

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Twenty-fourth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC

12-13 October 2020

Virtual meeting

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

1. The Twenty-Fourth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC was held on 12-13 October 2020 and virtually hosted by the Russian Federation. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) East and North-East Asia Office serving as NEASPEC Secretariat and was chaired by the Government of the Russian Federation.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Meeting commended the contribution of NEASPEC to promoting subregional environmental cooperation and institutionalizing transboundary cooperation as a comprehensive intergovernmental cooperation framework in North-East Asia. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitments of member States to enhancing national actions towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strengthening subregional approach to environmental cooperation, and creating synergies among multi-stakeholders and relevant mechanisms to expedite actions on subregional and global environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity conservation.

3. **Transboundary Air Pollution:** The Meeting noted the report of the Second Meeting of the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP) Science and Policy Committee (SPC) and Technical Centres (SPC-2) held on 2-3 June 2020, and adopted the draft NEACAP Work Plan 2021-2025 as recommended by the SPC-2. The Meeting noted the mandate and work of SPC for regularly review and plan activities to make the NEACAP work better respond to the need of cooperation. In this regard, SOM requested the SPC to initiate the timely implementation of the current Work Plan and have a mid-term review in 2022 with a view of making necessary adjustments. The Meeting also agreed on the need for the SPC to discuss, in the timeframe agreed upon by all SPC members, the priority areas of Category II, and submit their recommendation to the SOM before the mid-term

review in 2022.

The Meeting welcomed the voluntary initiative of the NEACAP Technical Center of the Republic of Korea for providing technical and training programme by hosting experts from other member States. The Meeting also noted the view of the EANET Secretariat on the potential of collaboration between EANET and NEACAP on sharing information and avoiding duplications.

4. **Nature Conservation:** The Meeting noted the progress in the implementation of the new NEASPEC project on the transboundary cooperation on the conservation of Amur tiger, Amur leopard and Snow leopard in North-East Asia, and shared further information on the relevant bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Meeting noted the interest of non-range member States in participating the project including through providing technical support.

5. The Meeting commended the progress on promoting transboundary cooperation among protected wetlands in the Tumen Estuary based on the preliminary study and the outcome of the expert group meeting in May 2020. The Meeting supported the proposed activities for institutionalizing the transboundary cooperation in Tumen Estuary as an independent project and providing financial and expert support and agreed to nominate national experts and focal points for further consultations among governments and multi-stakeholders in 2021.

6. The Meeting welcomed the proposal for organizing relevant outreach activities of NEASPEC during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-15) in May 2021, China, and the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14) in November 2021, China.

7. **Marine Protected Areas:** The Meeting emphasized the importance of effective management of marine protected areas, while recognizing the global level agenda such as Aichi Target and post-2020 Biodiversity Framework on marine protected areas. The Meeting noted the support of member States on the need to expand the target MPAs of NEAMPAN. The Meeting also guided the secretariat to further strengthen capacity building activities through experience sharing. The focus of such activities may include the effective management of MPA, socio-economic management of MPAs, and eco-tourism. The Meeting also recommended more active and effective use of online tools in their activities.

8. **Low Carbon Cities:** The Meeting highlighted the significance of involving diverse stakeholders including cities in climate action and noted the relevance and value of the NEA-LCCP's study and peer review. The Meeting commended the plan to implement the recommendation of SOM-23 to expand the current work to include cities in Mongolia and Russian Federation. The Meeting noted the interest and offer of member states to share their experiences in low carbon city development and to enhance cooperation among cities through such modalities as experience sharing and technical cooperation.

9. **Desertification and Land Degradation (DLD):** The Meeting agreed on refocusing NEASPEC's work on DLD on the interlinkage with other sectors, such as climate change and biodiversity conservation, and to develop a subregional approach and organize activities on Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to create the synergies among actions on addressing DLD and climate change while avoiding duplications of efforts with DLDD-NEAN. The Meeting welcomed the offer by the Republic of Korea to host an Expert Group Meeting in conjunction with the 15th World Forestry

Congress to be held in May 2021 to further elaborate the proposed activities.

10. **NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025:** The Meeting adopted the draft NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 with amendments and noted the full support of member States and the request of ESCAP to present it to the Environment and Development Committee session to be held December 2021 as a concrete example of subregional environmental cooperation.

11. The Meeting reviewed the recommendations and secretariat response of the independent evaluation of NEASPEC and decided to hold a National Focal Point meeting to develop and agree on concrete implementation plan for addressing the evaluation recommendations with clear responsibilities and timelines, as proposed by the Secretariat.

12. **Core Fund:** The Meeting appreciated the financial contributions of member States to the Core Fund as well as the Project-based Fund and noted the contributions of US\$ 44,985 from China, and the US\$ 245,727 from the ROK to the Core Fund in 2020. The Meeting also appreciated the Russian Federation for the contribution of \$337,081 for the nature conservation project. The Meeting accepted the financial report and approved the proposed programme planning and management including the budget plan for the development of the project document for 2021-2025 in accordance with the ESCAP procedure.

13. **Plan for the Next SOM:** The Meeting welcomed the statement of Japan to host SOM-25, noting that that the venue and time will be consulted with and communicated to Member States and the Secretariat in due course. The format of the SOM-25 will be further considered taking account of the COVID-19 pandemic while the Government wishes to host the meeting in Japan. The Meeting also noted the expectation of member States for fruitful outcomes from the next SOM.

14. **Other issues:** The Meeting welcomed the proposal from the ROK for holding National Focal Point meeting more frequently, at least one meeting prior to the SOM for the preparation and the review of the progress in implementation of NEASPEC programmes by utilizing virtual conference. The Meeting also welcomed the indication of the Mongolia for hosting meetings on air pollution and land degradation, respectively, if the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic allows

15. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the host/chair government and the Chair for the successful conduct of the Meeting despite the technical difficulties of the virtual meeting. The Chair expressed her appreciation to the Secretariat for its preparatory work for the SOM-24 and thanked delegations for their active and dedicated participation at the Meeting.

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