

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Eighteenth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC

5-6 November 2013

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

**REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING
OF THE NORTH-EAST ASIAN SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION**

1. The eighteenth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC was held in Ulaanbaatar on 5-6 November 2013. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) East and North-East Asia Office, acting as the Secretariat for NEASPEC, and was generously hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Green Development of Mongolia.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The 18th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) commended the contributions of NEASPEC during the last 20 years to subregional environmental cooperation and called it a unique and comprehensive mechanism for collectively reviewing subregional and national progress in sustainable development and a key vehicle for practical cooperation among member States.

3. The SOM in its continuing effort at strengthening NEASPEC launched new programmatic work on Marine Protected Areas as well as new activities and approaches within the existing programmes. In this regard, the Meeting noted the recommendations of member States on building synergies with relevant multilateral programmes in the subregion as well as bilateral activities among member States in the fields of nature conservation, air pollution and dust and sandstorms; in enhancing cooperation for mutual benefit based on priorities collectively set by member States; and for enriching subregional cooperation connecting with global processes on sustainable development.

4. **Transboundary Air Pollution:** The Meeting noted the process and outcome of the consultation after SOM-17 on the Russian proposal on the development of technical and policy framework for transboundary air pollution assessment and abatement. In this consultation process, the Russian Federation made further clarification on its proposal submitted to the SOM and other member States, Japan and the ROK, provided substantive views and recommendations.

5. During the Meeting, the Republic of Korea (ROK) reiterated the need for a comprehensive framework on transboundary air pollution in the subregion. China emphasized on the need for capacity training and importance of information exchange, as well as taking into account of subregion-specific situation and consulting member States with regard to utilizing experiences from other mechanisms, notably, CLRTAP. Japan highlighted the importance of the efficient use of resources and close collaboration with existing programmes within the subregion. Mongolia noted the relevance of this proposal on the bilateral cooperation between Mongolia and Japan on developing inventory guidelines and training workshops.

6. Further to the receiving views from member States, the Meeting endorsed the Russian proposal with the observations from China expressed in para.5, and welcomed the indication of the Secretariat to develop a plan for an expert group meeting and circulate it to member States expeditiously.

7. **Dust and Sand Storms:** The Meeting commended the successful completion of the training workshop and reiterated the support for carrying out similar activities. Mongolia highlighted the importance of providing training to build capacity, particularly at local level. Mongolia suggested that future-training programmes should be provided and include a wider range of participants from a greater number of regions within Mongolia. The Meeting also noted the importance of linking NEASPEC programme with other existing mechanisms such as the Northeast Asia Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought Network, and involving more member States in training programmes.

8. Mongolian delegation presented awareness raising materials produced and distributed during the NEASPEC project on “Implementing the Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms (DSS)” that informs and educates the younger generation. The delegation also briefed the Meeting on the usefulness of the GIS-based database (developed under the Project) in providing valuable information of all nation-wide activities on combating desertification.

9. The Meeting had also been briefed on the importance of developing the monitoring work in DSS and desertification control, especially on monitoring soil conditions. The Chair concluded the discussion by highlighting the significance of the overall subregional will to cooperate in combating desertification; and the need for other financial resources and broader participation from other sectors related to desertification prevention and control such as mining and agriculture.

10. **Nature Conservation:** The Meeting noted progress made in increasing bilateral

cooperation between China and the Russian Federation for the conservation of Amur tigers and leopards. Regarding proposed activities on Amur tigers and leopards, the Meeting received support from member States on DNA analysis, and welcomed the indication from Japan and the ROK for joining this activity and contributing to the work.

11. The Meeting reviewed the outcome of the Expert Group Meeting on the NEASPEC Project, “Conservation and rehabilitation of habitats for key migratory bird in North-East Asia”, and approved the implementation plan including the reallocation of budget components. The Meeting was also briefed on the plan of establishing transboundary-protected area at the headwaters of Amur River, which also includes Onon protected area, one of the target sites for the NEASPEC Project on migratory bird habitats. With regard to scoping survey on White-naped Cranes, the Meeting noted that Mongolia will serve as a coordinating body.

12. **Marine Protected Areas:** The Meeting was briefed on the process and progress made at the NOWPAP/NEASPEC Joint Workshop on Marine Biodiversity Conservation and MPAs in the Northwest Pacific in March 2013 and the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) prepared by the Secretariat. The member States commended the progress made and endorsed the TOR. With regard to its implementation, China stressed the importance of starting the activities small due to the limited budget and think about scaling them up as more resources become available. Russian Federation informed the Meeting that a proposal has been prepared by the Russian Government with a focus on creating an action plan for developing marine protected areas in North-East Asia. This proposal will be submitted to the Secretariat.

