGA was first established as an economic cooperation initiative, the threat of terrorism brought to the fore by 9/11 led to efforts to strengthen both transportation security and maritime borders under BIMP-EAGA.³⁰ The 2007 Sea Linkages MoU required parties to adopt a variety of policies to secure port and transportation facilities.³¹ Following the implementation of the MoU on Sea Linkages, the four states launched an MoU on Transit and Interstate Transport of Goods in 2009.³²

At a regional level, maritime security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea and other marine areas in the Southeast Asia are discussed under ASEAN auspices, the key bodies of which include the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, and other supporting bodies such as the Expert Working Group on Maritime Security (EWG on MS). In November 2007, the ASEAN member states, including the coastal states of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, signed the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism.³³ This agreement serves as a framework for regional cooperation to address terrorism.

At the strategic level, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the ASEAN Maritime Outlook set forth guidelines for the group's approach to the maritime domain.³⁴ ASEAN has taken an active stance on maritime security in recent years. Following the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration in Combating Transnational Crime, the grouping issued an ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016-2025).³⁵ During Indonesia's tenure as 2023 Chair of ASEAN, Jakarta hosted ASEAN's first joint naval exercise without external partners in

³⁰ Senia Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Maritime Terrorism: a Troublesome Cooperation?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol. 8, No. 3 (2010).

³¹ *Ibid*; BIMP-EAGA, "Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing and Promoting Efficient and Integrated Sea Linkages," BIMP-EAGA, November 2, 2007, <https://bimp-eaga.asia/documents-and-publications/2007-bimp-eaga-sea-link-mou>

³² Senia Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Maritime Terrorism: a Troublesome Cooperation?"

³³ Senia Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Maritime Terrorism: a Troublesome Cooperation?"; Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, January 13, 2007, [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACCT.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACCT.pdf)

³⁴ Nguyen Thanh Long, "Unlocking the Minilateral Paradigm for ASEAN Maritime Security Cooperation," *The Diplomat*, November 15, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/unlocking-the-minilateral-paradigm-for-asean-maritime-security-cooperation/>

³⁵ ASEAN, "ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016-2025), ASEAN, September 20, 2017, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Plan-of-Action-in-Combating-TC_Adopted-by-11th-AMMTC-on-20Sept17-4.pdf

September 2023.³⁶ Yet, illustrative of ASEAN's internal divisions and limitations, Cambodia, a close partner of China, protested the exercise's initially announced location.³⁷

Turning to Indonesia in particular, Jakarta has demonstrated a firm commitment to enhancing its maritime security. Showcasing Indonesia's leadership on this issue, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo announced the "Global Maritime Fulcrum" in 2014 designed to center Indonesia as an international leader on maritime issues.³⁸ However, the initiative went quiet during his second term due to competing policy concerns.³⁹ Notwithstanding, Indonesia has pursued a variety of bilateral efforts relevant to maritime security, including the recent Indonesia-Vietnam negotiations to demarcate their Exclusive Economic Zones in the South China Sea.⁴⁰ Considering Jakarta's disputes with China over the waters surrounding the Natuna Islands, Indonesia sees maritime security with its neighbors in the South China Sea and beyond as a high priority issue.⁴¹

3. US-Indonesia Maritime Security Cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea

Indonesia's maritime security necessitates outreach to a variety of external partners, including the United States. At the bilateral level, the United States-Indonesia relationship plays an important role in regional maritime security. Although less active in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea than elsewhere in the maritime region, most notably the South China Sea, the United States has a strong interest in supporting regional capacity to secure the sea, protect the freedom of navigation, and curtail both non-state illicit enterprises and state-sponsored threats to maritime security. Security cooperation ranks as a consistent bright spot in US-Indonesia relations and advancing cooperation in the maritime domain is an important area of mutual interest.

³⁶ Rahman Yaacob, "ASEAN's First Joint Military Exercise," *The Interpreter*, September 26, 2023, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/asean-s-first-joint-military-exercise>

³⁷ Richard Javad Heydarian, "Cambodia Seeks to Sink Joint ASEAN Naval Drills," *Asia Times*, June 17, 2023, <https://asiatimes.com/2023/06/cambodia-seeks-to-sink-joint-asean-naval-drills/>

³⁸ Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs Republic of Indonesia, "Indonesian Ocean Policy," Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2017, https://maritim.go.id/konten/unggah/2017/07/offset_lengkap_KKI_eng-vers.pdf

³⁹ Evan Laksmiana, "Indonesia's 'Global Maritime Fulcrum': A Post-Mortem Analysis," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, November 8, 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/indonesia-as-global-maritime-fulcrum-a-post-mortem-analysis/>

⁴⁰ Sebastian Strangio, "After 12 Years, Indonesia and Vietnam Agree on EEZ Boundaries," *The Diplomat*, December 23, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/after-12-years-indonesia-and-vietnam-agree-on-eez-boundaries/>

⁴¹ Sebastian Strangio, "Indonesia Seeking Southeast Asian Coordination on South China Sea Disputes," *The Diplomat*, December 29, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/indonesia-seeking-southeast-asian-coordination-on-south-china-sea-disputes/>



A patrol vessel of the Indonesian marine police

At the bilateral level, the United States and Indonesia have steadily elevated maritime security cooperation commensurate with the overall relationship. After the end of the United States arms embargo on Indonesia in 2005, the United States and Indonesia security cooperation began to expand and deepen. From 2005, negotiations under the Asia Pacific Regional Security Forum between the United States, Indonesia, the

Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Australia aimed to develop a cooperation regime for the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.⁴² In 2014, the two countries upgraded the relationship to the Strategic Partnership level,⁴³ followed in 2023 with an elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.⁴⁴ Although the text was not made public, the two capitals inked a Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Cooperation in 2015 with a number of maritime security provisions,⁴⁵ soon followed by a Plan of Action in 2015.⁴⁶ In December 2021, Indonesia and the United States expanded the original MoU on Maritime Cooperation until 2026, and in November 2023 the two governments signed a Work Plan on Maritime Security.⁴⁷ As two of the Co-Chairs of the ASEAN Regional Forum's Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security in 2021-22 and again in 2023-24, Indonesia and the United States have played key, mutually

⁴² Badan Koordinasi Keamanan Laut (Bakorkamla). 2010. *Buku Putih Bakorkamla*. 2009. Jakarta: Pustaka Cakra, pp. 183-184 as cited in Senia Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Maritime Terrorism: a Troublesome Cooperation?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol. 8, No. 3 (2010) p.65.

⁴³ The White House, "Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia," The White House Office of the Press Secretary, October 26, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/26/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-republic-indonesia>

⁴⁴ The White House, "Joint Statement from the Leaders of the United States and the Republic of Indonesia: Elevating Relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," White House Office of the Press Secretary, November 13, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/11/13/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-the-united-states-and-the-republic-of-indonesia-elevating-relations-to-a-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/>

⁴⁵ The White House, "FACT SHEET: U.S.-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation," The White House Office of the Press Secretary, October 26, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/26/fact-sheet-us-indonesia-maritime-cooperation>

⁴⁶ Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Plan of Action on Maritime Cooperation 2016-2020," Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 14, 2016, <https://treaty.kemlu.go.id/apisearch/pdf?filename=USA-2016-0352.pdf>

⁴⁷ Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2023) https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003395317_p.105; A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024; United States Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, "United States and Indonesia Celebrate the Opening of the "Anambas" Maritime Training Center in Batam," United States Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, <https://id.usembassy.gov/united-states-and-indonesia-celebrate-the-opening-of-the-anambas-maritime-training-center-in-batam/>. Last accessed 18 May 2024.

beneficial roles in advancing maritime security cooperation via ASEAN fora.⁴⁸ With each of their bilateral upgrades, US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation has continued to develop apace.

Alongside a variety of initiatives—such as port security⁴⁹—efforts in the security and law enforcement space have predominantly focused on two avenues: 1) enhancing Indonesia’s maritime domain awareness and 2) building Indonesian technical capacity and capabilities, particularly Indonesian government agencies tasked with marine law enforcement. The long-term goal is to enhance Indonesia’s ability to defend and police its immediate maritime periphery, especially in the face of persistent non-state challenges, such as terrorism and IUU fishing, as well as China’s assertiveness in the waters surrounding the Natuna Islands.

