

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Seventeenth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC

20-21 December 2012

Chengdu, China

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

1. The seventeenth Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC was held in Chengdu on 20-21 December 2012. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (SRO-ENEA) and generously hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The 17th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) reaffirmed member States' commitments to addressing environmental challenges in the region through close cooperation. It reiterated that NEASPEC is a comprehensive and unique mechanism for promoting sustainable development in the subregion.

3. The Meeting recognized the overall progress that NEASPEC has made in the context of programme and institutional development, and recognized the need to build on this momentum to further strengthen subregional environmental cooperation.

4. The Meeting also noted the great progress made in the expansion of the activities and the results achieved in carrying forward the mandates of the SOMs and requests the Secretariat to continue the good work and at the same time endeavour to increase the frequency of its communication and coordination of activities with member Governments in project implementation.

5. **Nature conservation:** The Meeting reviewed the outcome of the project on Development of the Cooperation Mechanism for Nature Conservation in Transboundary

Areas and considered one of its proposals of launching the Partnership for Tiger and Leopard Conservation. While the Meeting supported the continuation of NEASPEC activities on sharing information of national status and also the programme on target species and facilitating joint studies in transboundary areas, it noted potential redundancies between the proposed Partnership and existing bilateral mechanism between China and the Russian Federation on the same subject. The Meeting instead endorsed a proposal of the Russian Federation for new NEASPEC activities to focus on (1) monitoring Sino-Russian transborder movement of Amur tigers and leopards by using state-of-the-art methods available for tracking, (2) conducting research on improvement of existing transboundary ecological corridors in protected areas located along the border of China and the Russian Federation, and (3) conducting economic and ecological feasibility study on a new ecological corridor.

6. Regarding migratory birds, the Meeting took note of the project proposal on the Conservation and Rehabilitation of Habitats for Key Species for NEA Eco-networks with special emphasis on Cranes and Black-faced Spoonbills that directly support the implementation of NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy. The recommendations were made to seek synergies with existing mechanisms such as the Partnership for East Asian-Australian Flyway ensuring communication with experts in member States and to reframe the project title and activities, in particular, by the deletion of the term "NEA Eco-Network" from the project proposal. The Secretariat was requested to further elaborate on the project and to present it to member States by the first week of February 2013 for decision.

7. The Meeting noted recommendations of member States on the expansion of target species of NEASPEC activities and the plan of the Mongolian Government for a new project proposal on greater Gobi Bear for the consideration of the next SOM.

8. **Transboundary Air Pollution:** The Meeting commended the contribution of the Project on the Mitigation of Transboundary Air Pollution from Coal-fired Power Plants in supporting national policies and goals for abating air pollution, and noted the interest of member States in developing related projects. In this regard, the delegation of Japan expressed its willingness to facilitate communication with the Asian Development Bank.

9. Regarding the Review of Existing and Required Capacities for Addressing Adverse Environment Impact of Transboundary Air Pollution, the Meeting also noted the contribution of the project for enhancing knowledge of subregional cooperation. In this context, the Meeting recommended to harness collaborations with existing mechanisms.

10. Subsequently, the Meeting had an opportunity to review a new project proposal by the Russian Government for the development of technical and policy framework for transboundary air pollution assessment and abatement. The Meeting welcomed the initiative of the Government for strengthening subregional cooperation on transboundary air pollution. However, considering the technical complexity of the topic and limited time for member Governments' internal review, the Meeting recommended the Russian Government to further elaborate on the proposal and circulate it to other member States by the first week of February in order to seek comments from other member States. Based on

those comments, the chair of SOM-17 will instruct the Secretariat to proceed with the necessary process for the project.

11. **Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms:** The meeting welcomed the contribution of the project on prevention and control of dust and sandstorms in North-East Asia to national efforts for combating desertification and bilateral cooperation between China and Mongolia. For subsequent activities, the meeting took note of the need for engaging other member States and affected countries in the region and beyond joint activities, scaling up project size and improving knowledge sharing.

12. The meeting also emphasized the importance of raising awareness of local residents and facilitating local communities to develop new income sources in order to prevent grassland degradation and deforestation. Moreover, the Meeting recognized capacity building training as a very useful and essential approach to addressing DSS challenges, and recommended the Secretariat to facilitate knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices not only within the subregion but also to other regions.

