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Twenty-sixth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-26) of NEASPEC

23-24 November 2023

Seoul, Republic of Korea

REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda)

Low Carbon Cities

Note by the Secretariat

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The transition towards low carbon and resilient cities is essential to realize national and local mitigation targets. NEASPEC has promoted low carbon city development through peer-to-peer support and experience-sharing. The North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform launched in 2014 facilitated joint efforts of relevant institutions and organizations in adopting and advancing low carbon city development, linking cities with major stakeholders, promoting awareness, and building capacity.

2. Approved by SOM-21 in 2017, the pilot peer review studies were conducted, and peer review workshops were organized in Wuhan, China, in 2018, and Guangzhou, China and Gwangju, Republic of Korea, in 2019. The Secretariat also carried out a comparative study of national policies on low-carbon cities in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, engaging think tanks and institutes such as the Institute for Global Decarbonization Progress (iGDP), Institute for Global Environmental Studies (IGES) and the Korea Environment Institute (KEI).¹

3. Subsequently, the Secretariat implemented a project, *“Leveraging Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Low Carbon and Resilient Cities”*, funded by the UN regular budget, to promote knowledge sharing and capacity by utilizing ESCAP’s work on STI. Under this project, the secretariat organized a training workshop in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in 2021.

4. To expand the partnership for promoting city-led climate action by holding a regular forum on low carbon cities and also create synergies among existing city initiatives, the Secretariat, together with Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea, has organized the International Forum on Low Carbon Cities since 2021. The Forum serves as a venue to exchange knowledge and experiences among cities, academia and research institutes.

II. PROGRESS OF THE ACTIVITIES ON LOW CARBON CITIES

5. Since the SOM-25, held in September 2022, the Secretariat organized two International Forums on Low Carbon Cities, produced Low Carbon Cities Compendium of Best Practices, and organized a parallel session on city-led climate innovations at the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum.

(2nd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities)

6. The Secretariat organized the 2nd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 6 to 8 December 2022. The Forum was attended by over 150

¹ The study is available at: https://neaspec.org/sites/default/files/Comparative%20Study%20on%20LCC-final_0.pdf

in-person participants and approximately 300 online participants, including high-level speakers, key experts on climate change and representatives from local government, international and regional organizations, city networks and civil society.

7. The Forum contributed to strengthening commitment to city-led climate actions and partnerships, demonstrated by Incheon's announcement to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, which is five years earlier than the national target. The Forum shared good practices and local initiatives on net-zero carbon policies, nature-based solutions and circular economy from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Singapore and Europe to encourage concrete city-led climate actions in North-East Asia and beyond. City networks, including ICLEI East Asia, CityNet and C40, also exchanged their perspectives and shared plans to create synergies and identify collaborative opportunities.

(3rd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities)

8. On 29 August 2023, the 3rd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities was organized in Incheon, Republic of Korea, during the 2023 Korea Global Adaptation Week. It attracted over 200 on-site participants and approximately 120 online participants, including high-level speakers and key experts on climate change.

9. The Forum provided a venue to review and discuss the progress towards low carbon and resilient development of many cities in North-East Asia, and learn about the successful cases from Shanghai and the Greater Bay Area, China, Kyoto and Kitakyushu, Japan, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Incheon and Seoul, the Republic of Korea, and Moscow, the Russian Federation.

10. Building on the two previous fora, the Forum drew large attention from local governments, organizations and civil societies to the urgent need for city-led climate actions to achieve the global climate goals. The Forum also strengthened collaboration across multiple sectors and various stakeholders by sharing innovative approaches and good practices being implemented in key sectors, including energy, water, disaster risk reduction, transport and construction, and showcasing how to collaborate with the private sector and civil society.

(Low Carbon Cities Compendium of Best Practices)

11. To document and promote good practices shared at the international forums on low carbon cities and identified by partner institutions, the Secretariat, together with the Institute for Global Decarbonization Progress (iGDP) and ICLEI East Asia, produced *the Low Carbon Cities Compendium of Best Practices* as promotional material. The compendium introduces approximately 20 cases from cities in North-East Asia on policies, circular economy, nature-based solutions and innovations, and stakeholder engagement.

12. Based on the compendium, the Secretariat organizes a workshop, *City-led Climate Innovations: Driving Changes to Safeguard Our Future*, in Suwon, Republic of Korea, on 24 October 2023, as a parallel session of the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum. The session will showcase innovative approaches of the cities in promoting climate actions aimed at building the capacity of cities to accelerate innovations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It will also facilitate the exchange of experiences in supporting and ensuring the implementation of zero carbon measures at the local level.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The Meeting may wish to request member States the following:
- (a) Express interest in hosting the International Forums on Low Carbon Cities in the coming years; and
 - (b) Encourage cities and local municipalities to attend the NEASPEC activities on low carbon cities to exchange knowledge and experiences on city-led climate actions.
14. The Meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed activity plan (Annex III).

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