Maritime domain awareness, or the ability of a given government to “see” and understand what is going on in its neighboring waters, is an ongoing challenge. As such, the United States and Indonesia have partnered closely to enhance Jakarta’s capabilities. For example, in a bid to support regional states’ efforts to improve Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) over national and international waters in Southeast Asia, the United States Department of Defense provided \$57 million to Indonesia for an Integrated Maritime Surveillance System (IMSS) in the mid-2000s, which came on line in 2011.⁵⁰ The 2016-2020 Plan of Action on Maritime Cooperation called for increased efforts to foster enhanced maritime domain awareness.⁵¹ In 2022, the United States and Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) agreed for the United States to assist with providing drones for ISR purposes.⁵² The 2023 Work Plan on Maritime Security calls for \$5 million for maritime domain awareness and at-sea enforcement.⁵³ Since its launch in 2012, the United States Department of Transportation’s

⁴⁸ ASEAN, “ASEAN Regional Forum: Work-Plan for Maritime Security 2022-2026,” ASEAN, August 4, 2022, <https://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/3.-ARF-Workplan-on-Maritime-Security.pdf>

⁴⁹ United States Coast Guard, “Coast Guard Advances Port Security in Indonesia,” United States Coast Guard, January 3, 2013, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/01/03/coast-guard-advances-port-security-in-indonesia.html>

⁵⁰ United States Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, “Fact Sheet: DoD-funded Integrated Maritime Surveillance System,” United States Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://id.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/embassy-fact-sheets/fact-sheet-dod-funded-integrated-maritime-surveillance-system/>

⁵¹ Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Plan of Action on Maritime Cooperation 2016-2020.”

⁵² The White House, “FACT SHEET: Strengthening the U.S.-Indonesia Strategic Partnership,” The White House, November 13, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/13/fact-sheet-strengthening-the-u-s-indonesia-strategic-partnership/>

⁵³ The White House, “FACT SHEET: President Joseph R. Biden and President Joko Widodo Announce the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” The White House, November 13, 2023,

SeaVision has provided a web-based tool for maritime domain awareness,⁵⁴ and Indonesian users are reportedly among the most frequent accessors of the site.⁵⁵ Under the auspices of the Australia-India-Japan-United States Quad, the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) launched in 2022 serves as a “technology and training initiative to enhance maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region and to bring increased transparency to its critical waterways.”⁵⁶ The United States and Indonesia have also conducted military exercises designed to enhance maritime domain awareness.⁵⁷

Bilateral exercises play a key role in capacity building and enhancing Indonesia’s naval and marine capabilities. The United States Navy and Marine Corps have partnered with the Indonesian Navy over two dozen times with the Cooperation Readiness Afloat and Training (CARAT) exercises to improve interoperability and expand joint capacity.⁵⁸ Long-running bilateral military exercise Garuda Shield is now Super Garuda Shield, featuring seven participating nations and twelve observers. For the past two years, it has evolved to become a joint multi-service exercise, including on issues with relevance to maritime security such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).⁵⁹

Outside these two flagship exercises, the United States Coast Guard increasingly partners with its Indonesian counterpart, Bakamla, to build capacity and interoperability.⁶⁰ Starting in 2021,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/11/13/fact-sheet-president-joseph-r-biden-and-president-joko-widodo-announce-the-u-s-indonesia-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/#:~:text=Bolstering%20Maritime%20Security%3A%20Through%20a,funded%20Maritime%20Training%20Center%20in>

⁵⁴ SeaVision, “SeaVision,” United States Department of Transportation, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://info.seavision.volpe.dot.gov/>

⁵⁵ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

⁵⁶ Australian Government, “Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness,” Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/quad-leaders-summit-2023/indo-pacific-partnership-maritime-domain-awareness>

⁵⁷ Aaron-Matthew Lariosa, “Forward Deployed United States Marine Task Force Begin Drills with Indonesia,” *USNI News*, December 15, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/11/29/forward-u-s-marine-task-force-begin-drills-with-indonesia>

⁵⁸ The Jakarta Post, “United States Navy, Marine Corps and Indonesian Navy prepare for CARAT 2024,” *The Jakarta Post*, March 18, 2024, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/world/2024/03/18/us-navy-marine-corps-and-indonesian-navy-prepare-for-carat-2024.html#:~:text=Americas-US%20Navy%2C%20Marine%20Corps%20and%20Indonesian%20Navy%20prepare%20for%20CARAT,%2C%20scheduled%20for%20mid%20May>

⁵⁹ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

⁶⁰ John Bradford and Scott Edwards, “U.S. Coast Guard Is Helping Southeast Asians Protect Their Seas,” *Foreign Policy*, March 9, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/09/us-coast-guard-china-southeast-asia-defense-indo-pacific/>

United States provided funding for Indonesia's establishment of a Maritime Training Center on Batam,⁶¹ which launched in 2024.⁶² The two agencies also held a bilateral training exercise in 2021.⁶³ Following the upgrade to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Washington agreed to provide a further \$3 million to deepen support for Indonesia's Maritime Training Center.⁶⁴

Reflecting on the current state of US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation, there are many reasons to see the relationship as trending in a positive direction, even if Washington and Jakarta harbor different levels of comfort regarding increasing United States competition with China. The two countries held their first Senior Officials' Foreign Policy and Defense Dialogue in later 2023, which included discussion of maritime security issues.⁶⁵ With the incoming Prabowo Subianto administration in 2024, this is an opportune time for the United States and Indonesia to reevaluate and develop pathways to deepen cooperation on maritime security.⁶⁶ Overall, consultation and coordination has deepened along with the bilateral relationship.⁶⁷

Yet, the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea remains less of a focus within the overall bilateral relationship. Moreover, there are a few bilateral and institutional challenges acting as barriers to deepening cooperation. The following section will explore key findings from the "Indonesia-United States Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea" regarding challenges to securing the

⁶¹ The Maritime Executive, "US Funds Indonesian Maritime Training Center Near Strait of Malacca," *The Maritime Executive*, June 30, 2021, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/u-s-funds-indonesian-maritime-training-center-near-strait-of-malacca>

⁶² United States Embassy and Consulate in Indonesia, "United States and Indonesia Celebrate the Opening of the "Anambas" Maritime Training Center in Batam," United States Embassy and Consulate in Indonesia, January 30, 2024, <https://id.usembassy.gov/united-states-and-indonesia-celebrate-the-opening-of-the-anambas-maritime-training-center-in-batam/>

⁶³ United States Embassy and Consulates Indonesia, "U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Trains with Indonesia's Maritime Security Agency," United States Embassy and Consulates Indonesia, September 22, 2021, <https://id.usembassy.gov/u-s-coast-guard-cutter-trains-with-indonesias-maritime-security-agency/>

⁶⁴ The White House, "FACT SHEET: President Joseph R. Biden and President Joko Widodo Announce the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

⁶⁵ United States Department of Defense, "Joint Statement on the United States-Indonesia Senior Officials' 2+2 Foreign Policy and Defense Dialogue," United States Department of Defense, October 23, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3566363/joint-statement-on-the-united-states-indonesia-senior-officials-22-foreign-poli/>

⁶⁶ Lucas Myers, "Indonesia's 2024 Election and Its Implications for US Foreign Policy," *Asia Dispatches*, February 15, 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/indonesias-2024-election-and-its-implications-us-foreign-policy>

⁶⁷ Lucas Myers, "Indonesia Should Be at the Heart of US Indo-Pacific Policy," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2023, <https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/when-goods-cross-borders/indonesia-should-be-at-the-heart-of-us-indo-pacific-policy>

Sulu-Sulawesi Sea and prospects for Indonesia-United States cooperation to advance maritime security in the area and beyond.

4. Prospects for US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation

While the relationship is trending upward, it is important to recognize that US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation faces several challenges, which can be understood as the result of institutional capacity limitations and strategic divergences.

On the institutional side, the primary challenge for Washington and Jakarta lies with the diversity of interests and government actors playing a role in Indonesian maritime security. While Bakamla is the Indonesian coast guard for cooperation purposes with the United States, the situation is considerably more complex internally. In 2014, the Jokowi administration mandated Bakamla to assume leadership on maritime security issues, but actual implementation of maritime security remains fragmented because five agencies—in addition to Bakamla, the Navy, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, the Water Police, and the Ministry of Transportation—maintain some role in overseeing patrols.⁶⁸ Responsibility for law enforcement is split between nine in total.⁶⁹ Bakamla officially receives the president's support for coordinating and leading on maritime security, but its maritime security policy remains dispersed across a variety of competing players.⁷⁰ These internal tensions reportedly derailed initial US-Indonesia efforts to release a joint coast guard work plan in 2015.⁷¹ From the US perspective, this poses serious challenges in cooperating with Indonesia on maritime security, especially due to a lack of clarity as to the chain of command and the military's role in Indonesia's maritime law enforcement.⁷²

⁶⁸ Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, "Indonesia's Maritime Law Enforcement Faces Troubled Waters," *East Asia Forum*, August 29, 2020, <https://eastasiaforum.org/2020/08/29/indonesias-maritime-law-enforcement-faces-troubled-waters/>

