

**UNITED NATIONS**

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Twenty-fifth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-25) of NEASPEC

20-21 September 2022

Virtual meeting

**REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

**Renewed commitments to NEASPEC**

*Note by the Secretariat*

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Annex I. Non-paper for information and informal consultation, "Provisional Outline of the Statement/Declaration on Renewed Commitments to NEASPEC"

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The NEASPEC independent evaluation, which was conducted in 2020 and submitted to the SOM-24 in October 2020, recommended updating NEASPEC's long-term vision, mission and goals to align NEASPEC with the ambition and intention of its member States. The SOM-24 decided to hold a National Focal Point (NFP) meeting to develop and agree on an implementation plan for addressing the evaluation recommendations. The NFP meeting held in May 2021 generally agreed to develop a renewed commitment document while the necessity would be further reviewed and decided by the SOM-25. Subsequently, the Secretariat in July 2021 circulated a non-paper, "Provisional Outline of the Statement/Declaration on Renewed Commitments to NEASPEC", for information and informal consultations with member Governments. Thus, the SOM-25 is expected to decide on the necessity of adopting a renewed commitment document, and agree on the structure, key elements and timeline of such document, if the SOM agrees to proceed.

2. The NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 adopted by the SOM-24 defines specific objectives and activities in five thematic areas, i.e., Air Pollution, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation, Marine Protected Areas, Low Carbon Cities and Desertification and Land Degradation under the goals for enhancing science-based, policy-oriented cooperation, mobilizing mutual support, and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals. The Plan also provides the direction on how to operate and strengthen the institutional arrangement of NEASPEC including the SOM, National Focal Points, Secretariat, Committees, Technical Centers and Working Groups, as well as Project Partners. The SOM-24 reviewed the recommendations of the NEASPEC independent evaluation to improve the effectiveness of the SOM as the governing body of NEASPEC with the proper level of representations from member States; and enhance the Secretariat capacity including through the secondment of national experts to the Secretariat. In addition, it is necessary to discuss the efficient operation of the Committees and Working Groups considering their critical roles in advancing substantive cooperation under NEASPEC.

## II. RENEWED COMMITMENTS

3. NEASPEC has taken a step-by-step approach in defining its programme and building up the institutional structure based on the NEASPEC Framework adopted by the SOM-3 in 1996. As the founding document of NEASPEC, the Framework stipulates the general provisions, geographic coverage, objectives, governing body, participation, coordination and management, collaborating agencies, financial mechanism, and criteria for project selection. Member States made further commitments to developing NEASPEC into a comprehensive programme for environmental cooperation by adopting the Vision Statement at the SOM-6 in 2000.

4. Member States decided to take a more strategic and coordinated approach to NEASPEC programme planning and implementation by adopting the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 at the SOM-20 in 2016, and the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 at the SOM-24 in 2020. Through the step-by-step approach, NEASPEC has made significant progress in its institutional arrangements and evolved into a comprehensive mechanism in the context of its (a) **membership** covering all six subregional countries; (b) **programmatic areas** covering air pollution, biodiversity and nature conservation, marine protected areas, low carbon cities and desertification and land degradation; (c) **participating stakeholders** including governments, local governments, research institutions and civil society organizations; (d) **modalities** of delivering the work from policy dialogues to field projects; and (e) **interlinkages** of the work between local, national, (sub)regional and global agendas.

5. However, each of these dimensions needs to be further strengthened to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of NEASPEC as member States have raised their understanding and commitment to tackle pressing environmental issues. As presented in the NFP meeting document titled, “NEASPEC Renewed Commitments (NEASPEC/NFP/3)”, member States considered adopting a document such as a statement or declaration that stipulates NEASPEC’s updated long-term vision, goal, operational modality, etc. As a follow-up to the NFP meeting, the Secretariat circulated a non-paper titled “Provisional Outline of the Statement/Declaration on Renewed Commitments to NEASPEC” to help member States conceptualize the structure and content and facilitate a relevant decision at the SOM-25.

6. Having considered the new global context of climate change, biodiversity and Sustainable Development Goals, subregional context of commitments to the global goals and NEASPEC’s institutional development, the provisional outline provides key elements of renewed commitments for the consideration of member States, attached as Annex I.

### III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The Meeting may wish to exchange views on the necessity of developing a document stipulating an updated long-term vision, goal, operational modality, etc. of NEASPEC, and decide the process and timeframe for its preparation.

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