

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Nineteenth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC

22-23 September 2014

Moscow, Russian Federation

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

1. The nineteenth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC was held in Moscow on 22-23 September 2014. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) East and North-East Asia Office serving as NEASPEC Secretariat, and was generously hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The 19th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-19) noted the significant contributions of NEASPEC to addressing subregional environmental challenges and the need for renewing subregional cooperation within the current mandate of the programme and in line with the internationally agreed sustainable development goals and shared priorities of the NEASPEC member States.

3. The SOM-19 commended the progress in implementing projects while noting the importance of taking practical approaches to each project mindful of the limited availability of technical and financial resources.

4. **Transboundary Air Pollution:** The Meeting took note of the conclusion of the Expert Group Meeting of the NEASPEC Project "Development of the Technical and Policy Frameworks for Transboundary Air Pollution Assessment and Abatement in North-East Asia" which was adopted by the SOM-18. The Meeting emphasized the need of cooperation having in mind that it is voluntary in nature. Taking account of the Project budget and

technical capacity, the Meeting recommended to adjust the contents to seek synergies and avoid duplication with existing mechanisms and focus on modelling research cooperation, which will be conducted by the Scientific Research Institute for Atmospheric Air Protection, Russian Federation, in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Environmental Sciences and Busan National University of the ROK. The Meeting also requested the Secretariat to ensure timely progress and present concrete outcomes to the next SOM.

5. The Chinese delegation suggested that considering the uncertainty and complexity, the related conclusion could be considered as expert study output, and some other activities such as health impact assessment have exceeded the current technical capacity of the mechanism, so these could not be implemented in the current stage.

6. **Nature Conservation: [Conservation of Amur Tiger and Leopard]** The Meeting welcomed progress made in NEASPEC project “Study on Transborder Movement of Amur Tigers and Leopards using Camera Trapping and Molecular Genetic Analysis” and supported the project implementation plan developed by the Expert Group Meeting of the Project held in April 2014 in Incheon. The Meeting was informed of the leading roles of Feline Research Centre (FRC) for China and Land of the Leopard National Park, Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IBSS and PGI) and Far Eastern Branch of WWF Russia for the Russian Federation. The Meeting emphasized the importance of having unified methodologies, technical standards, and the efficient use of limited financial resources under the Project. The Meeting noted that isolated populations of Amur tiger and leopard exist in DPRK and in this regard, the Russian Federation urged all tiger range member States to be actively involved in NEASPEC’s work on Amur tiger and leopard to ensure comprehensiveness.

7. **Nature Conservation: [Conservation of Migratory Bird Habitats]** The Meeting reviewed the implementation of the NEASPEC Project, “Conservation and Rehabilitation of Habitats for Key Migratory Birds in North-East Asia”, and expressed its support to the implementation plan including identified survey sites, national focal points, guidelines and timeframe. With regard to national focal points, the Meeting was informed that the National Bird Banding Centre of the Chinese Academy of Forestry is the lead implementing agency of China for this Project. The Meeting took note of the importance of cooperation with other existing networks and activities that can utilise results of this Project, and the contribution of this Project to conservation in transboundary habitats. The ROK suggested the Secretariat to take an active role to facilitate the implementation of the joint survey at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) under this NEASPEC Project, and invited experts from all member countries to participate in this survey.

8. The Meeting was also briefed on the NEASPEC side event at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-12) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as the field survey of Rason Migratory Bird Reserve, DPRK. The Meeting took note of the satisfaction on the field survey carried out at Rason and that it can be a starting point for further stepped up activities. The Meeting was informed that the National Migratory Bird Centre will be opened in the ROK in 2016, and is expected to promote international cooperation with its counterparts in other countries

9. **Marine Protected Areas:** The Meeting took note of the first Steering Committee Meeting of NEAMPAN and endorsed the terms of reference of the Steering Committee. With regard to the Advisory Committee, the Meeting emphasized that the list of selection criteria shall include requirements of the full scale of expertise for its members as well as fair geographical representation. The Meeting generally supported the Russian proposal entitled “Strengthening the Subregional Cooperation for the Development of the Marine and Coastal Specially Protected Areas Network” and requested the revision of the proposal as it is desirable for NEAMPAN to carry out joint research focusing on the identified target MPAs. The Meeting also noted the need of further discussions on financial resources for the Project. The Meeting noted the revision of the Russian nomination with respect to areas covered be reflected in the target MPA, and the indication by Japan of its plan to nominate MPAs.

