

Expert Consultation Meeting on NEASPEC activities in the field of Transboundary Air Pollution in North-East Asia

20-21 January 2011, Incheon, Republic of Korea

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Participants exchanged views and information on existing regional/subregional mechanisms on transboundary air pollution to identify gaps in the existing approaches and methodologies under those mechanisms. The meeting also discussed the vast experience and expertise accumulated under the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE), Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) in order to search for possibilities of taking stock of the institutional and scientific frameworks established by the Convention in the context of the North-East Asian subregion.
2. The meeting facilitated in-depth discussions on the proposal submitted by the Russian Federation on the “Establishment of a regional system for adverse environmental impact assessment of air pollution” and its relevance in the context of the current mechanisms and identified opportunities for improvement.
3. The meeting recognized the need for further strengthening the linkages between scientific studies and policy making process in order to make the best use of the research outcomes for addressing national and subregional challenges to mitigating air pollution.
4. Taking into account the existing mechanisms including the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) and the Joint Research Project on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollutants in Northeast Asia (LTP Project) and the time frame and resources required for the proposal submitted by the Russian Federation, the meeting suggested focusing on carrying out a comprehensive study of the existing approaches and methodologies. The study may examine results of (a) atmospheric models such as LTP, MICS Asia studies, UNECE/EMEP and relevant regional/ subregional conferences such as Air Quality Modeling in Asia 2011, (b) integrated assessment activities within EANET and modeling with GAINS-Asia, and (c) national studies on environmental impacts of air pollution. Based on this review, the study may identify subregional needs and priorities and formulate options for a possible framework for enhancing multilateral cooperation.

5. In this regard, the representatives of member States participating in the meeting as well as representatives of LTP, EANET and UNECE/CLRTAP Secretariat expressed their willingness to fully cooperate with the study, exchange information and, in particular, provide data required for the study. The study may also explore the possible advantage of using a multi-model approach rather than a single model approach while it may develop common guidelines for further improving the quality of subregional modeling exercises, thereby reducing the level of uncertainties in the results.

6. The meeting recommended the study to fully utilize existing knowledge in the subregion and involve experts from all member States so that the outcome is a product of joint efforts of all member States.

7. The meeting recommended conducting the study for the period of one year between the 16th Senior Officials Meeting of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (SOM-16 of NEASPEC) and SOM-17 and requested SOM-16 to consider approving the conclusions of the meeting, and launching a new initiative of NEASPEC in this context. In order to proceed with the proposed study, member States are invited to nominate national experts as focal points for facilitating communication among national experts participating in this study as well as with the implementing agency. These experts will also act as members of the working group responsible for guiding the scope and process of the study.

8. Taking into account the present conclusions and recommendations, the Russian Federation is invited to submit an amended proposal to SOM-16.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

9. The Expert Consultation Meeting was convened primarily to discuss the project proposal on “the Establishment of a Regional System for Adverse Environmental Impact Assessment of Air Pollution” submitted by the Russian Federation. The initial proposal related to transboundary air pollution in North-East Asia was presented by the Russian Federation at the fifteenth Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC (15th SOM) held on 17-18 March 2010 in Tokyo, Japan. Based on the discussions that took place during the 15th SOM, the Russian Federation submitted a new proposal in May 2010. Subsequently, the NEASPEC secretariat facilitated consultations among the member States on this proposal in May-June 2010 and collected views and comments from member States. Upon further consultations of the NEASPEC secretariat with the Russian counterparts, the Russian government provided in November 2010 some additional clarifications on the proposal.

A. Attendance

10. The Expert Consultation Meeting was organized by the NEASPEC Secretariat on 20-21 January 2011 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The meeting was attended by seventeen participants including national experts nominated by governments of Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation and resources persons from the academia and UN Economic Commission for Europe (Secretariat of CLRTAP).

B. Opening Session

11. The Expert Consultation Meeting was opened by Mr. Peter Van Laere, Director of ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (SRO-ENEA). In his statement, Mr. Van Laere underscored the importance of adopting multilateral approach in addressing various environmental challenges in the North-East Asian subregion and expressed his hope that the outcomes of the meeting will be useful in further promoting the efforts of member States in dealing with transboundary air pollution as one of the most prioritized environmental issues of the subregion.

