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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**REPORT OF
THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS ON
ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION IN NORTH-EAST ASIA**

Seoul, 25- 26 October 2005

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I. CONCLUSIONS

1. The Meeting reaffirmed that the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) is an important undertaking of six countries, taking into account the new economic situation emerging in the subregion and environmental pressure and the problems associated with this particular situation. NEASPEC would also present a good example of international cooperation that attempts to help countries in developing relevant capacities and solving environmental problems through cooperation between neighbouring countries.
2. The Meeting expressed the appreciation for the contribution of US \$ 50,000 by China to the Core Fund in 2005. It also welcomed the remark by the Russian Federation that, in addition to providing in-kind technical cooperation, it will be ready to provide financial contribution to the NEASPEC Core Fund after the appropriate government decisions have been made in accordance with national procedures.
3. The Meeting reviewed the recommendations of an informal gathering of the environment ministers of NEASPEC, held during MCED2005 on 28 March 2005 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. To respond to the recommendations, the Meeting requested the secretariat to prepare a paper presenting possible institutional mechanisms for the future of NEASPEC, including the scope of the programme, the level of representation in the governing body, secretariat arrangements and financial rules and procedures, together with the possible options. The paper should be circulated among the member countries well in advance of the next SOM in order to ensure that substantial consultations are conducted within the governments of the member countries, as well as between the member countries through the appropriate forum.
4. Meanwhile, the member countries were requested to express, through diplomatic channels, their views as to whether NEASPEC should organize occasional ministerial gatherings on an informal basis in the margin of other ministerial forums. The Meeting welcomed the proposal by the Republic of Korea that it is ready to take a leading role in organizing such informal gathering during the period between SOM11 and SOM12.
5. The meeting recognized the significance of the nature conservation project in NEASPEC as the project utilizes a major part of the current Core Fund account and expands the scope of NEASPEC. While acknowledging steady progress in the project implementation in a feasible, realistic and practical manner, the Meeting noted the revision of the project formulation and its associated budget allocation as part of the secretariat's efforts to ensure that the project produces concrete outcomes focusing on pilot projects, which could raise the visibility of NEASPEC. The Meeting stressed, however, the importance of maintaining the components of the initial activity plan on database management and exchange visits, in the revised activity plan.
6. The Meeting approved the Secretariat's report on project modification. The Meeting supported the view expressed by the Japanese delegation that the budget for "research/ programme assistants" should be used for the costs of staff directly involved in the implementation of this particular project, rather than for general overhead costs. The delegation also expressed that budget revisions should be approved at SOM. At the same time, the secretariat expressed the need to maintain a certain degree of flexibility for the smooth implementation of projects.

7. The Meeting welcomed the progress in preparing the project on Mitigation of Transboundary Air Pollution from Coal-fired Power Plants. The Meeting expressed its gratitude to the Asian Development Bank for its continuous support to NEASPEC projects. The Meeting requested the secretariat to develop possible options to facilitate the participation of DPRK and the Russian Federation in the above-mentioned project. The Meeting requested the secretariat to initiate appropriate preparatory actions for the timely implementation of the project, which is expected to start in 2007. The Meeting also noted the importance of the synergy between other relevant initiatives and ongoing programmes in the subregion; amongst which the Meeting particularly welcomed the willingness of NOWPAP to share information and experience with NEASPEC.

8. The Meeting appreciated the secretariat for reporting on the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED-2005), held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 23 to 29 March 2005, its major outcomes, in particular, the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sound Economic Growth (Green Growth) and plans for the follow-up activities at the regional level, including the Regional Policy Dialogue on Green Growth, from 8 to 9 November 2005, and the First Meeting of the Seoul Initiative Network for Green Growth (SINGG) from 10 to 11 November, both to be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Welcoming the successful advancement since MCED2005, the Meeting recognized the importance of developing subregion-specific activities in relation with the regional follow-up to the major outcomes of MCED-2005, which should be tailored to meet the specific needs of the member countries.

9. The Meeting requested the secretariat to strengthen its efforts in keeping the member countries informed of important progress in MCED-2005 follow-up activities, as well as their substantive components, to facilitate increased participation of the member countries.

10. The Meeting also called for active participation of appropriate institutions of the NEASPEC member countries in the further implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, of which continuation for the next five years was endorsed by MCED-2005.

11. The Meeting noted with appreciation the significant progress made in terms of preparation of the follow-up projects for Prevention and Control of Dust and Sand Storms (DSS) in North-East Asia, and expressed their expectations for further development of international cooperation activities in the field. The Meeting welcomed the indication from the delegation of the Russian Federation of their willingness to participate in future project activities. Recognizing a number of ongoing bilateral programmes on relevant topics areas, the Meeting noted the significance of synergies between these programmes and the above-mentioned follow-up projects.