⁶⁹ Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, "Omnibus Law for Indonesia's Maritime Security," *The ASEAN Post*, May 6, 2024, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/omnibus-law-indonesias-maritime-security>

⁷⁰ Tangguh Chairil, "Assessing Indonesia's Maritime Governance Capacity: Priorities and Challenges," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 21, 2023, <https://amti.csis.org/assessing-indonesias-maritime-governance-capacity-priorities-and-challenges/>

⁷¹ Prashanth Parameswaran, "What's Behind the Missing US-Indonesia Maritime Security Pact?" *The Diplomat*, November 11, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/whats-behind-the-missing-us-indonesia-maritime-security-pact/>

⁷² A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

Relatedly, limited capacity poses a perennial challenge for both governments. On the Indonesian side, Bakamla lacks the resourcing to effectively patrol Indonesia's huge maritime space.⁷³ As of 2022, Bakamla maintained only ten vessels out of an expected need of 80.⁷⁴ At the same time, the United States tasks its Coast Guard with substantially expanded missions in the Indo-Pacific,⁷⁵ thus stretching resources during an era of budget constraints.⁷⁶

At the strategic level, Washington and Jakarta diverge on several key points. For instance, subtle differences exist in how to approach regional maritime security. An expanding series of bilateral, subregional, and regional cooperative agreements between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines guide maritime security policy in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.⁷⁷ By comparison, the United States must balance the need to be seen supporting wider "ASEAN centrality," in addition to its efforts to include other external partner countries involved in maritime security. For instance, the Australia-Japan-Philippines-United States grouping.⁷⁸ While the Indonesian and American approaches are not hugely different—especially considering Indonesia's support for a stronger ASEAN—there is a concern that minilateralism in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines might exclude other Southeast Asian countries. For example, as one participant pointed out, "although minilateralism in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, such as the Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia trilateral patrol, could be deemed as a successful initiative in repressing the number of armed robbery against ships and acts of maritime terrorism, there is a concern among Southeast Asian countries that other ASEAN member states might feel excluded from the cooperation venture in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea."⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Washington is cognizant of its image issues in Southeast Asia, and it must balance

⁷³ Dedi Dinarto, "Can Bakamla Be at the Forefront of Indonesia's Natuna Sea Strategy?" *The Diplomat*, January 21, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/can-bakamla-be-at-the-forefront-of-indonesias-natuna-sea-strategy/>

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Sara Muir, "US Coast Guard Formally Establishes Base Guam," US Indo-Pacific Command, November 8, 2023, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3584540/us-coast-guard-formally-establishes-base-guam/>

⁷⁶ AJ Pulkkinen, "Coast Guard Adjusts Operations Plan to Mitigate 2024 Workforce Shortage," United States Coast Guard, October 31, 2023, <https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/3575592/coast-guard-adjusts-operations-plan-to-mitigate-2024-workforce-shortage/>; Blake Herzinger, "Reorienting the Coast Guard: A Case for Patrol Forces Indo-Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, November 5, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/reorienting-the-coast-guard-a-case-for-patrol-forces-indo-pacific/>

⁷⁷ Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea from Maritime Terrorism."

⁷⁸ United States Department of Defense, "Joint Readout from Australia-Japan-Philippines-United States Defense Ministers' Meeting," United States Department of Defense, May 3, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3765061/joint-readout-from-australia-japan-philippines-united-states-defense-ministers/>

⁷⁹ A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

carefully between engaging in “ASEAN centrality” and bilateral or subregional minilateral initiatives.

Relatedly, there are also “sensitivities for Indonesia and other coastal states of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea in asking for help from countries external to the region,”⁸⁰ which erects barriers to US efforts to engage on this issue. As a former Indonesian government defense official suggested, “as a country that has gone through colonialism, the Indonesian government would like to reach out for help from its foreign counterpart, but it is reluctant to receive assistance too overtly. There is a sense of pride as a nation to be maintained.”⁸¹ The Indonesian government also feels the need to maintain its legitimacy before its Muslim-majority domestic audience, particularly due to disagreements with Washington over Israel. Being seen collaborating closely with the United States, could also place the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea as targets for terrorist groups, such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf Group.⁸²

Indonesia and the United States also differ on how to address the People’s Republic of China and its threat to regional maritime security. Although Indonesia and China have clashed over the North Natuna Sea, most seriously in a 2021 standoff over energy resources,⁸³ Jakarta often opts to adopt a less overtly confrontational approach than Washington.⁸⁴ The United States, meanwhile, has consistently named and shamed China’s malign behavior, expressed support for its ally the Philippines’ position in the South China Sea,⁸⁵ and conducted regular freedom of navigation exercises in disputed waters. For the United States, the priority in regional maritime security is the South China Sea and the threat from China, meaning that there are limited resources for dealing with issues elsewhere and some frustration with a perceived unwillingness by Indonesia to more openly confront Beijing. This divergence can be explained

⁸⁰ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

⁸¹ Interview with a former Indonesian high-government defense official, 2010 as cited in Senia Febrica, “Securitizing Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Accounting for the Varying Responses of Indonesia and Singapore.” *Asian Survey* Vol. 50, No. 3 (2010), pp. 569-590 <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2010.50.3.569>

⁸² *Ibid*; Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and Maritime Security*.

⁸³ Tom Allard, Kate Lamb, and Agustinus Beo Da Costa, “EXCLUSIVE China Protested Indonesian Drilling, Military Exercises,” *Reuters*, December 1, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-china-protested-indonesian-drilling-military-exercises-2021-12-01/>

⁸⁴ Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, “The Fix: Explaining Indonesia’s silence in the North Natuna Sea,” *The Interpreter*, September 6, 2023, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/fix-explaining-indonesia-s-silence-north-natuna-sea>

⁸⁵ For example: United States Department of State, “US Support for the Philippines in the South China Sea,” United States Department of State, March 23, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-support-for-the-philippines-in-the-south-china-sea-9/>

largely by Indonesia's "independent and active" foreign policy, as well as Jakarta's desire to avoid alienating Beijing and its lucrative investments. As a result, there are gaps in comfortability with openly challenging China on maritime security issues. For instance, in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, on Chinese IUU fishing. This is doubly so in the North Natuna Sea given the sensitivities and China's proclivity to retaliate economically.

Considering these challenges, as well as the shared interest in enhancing maritime security, there are a few policy options for enhancing US-Indonesia maritime security cooperation on both the institutional and strategic levels:

- The United States should dedicate more resources and funding for regional Coast Guard deployments and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.
- To build Indonesian capacity in maritime domain awareness, the United States should provide further funding for Indonesia's Bakamla, including the provision of drones.⁸⁶ The United States should also consider expanding the information available through SeaVision and IPMDA in particular, as some Indonesian experts have expressed that the information shared is less granular than is optimal.⁸⁷ Washington could also offer resources for establishing greater land- and sea-based ISR capabilities in the Sulu-Sulawesi seascape.
- Indonesia should continue to centralize maritime law enforcement responsibilities and resources under Bakamla.
- United States funding and support for the Maritime Training Center in Batam is a good model for US support for Indonesia's efforts to improve its own capacity to enforce the law and combat threats to maritime security, such as piracy, IUU fishing, and terrorism.

⁸⁶ Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003395317>; Senia Febrica and Suzie Sudarman, "Navigating Between the Two Reefs: Indonesian Media and Government Representation of China and the United States" in *Middle Powers in the Indo-Pacific Region*, (Bond University and United States Naval War College, 2020), <https://easc.scholasticahq.com/article/14187-navigating-between-the-two-reefs-indonesian-media-and-government-representation-of-china-and-the-united-states>; Senia Febrica & Suzie Sudarman, "Analyzing Indonesian Media and Government Representation of China," *British Journal of Chinese Studies* Vol. 8, No. 2, . (2018), pp.89-119. <https://doi.org/10.51661/bjocs.v8i2.8>

⁸⁷ A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

Due to Indonesia's sensitivities regarding sovereignty, it is not likely to be a good candidate for a bilateral Shiprider program.⁸⁸

- The United States and Indonesia should consider increasing the frequency of Coast Guard training exercises, both bilaterally and via minilateral initiatives. For instance, the United States could propose sending a Coast Guard delegation to observe INDOMALPHI trilateral patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.
- Considering Indonesia's preference to avoid escalating tensions with the People's Republic of China, naval and coast guard exercises with the United States conducted in less provocative regions, such as the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, are a good alternative to joint patrols in the South China Sea.
- The United States should continue to encourage Southeast Asian states to demarcate their maritime boundary disputes, including those in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Washington should also support Indonesia's efforts to improve ASEAN capacity to defend maritime security.