13. **Eco-efficiency Partnership:** The Meeting noted national policies and programmes including eco-city project of Japan, low carbon city development of China, carbon emissions reduction goals of the Republic of Korea, green civilization strategies of Mongolia. In this connection, the Meeting received support of member States for promoting voluntary information sharing with regard to the improvement of eco-efficiency and thus endorsed the proposal of launching the information platform for low carbon city strategies, however, without establishing any rating or ranking systems in this area. For the platform operation, the Meeting requested the Secretariat to seek synergies with existing initiatives and programmes to harmonize the local, regional and global processes. The Meeting also received the willingness of member States to support collecting data and information on low carbon cities in their respective countries.

14. **Marine Protected Areas:** The Meeting noted progress made by member States in the development of national programmes for the protection and preservation of marine and coastal environment, and exchanged views on potential contributions of the blue economy approach of China to improving marine and coastal environment, and to promoting green growth. The Meeting also underscored the role of Marine Protected Areas as an effective system for marine biodiversity conservation and the importance of information sharing among member States. In this regard, the Meeting endorsed the project proposed by the Republic of Korea for launching North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Network, with further discussions among member States on concrete plans and progress, and requested member States to nominate the national focal points for the network operation. The Meeting also recommended the Secretariat to ensure close collaboration with relevant mechanisms including the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) for the development and implementation of the network.

15. **Review the Outcome of Rio+20 Conferences:** The Meeting reviewed the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and its implications for NEASPEC. The Meeting came to a general consensus on the need for the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes at regional, subregional and national levels in which NEASPEC can play a very unique role by

elaborating its existing programmes in the context of the outcomes and developing new innovative ways within its mandate. In particular, the Meeting noted the potential of complementary roles of each member States in advancing sustainable development at subregional as well as at global levels. However, the Meeting noted that items requiring consensus through global negotiation through UN General Assembly process such as agreement on Sustainable Development Goals are not taken up at NEASPEC level. The Meeting underscored the need to find proper balance of NEASPEC role in line with approved activities.

16. The Meeting noted specific requests by Japan to join its Hanoi High-level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable City in March 2013 and by the Republic of Korea to host a NEASPEC side event during the 12th Conference of Parties to Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in 2014 and encouraged the participation of all member States in these events.

17. **Institutional Arrangement of NEASPEC:** The Meeting commended the efforts made by the Secretariat in producing a comprehensive review of relevant subregional mechanisms and recommendations for further strengthening NEASPEC. There was general consensus on the need for strengthening the human, technical and financial capacity of NEASPEC Secretariat and expanding its partnership with other relevant mechanisms and programmes. In particular, the Meeting came to a general conclusion on the continuation of the current arrangement of the governing body, i.e. SOM, while ad hoc ministerial gatherings could be organized, taking advantage of regional ministerial meetings including Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Meeting also took note of the recommendations contained in the study *“North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities”* on the need of according official status to staff members of ESCAP SRO-ENEA serving NEASPEC in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Secretariat work, and also on the need of developing a long-term (five year or ten year) strategy as a way to support member States to share a long-term view on the direction of NEASPEC and to enhance the efficiency of NEASPEC. The Meeting also discussed ways of improving the current functioning of the NEASPEC Secretariat in order to better meet the needs of member States.

18. **Core Fund:** The Meeting extended its appreciation to member States who made financial contributions to the Core Fund and projects. The Meeting took note of the financial report and approved the budget plan for July 2013 to December 2015 with the understanding that further budget adjustment may be made in accordance with the final decision on proposed activities. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that the revised budget will be reported at the next SOM.

19. **Plan for the Next SOM:** The Meeting welcomed the statement of the Mongolian delegation on hosting the SOM-18, and noted the venue and time will be communicated with the Secretariat in due course. The Secretariat also noted the request of the Mongolian delegation to add green development/ green economy to the agenda of the next SOM, and the final decision on agenda would be made upon consultation with the host government,

and the chair of the SOM-17 acting as the chair until the next SOM and the Secretariat.

20. **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.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEVENTEENTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

A. Attendance

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

B. Opening session

22. The Senior Officials Meeting was opened by Mr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna, the Director of the UNESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia. He briefed the participants of the history of NEASPEC development. He noted that the establishment of NEASPEC in 1993 was the direct response of this subregion to a call by the Agenda 21 adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 (Rio Conference). Over the past 20 years, the subregion has witnessed a rapid expansion of influence in all domains of global economy, politics and environment, which has kept the environmental challenges of the subregion serious and daunting. He highlighted the outcome of Rio+20 and called upon member States to take the 20-year commemoration of the Rio Conference as an opportunity to further reinforce subregional environmental cooperation. He also emphasized that fully realizing the potential of NEASPEC in responding environmental challenges in the subregion requires full commitments of member governments and active participation of major stakeholders. Subsequently, Mr. Ramakrishna reiterated the progress and major activities conducted by NEASPEC since the reallocation of the Secretariat to ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia. Finally, he expressed his best wish for a great success of the SOM-17.