13. The Meeting was informed of NOWPAP activities related to MPA with a specific focus on operating a database and that it is currently in the process of compiling a regional overview, updating the database and preparing a report.

14. **Green development/green economy and eco-efficiency:** The Meeting expressed its support to the upcoming International Symposium on “Realizing Low Carbon Cities in Northeast Asia: Bridging Science, Policy and Promoting Cooperation” which will be held in Beijing on 5-6 December 2013. The member States signified their readiness to nominate experts and share experiences with other member States by participating in this symposium.

15. The Russian Federation informed the Meeting that it is undertaking environmental legislation reform as part of the preparatory process of joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In particular, the reform includes the use of best available technology and waste management among others. China informed the Meeting on the designation of 29 new low carbon pilot regions to reduce carbon intensity of economy and its intention to support NEASPEC’s upcoming Low Carbon Cities Partnership and green development of Mongolia. Mongolia shared information related to the developments in Mongolia with respect to green development, particularly the submission of the green development strategy for consideration by the Parliament and the strengthening of the Ministry of Environment and Green Development. The ROK informed

the Meeting that it has designated three cities as pilot low-carbon cities and it is currently working on the second green growth plan for next five years. Japan emphasized that it attaches great importance to transformation to low carbon society and in this regard, expressed support for NEASPEC's Low Carbon Cities Partnership and highlighted the importance of synergies with other relevant programmes.

16. The Secretariat requested the member States to share information on national progress related to green development, green economy, and eco-efficiency for dissemination to other member States.

17. **Consideration of NEASPEC programmes and activities:** The Meeting received the proposal of Mongolia entitled "A conservation strategy to achieve recovery of a critically endangered Gobi bear population in Mongolia" which contains three components: (i) increasing the Gobi bear population; (ii) restoring their habitat; and (iii) awareness raising. Considering the extremely small population of the Gobi bears in the wild, the Meeting noted the urgency of action to improve their habitat conditions and recommended that planned efforts should be built on the successful experiences in the region. China expressed support to Mongolia's proposal and its willingness to share its expertise in artificial reproduction of endangered species. The ROK also shared its successful effort to re-introduce the Asiatic black bear into the wild. The Meeting approved the proposal, subject to further consultation on project activities and mobilization of necessary resources for implementation. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that it will further consult on the proposed project activities and will work towards identifying potential sources of financing.

18. **Special Session on Green Development of Mongolia:** The delegation of Mongolia briefed the Meeting on the Green Development Plan of the Mongolia, and hopes that it would be approved by the Parliament in 2013. The delegation highlighted the imperatives of Mongolia to move towards green development considering the high energy and carbon intensity of economy, the growing impact of climate change on natural resources, economy and society. In this regard, the Government has developed the Plan consisting of five dimensions, namely, climate compatible development, green economy and financing, equitable society, cultural heritage, and governance for sustainable development. In particular, the delegation highlighted four objectives with regard to environment-economy linkage, energy production, resource efficiency, green production and nature conservation, and also stressed the significance of green financing to achieve the Plan. The Meeting commended the political commitment of the Mongolian Government to green development and expressed its anticipation for collaboration between Mongolia and NEASPEC member States in the course of the implementation of the Plan.

19. **Institutional Arrangement:** The Meeting took note of the recommendations submitted to SOM-17 and the current SOM, and received views of member States on the recommendations. The Meeting agreed to (1) develop a long-term strategic plan, (2) accord the official NEASPEC titles to those ESCAP staff serving for the Secretariat, and (3) convene a ministerial gathering during the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific to be held in 2015. It further requested the Secretariat to

prepare an information document and to share with member States ahead of the next SOM.

20. **Core Fund:** The Meeting accepted the financial report, and welcomed the announcement of China and the Republic of Korea for their intended financial contributions to the Core Fund in 2013 and 2014. The Meeting also appreciated the Russian Federation for its intended project-based funding for project on transboundary air pollution. The Chair urged member States to scale up financial contribution to the Core Fund and NEASPEC activities.

21. **Plan for the Next SOM:** The Meeting welcomed the statement of the Russian delegation on hosting the SOM-19 in July or September 2014, and noted the venue and time will be communicated to the member States through the Secretariat in due course.

22. **Other Matters:** The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the host Government for its excellent arrangements for the Meeting and for its warm hospitality extended to all participants. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the Secretariat for its excellent preparatory work for the SOM-18 and also thanked the delegations for their very active and dedicated participation at the Meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

A. Attendance

23. The Meeting was attended by delegations from China, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, and representatives of the UN system agencies and international organizations¹.

