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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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

Beijing, 27 July 2001

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION
OF THE COMMISSION AND THE GOVERNING BODIES
OF ALL COLLABORATING AGENCIES**

1. The Meeting supported Commission resolution 57/2, "Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000", and requested all North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) member countries to participate actively in the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference. The Meeting requested all the participating countries, donor agencies and collaborating agencies to provide enhanced support for the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, 2001-2005, including its priority implementation mechanism, the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.
2. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the participation of all NEASPEC countries in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and recommended broad participation by stakeholders representing countries of the subregion. The Meeting also recommended that the continued efforts by NEASPEC to develop a concrete blueprint for a wide range of environmental cooperation in North-East Asia and progress in the development of the NEASPEC Framework be reported to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
3. The Meeting emphasized the need for further acceleration in the implementation of NEASPEC project activities. In this regard, particular attention was drawn to: (a) enhanced participation in ongoing project activities; (b) enhanced efforts to secure additional support to cover unfunded project areas; and (c) identification of new project areas in consultation with participating countries.
4. The Meeting reviewed the secretariat's proposal on the elaboration of the Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation and felt that it was premature to establish an independent secretariat and a NEASPEC fund.
5. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to continue to provide technical and secretariat support for environmental cooperation in North-East Asia and encouraged the participating Governments to second experts to ESCAP to assist in this effort. However, in view of the importance of establishing an independent permanent secretariat in the future, the Meeting encouraged the participating countries to submit to the Meetings of Senior Officials detailed proposals, including contributions as host country for hosting the secretariat.
6. The Meeting recommended the continuation of the Meeting of Senior Officials to guide environmental cooperation in North-East Asia and suggested further consultation to explore the possibility of convening a ministerial meeting in 2005 for a broad exchange of views and perspectives on environmental cooperation in the subregion.

7. The Meeting recognized with satisfaction that, with the contributions of the Republic of Korea and Japan, the Core Fund for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation had already been established. It expressed deep appreciation to the Republic of Korea for its announcement of an additional contribution of US\$ 100,000 to the Core Fund for the year 2001. It also welcomed the announcement by China that it would make a lump-sum donation to the Fund according to its economic capability.

8. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to administer the Core Fund in accordance with the United Nations rules and regulations. While considering the modalities of operation of the Core Fund, it was emphasized that utilization should follow the principle of transparency. It was also emphasized that in using the Core Fund, priority should be accorded to the projects approved by the Meeting of Senior Officials and then to the preparation and development of potential projects for funding by other international organizations, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as well as for urgent and special needs.

9. To make the Fund sustainable, it was recommended that each participating country make a voluntary contribution in cash or kind to the Core Fund. Owing to the different levels of economic development of the participating countries, contributions to the Fund must not be based on predetermined assessments or scales.

10. The Meeting noted that the establishment of the Core Fund reflected the will and determination of NEASPEC countries to strengthen subregional environmental cooperation. It was emphasized, however, that the Core Fund could not solely depend on contributions from the Governments of participating countries and financial support for projects should not be solely dependent on the Core Fund. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to intensify its efforts, in cooperation with relevant international organizations and donor countries, to raise funds from bilateral and multilateral donors and other financing channels, especially the five sources stipulated in the Framework for NEASPEC.

11. The Meeting welcomed the generous offer of the Government of Mongolia to host the Eighth Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia.

I. PROCEEDINGS

A. Environment and sustainable development policies and critical issues in North-East Asia

(Item 4 of the agenda)

1. The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea informed the Meeting that environmental issues in the country were being addressed on a top-priority basis in all sectors of the national economy. A National Coordinating Committee on Environment was actively promoting the integration of environment and development. It was formulating a national plan for the environment and making arrangements for environmental protection at the State level. The country was a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Vienna Ozone Protection Convention and the Montreal Protocol, had already prepared a report on climate change and was in the process of conducting a review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

2. The representative of Japan pointed out that Japan had established a Ministry of Environment, reformed the institutional structure and revised the Basic Environmental Plan. The new Basic Environmental Plan provided basic environmental policies and strategies at the beginning of the new millennium. Japan was also seriously addressing the problem of global climate change and ozone depletion. The Central Environmental Council was working to develop a domestic framework to attain the 6 per cent reduction target mentioned in the Kyoto Protocol. Efforts in the country were also concentrated on promoting a recycling-based society and ensuring environmental health and safety through exercising control over emissions of particulate matter and NOx. For hazardous chemicals such as dioxins, a pollutant Release and Transfer Register had been established. Efforts were also ongoing on the conservation of biodiversity. The representative briefed the meeting on the progress and perspectives of international cooperation in North-East Asia, in which Japan was participating.