23. The representative of the host country, Mr. Li Kexin, Deputy Director General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China delivered welcoming remarks. He first congratulated the SOM-17 and expressed his great appreciation to the efforts made by the local government of Sichuan Province. He stated that the environmental issue has become a major topic but that sustainable development remains a very challenging task in the context of fast growing economy. He recognized the significance of Rio+20 contributions to reaffirm the issue of sustainable development in global development. He stressed that North-East Asia should join the UN process of carrying out the outcomes of Rio+20 and lead a role in the process. He acknowledged the importance of NEASPEC in promoting sustainable

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

development in the subregion. He called upon subregional countries to work together and to participate in promoting sustainable development, especially in strengthening institutional mechanisms. He emphasized that China would like to fully utilize the NEASPEC platform and cooperate with other member States to address the environmental challenges in the subregion.

C. Election of officers

24. The Meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Li Kexin (China)
Vice-Chair:	Mr. Moonup SEONG (Republic of Korea)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Bold-Erdene YADAMSUREN (Mongolia)

D. Adoption of the agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
 - a) Opening remarks by the Head of ESCAP SRO-ENEA
 - b) Welcoming remarks by the Head of Delegation of the Host Government
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of agenda
4. Statements by delegations of member States, and UN and international organizations on matters related to sustainable development in North-East Asia
5. Review of programme planning and implementation
 - Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas
 - Transboundary Air Pollution in North-East Asia
 - Mitigation of Dust and Sandstorms
 - Eco-efficiency Partnership
 - Marine Environment
6. Review of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) and its implications for subregional cooperation on sustainable development in North-East Asia
7. Consideration of new NEASPEC project proposals
8. Review of issues concerning the institutional arrangement of NEASPEC
9. Review of the Core Fund

10. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Eighteenth SOM
11. Other matters
12. Adoption of the conclusion and recommendation of the meeting

**E. Policy issues for sustainable development in North-East Asia
(Agenda item 4)**

25. The representative of China pointed out that North-East Asia with a large population has become one of the most dynamic economies in the world. But it is also a place vulnerable to environmental challenges, such as water shortage, land degradation, etc. He noted that countries in this subregion share complementary characteristics that endow the subregion with a great potential for cooperation on promotion of sustainable development. He subsequently highlighted three aspects for further achieving sustainable development goals through (1) deepening subregional cooperation among all North-East Asia countries; (2) adjusting existing NEASPEC projects and expanding new projects in timely manner, in line with the changing situation for sustainable development; (3) broadening funding resources in support of the core fund of NEASPEC (China committed \$50,000 USD to the core fund in 2013)

26. The representative of DPRK stressed that the Government attaches a great importance to protecting the environment. In this regard, relevant policies, measures and regulations have come into force and a series of public campaigns and social activities have been conducted in order to attain the goals and targets set forth for the improvement of the environment and the sustainable development of the country.

27. The representative of Japan informed the Meeting of the progress of implementing its domestic climate policies, highlighting the introduction of Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) and carbon tax. He also informed the meeting that Japan will consider expanding the Emission Trading System (ETS) beyond the Tokyo Metropolitan area soon. Also he highlighted financial support to developing countries that the Government has made and its efforts to share knowledge, information, and technology within East Asia, including the launch of Low Carbon Asia Research Network (LoCARNet) in October 2012. He added that Japan will start a Joint Crediting Mechanism in 2013, which is a bilateral offset mechanism with developing countries, in order to complement Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). He shared the information that the Government of Japan announced the “Future Cities Initiatives” in the Rio+20 Conference to demonstrate transformations of cities with latest technologies and good practices. He stated that 11 model cities are designated as model cities including 6 disaster-affected cities. He continued that the Government of Japan aims to establish a platform to exchange knowledge and technologies for making Future cities. Related issues will be discussed at the Fourth High Level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (HLS ESC) to be held on 21-22 March 2013 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

28. The representative of Mongolia first pointed out that along with the economic

growth, Mongolia witnessed severe environmental degradation, desertification, and water shortage, which forced nomads to migrate to urban areas. He also highlighted that more intensified cooperation among the regional countries is needed (1) to cope with transboundary environmental problems, (2) to enhance the timely information sharing of natural disasters, (3) to expand measures to protect the atmosphere, land, underground, water, forest and plant species at regional level, (4) to improve energy utilization. He informed the Meeting that the Government is carrying out government restructuring and is intending to exploit new policies to direct the economy from brown to green. He also noted that the Government adopted the new environmental law based on the "Polluter Pays Principle". He underscored the importance of active cooperation and high contribution to the subregional environmental protection. He finally stated that Mongolia is ready to host the upcoming 18th Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC in 2013.