5. Environmental conservation and management in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea

The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is known as an “outstanding ecoregion situated within the center of global marine biodiversity.”⁸⁹ The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (US NOAA), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Conservation International (CI) respectively identify the region as a distinct large marine ecosystem (LME), ecoregion, and seascape.⁹⁰

International cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea that addresses the connections between the ocean, climate change, and biodiversity is urgently needed to address growing environmental challenges in the area.⁹¹ These include pressures from increasing population numbers, the

⁸⁸ Indo-Pacific Defense Forum Staff, “Long-standing Shiprider Agreements Boost Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Protect EEZs,” Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, April 28, 2024, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2024/04/long-standing-shiprider-agreements-boost-free-and-open-indo-pacific-protect-eezs/>

⁸⁹ Evangeline F.B. Miclat, Jose A. Ingles, Jose Noel B. Dumaup, “Planning Across Boundaries for the Conservation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion,” *Ocean & Coastal Management* 49 (2006), pp. 597-609.

⁹⁰ PEMSEA, “Conserving the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas,” PEMSEA, 2008, <https://www.pemsea.org/resources/publications/magazines-and-newsletters/conserving-sulu-and-sulawesi-seas>. Last accessed April 20, 2024.

⁹¹ For discussion on the interconnection between the ocean, climate change, and biodiversity see Senia Febrica, Elisa Morgera, and Bernadette Snow, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UK Parliament International Development Committee: Climate Change and Development,” One Ocean Hub, accessed April 30, 2024, <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/35570/pdf/>.

overexploitation of marine resources, warming temperatures, acidification, deoxygenation, and marine pollution. The region has some of the highest population density in the world (at 141 persons/km² versus a global average of 59), including the added pressure of 60 percent of this population concentrated in coastal areas.⁹² Due to its average growth rate of over 2 percent per year, coastal populations in the region are expected to double within 35 years.⁹³ The rapid growth rate of coastal populations has increased development activities (e.g. excavation, dredging, and shore conversion) that can translate to “lower levels of health and wellbeing for both the reefs and the people.”⁹⁴ Experts have warned that the deterioration of environmental conditions in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea “indicates that resource extraction has exceeded the natural capacity of this marine ecosystem for recovery.”⁹⁵

Climate change seriously imperils the Sulu-Sulawesi marine ecoregion. The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is located in the northern part of the Coral Triangle, often cited as the world’s center of marine biodiversity.⁹⁶ Ocean acidification, for example, has a direct and rapid impact on coral reefs as it increases porosity in structurally critical sections of coral framework.⁹⁷ As a result, “this condition leads to crumbling of load-bearing material, and a potential collapse and loss of complexity of the larger habitat” and the biodiversity that the coral reefs support.⁹⁸ Greenhouse gasses alter the oxygenation of the water column, temperature, pH levels, and local faunas’ food supplies, particularly in deep water, which changes the distribution of deep-sea species, including commercially important fish and foundation species.⁹⁹ This threatens to lead to a decline of 28 to 100 percent in suitable habitats for cold-water corals.¹⁰⁰ In addition to its environmental damage, this issue hampers the socio-economic development of communities

⁹² World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), “Sulu Sulawesi marine ecoregion,” World Wide Fund for Nature, <https://www.feu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwfssme2.pdf>, p. 1. Last accessed May 18, 2024; A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ GIZ, “Conserving marine biodiversity in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape,” GIZ, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/18229.html>

⁹⁷ Sebastian J. Hennige et al., “Crumbling Reefs and Cold-Water Coral Habitat Loss in a Future Ocean: Evidence of ‘Coralporosis’ as an Indicator of Habitat Integrity,” *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 7 (2020), pp.1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2020.00668> as cited in Febrica, Morgera, Snow, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UK Parliament International Development Committee.”

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Andrew K. Sweetman et al., “Major impacts of climate change on deep-sea benthic ecosystem,” *Elementa* Vol. 5, No. 4 (2017), pp. 1-23 as cited in Febrica, Morgera, Snow “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UK Parliament International Development Committee.”

¹⁰⁰ Telmo Morato et al., “Climate-induced changes in the suitable habitat of cold-water corals and commercially important deep-sea fishes in the North Atlantic,” *Global Change Biology*. 2020 Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 2181-2202. doi: 10.1111/gcb.14996., pp. 2181.

living in the region. The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is a major source of live reef food fish.¹⁰¹ It produces almost \$1 billion USD per year in fish.¹⁰² The marine resources from the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea directly benefit 35 million people from at least 50 indigenous cultural groups.¹⁰³ Losses to these resources could be catastrophic to local livelihoods.

A combination of bilateral cooperation among coastal states and external partners and subregional and regional initiatives shape the current state of environmental cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea marine ecoregion. At a subregional level there are two interlinked environmental initiatives: the tri-national committee for the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion and the Coral Triangle Initiative.

In the 1990s, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines partnered with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to implement an ecoregion conservation approach. An Ecoregion Conservation Program for the Sulu-Sulawesi region emerged out of this process in 1999. Adopting a two-pronged approach, it aimed to both plan for biodiversity conservation and implement a variety of conservation actions for key areas and species.¹⁰⁴ The participating countries and WWF also established guidelines for ecoregion conservation, including a Biodiversity Vision in March 2001 that evolved into an Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP).¹⁰⁵ The process involved over 70 experts from academia, government, and nongovernmental groups from the Sulu-Sulawesi coastal states, Australia, and the United States.¹⁰⁶ Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines later formed a Preparatory Committee to adopt the ECP. In early 2003, the three partners established the Indonesian National Committee, the Malaysian Technical Working, and the Philippine's Presidential Commission for the Integrated Conservation and Development of the Sulu-Celebes Sea (PCICDSCS) to finalize, adopt, and implement the agreement.¹⁰⁷ Parallel to this trilateral governmental process, WWF developed a mechanism for a WWF Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion Conservation Program. A Coordination Unit headed by an Ecoregion

¹⁰¹ N. Bently, "Fishing for solutions: can live trade in wild groupers and wrasses from Southeast Asia be managed?." Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, (1999).

¹⁰² WWF-SSME, "Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Ecoregion: users, uses and threats," Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion Program, WWF, Philippines, (2001).

¹⁰³ R. Cola et al., "A kaleidoscope of cultures," (2001) in: Frend J, editor, *Sulu-Sulawesi Seas* (Manila: Bookmark Inc. and WWF-Philippines-Kabang Kalikasan ng Philipinas (KKP), p.110-4.

¹⁰⁴ Evangeline F.B. Miclat, Jose A. Ingles, Jose Noel B. Dumaup, "Planning across boundaries for the conservation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion," *Ocean & Coastal Management*, Vol.49 (2006) p. 599

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 599

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.605.

Coordinator serves as the secretariat and coordinates the implementation of the three countries' initiatives.¹⁰⁸

When the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF) was launched in 2007, WWF proposed for the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea Marine Ecoregion to be one of the focus seascapes within the CTI.¹⁰⁹ Coastal states and collaborating partners of CTI soon accepted this proposal. The rapid acceptance of this proposal demonstrated success of key government and civil society partnerships in the conservation and sustainable management of Sulu-Sulawesi marine and coastal areas, as well as the interlinkages between the two subregional marine initiatives.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste form the CTI-CFF multilateral partnership (the 'CT6') to protect the Coral Triangle region. Although it covers only 1.6 percent of the planet's oceans, the Coral Triangle region has the highest coral diversity in the world with 600 coral species or 76 percent of the world's known species.¹¹⁰ Similarly, it is home to the highest reef fish diversity on the planet with 2,500 species or 37 percent of the world's reef fish species.¹¹¹ These marine and coastal resources support approximately 363 million people.¹¹² As such, the Coral Triangle Initiative and the marine resources it protects are a key governmental and non-governmental initiative. Partners who support the Coral Triangle Initiative include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the Australian Government's Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities; the Asia Development Bank; Global Environment Facility (GEF); Conservation International; the Nature Conservancy; and WWF.¹¹³ The Coral Triangle Initiative is managed by a Secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.606.

¹⁰⁹ Discussion with a participant of the "Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, May 8-11, 2024" workshop organized by the Hollings Center. The discussion took place on the sideline of the workshop on May 10, 2024.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, "Coral Triangle Initiative," United Nations, <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/coral-triangle-initiative>, last accessed April 27, 2024.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹¹² *Ibid*.

¹¹³ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁴ The Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security, available from <https://biodiversitylinks.org/organizations/coral-reef-triangle-initiative-on-coral-reefs-fisheries-cti-cff>. Last accessed 27 April 2024.