3. The representative of China informed the Meeting that China attached great importance to NEASPEC and supported its enlarged role in enhancing subregional cooperation. He stressed that in further strengthening the programme it was important to take into account the diversity of the subregion and the specific circumstances of a country, and to follow a step-by-step approach. Technical cooperation should be the backbone of cooperative efforts. The characteristics of the NEASPEC process in strengthening the technological and managerial capacity of participating countries were promising. He noted that coal accounted for a substantial portion of the energy structure in the North-East Asian subregion. The clean coal project was important for upgrading technologies at coal-fired power plants, increasing energy efficiency, reducing pollution and improving the regional environment. Starting from the clean coal demonstration project at Tongliao in China, the first-phase project carried out by NEASPEC had benefited the whole region.

4. The representative of Mongolia stated that the Mongolian people had traditionally aimed at conserving the environment and at the proper use of natural resources. However, increased population, industrialization and development had had considerable impacts on the traditional Mongolian lifestyle and nomadic civilization. The new economic forces had damaged the air, soil and water. Natural disasters had also taken their toll. Since 1995, numerous initiatives and programmes of the Government had responded to Mongolia's environmental challenges. A large number of strategies and programmes had been approved over the previous five years. A Mongolian Trust Fund on Environment had been established. Mongolia had signed nine international environmental conventions and was cooperating effectively in international efforts towards environmental amelioration.

5. The representative of the Republic of Korea stated that the country was carrying out resource-circulatory environmental policies taking into account demand and ecological efficiency, breaking from policies taking account of only production and supply, and it was changing from post-management to precautionary management, which prevented pollution in advance. In addition, to attain sustainable development, the country was creating circumstances which would enable the major stakeholders in the economic, industrial and private sectors, in addition to the Government, to participate. The basic object of the country's environmental policies in 2001 was to intensively promote the ECO-2 Project for the mutual development of both ecology and economy and thereby expand the driving force of the nation's development in the twenty-first century. In the field of green World Cup games, the country was going to make plans to minimize the environmental impacts which might be caused by the construction and operation of facilities, such as the main stadiums and accommodations for players and visitors. The representative also highlighted the country's environmental cooperation in North-East Asia.

6. The representative of the Russian Federation briefed the Meeting on Russian environmental policy (including the relevant legislative base and institutional framework for environmental protection, the national action plan for environmental protection, 2000-2001, the recently-adopted long-term energy and transport strategies with a strong environmental component and ongoing special federal programmes on the environment for various sectors and Russian regions). He stressed the recent achievements in the country in elaborating and applying new environmental policy tools and instruments (eco-auditing, eco-efficiency, environmental expertise, green accounting practices, eco-services), some of which had yielded tangible results. He suggested expanding the existing bilateral and subregional cooperation in such areas as cleaner energy and energy efficiency, conservation of biodiversity, forests, marine environment and coastal zones management. He also referred to the importance of joint efforts and activities in scientific research and technology exchanges as well as the prevention and mitigation of disasters, which were damaging the subregion's economies and environment.

B. Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the Seventh Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia

(Item 5 of the agenda)

7. The Meeting had before it the conclusions and recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the Seventh Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia, held at Beijing on 25 and 26 July 2001. The conclusions and recommendations covered: (a) the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, (b) programme planning and implementation, (c) further development of the NEASPEC Framework into a comprehensive programme for environmental cooperation in North-East Asia and (d) modalities of administration of the Core Fund for NEASPEC.
8. The Meeting reviewed the conclusions and recommendations, and adopted them as follows:

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, 2000

- (1) The Meeting supported Commission resolution 57/2, "Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000", and requested all NEASPEC member countries to participate actively in the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference. It was noted that many NEASPEC member countries had already formulated local, subnational and national programmes to implement the Regional Action Programme, 2001-2005 in the programme areas of particular concern to each individual country.
- (2) The Meeting supported the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment as a priority mechanism for the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, 2001-2005, covering the programme area of environmental quality and human health. The Meeting encouraged the Governments of the NEASPEC member countries to promote the participation of their local government units in the activities being undertaken to implement the Kitakyushu Initiative, including the establishment of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network.
- (3) The Meeting requested donors to provide financial support for the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, 2001-2005, including its priority implementation mechanism, the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.
- (4) The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the participation of all NEASPEC countries in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and recommended broad participation by stakeholders representing countries of the subregion. The Meeting welcomed the efforts of the regional Task Force in organizing the stakeholders meeting and the intergovernmental meeting on the subregional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

