

**FRAMEWORK FOR THE NORTH-EAST ASIAN SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMME OF
ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION**

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BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia held at Seoul in February 1993 was the first attempt at the official level to promote subregional environmental cooperation in the North-East Asia. Besides identifying three priority areas initially, for the development of project profiles, the Meeting recommended that as a follow-up to the UNCED, the subregional cooperation programme should be developed on a step-by-step basis on agreed priority areas. The Meeting also observed that there was a need for an overall framework for subregional environmental cooperation and some kind of support arrangement to carry forward the agreed programme. In this connection, it was agreed that the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 could serve as a basis for the elaboration of the general framework for such cooperation.

2. The Second Meeting of Senior Officials held at Beijing in November 1994 approved five priority projects for implementation, and discussed the issue of overall framework **of cooperation** in detail. It made the following observations in this regard:

(a) It would be advisable to follow a practical approach towards subregional cooperation which should be promoted step by step;

(b) The Meeting of Senior Officials would act as the governing body for environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. It would also serve as a forum for sharing of experience on policy matters, information exchange, consultation and stock taking on activities which would promote environmental cooperation in North-East Asia;

(c) Since a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly has been scheduled for mid-term review of the implementation of Agenda 21 comprehensively in 1997, it would be most appropriate if the North-East Asian region could show tangible results of subregional cooperation and formulate an appropriate framework of cooperation by 1997;

(d) There are several principles in the Rio Declaration that are relevant in the context of subregional cooperation.

(e) Commonality of interest, contribution to capacity-building, priority setting by the countries themselves, the impact on the environment and sustainable development efforts, cost effectiveness and tangible subregional environmental benefits should contribute to the general guidelines for the selection of projects for subregional cooperation.

(f) The ESCAP secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the Asian Development Bank, and the

World Bank should continue to provide professional, financial and technical support for furthering the activities of subregional cooperation.

3. The ESCAP Secretariat transmitted a letter to the focal points of North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation to seek their views and comments on the overall framework for the subregional cooperation. The comments received by the secretariat have been incorporated in the draft Framework prepared for the consideration of the Meeting.

4. The governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation have already signed a Memorandum of

Understanding on Environmental Principles Governing the Tumen River Economic Development Area in North-East Asia. The Memorandum of Understanding details out the responsibilities of and the cooperation to be extended by the Contracting Parties in attaining environmentally sound and sustainable development of North-East Asia and the Tumen River Economic Development Area in particular. This could be considered as an example for the participating governments in promoting the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation.

5. The document, elaborates an overall framework for sustaining and strengthening subregional cooperation in North-East Asia. It elaborates the geographical coverage, programme objectives, the functions and responsibilities of Senior Officials Meeting in promoting cooperation on the environment, and coordination and management and financial mechanisms of such cooperation. This document was adopted in a non-binding format by the Third Senior Officials Meeting.

II. FRAMEWORK FOR NORTH-EAST ASIAN SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION

1. The Senior Officials designated by the Governments of the of Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation, hereinafter referred to as the Participating Parties, having met at their Third Meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (17-20 September 1996), have agreed as follows:

1. General

1.1 The Participating Parties affirm their commitment to promote subregional cooperation to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development in North-East Asia by actively and effectively promoting the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation, as a follow-up of the UNCED of 1992.

1.2 The Programme will be coordinated, to the extent possible, with other ESCAP's regional arrangements and activities to enhance overall effectiveness of environmental cooperation in the

subregion.

1.3 The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, as adopted by the UNCED, should continue to provide general policy guidance on the subregional cooperation in North-East Asia.

2. Geographical Coverage

2.1 The geographical scope of the Programme is defined as the areas under the jurisdiction of the following Participating Parties:

- The People's Republic of China
- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- Japan
- Mongolia
- The Republic of Korea
- The Russian Federation.

2.2 Other Parties and relevant institutions that have interest and commitment in furthering cooperation in North-East Asia, may be invited to join in the Programme activities and provide financial support, as appropriate.

3. Programme Objectives

3.1 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.