Beyond the Coral Triangle Initiative, ASEAN-level discussion on environmental issues in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea and key sea lanes in the region feature a number of lead sectoral bodies, including ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN), ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Food (AMAF), and the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME). An array of supporting sectoral bodies also support the deliberation and development of policy and legal frameworks within ASEAN related to different ocean sectors (e.g. fisheries, maritime transport, and plastic debris). These include sectoral bodies such as the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC), the ASEAN Working Group on Chemicals and Waste (AWGCW), the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ), the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries (ASWGF), the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME), and the ASEAN Maritime Transport Working Group (MTWG).¹¹⁵

In the past five years, the lead and supporting sectoral bodies in ASEAN have produced various regional declarations, frameworks, and action plans relevant to the sustainable conservation and management of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. These include the ASEAN Framework for Circular Economy (2021), the ASEAN Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) Framework (2023), the ASEAN Declaration on Blue Economy (2021), the ASEAN Strategic of Customs Development (2021-2025), the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris (2021-2025), the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in ASEAN Region (2019), and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris (2021).

These developments represent solid progress by coastal states of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, ASEAN, and other external partners. However, closer cooperation between coastal and user states of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, regional and international bodies, and local communities is essential to maintain the services and values that the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea provides.¹¹⁶

The next part of this paper will explain challenges in transboundary cooperation and opportunities for Indonesia-United States collaboration in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.

¹¹⁵ ASEAN Secretariat, “Overview of the Marine Debris Condition in Southeast Asia and the Role of Parliament in Addressing the Issue,” July 6, 2023, <https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/ditc-ted-iccf-asia-06072023-ASEAN-1.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Senia Febrica and Morgera Snow, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UK Parliament International Development Committee.”

6. US-Indonesia Environmental Cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea

A memorandum of understanding drafted on September 18, 2007 between the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) set the foundational agenda for US-Indonesia bilateral cooperation in the marine sector.¹¹⁷ An Implementation Arrangement in June 2010 further enhanced the MoU. Today, Indonesia and United States cooperation in the marine sector includes joint exploration using NOAA's expedition ship "Okeanos Explorer," sustainable fisheries management, the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), and other efforts to address biodiversity loss.¹¹⁸

The United States is one of the founding partners of the Coral Triangle Initiative in 2007, which serves to organize multilateral efforts to protect shared marine and coastal resources. USAID leads United States engagement in the Coral Triangle region in collaboration with the United States Department of State, NOAA, the United States Department of Justice, and a consortium of environmental NGOs. The United States-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in 2023 highlights the United States' continued support for the Coral Triangle.¹¹⁹ In the Coral Triangle region, the United States has contributed \$63 million to address threats from overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and climate change in the region. As part of this funding, \$32 million has been allocated for USAID programs to help Jakarta protect and sustainably manage 20 million hectares of ocean and coastal resources.¹²⁰

Per the readout, US collaboration with Indonesian maritime authorities via the Coral Triangle Initiative has resulted in a number of key successes.¹²¹ First, it has contributed to strengthening eight million hectares of marine protected areas (MPAs). Second, the Regent of Southeast Maluku declared Kei Kecil as an MPA to help protect the leatherback turtle and empower local communities to sustainably manage the local environment. This area contains 150,000 hectares

¹¹⁷ Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Washington DC, "Indonesia-US bilateral relations," 2018, https://kemlu.go.id/washington/en/pages/hubungan_bilateral_indonesia-amerika_serikat/554/etc-menu

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

¹²⁰ United States Embassy in Indonesia, "Fact sheet: United States Partners with Indonesia to Protect the Coral Triangle," United States Embassy in Indonesia, <https://id.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/embassy-fact-sheets/fact-sheet-united-states-partners-with-indonesia-to-protect-the-coral-triangle/>; Coral Triangle Initiative, "Coral Triangle Initiative: Partner," <https://www.coraltriangleinitiative.org/partner/usaaid>.

¹²¹ United States Embassy in Indonesia, "Fact sheet: United States Partners with Indonesia to Protect the Coral Triangle," United States Embassy in Indonesia, <https://id.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/embassy-fact-sheets/fact-sheet-united-states-partners-with-indonesia-to-protect-the-coral-triangle/>

of the 450,000 hectares of targeted new MPAs. Third, the partnership enabled a public-private partnership featuring efforts by the Indonesian Ministry for Marine Affairs and Fisheries and BP MIGAS (*Badan Pelaksana Kegiatan Usaha Hulu Minyak dan Gas Bumi*) to fund conservation activities in designated MPAs. Fourth, it fosters collaboration between US and Indonesian universities for marine research. Fifth, it determines high priority areas for marine biodiversity conservation investments. Sixth, it supports the creation of training programs for the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries officials that build capacity to address environmental crimes such as IUU fishing. Seventh, it supports regional catch documentation and traceability (CDT) systems to combat IUU fishing through “Strengthening Organizational and Administrative Capacity for Improved Fisheries Management” activity.¹²²

Indonesia and United States also have shared interests in highlighting the connection between marine biodiversity loss and climate change. Despite the media, academia, and government raising awareness of the interconnections between terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity loss, and climate change, the international climate change process has only recently begun to address the ocean-climate change-biodiversity nexus.¹²³ This is problematic because the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹²⁴ has already negotiated on key issues relating to ocean management, including climate change, biodiversity, and human rights.¹²⁵

Indonesia in particular views the issue as a relatively high priority. In 2022, Indonesia as a party to the CBD Convention called for developed countries to contribute more to protecting the environment in low- and middle-income countries.¹²⁶ At the 15th CBD COP on December

¹²² United States Embassy in Indonesia, “Fact sheet: United States Partners with Indonesia to Protect the Coral Triangle,” United States Embassy in Indonesia,”; Coral Triangle Initiative, “Coral Triangle Initiative: Partner,” Coral Triangle Initiative, <https://www.coraltriangleinitiative.org/partner/usaid>.

¹²³ Mitchell Lennan, Senia Febrica, and Elisa Morgera, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): Possible Topics for Ocean and Climate Dialogue to be Held in Conjunction with SBSTA 56,” (June 2022) submitted on March 23, 2022.

¹²⁴ For example, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), *Voluntary Guidelines for the Design and Effective Implementation of Ecosystem-Based Approaches to Climate Change adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction*, CBD Technical Series No. 93 (2019), <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-93-en.pdf>; Mitchell Lennan, “Policy brief: Integrated and Inclusive Ocean Governance is Essential to Tackling Climate Change,” One Ocean Hub, October 2021, <https://oneoceanhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Climate-change-and-ocean-policy-brief-FINALFINAL.pdf>; Mitchell Lennan and Elisa Morgera, “The Glasgow Climate Conference (COP26),” 37, *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 137 (2022), p.141–142 as cited in Mitchell Lennan, Senia Febrica and Elisa Morgera, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UNFCCC”

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, “Indonesia calls for fair share from developed countries to preserve biodiversity,” *The Jakarta Post*, December 24, 2022, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/12/24/indonesia-calls-for-fair-share-from-developed-countries-to-preserve-biodiversity.html>.

19, 2022, participating countries adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. As part of the Global Biodiversity Framework, countries agreed to designate 30 percent of land and water areas for conservation by 2030. This is known as the “30 by 30” target.¹²⁷ Fifteen countries also agreed to raise a minimum of \$20 billion per year by 2025 and \$30 billion USD per year by 2030 in international financing for developing countries.¹²⁸ Indonesia’s head of delegation to CBD COP, Deputy Environment and Forestry Minister Alue Dohong, noted that Indonesia declared over 54 percent of forested areas as protected by 2020.¹²⁹ However, only around 9 percent of the total area of Indonesian waters spanning 6.4 million square kilometers have been declared marine protected areas.¹³⁰ Indonesia in total has established 411 MPAs across the archipelago, managed by a range of national and provincial government institutions.¹³¹

Indonesia plans to declare a further 32.5 million hectares by 2030 in order to reach 30 percent of the country’s total marine area by 2045.¹³² Currently, Indonesia’s existing marine conservation areas cover 28.9 million hectares of waters and are home to “58 thousand hectares of seagrass meadow, 1.2 million hectares of coral reefs, 211 thousand hectares of mangrove, and 30 percent of the country’s main fish spawning locations.”¹³³ Per USAID, MPAs that are well-managed could play a crucial role in protecting critical marine habitats and reduce the exploitation of at-risk species.¹³⁴

In line with Indonesia’s goal to meet its GBF target, the United States’ “2022 National Security Strategy makes clear that biodiversity loss is a wide-reaching crisis that also impacts governments’ abilities to meet basic human needs and contributes to policy, economic, and social instability.”¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Conversation Corridor, “What is 30x30?” Conversation Corridor, accessed June 11, 2024, <https://conservationcorridor.org/what-is-30x30/>

¹²⁸ A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, “Indonesia calls for fair share from developed countries to preserve biodiversity.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ USAID, “USAID Kolektif: Strengthening Indonesia’s Marine Protected Areas,” USAID, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://www.usaid.gov/indonesia/fact-sheets/usaid-kolektif-advance-indonesias-marine-protected-areas-management-effectiveness>.

