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REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION
(Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda)

NATURE CONSERVATION IN TRANSBOUNDARY AREA
Note by the secretariat

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I. PROCESS OF NEASPEC ACTION ON NATURE CONSERVATION

1. As the 2nd SOM identified “ecosystem management” as one of three priority areas of subregional cooperation, the 2nd and 4th SOMs, the NEASPEC countries discussed a proposal on “the North-East Asian Biodiversity Management Programme” presented by UNDP as a Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project. However, securing fund for the project was not realized.
2. Having attained NEASPEC’s own financial resources by the establishment of the Core Fund, the Secretariat put forwarded to the 7th SOM in 2001 a paper “Identification of Project Ideas” including a brief proposal for “North-East Asia Nature Conservation Programme”. The Meeting agreed that the programme should initially focus on training and general information exchange based on consensus among the participating countries.
3. The 8th SOM in 2002 decided to establish a working group of national focal points on nature conservation to identify priority areas for development of projects in nature conservation, initiate exchange of information to grasp issues and problems and to bring issues to the attention of governments for cooperative action.
4. Following the recommendation of the 8th SOM, three meetings of Working Group were held from June 2003 to September 2004 to formulate priority areas of joint action and a concrete project proposal on “Nature Conservation Programme in North-East Asia”. The project was endorsed at the 10th SOM in 2004 and successfully implemented from mid 2005 to early 2007. Having held three expert workshops, four pilot projects, and national surveys and workshops, the project developed a NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy for the adoption by the 12th SOM in 2007.
5. The 12th SOM adopted the NEASPEC Resolution on Nature Conservation Programme which endorses the Conservation Strategy; calls upon the NEASPEC member countries to work towards the implementation of proposed subregional and national actions in the Strategy; and requests ESCAP to facilitate developing further joint activities.
6. In this regard, ESCAP had consulted with the Russian Federation to include a project on nature conservation in transboundary areas into the ESCAP programme to be funded by the Government of the Russian Federation from 2009, and reported the preliminary result of the consultation to the 13th SOM in 2008.
7. The 13th SOM welcomed the preliminary result and recommended to seek for a possibility to formulate the proposed activity as a full NEASPEC project with comprehensive participation by NEASPEC member countries. Thus, the Secretariat developed the following project proposal for the approval of the SOM.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

8. The proposed project on “Establishing Coordination Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia” aims to strengthen transboundary cooperation in Lower Tumen River Area encompassing China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. This transboundary area has critical implications for four target species of the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy as home to both Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard, and part of either breeding grounds or migration corridors of White-napped Crane and Hooded Crane.

9. Considering the global significance of the species, various initiatives of UN agencies and NGOs have already made to strengthen transboundary cooperation in Lower Tumen River Area. In particular, UNESCO undertook a project to create a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve in the area during 2002-2004. Though the project was not able to achieve its final goal, the processes and key outcomes provide useful ground for further work. Moreover, the need for creating ecological corridors in China and transboundary protected areas between China and the Russian Federation was highlighted by the attached Action Plan for conservation of Amur tiger in Northeast China, an outcome of the International Workshop on Transboundary Amur Tiger Wild Population Restoration held in July 2006 in Yanji, China, as a pilot project of the NEASPEC nature conservation project.

10. Thus, the project will particularly focus on the development of a framework for national and local coordination mechanisms among the three countries of the Tumen River Area through assessing national and local situations pertaining to the protection of the key feline animals and migratory birds in the area; conducting national and local consultations with government officials and other major stakeholders; undertaking field surveys on the population and habitats of the species.

11. The project will be implemented from mid 2009 for the next two years with the budget of US\$123,430, which will consist of contributions of \$75,000 from the Russian Federation and US\$48,430 from the NEASPEC Core Fund.

12. Other NEASPEC member countries, i.e., Mongolia, Japan and the Republic of Korea, could participate in project implementation by, for example, sharing national experiences in nature conservation policies and contributing to field surveys.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The Meeting may wish to provide guidance on the approach, component and modality of the proposed project and approve the project.

14. The Meeting may wish to receive proposals of national contributions to the project implementation.

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