

Annex I.

## **Expert Group Meeting on Addressing Sustainable Development Challenges in North-East Asia**

# **Promoting Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia: Development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030**

**13 December 2024, Hybrid (Beijing and Online)**

### **Background**

The North-East Asia Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) is a unique environmental cooperation mechanism in North-East Asia tailored to the specific subregional characteristics and needs of the member States for concerted efforts to improve environmental sustainability. NEASPEC has made significant and tangible progress in subregional environmental cooperation in several programmatic areas, namely air pollution, biodiversity and nature conservation, marine protected areas, low carbon cities, and desertification and land degradation. It has also facilitated the establishment of thematic platforms, such as the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP), North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN), and North-East Asia Low Carbon Cities Platform (NEA-LCCP).

NEASPEC Strategic Plans have served, through the years, as guiding documents for developing and implementing NEASPEC work in its five programmatic areas as well as strengthening its institutionalized cooperation platforms and have supported NEASPEC work to move from a short-term, project-based to a long-term, programmatic approach. In 2016, after a study on challenges and opportunities of NEASPEC and a series of consultations, the 20<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-20) adopted the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2016-2020. And in 2020, building on the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and reflecting new developments during its implementation, the 24<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-24) adopted the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

The development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is at hand. In 2023, NEASPEC member States reaffirmed their commitment to promoting environmental cooperation in North-East Asia, which set a solid impetus in developing the next five-year strategic plan. Through the NEASPEC Commemorative Statement issued to mark the 30th anniversary of NEASPEC, member States envisaged: (a) accelerating the progress of NEASPEC's activities, projects and platforms in five programmatic areas; (b) bolstering NEASPEC's relevance to tackling environmental challenges and delivering concrete benefits for the

subregion and beyond; (c) developing subregional knowledge base and capacity through NEASPEC's works for the member States, and (e) enhancing the effectiveness of NEASPEC's work.

## Objectives

ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, as NEASPEC secretariat, has supported member States in the development of NEASPEC strategic plans. To this end, the Expert Group Meeting is organized with the following objectives:

- a. Discuss the timeline and approach in developing the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030
- b. Exchange views among NEASPEC member States, experts and practitioners on how to further operationalize the goals articulated under the NEASPEC Commemorative Statement

The discussions during Expert Group Meeting will lay the groundwork for the NEASPEC secretariat in carrying out its tasks supporting member States in developing the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030.

## Participants

Participants will include:

- o Government delegations attending the 27<sup>th</sup> NEASPEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-27),
- o Representatives and partners of NEASPEC programmatic areas
- o Experts from academia, research institutes, UN, and other international organizations

## Indicative Programme

Time	Sessions
14:00-14:05 [5 mins]	<p><b>Opening</b></p> <p><b>Remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav (Head, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office)</li> </ul>
14:05-15:35 [90 mins]	<p><b>Accelerating NEASPEC's progress: Programmatic Areas</b></p> <p>Moderator: NEASPEC secretariat</p> <p>A. Context Setting: Presentations on NEASPEC programmatic areas</p>

Time	Sessions
	<p>[45 mins]</p> <p><i>For context setting, presentations on each programmatic area will be delivered by the secretariat and resource persons. The presentations will highlight the key milestones and achievements under each programmatic area, identify emerging issues and reflect on opportunities for advancing cooperation through NEASPEC for consideration in the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air pollution</li> <li>• Low carbon cities</li> <li>• Marine protected areas</li> <li>• Biodiversity and nature conservation</li> <li>• Desertification and land degradation</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Moderated Discussions [45 mins]</b></p> <p><i>During the moderated discussions, each NEASPEC member state will be requested to provide interventions and share their insights, as guided by the session questions below. Other EGM participants (e.g., NEASPEC partners, resource persons) will also be requested to share their perspectives.</i></p> <p><i>The guiding questions take reference from the NEASPEC Commemorative Statement on Promoting Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In bolstering NEASPEC's relevance to tackling environmental challenges and delivering concrete benefits for the subregion and beyond, how can NEASPEC better align its work with national, regional and global goals and priorities?</li> <li>2. What strategies can NEASPEC employ to strengthen partnerships with other regional and international environmental frameworks including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to maximize synergies of efforts?</li> <li>3. What policy issues and areas can further strengthen the work and bolster cooperation under the current NEASPEC's programmatic areas?</li> <li>4. What are possible approaches/mechanisms to improve the delivery of NEASPEC activities in terms of developing subregional knowledge base and capacity?</li> </ol>

Time	Sessions
15:35-15:45 [10 mins]	<i>Break</i>
15:45-16:45 [60 mins]	<p><b>Accelerating NEASPEC's progress: Programmatic Areas (con't)</b> Moderator: NEASPEC secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEASPEC cooperation areas</li> <li>• Interlinkages of programmatic areas</li> <li>• New areas of collaboration</li> </ul> <p>C. Moderated Discussions (60 mins)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. In optimizing the operation of coordination and decision-making processes, are there opportunities in merging current programmatic areas leveraging from their interlinkages?</li> <li>6. Are there any specific gaps or niches in current regional initiatives where NEASPEC can provide unique added value through its programmatic focus or coordination efforts?</li> <li>7. What mechanisms or platforms can NEASPEC develop to facilitate regular knowledge exchange and collaborative research across programmatic areas?</li> <li>8. What are possible new areas of collaboration that can be effectively addressed by NEASPEC?</li> </ol>
16:45-17:45 [60 mins]	<p><b>Accelerating NEASPEC's progress: Operational Support</b> Moderator: NEASPEC secretariat</p> <p>D. Context Setting: Presentations on operational support [10 mins]</p> <p><i>The secretariat will provide a presentation on the operational support to NEASPEC, highlighting issues on funding, staffing needs/requirements and outreach.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding (programme delivery and staffing)</li> <li>• Outreach and stakeholder engagement</li> </ul> <p>E. Moderated Discussions [50 mins]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. In support of the accelerating NEASPEC's progress, how to promote increased voluntary contributions from member States?</li> <li>10. In addition to the voluntary contribution from member States, what other mechanisms can be explored to finance practical project cooperation?</li> </ol>

Time	Sessions
	11. How can NEASPEC enhance stakeholder engagement (e.g., academia, civil society, private sector, etc.) to promote inclusive and participatory environmental governance?
17:45-18:00 [15 mins]	<b>Wrap-Up and Next Steps</b>