¹³² *Ibid.*; Antara, “Government targets expanding marine conservation areas to 30% by 2045,” *Antara News*, February 5, 2024, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/305082/government-targets-expanding-marine-conservation-areas-to-30-by-2045>.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ USAID, “USAID Kolektif: Strengthening Indonesia’s Marine Protected Areas,” USAID, <https://www.usaid.gov/indonesia/fact-sheets/usaid-kolektif-advance-indonesias-marine-protected-areas-management-effectiveness>.

¹³⁵ White House, *National Security Strategy*, White House, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>, as cited in

Internationally, United States work on marine biodiversity is spearheaded by USAID.¹³⁶ In 2021, USAID invested \$319.5 million USD to conserve biodiversity and counter wildlife trafficking in countries where it is active. This funding includes Indonesia.¹³⁷ To combat wildlife trafficking worldwide, USAID invested over \$55 million USD in 2021 funds to prevent and reduce poaching and illegal trade in animals, which includes efforts to reduce illegal fishing.¹³⁸

Bilaterally, USAID works closely with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI), and other key partners as part of the \$19.6 million USD USAID Build Indonesia to Take Care of Nature for Sustainability (BIJAK) project since 2016.¹³⁹ The project protects both land and marine ecosystems. Per USAID, BIJAK will assist the Indonesian government in addressing 1.8 million hectares of land disputes in conservation areas and protect 43 million hectares of high-value habitat.¹⁴⁰ The press release also suggests that the BIJAK project has reduced consumer preference for wild-caught songbirds and helped address the illegal animal trade. The project also contributed to Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries efforts to protect Indonesia's shark populations via establishing quotas.¹⁴¹ In 2019, USAID BIJAK and LIPI also collaborated to assess the potential impact of fishing on the silky shark population. Per a researcher quoted in the press release, these efforts are an "important policy base for setting catch and export quotas, and the domestic distribution of sharks."¹⁴²

The United States and Indonesia are also working together to protect marine biodiversity and enhance the MPAs through USAID Kolektif.¹⁴³ The Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries set a goal of improving its management of over 20 million hectares of existing MPAs by 2024.¹⁴⁴ The Indonesian Biodiversity Foundation (KEHATI) and Yayasan Konservasi Alam

United States Department of State, "Highlighting US efforts to combat the biodiversity crisis," United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/highlighting-u-s-efforts-to-combat-the-biodiversity-crisis/>.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ USAID, "United States and Indonesia Celebrate Shared Successes in Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation," USAID, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://www.usaid.gov/indonesia/press-release/united-states-and-indonesia-celebrate-shared-successes-climate-change-and-biodiversity-conservation>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ USAID, "USAID Kolektif: Strengthening Indonesia's Marine Protected Areas," USAID, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://www.usaid.gov/indonesia/fact-sheets/usaid-kolektif-advance-indonesias-marine-protected-areas-management-effectiveness>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Nusantara (YKAN) collaborate to implement USAID Kolektif. A variety of other actors are also involved, including the private sector. Per the readout, USAID Kolektif maintains a series of long-term objectives: “1) strengthen human resources and institutional arrangements for MPA management; 2) establish sustainable financing for MPAs; 3) increase benefits for coastal communities through the sustainable management of MPAs; 4) strengthen compliance with MPA rules and regulations; and (5) improve protection for marine ETP species and priority habitats.”¹⁴⁵ USAID Kolektif targets 13 MPAs across two fisheries management areas (*Wilayah Pengelolaan Perikanan Negara Republik Indonesia* – WPP NRI 711 and 715), which are located in Riau Islands, Bangka Belitung, West Kalimantan, West Papua, and Southwest Papua provinces.¹⁴⁶

Indonesia and the United States are also exploring ways to manage risks posed by changing climate and ocean through insurance initiatives and public-private partnerships for climate finance.¹⁴⁷ Such collaborative initiatives are needed to fill the gap in global climate finance efforts. Despite developed countries’ commitments to double the available adaptation finance in order to meet the goal of \$100 billion through 2027, it remains unclear whether the climate finance efforts will focus primarily on land or maritime areas.¹⁴⁸ The UN Framework on Convention on Climate Change COP26 decision on “matters related to the Committee on Finance” noted that “the needs identified by developing countries touch on all [Sustainable Development Goals] SDGs, with 75 per cent of NDCs having linkages to SDGs 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17.”¹⁴⁹ However, it is worrying that SDG 14 (Life Below Water), the least funded of the SDGs, is not listed.¹⁵⁰ This is problematic because “only 2 per cent of Green Climate Fund investments are directed to ocean-related activities.”¹⁵¹ As Indonesia is the third-

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

¹⁴⁸ IISD, “Glasgow Climate Change Conference: 31 October – 13 November 2021” (16 November 2021) 12(793) *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* available at https://enb.iisd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/enb12793e_1.pdf as cited in Mitchell Lennan, Senia Febrica and Elisa Morgera, *The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UNFCCC*.

¹⁴⁹ UNFCCC, “Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance, Decision 5/CP.26,” FCCC/CP/2021/12/Add.1, para 69, as cited in Mitchell Lennan, Senia Febrica, and Elisa Morgera, *The One Ocean Hub Written Submission to the UNFCCC*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Statement by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Baroness Scotland, “COP26 Commonwealth Pavilion Friday 5th November 2021 afternoon session” (2021), at 2:54:15, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBVHHiQv4hM&t=9483s> as cited in Mitchell Lennan, Senia Febrica, Bernadette Snow, and Elisa Morgera, “The One Ocean Hub Written Evidence to the UNFCCC.”

most vulnerable country in Southeast Asia to climate change after Myanmar and Vietnam,¹⁵² this is a key concern. Climate finance is needed to strengthen resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. As such, USAID is in the process of co-developing a climate insurance program and providing new pool of funding to support the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries’ “Blue window.”¹⁵³ It is expected that donors and the private sector will contribute to the pool of funding for innovative climate change solutions.¹⁵⁴

More recently, Jakarta and Washington inked an agreement between the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).¹⁵⁵ The MoU aims to enhance bilateral efforts to protect the environment and address climate change. Similarly to US-Indonesia efforts in the traditional maritime security domain, US-Indonesia cooperation to protect the marine ecoregion have continued to grow with the overall bilateral relationship.

7. Prospects for US-Indonesia cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi marine ecoregion

The United States and Indonesia share a common interest in the Sulu-Sulawesi marine ecoregion. This is best encapsulated by the term “blue economy,” which serves as “a key expression of common interest” between Indonesia and the United States where marine conservation and the sustainable use of resources are concerned.¹⁵⁶ “Blue economy” encompasses varied uses and types of maritime and coastal spaces. One of the US government officials attending the Dialogue, for example, used the term “blue economy” to refer to the interlinkages between safety and security, resilience, and sustainable marine ecosystems. To quote the speaker: “The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is a globally significant area for biodiversity conservation. We need ecological security to have human security.”¹⁵⁷ To be sure, Indonesia-United States environmental cooperation has resulted in a series of positive developments as noted in the previous section, such as the Coral Triangle Initiative.

¹⁵² A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ US Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, “Indonesian MoEF and US EPA Sign MoU to Enhance Environmental Cooperation,” US Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, April 5, 2024, <https://id.usembassy.gov/indonesian-moef-and-us-epa-sign-mou-to-enhance-environmental-cooperation/>

¹⁵⁶ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

However, environmental cooperation between Indonesia and the United States, also faces some challenges. One of the key challenges highlighted at the Dialogue is the complexity of ongoing environmental problems in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea coinciding with a range of non-traditional security concerns. For instance, continuing maritime boundaries disputes impact cooperation dynamics between the states bordering the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. These include the disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia over Ambalat block and Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah. There has been an increase in the use of destructive and IUU fishing methods, particularly cyanide fishing and bottom trawling, in areas with contested boundaries disputes in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.¹⁵⁸

The lack of capacity among coastal states is a further barrier to realizing Indonesia-United States cooperation goals in conserving and sustainably managing the use of marine biological diversity. The limited maritime surveillance and coast guard patrols, as well as inter-agency information sharing, have hindered the



A small-scale fisher working in the Sulawesi Sea

ability of the coastal states of the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea in addressing the problem.¹⁵⁹ For instance, perpetrators of destructive and IUU fishing in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea do not hesitate to use violence towards fishers. However, Indonesian maritime authorities “do not have adequate vessels and fuel to carry out round-the-clock patrols to curb” illicit activities at sea or enhance naval cooperation initiatives.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, “Indonesia’s ordinary fishers are afraid to fish.”¹⁶¹ Vessels coming from the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand were among the reported perpetrators of IUU fishing in the waters of North Sulawesi.¹⁶² Local fishers claim that illegal

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Two participants at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Senia Febrica, *Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2023), p.10. See also, RSIS Policy Report, “Indonesia’s Naval Development and Maritime Cooperation” RSIS, accessed May 10, 2024, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PR120705_Indonesia_Naval_Development_Maritime_Cooperation.pdf.

