

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Local Leaders from Asia-Pacific Convene in Boracay for High-Level Governance Summit on Integrated Coastal Management and Blue Economy





Local government leaders from across Asia and the Pacific convened in the Philippines from 9 to 12 June 2025 for the First Session of the 2025 Executive Bureau of the United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), hosted in partnership with the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) and the Provincial Government of Aklan with support from Australian Government and The Asia Foundation, Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC) - CCLEX, the PAG-IBIG Fund, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and Coca-Cola Europacific Aboitiz Philippines, Inc.(CCEAP).

Held at Crimson Resort and Spa, Boracay, the summit placed Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and the Blue Economy at the center of discussions—highlighting how local governments can lead efforts to protect marine ecosystems while promoting economic development in coastal and island communities.

“This event is about unlocking the power of local leadership in coastal governance,” said Governor Dax Cua, President of both ULAP and UCLG ASPAC. “Local governments are not waiting on national directives—we are setting the pace for how marine resources are managed, how tourism is made sustainable, and how communities can thrive along the coast.”

Boracay—once the subject of international headlines following its 2018 closure due to environmental damage—was chosen as the summit’s venue precisely because of its journey from near collapse to controlled rehabilitation. In his address, Aklan Governor Jose Enrique “Joel” Miraflores described the island as “a living example of what local governments can achieve with the right mix of political will, community engagement, and long-term planning.”

Over the course of four days, the summit featured a mix of plenary panels, technical sessions, and partnership-building activities. Local leaders exchanged policy innovations on marine spatial planning, sustainable tourism, waste management, water resource management, and coastal zoning—issues that are increasingly critical as more than 200 million people in Asia-Pacific depend directly on coastal ecosystems for food and livelihood.

One of the key themes was the importance of integrated and inclusive approaches to coastal governance—linking environmental stewardship with economic development, public service delivery, and community resilience. Speakers from local government units, academia, and development partners in the Philippines, New Zealand, South Korea, China, and Indonesia shared how local governments are tackling marine resource protection,

sustainable land use, water management, tourism regulation, and local livelihood support as interconnected priorities. Whether through ocean-friendly infrastructure, improved zoning policies, or investments in coastal food systems, the emphasis was on comprehensive, locally led solutions that respond to both ecological pressures and the daily needs of coastal communities.

Boracay also witnessed the launch of a school-based hydroponic garden in partnership with the City of Guangzhou, the Municipality of Malay, and the Aklan provincial government—a small but symbolic project promoting food security and environmental awareness among youth.

The event closed with a policy dialogue on localizing the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, reinforcing the idea that national and regional development goals can only succeed with the full engagement of local governments. In her keynote, Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso, the Philippines' Eminent Person to the ASEAN High-Level Task Force, emphasized that “the future of ASEAN depends on the leadership of its cities.”

Participants adopted the “Boracay Call for Action,” a joint statement committing UCLG ASPAC members to advancing integrated coastal governance, strengthening LGU capacity, and promoting inclusive and sustainable marine economies.

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC, called the gathering a defining moment for the region's local leadership. “This was far from a symbolic gathering—it was a working platform for real solutions,” she said. “In Boracay, we witnessed the energy, commitment, and innovation of local governments taking center stage in addressing the complex challenges of our time—locally grounded, but regionally and globally relevant.”

With over 10,000 local governments represented in UCLG ASPAC and more than 3.7 billion people living in the Asia-Pacific, the decisions made in Boracay this week carry implications far beyond the Philippine archipelago.

For the leaders gathered in Boracay, the message was unmistakable: the future of coastal and marine governance will not be decided in distant capitals, but in the hands of mayors, governors, and barangay officials who stand at the frontlines of both challenge and change. In an era defined by ecological strain and economic transformation, it is local leadership—grounded in community, driven by innovation—that will chart the course forward.

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