12. The Meeting reviewed the joint proposal by the secretariat and UNEP, regarding the development of the North-East Asia Environmental Outlook. The Meeting found the project beneficial to NEASPEC in line with its vision and, therefore, could eventually be taken up as NEASPEC project in the future. The Meeting, nevertheless, emphasized the needs for further elaboration of the project proposal, in terms of *inter alia* focus of the project, modality of cooperation amongst relevant international and national institutions, and budget plan. The Meeting also stressed the importance of ensuring the maximum use of existing data and information with a view to minimizing the additional budgetary requirement as well as the burden to the national institutions participating in the project. The Meeting requested the secretariat in cooperation with UNEP, to

develop a revised project proposal and to circulate among the member countries for further consultation.

13. The Meeting appreciated the conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on emerging issues related to environmentally sustainable economic growth in North-East Asia. In particular, the Meeting agreed to request the secretariat to organize another Expert Group Meeting, most probably in the first half of 2006 to undertake further in-depth discussions on the issues related with eco-efficiency. While this Expert Group Meeting will *inter alia* identify priority areas of future subregional cooperation on the related topic, the Meeting requested the secretariat to consult with member countries concerning its venue.

14. The Meeting reviewed and adopted the secretariat's report on expenditures of the NEASPEC Core Fund during the past year. The Meeting encouraged the member countries to make voluntary financial contributions to the Core Fund. The Meeting requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to mobilise additional funding from the external financial institutions.

15. The Meeting welcomed the China's generous offer to host the Twelfth Meeting of Senior Officials of NEASPEC. The venue and exact dates will be decided in consultations with the secretariat and will be announced in due course. The Meeting agreed to take up the issue of the institutional arrangement for NEASPEC, the publication of Northeast Asia Environment Outlook and emerging issues related to the environmentally sustainable economic growth in North-East Asia, as possible topics for SOM12.

16. The Meeting expressed a sincere appreciation to the secretariat for the efficient and effective operation of the Meeting.

17. The Meeting expressed a sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for generously hosting the Meeting and for its warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE 11th SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

18. The Eleventh Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia was held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea on 25-26 October 2005. It was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and generously hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

A. Attendance

19. The Meeting was attended by representatives of China, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. It was also attended by representatives of UNEP and the Northwest Pacific Action Programme (NOWPAP).

B. Opening session

20. The Eleventh Senior Officials Meeting was opened by Mr. Rae Kwon Chung, the Director of the Environment and Sustainable Development Division of ESCAP. Mr. Chung expressed his sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for generously hosting this important meeting and excellent arrangements, and welcomed delegates and experts from the member countries of NEASPEC. He also reminisced the historical meaning and progress since the launch of NEASPEC in 1993, and noted the significance of making new progress in institutional mechanisms and activities. In relation to activities of NEASPEC, Mr. Chung drew participants' attention to the outcomes and follow-up of the MCED 2005 by suggesting their linkages with potential activities of NEASPEC on eco-efficiency. He also briefed the current progress in the implementation of the nature conservation project, and the Secretariat's efforts to produce more tangible outcomes.

21. A welcoming address to the participants at the Eleventh Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC was presented by Mr. Cho Hyun, the Director General of International Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of ROK. After extending his gratitude to the delegates and the experts, he welcomed new initiatives of NEASPEC on environmentally sustainable economic growth and the continuance of activities on air pollution from coal-fired power plants. He also recognized the collective commitments of the member countries by noting the outcome and implication of first ministers' meeting on institutional advancement of NEASPEC. Thus, he expressed his anticipation for the additional efforts to be made on developing viable solutions for the new financial and institutional mechanisms of NEASPEC.

C. Election of officers

22. Mr. Shin Boo-nam, (Republic of Korea) was elected as the Chairperson of the Meeting. Mr. Chen Chuandong (China) was elected as the Vice-Chairperson. Mr. Tanaka Satoshi (Japan) was elected as the Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the agenda

23. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Environment and development policies and issues of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC).
5. Review of programme planning and implementation
 - a) The outcome of the NEASPEC environment ministers meeting;
 - b) Framework for a Nature Conservation Programme in North-East Asia;
 - c) Mitigation of Transboundary Air Pollution from Coal-Fired Power Plants in North-East Asia.
6. Report on multilateral initiatives relevant to NEASPEC
 - a) The outcome and the follow-up of the 5th MCED;
 - b) The Follow-up of the "Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sand Storm in Northeast Asia".
7. Consideration of the future NEASPEC activities

- a) Emerging issues related to environmentally sustainable economic growth in North-East Asia;
 - b) Proposal for North-East Asia Environmental Outlook.
8. Report on the expenditure of NEASPEC Core Fund.
 9. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twelfth Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia.
 10. Other matters.
 11. Adoption of the report.

E. Environment and development policies and issues of the North-East Asian Subregional programme for environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)

(Item 4 of the agenda)

24. The representative of China recognized that NEASPEC has continued to be a catalyst for dialogue, cooperation and capacity- building in sustainable development in North-East Asia. The representative also noted the significance of an action-oriented and a pragmatic approach of NEASPEC and better synergy with other initiatives. Having welcomed the outcome of MCED-2005, the representative stated the government's efforts to balance between economic development and environment sustainability by pursuing policies for a circular economy and resource efficient society. The representative also expressed that a holistic approach should be taken in addressing environment sustainability, taking into account the difficulties and special needs of developing countries.