3.2 The activities under the Programme are intended to enhance capacities of the Participating Parties in environmental management efforts through subregional cooperation. To facilitate complete and effective participation of national institutions at all levels in sustainable development efforts, activities of the programme will be primarily aimed at strengthening their relevant technological and managerial capabilities.

3.3 It would be advantageous to have a step-by-step and practical approach towards this subregional cooperation and consolidate the results as the Programme develops in the future.

That approach could be used as building blocks for strengthening subregional cooperation over time.

4. Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia (SOMECEA)

4.1 The Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia (SOMECEA) will act as the Governing Body for the Programme. It will, accordingly, provide overall policy guidance as well as project coordination and management to the Programme.

4.2 The Senior Officials Meeting for Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will make all policy decisions concerning all substantive and financial matters related to the Programme and, in particular, will

(a) Keep under constant review the Programme with a view to identifying further areas of cooperation and project-related activities in a step-by-step approach;

(b) Review the progress in implementing the Programme/projects and evaluate the result achieved;

(c) Approve the budget and work plan of the Programme/projects;

(d) Attempt to formulate a common framework of policies on subregional/international environmental issues over time, on the basis of the Rio Declaration as adopted by the UNCED.

(e) Review the institutional and financial arrangements for the subregional cooperation and suggest appropriate mechanisms; and

(f) Serve as a forum for sharing of experience on policy matters, information exchange, consultation and stocktaking on activities which would promote environmental cooperation in North-East Asia.

4.3 The Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will be held, in principle, annually in one of the Participating Parties, on a rotating basis.

4.4 The Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will work towards practical institutional and financial arrangements for the Programme, as appropriate.

4.5 During the interim period, the secretariat support to the Senior Officials Meeting is requested to be provided by the ESCAP secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Development

Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and other relevant institutions, pending the final decision on the future institutional and financial arrangements of the Programme.

5. Participation, Coordination and Management

5.1 Each Participating Party will designate National Focal Points (NFP) whose responsibilities will, *inter alia*, be the following:

(a) Undertake routine work in connection with the relevant Programme activities;

(b) Act as official channel of communication between the institutions participating in the Programme, the Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia, the ESCAP secretariat and other collaborating agencies and institutions;

(c) Consult with and provide guidance to the relevant national institutions in connection with the implementation of the approved projects;

(d) Collate and present on the implementation of the approved projects and activities, as appropriate;

(e) Assist participating and collaborating institutions, and international agencies in undertaking the implementation of the approved projects and activities.

5.2 The activities under the Programmes will generally be executed by the secretariat. The Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia may also designate one or more agencies to assume overall responsibilities for implementing any specific project. The secretariat and the designated agencies will accordingly develop project proposals and activities including budgetary support requirements, seek funding support and present periodic reports, as desired.

5.3 The participating institutions (such as government agencies, research centres, laboratories, universities, etc.) will be designated by the Participating Parties to implement and carry out the relevant approved activities under the Programmes.

5.4 Regional consultants and institutions will be used, to the extent possible, for the implementation of approved projects/activities.

6. Collaborating Agencies

6.1 The United Nations bodies and agencies such as ESCAP, UNDP and UNEP and multilateral

financing institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are invited to assist in the implementation of the Programme, as their follow-up contribution to the UNCED in the North-East Asian subregion in line with Chapter 38 of Agenda 21. Their technical, financial and managerial support will be sought on a continuing basis to further the work of the Programme. Other collaborating agencies will be invited as necessary.

7. Financial Mechanism

7.1 Financial support for the activities of the Programme may be available from:

- (a) Participating Parties voluntary contribution in cash or in kind or both;
- (b) Collaborating agencies on a project funding basis;
- (c) Bilateral and multilateral donors' contributions; and
- (d) Private sector on a project funding basis, and
- (e) Other contributions.

7.2 The Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will strive to reach a consensus on establishing a trust fund, to be funded by donors/collaborating agencies and Participating Parties on a voluntary basis, to ensure effective and efficient Programme implementation over a longer time frame.

8. Criteria for Project/Activity Selection

8. Commonality of interest, contribution to capacity-building, priority setting by the countries themselves, the impact on environment and sustainable development efforts, tangible subregional environmental benefits, and cost effectiveness will be the principal factors in the selection of projects for subregional cooperation.