¹⁶¹ A participant at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024.

¹⁶² Senia Febrica, *Port Security and Preman Organizations in Indonesia*, (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2023).

fishers do not hesitate to kill, kidnap, or use violence against any local fishers they encounter at sea to prevent the reporting of the IUU fishing to the Indonesian authorities.¹⁶³

To address IUU fishing and other illicit activity at sea, Indonesia and the United States can explore the possibilities of using innovation and technology to detect and prosecute perpetrators of destructive and IUU fishing. Technologies like remote sensing, satellite imagery, and machine learning could be used to detect illegal fishing activities, such as bomb fishing, and the presence of IUU fishing vessels and support ecosystems, including bunker ships, transshipment ships, and offshore infrastructure.¹⁶⁴ For example, the Stimson Center created the Mekong Dam Monitor, an open-source online platform for near-real time monitoring of dams and environmental impacts in the Mekong Basin. The platform uses “remote sensing, satellite imagery, and GIS analysis to provide near-real time reporting and data downloads across numerous previously unreported indicators in the Mekong Basin.”¹⁶⁵ A similar platform could be applied to the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis or molecular techniques based on marine genetic resources, genomics and chemistry, and embedded in a forensic framework, have also great potential to reveal fisheries fraud, generate evidence in court trials, and support fish and fish product traceability “from ocean to fork.”¹⁶⁶ Vessels conducting IUU fishing are often equipped with fish processing technologies and combine their catch from areas where they have legal permits to fish with those where they have no license but have lower degrees of law enforcement. As a former legal advisor to the Taiwanese government noted:

Some of the large vessels that are committing IUU fishing, they are very well equipped with fish processing devices and have license, for example, to catch blue fin tuna in the Pacific. However, they also combine their catch with other types of tuna that they harvest in areas with less strong presence

¹⁶³ Interview with three retired local fishermen from North Sulawesi, Bitung, Manado and Minahasa Utara, February 8, 2016 as cited in Senia Febrica, *Port Security and Preman Organizations in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2023).

¹⁶⁴ Two participants at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024; BBC, “How AI is being used to prevent illegal fishing,” BBC, April 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68564249>; A participant at the “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur.

¹⁶⁵ Stimson Center, “Mekong Dam Monitor,” Stimson Center, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.stimson.org/project/mekong-dam-monitor/>.

¹⁶⁶ Jann Th. Martinsohn, “Deterring Illegal Activities in the Fisheries Sector: Genetics, Genomics, Chemistry and Forensics to Fight IUU Fishing and in Support of Fish Product Traceability,” Joint Research Center, 2011, p.4, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7997b95f-4fcf-4095-836f-c24b2edc3484>; Jann Th. Martinsohn et al., “DNA-analysis to monitor fisheries and aquaculture: Too costly?” *Fish and Fisheries*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2019), pp.391-401, <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12343>

of law enforcement authorities, for example big eye tuna from the Indian Ocean.¹⁶⁷

This renders it difficult for law enforcement authorities to determine fish species caught and the location where they were harvested.

Beyond the use of marine genetic resources or DNA analysis, capacity building and technology transfer to developing countries such as Indonesia will be needed.¹⁶⁸ Capacity building (for example, the training of inspectors and laboratory staff) and technology transfer from the United States could assist Indonesia's efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal target 14a:¹⁶⁹ "Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology...to improve ocean health and enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries."¹⁷⁰

In the area of counter IUU fishing, Indonesia and the United States will also need to foster closer partnerships with the private sector, particularly transnational corporations (TNC), to address those that commit IUU fishing and to collaborate with those that promote sustainable practices. TNCs dominate the catching and processing of fisheries products and control financial flows generated by the industry. Some TNCs capture fish in greater quantity than a number of countries combined.¹⁷¹ As international cooperation typically focuses on states and exclude non-state actors, this is a key area of oversight.¹⁷² In the future, Indonesia and the

¹⁶⁷ Interview with a former legal advisor to the Taiwanese government, August 2015, Taipei.

¹⁶⁸ Presentation by Elisa Morgera (University of Strathclyde, UK), "Fairness, equity and iterative learning in relation to benefit-sharing under the BBNJ Agreement" at the 8th International Conference on the Law of the Sea, titled "Law of the Sea for the Next Generation: BBNJ Agreement, from Definition to Regulation" (November 20-22, 2023, in Seoul); see also One Ocean Hub, "Exploring the path towards implementation of the BBNJ Agreement," One Ocean Hub, December 13, 2023, <https://oneoceanhub.org/exploring-the-path-towards-implementation-of-the-bbnj-agreement/>

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*; Martinsohn, "Deterring Illegal Activities in the Fisheries Sector."

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources," United Nations, accessed May 23, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

¹⁷¹ Henrik Österblom et al., "Transnational Corporations as 'Keystone Actors' in Marine Ecosystems," *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 10, No. 5: e0127533 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127533>, as cited in Senia Febrica et al., "Part I Defining Destructive Fisheries in a Rounded Manner," One Ocean Hub, August 26, 2021, <https://oneoceanhub.org/destructive-fishing/>

¹⁷² Shima Baradaran, Michael Findley, Daniel Nielson, and J.C. Sharman, "Does International Law Matter?," *Minnesota Law Review* Vol. 97, No. 3 (2012), pp. 743–837; NM Jensen and EJ Malesky, "Nonstate Actors and Compliance with International Agreements: An Empirical Analysis of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention," *International Organization*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (2018), pp. 33-69, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818317000443>

United States should expand efforts to engage TNCs to address destructive and IUU fishing practices.¹⁷³

Moreover, although the United States has shown concrete commitments to strengthening Indonesia's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is not within the list of United States priority MPAs.¹⁷⁴ USAID's priority MPAs in the Riau Islands, Bangka Belitung, West Kalimantan, West Papua, and Southwest Papua do not overlap with the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.

Moreover, in strengthening Indonesia's MPAs and the designation of "no take zones," Indonesia and the United States need to ensure that MPAs are co-designed by government authorities with various stakeholders. These include stakeholders that are most dependent on the ocean but are often marginalized in the decision-making processes, such as Indigenous Peoples and local communities, small-scale fishers, and women. There are at least 50 Indigenous cultural groups in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea region.¹⁷⁵ On rural islands in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea region, small-scale and artisanal fishing contributes directly to health and the economy of fishing villages and coastal communities.¹⁷⁶ Women in fishing villages and coastal areas are intricately involved in the fishing industry and thus local food security. Achieving progress in the establishment of MPAs necessitates inclusive policies and legal processes that provide Indigenous Peoples, local communities, small-scale fishers, and women with meaningful participation from the outset.

In the area of climate change adaptation and mitigation, more needs to be done to integrate Indonesia-United States collaborative efforts with various stakeholders in Indonesia to increase their buy-in to new climate financing initiatives. For example, not all ocean stakeholders, including those from the government, are familiar with the United States plan to co-develop "Blue Window" as a collective pool of funding under the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, new Indonesia-United States climate finance mechanisms,

¹⁷³ Arlie Hannah McCarthy et al, "Destructive fishing: An expert-driven definition and exploration of this quasi-concept," *Conservation Letters*, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/conl.13015>

¹⁷⁴ A participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ Miclat et al., "Planning across boundaries for the conservation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion," p. 599.

¹⁷⁶ Amling et al., "Stable Seas," p. 55.

¹⁷⁷ Discussion with a participant at the "Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea," April 23, 2024.

including in the area of marine insurance, need to complement existing ones. For example, in Indonesia the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries put in place *Kusuka* insurance for fishers in 2019. While the insurance helps fishers to manage risks, the Indonesian artisanal fishers' association, Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI) argued that the government's commitments are not sufficient. KNTI demanded that the government provide health insurance for small scale fishers. Reports suggest that the government will need to allocate Rp 400 billion [USD \$25,568,840] to meet this demand to subsidize fishers' health insurance.¹⁷⁸ Expanding this coverage could be a strong prospect for Indonesia-United States climate finance cooperation.

