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Twenty-seventh Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-27) of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)

12-13 December 2024

Beijing, China

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. The North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) is focused on promoting low carbon city development through peer-to-peer support and experience-sharing. The North-East Asia Low Carbon City Platform (ENEALCCP) launched in 2014 is a platform to facilitate 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 the twenty-first Senior Officials Meeting (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 the project, “Leveraging Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Low Carbon and Resilient Cities”, funded by the United Nations’ regular budget, to promote knowledge sharing and capacity by utilizing the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on Science, Technology and Innovation (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, thereby creating synergies among existing city initiatives, the secretariat, together with Incheon Metropolitan City, the Republic of Korea, organized the International Forum on Low Carbon Cities since 2021. The forum is a venue to exchange knowledge and experiences among cities, academia and research institutes.

5. As presented at the twenty-sixth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-26), held in November 2023, the secretariat organized three International Forums on Low Carbon Cities,

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

produced the *Low Carbon Cities Compendium of Best Practices*, and organized a parallel session on city-led climate innovations at the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum.

II. PROGRESS OF THE ACTIVITIES ON LOW CARBON CITIES

(4th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities)

6. The Fourth International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, held on 8 October 2024 in Kitakyushu, Japan, was convened with over 100 participants from 18 countries to explore innovative approaches for sustainable, low-carbon urbanization. Co-organized by ESCAP, Kitakyushu City, and Incheon Metropolitan City, the participants of the forum reaffirmed cities' essential role as testing grounds for climate action. Discussions were focused on reducing urban emissions, enhancing resilience to climate impacts, and fostering partnerships to drive sustainability. The forum's meeting report is provided in Annex I.

7. Hosting the forum in Kitakyushu was an opportunity to share the city's achievements in renewable energy, hydrogen use, and recycling, which were showcased during a site visit on 9 October to environmental facilities such as the Takamiya Environmental Museum and Kitakyushu Eco-Town. These insights, along with the forum's outcomes, will contribute to upcoming events including the eighty-first session of ESCAP guided by the theme "Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific".

8. On 7 October 2024, prior to the forum, the secretariat hosted an informal dialogue with longstanding partners of the Northeast Asia Low Carbon Cities Platform (LCCP) to explore strategies for revitalizing the platform and enhancing regional cooperation on low-carbon development. The summary of the dialogue is provided in Annex II.

9. Key discussions were focused on the need to expand peer reviews to invite more cities in the region, conduct comparative studies at the national level, and strengthen knowledge sharing and peer learning mechanisms. Participants also highlighted the importance of involving both national and local governments in ongoing discussions. Practical recommendations included developing clear guidelines and templates to assist local governments, prioritizing capacity building and community engagement, and emphasizing the process of low-carbon transition as much as its outcomes.

10. The secretariat further aims to enhance its engagement across ESCAP, including through high-impact initiatives such as the Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-9) and the NDC-Urban (Nationally Determined Contributions for Urban Development) programmes. Strengthening collaboration with these ESCAP-led initiatives will enable the secretariat to

amplify its regional reach and contribute more substantively to sustainable urban development and climate action efforts.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

11. 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 including the LCCP.

12. The meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed activity plan (Annex III).

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