(5) The Meeting emphasized that the continued efforts by NEASPEC to develop a concrete blueprint for a wide range of environmental cooperation in North-East Asia should be recognized as a major achievement at the subregional level in the implementation of Agenda 21. It recommended that that cooperation and progress in the development of the NEASPEC Framework should be reported to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(6) The Meeting took note of the progress made during the previous year in the implementation of NEASPEC projects with the invaluable support provided by the host institutions for the relevant activities, such as the National Institute of Environmental Research and the Korean Electric Power Research Institute. In addition, the Meeting noted with deep appreciation the financial contributions by the Asian Development Bank, the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of Japan.

(7) The Meeting noted the progress in implementing the second-phase projects and also that, with funding secured for three projects, the implementation process had begun. It emphasized the need for the early implementation of project activities during 2002. It also requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to secure funding for the fourth project.

(8) The Meeting endorsed the recommendations of the First Meeting of the National Focal Points for the North East Asian Centre for Environmental Data and Training (NEACEDT), held at Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 14 to 16 February 2001, except for recommendation No. 6 on the use of the Core Fund, which was considered separately. The Meeting reiterated the importance of enhanced participation by all NEASPEC countries in the development of the Centre's activities.

(9) The Meeting felt that the secretariat's three proposed programmes, namely, the Comprehensive Clean Technology Programme, the North-East Asia Nature Conservation Programme and the Environmental Monitoring and Data Collection Programme, were interesting but needed further exploration and consultation at expert group meetings. With regard to the Nature Conservation Programme, it was agreed that the programme should initially focus on training and general information exchange, which should be based on consensus among the participating countries, and should avoid duplication of relevant regional programmes of other international organizations. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to formulate a project on biodiversity in consultation with participating countries for GEF funding.

(10) The Meeting noted that, alongside nature conservation, desertification and problems of yellow dust could also be included in the priority areas for the formulation and implementation of future projects with the support of UNCCD, UNEP, ESCAP and other relevant organizations.

(11) The Meeting emphasized that, in identifying new projects, the priorities raised by previous Meetings of Senior Officials should be considered. While new components might be added, that should be done following a practical and step-by-step approach. The Meeting also recommended careful consideration of new projects in order not to duplicate any ongoing efforts in the subregion and to keep the approach focused and make the best use of the limited human and financial resources in the interests of the participating countries.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEASPEC FRAMEWORK INTO A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION IN NORTH-EAST ASIA

(12) The Meeting reviewed the secretariat's proposal on the elaboration of the Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation and felt that it was premature to establish an independent secretariat and a NEASPEC fund.

(13) The Meeting reiterated its confidence in the ESCAP secretariat and requested it to continue to provide technical and secretariat support for environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. However, in view of the importance of establishing an independent permanent secretariat in the future, the Meeting suggested that the participating countries be encouraged to submit to the Meetings of Senior Officials detailed proposals, including contributions as host country for hosting the secretariat.

(14) The Meeting encouraged the participating Governments to send experts on secondment to the Environment Section, Environment and Natural Resources Development Division of ESCAP to assist in the development and implementation of NEASPEC activities.

(15) The Meeting recommended the continuation of the Meeting of Senior Officials to guide environmental cooperation in North-East Asia. The Meeting discussed the possibility of convening a ministerial meeting for a broad exchange of views and perspectives on environmental cooperation in the subregion. Such a meeting could be held in conjunction with the next Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, scheduled for 2005.

MODALITIES OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE CORE FUND FOR NEASPEC

(16) The Meeting recognized with satisfaction that, with the contributions of the Republic of Korea and Japan, the Core Fund for NEASPEC had been established. It expressed deep appreciation to the Republic of Korea for its announcement of an additional contribution of US\$ 100,000 to the Core Fund for the year 2001. It also welcomed the announcement by China that it would make a lump-sum donation to the Fund according to its economic capability.

(17) It was emphasized that in using the Core Fund, priority should be accorded to the projects approved by the Meeting of Senior Officials and then to the preparation and development of potential projects for funding by other international organizations, such as GEF, as well as for urgent and special needs. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to administer the Core Fund in accordance with the United Nations rules and regulations.

(18) To make the Core Fund sustainable, it was recommended that each participating country make a voluntary contribution in cash or kind to the Fund.

(19) While considering the modalities of operation of the Core Fund, it was emphasized that utilization should follow the principle of transparency. In addition, owing to the different levels of economic development of the participating countries, contributions to the Fund must not be based on predetermined assessments or scales.

