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Plan for the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025

(Item (8) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the Secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 was adopted at the 20th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-20) in 2015 through consultations at the SOM-19 in 2014 and a meeting of National Focal Points of NEASPEC in 2015. The NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 sets the goals, overall approaches and specific objectives and activities of NEASPEC's work in five programmatic areas identified by the member States, namely: transboundary air pollution, biodiversity and nature conservation, marine protected areas, low carbon cities, and desertification and land degradation. Besides the programmatic areas outlined in the current Plan, new programmatic areas can be developed if such need is identified and consensus reached among member States. The Plan also provides the specific steps for strengthening the institutional support and monitoring and evaluation.

2. In order to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the performance of NEASPEC in delivering the current strategic plan, and to contribute to the development of a new plan to further strengthen NEASPEC, an external evaluation plan was considered and supported by SOM-22 in 2018. The scope of the evaluation includes a) assessing the programmatic achievements; b) identifying the strengths and challenges in the current institutional and organizational setup of NEASPEC; c) analyzing partnership arrangements and resource mobilization; and d) formulating concrete and actionable recommendations in the context of the subregional priorities of environmental cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Following to the discussion at SOM-22, the Secretariat drafted and circulated a Terms of Reference (TOR) on external evaluation of NEASPEC in December 2018 to national focal points for incorporating views of the member Governments and consulted with the ESCAP Strategy and Programme Management Division (SPMD) to finalize the draft TOR.

4. Subsequently, the Secretariat conducted an open recruitment process for a consultant through the UN Careers Portal and the UN consultancy roster, and reviewed about 150 candidates against the following criteria: (1) evaluation and analytical skills, (2) academic qualification, (3) professional experiences in conducting evaluations in the UN system, and (4) English proficiency. After the review, the Secretariat revisited the initial plan of external evaluation as candidates do not fully meet the required competency for the evaluation.

5. In this regard, the Secretariat proposes a revised plan to carry out the evaluation by the Secretariat based on a questionnaire and approaches agreed by the member States.

II. EVALUATION OF NEASPEC

6. The proposed evaluation remains to be forward-looking and designed to support organizational learning and decision-making as presented at SOM-22. The aim is to contribute to further strengthening the role of NEASPEC in addressing subregional priorities of environmental cooperation and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and, in particular, to serve as a key reference for the development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

7. The evaluation is proposed to be carried out by the Secretariat in collaboration with member governments and project partners based on agreed questionnaire in the following process including to:

- a) Invite views of member governments during the SOM-23 on: a) the preliminary evaluation about the five programmatic areas based on the set of objectives and activities planned in the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020, and b) the draft questionnaire as attached in the Annex II for the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025;
- b) Revise the draft questionnaire after incorporating views expressed by member governments during the SOM-23;
- c) Circulate the revised questionnaire to all stakeholder groups, including to national focal points, partner ministries, national institutions, project partners and other collaborating institutes in member States;
- d) Collect and analyze the questionnaire responses;
- e) Present the results of evaluation to a meeting of National Focal Points as input for discussion on the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 to be held in early 2020; and
- f) Present a draft Strategic Plan to the next SOM for consideration.

Table 1. Tentative timeline for the evaluation and development of Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Time	Action
October-November 2019	Revise and finalize the evaluation questionnaire
November-December 2019	Circulate the questionnaire to all stakeholder groups
January-February 2020	Collect and analyze the questionnaire responses from all stakeholder groups
March 2020	Present the results of evaluation to a Meeting of National Focal Points together with a draft outline of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025
April-May 2020	Develop a draft Strategic Plan 2021-2025, based on key findings and recommendations from the evaluation and the National Focal Points Meeting

June-July 2020	Circulate the draft Strategic Plan to national focal points for further review
24 th SOM in 2020	Present the second draft Strategic Plan 2021-2025 for adoption

8. In this regard, the following preliminary evaluation of implementing the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 by the Secretariat is presented for the review of member States on NEASPEC performance and for the initial discussion on the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