29. The representative of the Republic of Korea stressed the need to reaffirm commitments to addressing environmental challenges through close cooperation among countries. He noted that NEASPEC is a comprehensive and unique mechanism in the subregion to cover the cooperation in the fields of land, air and marine environmental protection. He then pointed out that NEASPEC has been functioning very well as an important mechanism for cooperation on key environmental issues in North-East Asia and that all member States benefited from this exercise. Concerning recent outcomes made by the Government, he underlined that the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) transformed into an international organization and the Government was successful in the bid to host the Green Climate Fund (GCF). He continued that the Government wishes to exploit the great resources to further participate in sustainable development progress. Finally, he expressed his wish that the Meeting can adopt the marine project that was initially proposed by the Government in the previous SOM and later on was developed into the proposal on 'Sub-regional Cooperation for Strengthening Marine Protected Areas in Northeast Asia'.

30. The representative of the Russian Federation elaborated on key important outcomes that the Government achieved: (1) completion of a comprehensive National Report on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Principles, (2) adaptation of the New Environmental Policy, (3) adoption of the Principles of State Policy in the Area of Environmental Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to the Year 2030. He briefed on the APEC meeting that was held in Khabarovsk, Russian Federation on 16-18 July 2012. He noted that the unanimous endorsement of "Khabarovsk Statement" expressed a variety of views in the five environmental areas: (1) biodiversity, (2) sustainable use of natural resources, (3) combating trans-boundary pollution of the environment (4) mitigation of climate change, and (5) green growth. He provided an updated framework for APEC and external stakeholders to cooperate on addressing them. He emphasized the promotion of international cooperation in the field of environmental protection and the enhancement of environmental cooperation with foreign countries. He finally highlighted that the Russian Federation has been a donor for NEAPEC projects and will continue to support and closely work together with all partners within NEASPEC framework.

31. The representative of the Environment of Development Division of ESCAP acknowledged the progress made by the NEASPEC after its relocation in 2010. He encouraged active discussion on the agenda item on Rio+20, since his division is ready to collaborate with member States to implement the outcomes in the subregion.

32. The representative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) noted the need for the expansion of work of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to cooperate with North-East Asia due to the long-range transport nature of air pollution. He shared the key achievements including protocols and agreements on transboundary air pollution. He stated that UNECE will strengthen policy framework and bring the research into action and that UNECE would like to share knowledge and experience with member States in NEA.

33. The representative of United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP ROAP) briefed on the history of NOWPAP, its networking on marine protected areas and the participation in the NEASPEC Expert Consultation Meeting on Marine Protection. He identified great potential of further cooperation on marine issues between NEASPEC and NOWPAP.

F. Presentations and discussions on substantive agenda items

(Agenda items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

34. The Meeting had presentations from the Secretariat on agenda item 5: Review of programme planning and implementation; agenda item 6: Review of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and its implications for subregional cooperation on sustainable development in North-East Asia; agenda item 8: Review of issues concerning the institutional arrangement of NEASPEC; and agenda item 9: Review of the Core Fund, followed by interventions from member States. Under agenda item 7: Consideration of new NEASPEC proposals, the delegation of the Russian Federation proposed a project on transboundary air pollution. The representative of UNEP presented key findings from the DPRK Environment and Climate Change Outlook and recommended actions of technical cooperation that can be undertaken by UNEP, NEASPEC, international organizations and national donors. Key outcomes of discussions on the agenda items are included as the Conclusions and Recommendations in the Report of the Meeting.

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

(Agenda item 10)

35. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the Eighteenth Senior Officials Meeting. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Mongolia

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 11)

36. The Meeting expressed deep appreciation to the Government of China for generously hosting the Seventeenth 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 12)

37. The Meeting adopted the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Senior Officials Meeting on 21 December 2012. The report of the Meeting was finalized and adopted by circulating it among the member States after the Senior Officials Meeting.

.