(20) The Meeting noted that the establishment of the Core Fund reflected the will and determination of NEASPEC countries to strengthen subregional environmental cooperation. It was emphasized, however, the Core Fund could not solely depend on contributions from the Governments of participating countries and financial support for projects should not be solely dependent on the Core Fund. The Meeting requested the ESCAP secretariat to intensify its work, in cooperation with relevant international organizations and donor countries, to raise funds from bilateral and multilateral donors and other financing channels, especially the five sources stipulated in the Framework for NEASPEC.

9. The Meeting noted the statement by the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that as it had not been present at some previous meetings, it would give due consideration to the decisions taken at those meetings.

C. Venue, date and agenda of the Eighth Meeting of Senior Officials

(Item 6 of the agenda)

10. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the Eighth Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia. The Government of Mongolia offered to host the Eighth Meeting in July-August 2002. The dates of the Meeting would be finalized by the secretariat in consultation with the host country and other participating countries.

11. The provisional agenda of the Meeting is as follows:

1. Opening session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Environment and development policies and issues for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC).
5. Programme planning and implementation:
 - (a) Implementation of ongoing projects;
 - (b) Identification of project ideas.
6. Further development of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC).
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

12. The Seventh Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia was held at Beijing on 27 July 2001. It was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and hosted by the Government of China.

A. Attendance

13. The Meeting was attended by representatives of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. It was also attended by representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

B. Opening session

14. In his welcome statement, the Chief of the Environment and Natural Resources Development Division of ESCAP expressed his sincere appreciation to the Government of China for hosting this important meeting and for all its hospitality and excellent arrangements. He highlighted the tangible results that had come out of the Preparatory Meeting, in particular, with regard to the identification and further implementation of NEASPEC projects as well as the modalities of administration of the Core Fund for NEASPEC. He hoped that, based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting, the Meeting of Senior Officials would make a concrete and effective contribution to advancing the implementation of ongoing environmental cooperation in the subregion.

15. The opening statement at the Meeting was delivered by the Director-General, Department of International Conferences and Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China. He emphasized that the achievements of NEASPEC were obvious to all as a major follow-up of the subregion to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, since NEASPEC developed technical

cooperation as a priority in its programme implementation, based on the specific conditions of the subregion and following the principle of a practical and step-by-step approach. He expected that further development of NEASPEC would explore new horizons of international environmental cooperation, enhance the awareness and experiences of the participating countries in the field concerned and eventually play an exemplary role for enhanced environmental cooperation at the global level. He hoped that the Meeting would lay a good foundation for the development of NEASPEC in the new century.

16. The representatives of UNEP, ADB and UNCCD also made statements indicating their commitment to provide support for subregional environmental cooperation. Some of the points highlighted in those statements included the following:

(a) ADB had been supporting NEASPEC since the provision of the first regional technical assistance (TA) for environmental cooperation in North-East Asia, in response to a request at the Second Meeting of Senior Officials, held at Beijing in 1994. The second TA for North-East Asian environmental cooperation had been formulated following the successful completion of the first TA and was now to be implemented in close collaboration with ESCAP, during the next 30 months or so. The new TA would help in building human and organizational capacities for environmental protection in relation to coal-fired power plants and environmental monitoring in North-East Asian countries;

(b) UNCCD had been actively implemented, particularly in countries of North-East Asia, further to the outcomes of the recent Asia-Africa Forum and the Asian CCD Focal Points Meeting. Among such efforts, the Mongolian national forum for the synergistic implementation of interlinked multilateral agreements had been held in June as a pioneering effort for countries of the region in implementing multilateral environmental agreements at the national level, especially the conventions on biological diversity, climate change, and desertification and land degradation. The need for a subregional project to undertake studies regarding dust- and sandstorms in North-East Asia was emphasized.

C. Election of officers

17. Mr. Li Baodong (China) was elected Chairperson. Ms. Namsrai Sarantuya (Mongolia) was elected Vice-Chairperson. Mr. Zeon Nam-jin (Republic of Korea) was elected as Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the agenda

18. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Environment and sustainable development policies and critical issues in North-East Asia.
5. Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the Seventh Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia.
6. Venue, date and agenda of the Eighth Meeting of Senior Officials.
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report.

III. OTHER MATTERS

(Item 7 of the agenda)

19. The Meeting expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of China for generously hosting the Preparatory Meeting and the Meeting of Senior Officials and for its warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Meetings. The Meeting also expressed deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its financial support for the organization of the Meeting.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

(Item 8 of the agenda)

20. The Meeting adopted its report on 27 July 2001.

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