Table 2. Preliminary Evaluation of Implementing the Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Objectives and Planned activities	Implementation	Note
Transboundary Air Pollution		
Objectives: By 2020, implement joint projects, study and cooperation on transboundary air pollution		Launched the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership through studies and consultations
Support collaboration among national institutions on modelling on source-receptor relationship of transboundary air pollution, policy scenarios, impact assessment, etc., to strengthen the science-policy linkage	Partially	Supported Russian institute's capacity building on source-receptor relationship modeling Plan to implement them under NEACAP
Encourage the exchange of emission data to support the collaboration among scientific and academic communities	Minimally	Will be undertaken as a key NEACAP activity
Promote wider participation of stakeholders in subregional cooperation on tackling air pollution	Substantially	Held various meetings and outreach to wider stakeholders
Liaise with multilateral, regional and global mechanisms on transboundary air pollution and develop partnership activities	Substantially	Had consultations with existing mechanisms including CLARTAP, APCAP, EANET, LTP and academic networks
Biodiversity and Nature Conservation		
Objectives: By 2020, implement joint plans or projects for six target species with enhanced and strengthened transboundary cooperation		Implemented projects for all target species except Snow Leopard and strengthened the scientific and policy basis of transboundary cooperation
Implement the strategy for habitat conservation and rehabilitation of White-naped Cranes, Hooded Cranes and Black-faced Spoonbills	Fully	Implemented two projects on the conservation and rehabilitation of habitats for the three species
Strengthen linkages between policy framework and scientific basis, and improve harmonization of data, methods and techniques, to conserve Amur tigers and leopards	Fully	Implemented a project on the scientific assessment of transborder movement of the species which strengthened policy and scientific basis.
Strengthen bilateral and multilateral, and multi-level cooperation and capacity	Substantially	Conducted surveys and field researches with diverse local and international partners

Support coordination among major stakeholders to improve existing transboundary ecological corridors and facilitate the establishment of transboundary protected areas	Substantially	Supported a joint study on the assessment of the Dauria International Protected Area (DIPA), and the process for transboundary protected area for Amur tigers and leopards
Promote dialogue and cooperation with multilateral mechanisms	Substantially	Played an instrumental role in DPRK's accession to the Ramsar Convention and EAAFP.
Marine Protected Areas		
Objectives: By 2020, fully operationalize NEAMPAN to support partnerships among target MPAs and stakeholders, and enhance capacity		Supported information sharing among members and conducted an assessment
Facilitate the sharing and exchange of knowledge, information, experiences and practices with regard to strengthen MPA management effectiveness	Substantially	Held workshops for sharing knowledge and information, and conducted a joint study on the assessment of monitoring and management strategies
Cooperate with existing partnerships that can provide targeted capacity-building and technical assistance	Substantially	Jointly organized activities with EAAFP and YSLME, and shared information with NOWPAP, CBD and national networks
Enhance interactive communication among policy makers, scientific community and local stakeholders in NEASPEC	Partially	Set up the steering committee under NEAMPAN while requiring to be further activated
Facilitate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder communication network	Substantially	Communicated with all relevant networks and institutions at national, subregional and international levels
Share experiences in achieving a balance between the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity	Partially	Experience sharing will be further promoted after the completion of the current study
Low Carbon Cities		
Objectives: By 2020, fully operationalize a subregional platform for low carbon cities to support communications and cooperation among stakeholders		Operationalize the North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform with programmes on peer review and comparative analysis
Facilitate information sharing and communications with regard to subregional LCC progress, case studies, relevant activities, platform events and publications, etc.	Substantially	Facilitated information sharing among diverse stakeholders through workshops and studies

Enhance provision of technical assistance by linking, mobilizing and connecting experts to review and analyze city's LCC approach, as well as providing recommendations and technical support	Substantially	Provided technical review and policy recommendation for host cities of the peer review, Wuhan and Guangzhou, China
Conduct analytical studies to identify gaps, generate practical knowledge and address specific for LCC development	Substantially	Conducted a comparative study on Low Carbon City Development in China, Japan, and Republic of Korea
Promote capacity building by matching the demand and supply of knowledge and experiences especially within the subregion to enhance local capacity	Substantially	Peer review and workshops contributed to enhancing knowledge and capacity on LCC policy
Desertification and Land Degradation		
Objectives: By 2020, implement a number of partnership projects recommended by the North-East Asia Multi-stakeholder Plan (NEAMSP) on Combating Desertification and Land Degradation for more coordinated and efficient actions		Launched the Study on North-East Asia Land Degradation Neutrality and Sustainable Development (NEAMSP)
Map activities and capacity in the subregion to coordinate, complement and enhance efficiency of DLD-related activities	Partially	Mapped out DLDD related activities and made the information available on the NEASPE website
Develop and maintain an open subregional network that addresses the multidisciplinary aspects and impact of DLD	Minimally	Participated in relevant multilateral and international platforms in North-East Asia
Build partnerships, joint activities, and mobilize financial and technical resources for NEAMSP as appropriate	Minimally	Built a new partnership with FAO by co-organizing a side event at the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019
Enhance regional cooperation for best practice sharing and upscaling integrated land rehabilitation to improve sustainable land management decision making	Substantially	Contributed to publication of the UNCCD Thematic Report on LDN