There are also opportunities to collaborate in protecting children in the climate crisis. Climate change and biodiversity crisis affect all socioeconomic groups, but the impact varies across age, gender, economic, social, and geopolitical factors.¹⁷⁹ Children are the population group hit hardest by climate change and environmental harm, all while contributing the least to environmental degradation.¹⁸⁰ As climate change affects the "biogeographical distribution of fish species... jeopardizing food security and livelihoods in the tropics," an increasing frequency of low- to zero-catch is now a common reality among artisanal and small-scale fishers in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.¹⁸¹ This development is also seen in different coastal areas of Indonesia and other low- to middle-income countries. The economic hardship it creates pushed children to work as support workers on fishing vessels or to be involved in gangs and shadow

¹⁷⁸ Antara News, "KNTI minta penguatan perlindungan nelayan hadapi perubahan," *Antara News*, January 12, 2023, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3346074/knti-minta-penguatan-perindungan-nelayan-hadapi-perubahan-iklim>, as cited in Senia Febrica, Herson Keradjaan, Laely Nurhidayah, and Michael Gustaf, "Small-scale fishers' perception of risks in Indonesia's cross-border region of North Maluku," submitted to *Marine Policy* in March 2024.

¹⁷⁹ Senia Febrica et al., "One Ocean Hub written submission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Report on the adverse impacts of climate change on the right to food," OHCHR, December 7, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/food/submissions/csos/submission-climate-change-food-one-ocean-hub.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ UN Doc CRC/C/88/D/104/2019, para 19 as cited in Elisa Morgera, Michael Sweeney, and Sophie Shields, "SDG14 and Children's Human Rights." One Ocean Hub, August 2022, <https://oneoceanhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SDG14-and-childrens-human-rights.pdf>, pp.19.

¹⁸¹ Benjamin Kofi Nyarko, "Presentation at IMO Maritime Week Webinar: Ocean and Climate Change," September 24, 2020 as cited in Senia Febrica et al., "One Ocean Hub written submission on the adverse impacts of climate change on the right to food," OHCHR, December 7, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/food/submissions/csos/submission-climate-change-food-one-ocean-hub.pdf>; See also UN Secretary General's Report on "Adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food" (see footnote 35 of the thematic report A/HRC/53/47), available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change/impact-climate-change-right-food>; Richard N. Muallil et al., "A rapid assessment of the status, trends, and challenges in small-scale commercial sardine fisheries in the Sulu Archipelago, southern Philippines," *Marine Policy* Vol. 160 (2024), p.5

economy activities.¹⁸² This deprives children of educational opportunities and exposes them to hazardous working condition, human trafficking risk and other forms of criminal exploitation.¹⁸³ Funding and programming to support at-risk children is an important area of cooperation for the United States and Indonesia.

Taking into consideration the challenges and joint interest in enhancing environmental security, we recommend a few policy options to strengthen United States and Indonesian cooperation in this area:

- Indonesia and its neighboring states should engage in peaceful negotiations to settle the pending maritime boundaries agreements. This development would contribute positively to conservation and sustainable management of marine resources in the region.
- The United States should provide capacity building and transfer of technology for innovation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea to detect destructive and IUU fishing. Technologies such as remote sensing, satellite imagery, and machine learning could be used to detect destructive and illegal fishing activities (e.g. bomb fishing) and the presence of IUU fishing vessels and its support ecosystems that may include bunker ships, transshipment ships, and offshore infrastructure.¹⁸⁴ Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis or molecular techniques based on marine genetic resources, genomics and chemistry, and embedded in a forensic framework, also have great potential to reveal

¹⁸² Senia Febrica, *Port Security and Preman Organizations in Indonesia*; Discussion with a participant at the sideline of “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur; Alexandra Amling et al., “Stable Seas: Sulu & Celebes Seas,” *Stable Seas*, 2019, p.47, https://safety4sea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Stable-Seas-Sulu-Celebes-Seas-2019_02.pdf; International Organization for Migration. (2016). *Report on Human Trafficking, Forced Labour and Fisheries Crime in the Indonesian Fishing Industry*, pp. 7, 32, 35-36, <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/country/docs/indonesia/Human-Trafficking-Forced-Labour-and-Fisheries-Crime-in-the-Indonesian-Fishing-Industry-IOM.pdf> ; For comparison on a similar situation in another region see also John Kwame Boateng et al., “Reconciling conflicts between cultural beliefs, and human rights standards in coastal communities of Ghana: preserving cultural rights and promoting sustainable fishing practices,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2340427>

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Two participants at the “Indonesia-United States Track 1.5 Dialogue on Ocean Security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea,” April 23, 2024; BBC, “How AI is being used to prevent illegal fishing,” BBC, April 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68564249>; A participant at the “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur.

fisheries fraud, generate evidence in court trials, and support fish and fish product traceability “from ocean to fork.”¹⁸⁵

- The United States and Indonesia should cooperate with private sector to improve certification and strengthen the traceability of marine products from fishers to consumers. The two governments need to strengthen cooperation to stop companies from committing destructive and IUU fishing and to collaborate with those that promote sustainable practices.
- Indonesia and the United States should explore opportunities to involve various stakeholders including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, small-scale fishers, women, and representatives of private sector in the co-design and co-management of MPAs in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.
- Indonesia and the United States should work to co-develop innovative climate finance mechanisms, including in marine insurance, to complement existing ones.
- Indonesia and the United States should collaborate more closely to protect children from the impacts of climate crisis “to human systems (e.g. food insecurity and poverty), which can in turn incentivize maritime crime (e.g. smuggling, trafficking).”¹⁸⁶ There is a pressing need to study the extent of climate change impacts on maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi region, co-design practical opportunities to increase climate resilience, and protect children from risks of being groomed and coerced into criminal activities or becoming victims of such activities.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Jann Th. Martinsohn, “Deterring Illegal Activities in the Fisheries Sector: Genetics, Genomics, Chemistry and Forensics to Fight IUU Fishing and in Support of Fish Product Traceability,” Joint Research Center, European Commission, (2011) p.4, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7997b95f-4fcf-4095-836f-c24b2edc3484>; Jann Th. Martinsohn et al., “DNA-analysis to monitor fisheries and aquaculture: Too costly?” *Fish and Fisheries*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2019), p.391-401, <https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12343>

¹⁸⁶ James Brennan and Basil Germond, “A methodology for analyzing the impacts of climate change on maritime security,” *Climatic Change* Vol. 177, No. 15 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03676-0>

¹⁸⁷ Senia Febrica, *Port Security and Preman Organizations in Indonesia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2023); Alexandra Amling et al., “Stable Seas: Sulu & Celebes Seas,” *Stable Seas*, 2019, p.47, https://safety4sea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Stable-Seas-Sulu-Celebes-Seas-2019_02.pdf; International Organization for Migration. (2016). *Report on Human Trafficking, Forced Labour and Fisheries Crime in the Indonesian Fishing Industry*, pp. 7, 32, 35-36, <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/country/docs/indonesia/Human-Trafficking-Forced-Labour-and-Fisheries-Crime-in-the-Indonesian-Fishing-Industry-IOM.pdf>; Discussion with a participant at the sideline of “Changing Dynamics in Southeast Asian Maritime Affairs Dialogue Meeting,” May 6, 2024, Kuala Lumpur. see also John Kwame Boateng, Harrison Kwame Golo, Sulley Ibrahim and Bolanle Erinosh, “Reconciling conflicts between cultural beliefs, and human rights standards in coastal communities of Ghana: preserving cultural rights and promoting sustainable fishing practices,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 1 ((2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2340427> for a comparison on a similar development in another region.

8. Conclusion

The United States and Indonesia share a joint interest in improving traditional and non-traditional security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. Traditional maritime security issues and environmental security are vital to local livelihoods, addressing the risks of terrorism and robbery at sea, addressing climate change, and protecting the environment. None of these issues can be tackled unilaterally and necessitate Jakarta and Washington to collaborate closely, as well as with other stakeholders and actors in the region, both at the local and supranational levels.

The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea plays an important role in the region's complex maritime landscape, but the United States and Indonesia also share a broader interest in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Lessons and policy initiatives from the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea can be applied elsewhere, and maritime cooperation can serve as a solid foundation for improving the overall US-Indonesia bilateral relationship. Just as traditional maritime and non-traditional marine security initiatives have developed in accord with upgrades to the bilateral relationship, further collaboration can lead to a virtuous cycle that begets expanded and deeper cooperation elsewhere.

Although bilateral issues remain a hindrance at times, the overall Indonesia-United States relationship proceeds apace with its upgrades over the past decade. Human, environmental, and maritime security in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea are important issues for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and joint collaboration on the policy issues discussed in this report can facilitate positive progress and highlight avenues for future developments.

The views expressed are the authors' alone, and do not represent the views of the United States Government, the Hollings Center, or the authors' respective employers.