B. Opening session

24. The Senior Officials Meeting was opened by Mr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna, the Director of the UNESCAP East and North-East Asia Office. He welcomed delegates and representatives from international organizations, and expressed gratitude to the Government of Mongolia for the excellent meeting arrangement. He noted that in 2013, Senior Officials Meeting commemorates its 20th anniversary after the first meeting in February 1993, which was convened as a consultative body for North-East Asian countries to build a new institutional framework for environmental cooperation, and highlighted that SOM has been acted as integral platform for decision-making for reviewing environmental processes in the subregion. He also emphasized two aspects for NEASPEC to take a step forward: (1) making NEASPEC a forum for policy dialogue; and (2) strengthening institutional arrangement of the Secretariat to serve member States more efficiently and effectively.

25. The representative of the host country, Mr. Batbold Jamsran, the State Secretary of

¹ Please see List of participants for details.

Ministry of Environment and Green Development, Mongolia, delivered welcoming remarks. He first expressed his appreciation to member States for coming to Mongolia to discuss environmental issues. He stated that sustainable development is what the current generation has to achieve for millions of people in the world and our future generations. He stressed that it is important to protect freshwater, forest and species in order to reduce climate change impact. He also emphasized the importance of greenhouse gas emissions and waste reduction to combat desertification. He informed the Meeting of two aspects: (1) the Government has been actively supporting international and regional environmental initiatives by hosting international and regional meetings such as World Environment Day this year; and (2) the Ministry of Environment and Green Development submitted the green development strategy to the Parliament. He pointed out that it is necessary to have one common initiative within the subregion and to implement the initiative effectively. He lastly expressed his wishes that the Meeting would develop concrete initiatives for a green future as an interesting and inspiring example in the region.

C. Election of officers

26. The Meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Batbold Jamsran (Mongolia) ²
Vice-Chair:	Mr. Zhaoyang Xu (China)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Irina Fominykh (Russian Federation)

D. Adoption of the agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
 - a) Opening remarks by the Director of ESCAP ENEA Office
 - b) Welcoming remarks by the State Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Green Development of Mongolia
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of agenda
4. Statements by delegations of member States, UN and international organizations on issues related to sustainable development in North-East Asia
5. Review of programme planning and implementation
 - Transboundary Air Pollution in North-East Asia

² After the election of officers, the Chair requested Mr. Batbold Dorjgurkhem, Director of International Cooperation, MEGD, to conduct the SOM as the acting Chair.

- Mitigation of Dust and Sandstorms
 - Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas
 - Marine Protected Areas
 - Green Development/Green Economy and Eco-efficiency Partnership
6. New NEASPEC programmes and activities
 7. Review of issues concerning the institutional arrangements of NEASPEC
 8. Review of the Core Fund
 9. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the nineteenth SOM
 10. Other matters
 11. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting

E. Policy issues for sustainable development in North-East Asia

(Agenda item 4)

27. The representative of China pointed out that North-East Asia with the highest population density and most dynamic economy in the world has been facing serious environmental challenges such as water shortage, desertification and sandstorm. He stressed the important role of NEASPEC in this subregion since its foundation in 1993 in terms of training, experience sharing, environmental management, etc. Emphasizing the importance of cooperation in the region, he suggested to enhance cooperation based on the principle of mutual benefit and practical efficiency, and further elaborated three aspects: (1) enriching and renewing subregional cooperation combined with the progress of UN; (2) sticking to projects and focusing on their implementation, in line with the adjustment to the changing situation; and (3) increasing financial resources and properly managing and making best use of core fund of NEASPEC (China committed USD 50,000 to the core fund in 2014).

28. The representative of Japan highlighted the rapid urbanization related to many environmental issues such as energy consumption and air condition, and underscored the importance of transformation to environmentally sustainable cities. She informed the Meeting that Japan has organized several meetings to facilitate discussion on the approaches and actions to be taken to enable transformation to environmentally sustainable cities, such as International Conference on Future of Cities, Seminars on Low Carbon Development in Asia and High Level Forum on Environmentally Sustainable Cities. She also informed the Meeting of Japan's support for transformation to low carbon societies by transferring its technologies through Joint Crediting Mechanisms with Mongolia, Vietnam and other five countries. She expressed the willingness to contribute to sustainable urban development in the region in collaboration with NEASPEC partners.

29. The representative of Mongolia first pointed out the historical process on sustainable development under the United Nations, namely, the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in 2012. She noted that Mongolia now faces many challenges such as environmental issues, rapid urbanization, lack of provision of social services and high youth unemployment rates, which were discussed during the series of workshops organized by the Ministry of Economic Development and UNDP. She informed the Meeting that the Ministry of Environment and Green Development has established an inter-ministerial working group to develop green development goals and targets for Mongolia until 2030, and the draft has been submitted to the Parliament for an approval. The draft includes decreasing environmentally harmful production, increasing investments in nature, improving regulations in promoting green development, etc. She also informed the Meeting that the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) project was initiated in 2013, with aims to support Mongolia in refining and implementing its Green Development Strategy. She expressed her wishes that cooperation among member States of NEASPEC would focus more on concrete actions and initiatives to improve inter-sectoral coordination for implementing green development concept.