III. ISSUES OF CONSIDERATION

9. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to share views on the revised plan of evaluation, the preliminary evaluation of implementing the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, and the proposed questionnaire and approaches for the development of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

10. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to adopt the revised evaluation plan and the draft questionnaire for the development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and to support the participation of national focal points and national stakeholders in the evaluation and ensuing consultations on the development of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 tentatively scheduled in early 2020.

Annex I. Milestones of the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020

1993 NEASPEC Establishment	NEASPEC started as a collective response of North-East Asian countries to the call of Agenda 21, adopted by United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, to strengthen subregional and regional cooperation to implement identified actions.
1996 NEASPEC Goals	<p>The Framework of NEASPEC was adopted by the 3rd Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in 1996 and defined the goal of NEASPEC as follow:</p> <p><i>The principal objective of the Programme is to promote subregional environmental cooperation and sustainable development efforts for enhancement of quality of life and well-being of present and future generations in line with the spirit of UNCED.</i></p> <p>The Framework also suggested <i>a step-by-step and practical approach</i> towards developing and consolidating programmatic areas of NEASPEC over time.</p>
2010 Permanent Secretariat at ESCAP-ENEA	Since then, NEASPEC has taken steps to realize the objective by adopting an approach that continually expanded the scope and increased the involvement of wider stakeholders for joint actions. In this course of the progress, NEASPEC during 2010-2011 had a major milestone in its institutional arrangement and programmes by bringing the secretariat to North-East Asia with the launch of ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office and subsequently changing the status of the secretariat from interim to permanent.
2011 Analytical Study	With this new arrangement, SOM-16 in 2011 requested the Secretariat to carry out an analytical study of similar subregional programmes and entities with a view of benefitting from their experience as member States wished to deepen and broaden NEASPEC's engagement.
2012 Study proposed long-term Strategic Plan	The analytical study, "North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities" carried out by an external consultant and presented to SOM-17 in 2012, proposed a number of recommendations including the formulation of a long-term (five-year or ten-year) Strategic Plan to provide a roadmap for NEASPEC's future activities. The Meeting took note of the need of developing the plan as a way to support member States to share a long-term view on the direction of NEASPEC and to enhance the efficiency of NEASPEC.
2014 Strategic Plan	In this regard, the Secretariat prepared an outline of the strategic plan for the review and decision by the SOM-19 in 2014. The outline firstly indicated

Outline

the need to:

- a) **Strengthen modalities and current programme areas** in connection with growing urgency to address environmental issues;
- b) **Broaden the scope** of NEASPEC beyond environmental cooperation to serve as a subregional platform for **regional and global processes on sustainable development**; and
- c) **Strengthen the link with other subregional and regional initiatives** as well as Sustainable Development Goals and identify areas of complementarity.

To enable the role of NEASPEC in these areas, the outline elaborated a draft set of vision/ strategic priorities, examples of specific goals and targets for each programmatic area, and the need for strengthening institutional arrangement.

The SOM-19 supported the development of the plan while emphasizing a number of points including the consideration of the subregion's uniqueness and NEASPEC's comparative advantages; the focus on practical and action-oriented activities, and the current programmatic areas with a view of properly addressing persistent challenges; and the need to avoid duplication and strengthening partnership with relevant mechanisms. The Meeting also requested the Secretariat to prepare and circulate a questionnaire on the plan to the member governments, and continue to communicate with member States on the development of the Plan before the next SOM.

2015

Consultation on Draft Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Against this background, the national focal point meeting was organized in October 2015 at the Secretariat office in Incheon to review and discuss the draft strategic plan in preparation for member States to fully share their views to finalize and adopt the plan at SOM-20 held in February 2016.