10. **Eco-efficiency with a Focus on Low Carbon City:** The Meeting was briefed on the conclusions of the International Symposium “Realizing Low Carbon Cities in North-East Asia” held in Beijing and the proposed roles and activities of the Platform. The Meeting endorsed the establishment of the North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform by adopting the terms of reference and requested the Secretariat to modify the paragraphs on financial resources in the terms of reference to be consistent with the Secretariat paragraph, and to circulate the revised terms of reference to member States.

11. The Meeting also provided recommendations on activities of the Platform including the consideration of the different stages of development and unique characteristics of cities such as small cities; and the initial focus of activities on experience sharing and capacity building. The Meeting was informed that China, Japan and the ROK will consider recommending potential platform members after the SOM.

12. **Dust and Sandstorms:** The Meeting was briefed on NEASPEC’s work on dust and sandstorms (DSS) since 2010, as well as key cooperation activities in DSS and desertification control in the subregion. The Meeting recommended that capacity building programmes should have specific focus such as selection and management of tree species, windbreak establishments, sand fixation, and vegetation establishment on degraded land, and monitoring of sand dust and desertification. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to provide a detailed plan of an international conference which would involve experts beyond the subregion. The Meeting appreciated NEASPEC and member States on their assistance to prevent desertification and suggested that NEASPEC should continue its work on DSS to promote cooperation among member States. The Meeting noted the significance in involving local and young stakeholders in order to bring lasting and effective impact of DSS initiatives.

13. **Consideration of NEASPEC Programmes and Activities:** The Meeting received indication of new proposals from Mongolia on subregional mechanism for sustainable development, waste and hazardous waste management, and a project addressing the inter-linkage of all NEASPEC thematic areas. The Meeting was also informed that Mongolia will develop the proposals and submit in due course.

14. **Core Fund:** The Meeting noted the need for adequate and predictable financial

resources of NEASPEC, which is key to timely development and implementation of NEASPEC activities. China and the ROK announced contributions of US\$50,000 and US\$58,000, respectively, to the Core Fund in 2014 and the ROK also indicated scaling up of its contribution to US\$100,000 in 2015. The Meeting appreciated the financial contribution to the Core Fund and the project-based funding of the Russian Federation, and Secretariat's efficient use of resources.

15. **Preparation of the Strategic Plan of NEASPEC:** The Meeting was briefed on the background and guidance needed from the SOM for preparation of the Strategic Plan of NEASPEC as well as the process of global and regional process on sustainable development including the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). The Meeting supported the development of the Strategic Plan. The Meeting also emphasized on 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 requested the Secretariat to prepare and circulate a questionnaire on the Strategic Plan to the member governments, and continue to communicate with member States on the development of the Plan before the next SOM.

16. **Plan for the Next SOM:** The Meeting welcomed the statement of the Japanese delegation on hosting the SOM-20 in 2015, and noted the venue and time will be communicated with the Secretariat in due course.

17. **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 her appreciation to the Secretariat for its excellent preparatory work for the SOM-19 and also thanked delegations for their very active and dedicated participation at the Meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

A. Attendance

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

B. Opening session

19. 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 expressed gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for the excellent meeting

¹ Please see Annex I – List of participants for details.

arrangements. Considering NEASPEC in changing national, subregional and global context with regard to sustainable development, he stressed that the SOM's guidance on NEASPEC's strategic priorities, goals and mode of cooperation will be vital in ensuring NEASPEC to fully exploit its strengths and unique position, as well as to strategically respond to emerging needs in the next five to ten years. In this connection, he highlighted the significance of a long-term Strategic Plan of NEASPEC, in particular, on three aspects: (i) how to strengthen NEASPEC programmes, in both modalities and areas of work; (ii) NEASPEC's potential roles with regard to sustainable development agenda in post-Rio+20 process; and (iii) NEASPEC's links and roles in regional and global context.