30. The representative of the Republic of Korea first congratulated the 20th anniversary of NEASPEC and highly commended what NEASPEC has achieved and committed to the continuous contribution to addressing environmental challenges in North-East Asia. He welcomed NEASPEC's expansion of its programme fields into transboundary air pollution, marine protected areas, etc., and expressed his Government's strong support to new initiatives. In this regard, he noted that NEASPEC continuously needs to upgrade its programmes and activities by enhancing human and technical capacity of the Secretariat through stable financing. Concerning recent outcomes made by the Government, he pointed out four achievements. First, ROK invested the equivalent of 2% of GDP to green growth for the last five years and has reaped visible benefits in economy and social welfare. The Government is now preparing for five-year plan on green growth (2014-2018) and another plan on climate change for the next 20 years. Second, ROK will strongly support the Green Climate Fund (GCF) which will be opened in Incheon, in December. Third, he informed the Meeting that the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), located in Seoul, acquired the observer status of the UN General Assembly in October, and received recognition of the OECD as an ODA eligible organization in June 2013, respectively. Fourth, new initiative for Peace and Cooperation in North-East Asia is to build an infrastructure of trust by accumulating small but significant interactions on mutually beneficial issues, and the Government regards environment as one of the promising cooperative issues which can contribute to achieving sustainable development in the region. Overall, he wished to have closer cooperation in the fields of environment with the member States. Lastly, he informed the Meeting that the Government will host 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2014, and appreciated kind attention and support by other member States for this COP.

31. The representative of the Russian Federation elaborated on key important outcomes that the Government achieved: (1) poverty reduction by 60% since 1990s; (2) its active role to the global economic and financial crises and their prevention; (3) its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and plan to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020 relative to 1990; and (4) its reduction on energy use by more than 4% per year. She also pointed out that the best ways to counter threats to global development are to create good jobs and to operate financial agencies stably. Finally, she emphasized that the Russian Federation is building an economy based on knowledge and high technology, and ready to play a leading role in accomplishing global food security issues in order to prevent food shortages and excessive price increases.

32. The representative of UNDP Mongolia informed the Meeting that it is currently running a programme cycle which will last until 2016, and also working on the post-2015 discussion to figure out its priorities. Pointing out several issues such as poverty reduction, social services provision, and sustainable development that UN agencies need to focus on, she stated that UNDP Mongolia has supported the green development of Mongolia and its equitable development. She also identified that there are areas of cooperation directed towards urbanization and its related issues in Mongolia. Lastly she expressed her willingness to support the programmes and activities of NEASPEC.

33. The representative of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) stated that it is working on sustainable development goals, governance, air pollution, sustainable cities and green environment. He stressed great advantages of further cooperation with NEASPEC in order to resolve many of those issues.

34. The representative of NOWPAP briefed on the history of NOWPAP, its inter-governmental programmes dealing with marine issues, activities including monitoring coastal environment and integrated coast and river basin, and status of environment report. He emphasized the synergy effect which can be achieved by close collaboration and information sharing between NOWPAP and NEASPEC marine programmes. He also informed the Meeting of its intergovernmental meeting, which will be held in December 2013 in Toyama, Japan, to discuss the focus of the next biennium.

F. Presentations and discussions on substantive agenda items

(Agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8)

35. The Meeting had presentations from the Secretariat on agenda item 5: Review of programme planning and implementation; agenda item 6: New NEASPEC programmes and activities; agenda item 7: Review of issues concerning the institutional arrangements of NEASPEC; and agenda item 8: Review of the core fund, followed by interventions from member States. Under agenda item 6: New NEASPEC programmes and activities, the delegation of Mongolia proposed a project on conserving the critically endangered Gobi

bear in Mongolia. Key outcomes of discussions on the agenda items are included as the Conclusions and Recommendations in the Report of the Meeting.

**G. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Nineteenth Senior Officials Meeting
(Agenda item 9)**

36. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the nineteenth Senior Officials Meeting. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Russian Federation for generously offering to host the next Meeting. The proposed dates, venue and the provisional agenda would be announced by the Secretariat in consultation with the host Government in due course.

**H. Other matters
(Agenda item 10)**

37. The Meeting expressed deep appreciation to the Government of Mongolia for generously hosting the eighteenth Senior Officials Meeting and for its warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements for the Meeting, and to the Secretariat for the excellent preparation of the Meeting.

**I. Adoption of the report
(Agenda item 11)**

38. The Meeting adopted the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Senior Officials Meeting on 6 November 2013. The report of the Meeting was finalized and adopted by circulating it among the member States after the Senior Officials Meeting.

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