12. Mr. Heung-kyeong Park, Deputy Director-General for Green Growth and Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, in his opening speech, welcomed the participants of the meeting to Incheon and reiterated the utmost importance that the Government of the Republic of Korea attaches to concept of green growth both on national and subregional scale. He also stressed the role of NEASPEC as a platform for addressing environmental issues of the subregion and expressed his gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for coming up with a new initiative on management of transboundary air pollution within the frames of NEASPEC.

13. Mr. Maxim Volkov, Councilor of the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Korea, thanked the secretariat of NEASPEC for organizing the Expert Consultation Meeting and confirmed strong support and commitment of the Russian Federation to the proposal that was submitted by his country on the Establishment of a Regional System for Adverse Environmental Impact Assessment of Air Pollution.

C. Current Regional and Subregional Initiatives for Transboundary Cooperation on Air Pollution

14. The session reviewed approaches and practices of existing regional and subregional cooperation mechanisms on mitigation of transboundary air pollution based on presentations made by the representatives of the EANET, LTP Project and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP). The review identified room for improvement in existing approaches and methodologies in the North-East Asian subregion, especially in the light of well developed scientific and institutional approaches of CLRTAP, which can serve as a good model for the subregion.

15. Particularly, the review suggested the need for further strengthening the linkages between scientific studies and policy making process in order to make the best use of the research outcomes for addressing national and subregional challenges to mitigating air pollution. The session also discussed different modeling methods adopted under each mechanism and the necessity for harmonization of regional/subregional modeling methods.

16. Concerning the large scale of technical work required for modeling of transboundary air pollution, the session recommended enhancing the practice of sharing of monitoring data, exchange of modeling methodologies, and development of joint activities among existing regional and subregional mechanisms on mitigation of transboundary air pollution.

D. Current Methodologies for the Assessment of Environmental Impacts of Air Pollution in North-East Asia and Europe

17. The session discussed studies on assessment of adverse health impacts of air pollution in North-East Asia, especially the health impacts caused by the long-range pollutants, such as PM 2.5 and PM 10. The results of the environmental impact assessment of air pollution in Ulaanbaatar showed that respiratory complications and blood circulating diseases are becoming an increasing threat to the citizens, especially pregnant women and new born babies. Discussions indicated the lack of comprehensive studies on health impact while both transboundary and local air pollutants can have distinct impacts on human health in different regions due to different geographic and climate conditions.

18. The representative of UNECE/CLRTAP secretariat presented the comprehensive scientific and institutional framework for assessment of environmental impacts of transboundary air pollution that was established within the Convention. Particularly, Mr. Olendrzynski introduced the Working Group on Effects as the main body responsible for planning and coordination of the effects-oriented activities. He also elaborated on the functions and tasks of different International Cooperative Programs (ICPs) and Task

Forces that cover some specific aspects of environmental impact assessment which include effects on waters, forests, vegetation, materials, health and others.

E. New Scientific and Technical Approaches Proposed within the Frames of NEASPEC and possible work plan

19. The representative of Scientific Research Institute for Atmospheric Air Protection presented the proposal on the “establishment of a regional system for adverse environmental impact assessment of air pollution”. In his presentation, Mr. Romanov introduced the main objectives and scope of the proposed project, its approximate budget, and the estimated time frame for implementation. He also welcomed any comments and suggestions on the detailed scope of the project as well as on the approaches and methodology to be adopted for its realization.

20. The representative of UNECE/CLRTAP introduced two recent comprehensive studies on the hemispheric transport of air pollutants and black carbon, showing the benefit of co-benefits approach which integrates policies of air pollution and climate change as a cost-effective way to mitigate transboundary air pollution, thereby limiting risks to human health and improving local environments. In this regard, he informed the participants on the outcomes of the recent session of the Executive Body of the Convention held in December 2010, which particularly adopted the decision to revise the Gothenburg Protocol to the Convention by including actions on black carbon to its provisions and decided to pursue further studies on troposphere ozone and its important precursors such as methane and carbon monoxide.

F. Adoption of Conclusions and Recommendations

21. Concerning the proposal of the Russian Federation, the participants adopted a set of conclusions and recommendations for further action and attention of SOM-16 as reflected in the first part of this report.

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