20. The welcoming remarks from the host Government was delivered by H.E. Rinat GIZATULIN, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. He first expressed his appreciation to member States for coming to the Russian Federation to discuss environmental issues. He mentioned that the Russian Federation is facing numerous environmental challenges in particular air pollution, water resources, land management, ecosystem and waste disposal. He highlighted the Russian Federation's emphasis on environmental cooperation in North-East Asia with a number of recent and upcoming activities, including the 9th Meeting of China-Russia Environmental Protection Sub-Committee earlier in the month, another bilateral environmental cooperation meeting between Mongolia and the Russian Federation to be held later in the year, and a joint committee with China, Mongolia and ROK to discuss joint actions. He regarded NEASPEC as an important tool in transboundary cooperation for achieving practical outcomes, especially in the areas of transboundary air pollution, marine protected areas and nature conservation. He informed that the 100th anniversary of the first protected area in the Russian Federation will be celebrated in 2016, and Russia is keen to share this experience in protecting the unique richness of the Far East marine environment.

C. Election of officers

21. The Meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Ms. Irina Fominykh (Russian Federation)
Vice-Chair:	Mr. Enkhbat Donchinbuu (Mongolia)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Hiraoka Akiko (Japan)

D. Adoption of the agenda

1. Opening of the meeting

a) Opening remarks by the Director of ESCAP ENEA Office

- b) Welcoming remarks by head of the host government delegation
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
 - Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas
 - Marine Protected Areas
 - Eco-efficiency Partnership
 - Dust and Sandstorms and Desertification
6. New NEASPEC programmes and activities
7. Review of the Core Fund
8. Preparation of the strategic plan of NEASPEC
9. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the twentieth SOM
10. Other issues
11. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting

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

(Agenda item 4)

22. The representative of China highlighted the contribution of NEASPEC to subregional environmental cooperation through step-by-step approach and practical cooperation, and elaborated four aspects with regard to future cooperation: (1) seize key points of Post-2015 Development Agenda and deepen cooperation by enriching and renewing subregional cooperation combined with the progress of the United Nations, (2) clarify targets and implement projects, the key foundation of NEASPEC, and expand areas of cooperation in compliance with subregion's reality, (3) reinforce planning of NEASPEC and push forward step-by-step reform through gradually and steadily formulating a strategic framework for practical cooperation, and (4) increase income, decrease expenditure and mobilize resources. The representative also introduced the on-going efforts of the Government including the release of the Action Plan for Air Pollution Prevention and Control in 2013.

23. The representative of Japan introduced national initiatives in the fields of climate change, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, flyway partnership and education for sustainable development (ESD). With regard to climate change and Minamata Convention,

the representative highlighted the efforts of the Government for supporting developing countries to build low carbon societies by disseminating low carbon technologies, and tackle environmental pollution with a three-year programme with \$2 billion dollar, respectively. Concerning flyway partnership and ESD, the representative called for the attention of other member governments to the 8th Meeting of Partners of the East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership in 2015 and the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in 2014.

24. The representative of Mongolia introduced the Parliament's approval of the National Green Development Strategy in June 2014 and the current process for finalizing its National Action Plan to implement the Strategy, and expressed the intention for cooperation with other member States to achieve its goals and targets. The representative also proposed other member States and the Secretariat to have the topic of subregional sustainable development as a new agenda to the SOM-20 in order to meet the global call for Sustainable Development Goals, and the management of waste and hazardous waste as a new area of subregional cooperation. Considering potential mutual benefit and interest, the representative appealed other member States to support the two new initiatives.

25. The representative of the Republic of Korea noted the achievement of NEASPEC on transboundary cooperation in the subregion, the need to continue further work making NEASPEC a capable and comprehensive environmental cooperation mechanism and welcomed the development of the Strategic Plan for NEASPEC. The representative proposed that NEASPEC to pay more attention on climate change issues in view of the global concern for climate change. The representative informed that the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-12) will take place in Pyeongchang from 6 to 17 October and hoped that NEASPEC will attend and join the concerted efforts. The representative also welcomed the participation of DPRK representative, which would greatly contribute to achieving goals of NEASPEC and highlighted the importance of environmental cooperation for bolstering peace and cooperation in the region.

F. Presentations and discussions on substantive agenda items

(Agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8)

26. 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 the core fund; 8: Preparation of the strategic plan of NEASPEC, followed by interventions from member States. Key outcomes of discussions on the agenda items are included as the Conclusions and Recommendation in the Report of the Meeting.

G. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twentieth Senior Officials Meeting

(Agenda item 9)

27. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the twentieth Senior Officials Meeting. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Japan 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)

28. The Meeting expressed deep appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for generously hosting the nineteenth 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)

29. The Meeting adopted the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Senior Officials Meeting on 23 September 2014. 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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