In relation to the institutional and financial mechanisms of NEASPEC, the representative expressed the support of China to high-level political and policy dialogue, and the need to maintain a sustainable and financially sound Core Fund for future development of NEASPEC. The representative also informed the meeting of the Chinese Government's recent contribution of US\$50,000 to the Core Fund, and requested the Secretariat to continue to seek additional funding from the outside source.

25. The representative of Japan introduced major progress in environmental policies and a new campaign to tackle climate change. At the outset, the representative briefed a comprehensive approach to attain the goal of the Kyoto Protocol and to mobilize all different policy tools. In that connection, the representative introduced Cool Biz campaign for the reduction of energy consumption and in turn carbon emission. He also introduced the Japanese government's efforts for driving the society towards the sound material-cycle society by targeting substantial improvement in resource productivity, cyclical use rate, and final disposal amount, which are the key components of 3R policies. In addition, the representative briefed the introduction of control on emission from vehicles, in particular, the strictest standard on diesel vehicles in the world based on precautionary principle

26. The representative of Mongolia, at the outset, stated the government's efforts for achieving the goal of the MCED 2005, environmentally sustainable economic growth, and participating in NEASPEC more actively. The representative described Mongolia's environmental challenges in the context of land degradation, deforestation, decline of water resources, biodiversity loss, frequent natural disaster, urban air pollution, and solid waste. The representative, in particular, drew the participants' attention to the state of deforestation and a key national response, Green Belt National Programme.

27. As the host of the Meeting, the representative of the Republic of Korea expressed his greetings to the national delegates and experts. The representative reminded the participants that the 11th SOM is the first meeting of the third cycle of meetings since the first meeting held in the Republic of Korea in 1993. In that connection, the representative expressed the anticipation for the Meeting to be a fresh start of NEASPEC.

The representative recognized that NEASPEC has made a great progress based on a practical and step-by-step approach, which was adopted at the second SOM in Mongolia. While stressing the significance of the high-level political commitments from the NEASPEC environment minister's Meeting, the representative underlined a number of tasks for the progress in the institutional mechanism of NEASPEC and subregional environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. Firstly, the representative noted the significance of promoting policy guidance role of NEASPEC by creating linkages with Tripartite Environment Ministers' Meeting (TEMM). Secondly, the representative stressed the need to prepare a long-term vision and a concrete plan of NEASPEC. The representative drew participants' attention to the retardation of NEASPEC by comparing with institutional development of NOWPAP and EANET. Finally, the representative laid an emphasis on the appropriateness of undertaking activities on environmentally sustainable economic growth, while recognizing the follow-up activities of the MCED-2005, in particular, through the launch of Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth.

28. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed the intention to activate the government's involvement in the environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. The representative also elaborated the recent restructuring of federal and regional environmental bodies, and changing conditions of the government regarding the subregional environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. He also recognized the increasing pressure on the environment in the Russian Federation due to economic growth, and in turn the needs of collaborative actions on eco-efficiency under NEASPEC. He particularly noted on the collaboration among the member countries of NEASPEC to learn from each other's experience in tackling the environmental problems caused by the current trend of economic growth.

F. Presentations and Discussions on Substantive Agenda Items

(Item 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the agenda)

29. The Meeting had presentations from the Secretariat on Agenda Item (5) Review of programme planning and implementation, Agenda Item (6) Report on multilateral initiatives relevant to NEASPEC, Agenda Item (7) Consideration of future NEASPEC activities, and Agenda Item (8) Report on the expenditure of the Core Fund. The Meeting subsequently had considerable discussions after presentation on each topic in the Agenda Items. The key outcomes of the presentation and discussion are included in the conclusion of the Meeting.

30. The Meeting reviewed the outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM), which was held in the morning of 25 October to discuss eco-efficiency in the context of emerging issues related to environmentally sustainable economic growth in North-East Asia. The EGM consisted of resource persons' presentations on eco-efficiency in North-East Asia, country reports and discussions on approaches to NEASPEC activities on identified issues. The result of the review is also included in the conclusion of the Meeting.

G. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twelfth SOM

(Agenda Item 9)

31. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the Twelfth Senior Officials Meeting. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of China for generously offering to host the next Meeting in the second half of 2006. The proposed dates and venue will be announced at a later stage.

H. Other Matters

(Item 10 of the agenda)

32. The Meeting acknowledged the suggestion of the Secretariat on the change in the official title of Meeting from the Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia to Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC. The suggestion was made to reflect the reality of the Meeting.

33. The Meeting expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of Republic of Korea for generously hosting the Eleventh Senior Officials Meeting and for its warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Meetings.

I. Adoption of the Report

(Item 11 of the agenda)

34. The Meeting discussed the conclusion of the Meeting on 26 October 2005. The report of the Meeting has been finalized and adopted after circulation among the member countries.

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