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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(e) of the provisional agenda)

Desertification and Land Degradation

Note by the Secretariat

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ANNEX I: Concept note of the NEASPEC Expert Group Meeting on Desertification and Land Degradation and Climate Change

ANNEX II: NEASPEC approach for desertification and land degradation

ANNEX III: (draft) Activity Plan for desertification and land degradation in 2023-2024

I. BACKGROUND

1. Desertification and land degradation (DLD) are significant challenges to sustainable development in North-East Asia, affecting soil, air and water quality. In recognition of the threat and impact of DLD on the people, their livelihood and the environment, NEASPEC member States have developed and implemented various policies and programmes to combat DLD, including through NEASPEC.

2. In support of this, NEASPEC contributed to capacity building, knowledge sharing and training on addressing DLD during 2011-2013, and launched the North-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Plan on Combating DLD (NEAMSP) at the SOM-20 in 2016 as a subregional cooperation platform.

3. However, recognizing that national partners and activities of NEASPEC overlap with the Northeast Asia Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought Network (DLDD-NEAN), member States considered re-orienting the NEASPEC work and decided to conduct a stock-taking study on the interlinkage of climate change mitigation and DLD, develop a subregional approach for addressing climate change and DLD without duplication with other mechanisms, and hold stakeholder dialogues, as contained in the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

4. Accordingly, the Secretariat conducted a stock-taking study on the interlinkage of DLD and climate change in 2021, as reported to SOM-25. The Secretariat also organized an expert group meeting in June 2023. Based on the findings of the stock-taking study and discussions of the expert group meeting, the Secretariat developed a tentative subregional approach to DLD for NEASPEC and consulted with existing subregional platforms of DLD by holding bilateral dialogues.

II. OUTCOMES OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DESERTIFICATION AND LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

5. The Secretariat, jointly with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, organized an Expert Group Meeting on Desertification and Land Degradation and Climate Change in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 19 to 20 June 2023.¹

¹ <https://neaspec.org/content/expert-group-meeting-desertification-and-land-degradation-and-climate-change-subregional>

6. Attended by around 30 experts from Australia, China, India, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation and representatives of international and subregional organizations, the Meeting reviewed the current status, trends and impacts of DLD in North-East Asia, identified drivers and risks, and discussed a subregional approach and potential activities for NEASPEC (Annex I).

7. Highlighting the severe challenges faced by DLD in some parts of North-East Asia, the Meeting noted the need to assess, monitor and manage anthropogenic causes, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, mining, land use and land cover, population pressure and migration, as well as biophysical causes, such as climate change.

8. The Meeting also proposed further analysis and research on the discussed causes, drivers and impacts of DLD to raise subregional understanding of challenges from DLD, capacity-building activities and regional and subregional venues and/or platforms to exchange knowledge and experiences in combating DLD in North-East Asia.

III. PROPOSED SUBREGIONAL APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES FOR NEASPEC

9. The NEASPEC approach and activities can aim to raise awareness of all concerned stakeholders in North-East Asia on the challenges of DLD and to build their capacity to address them to ensure sustainable development in the subregion (Annex II).

10. Noting that existing subregional platforms on DLD, including the Northeast Asia Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought Network (DLDD-NEAN) and the Asian Forestry Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), focus on reforestation and forest management, NEASPEC can focus on enhancing the understanding of the causes, drivers and impacts of DLD in North-East Asia and building the capacity to assess, monitor and manage them through promoting international cooperation.

11. In this regard, NEASPEC's work on DLD can be as the following:

- (a) ENHANCE the understanding of DLD in North-East Asia through research and analysis of their causes, drivers and impacts, including the interlinkages between climate change and DLD and anthropogenic indicators;

- (b) BUILD the capacity to develop and implement appropriate policy options to address DLD in North-East Asia; and
- (c) PROMOTE collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experiences of member States in addressing DLD.

12. The proposed approach was consulted with Mongolia to align with the upcoming Seventeenth Session of the UNCCD Conference of Parties in 2026 and the DLDD-NEAN secretariat to ensure synergies between the two platforms and avoid duplications.

IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The Meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed subregional approach for NEASPEC (Annex II).

14. The Meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed activity plan for 2023-2024 (Annex III).

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