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Twenty-seventh Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of NEASPEC

12-13 December 2024

Beijing, China

**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING
OF THE NORTH-EAST ASIAN SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION**

1. The Twenty-seventh Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) was held in Beijing, China, on 12-13 December 2024 and hosted by the Government of China. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia, serving as NEASPEC secretariat, and was chaired by the Government of China.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Reaffirming the commitments of the member States to enhancing national actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthening subregional approaches and multi-stakeholders' mechanisms to expedite actions on subregional and global environmental challenges, the Meeting commended the contribution of NEASPEC to promote subregional environmental cooperation.

3. **Air Pollution:** The Meeting welcomed the progress of work on air pollution, facilitated under the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP), in 2024. The Meeting approved the Executive Summary of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report, presented in Annex I. Recognizing the need to finalize the full report, as it will provide the reference for the activity plan on air pollution in 2025, the senior officials requested the secretariat to work closely with the member States to address their comments, with the aim to publish the report following the consensus of the member States on its content in line with the Executive Summary of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report in time for the Second NEACAP Policy Dialogue planned in the first half of 2025. Notwithstanding that the country

is not included in the report, the Meeting noted the interest expressed by the Russian Federation to participate in future dialogues. The Meeting noted the plan for the Second NEACAP Policy Dialogue to be held in conjunction with the seventh meeting of the Science and Policy Committee (SPC-7) and highlighted the importance of maximizing the participation of policymakers and stakeholders in these engagements. In this regard, the delegates requested the secretariat to streamline the objectives and discussions, avoid duplication, and closely coordinate with other (sub) regional mechanisms on schedules of activities. The Meeting adopted the proposed activity plan in 2025, with the adjusted timeline for the publication of the full report before the Second Policy Dialogue.

4. **Biodiversity and Nature Conservation:** The Meeting was informed of the updates on biodiversity and nature conservation on the flagship species and their habitats as well as transboundary cooperation, including the Workshop on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity for Transboundary Cooperation. The delegates welcomed the approval of the new project on “Connectivity Conservation for Habitats of Flagship Migratory Birds in North-East Asia (Black-faced Spoonbills, White-naped Cranes, and Hooded Cranes)” funded by the Russian Federation. The meeting adopted the proposed activity plan for 2025.

5. **Marine Protected Areas:** The delegates acknowledged the progress made in 2024 on marine protected areas (MPA), including the study on climate change and MPAs, knowledge sharing and capacity building activities such as the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) Workshop held in China, and outreach activities. The Meeting adopted the proposed activity plan for 2025.

6. **Low Carbon Cities:** The Meeting welcomed the progress on the programmatic area, including the organization of the 4th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities. The senior officials also acknowledged efforts related to low carbon development made by the member States and took note of the interests in hosting the International Forum on Low Carbon Cities in the coming years, including the Russian Federation’s suggestion to host the 5th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities in Vladivostok during the Eastern Economic Forum in 2025. The Meeting adopted the proposed activity plan for 2025.

7. **Desertification and Land Degradation:** The Meeting noted the progress made in the work programme on desertification and land degradation (DLD). It also noted the plan to study the main causes, drivers, impacts, potential solutions and regional cooperation initiatives of DLD in North-East Asia, and to organize a subregional forum in 2025 to address these issues, thereby building momentum for the 17th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, scheduled for 2026. The delegates further requested the secretariat to engage in close consultations with the member States during the preparation of the study and agreed to delete reference to the background paper in the proposed activity plan for 2025. The Meeting adopted the proposed activity plan for 2025.

8. **Core Fund and Project-based Fund:** The Meeting appreciated the financial contributions of the member States to the Core Fund and Project-based Fund, as well as the support and in-kind contributions from partner organizations. The senior officials encouraged the member States to

provide continued financial and in-kind contributions for the implementation of NEASPEC programmes and activities. The Meeting approved the financial report.

9. **NEASPEC Strategic Plan for 2026-2030:** The Meeting welcomed the preparations of the secretariat for the development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030, including the proposed timeline. Noting the informal nature of the expert group meeting, organized by the secretariat back-to-back to SOM-27, to gather ideas and insights to help kick-off the development of the Strategic Plan, the delegates advised that its drafts will be reviewed and adopted by the member States. The Meeting also tasked the secretariat to seek the perspectives of other stakeholders through a survey, which would also ensure broader coverage of experts and nationalities in the subregion. The Meeting took note of the advice from Mongolia, as the country host of the 28th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-28), to tentatively schedule the SOM-28 around late September 2025. The secretariat will revise the proposed timeline, in line with the guidance received from the member States, and circulate to NEASPEC National Focal Points within two weeks after the SOM-27.

10. **Plan for the Next SOM:** The Meeting welcomed the statement of Mongolia to host the SOM-28, noting that the venue and time will be announced in due course, in consultations with the member States and the secretariat.

11. Delegates expressed appreciation to the Government of China and the Chair for the successful hosting and arrangement of the SOM-27. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the secretariat for its preparatory work and thanked delegations for their active and dedicated participation in the Meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

A. Attendance

12. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of China, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, together with experts and representatives of international organizations and partners.

B. Opening session

13. The Senior Officials Meeting was opened by Mr. Ganbold Baasanjav, Head of the UN ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia. He welcomed the delegates and representatives of the 27th Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC (SOM-27), expressing gratitude to the Government of China for hosting the meeting. Building on the momentum from the 30th anniversary of NEASPEC last year, he highlighted key discussion points for SOM-27 including the preparatory process for the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030. Mr. Baasanjav further emphasized with appreciation on the cruciality of financial support from the member States to make NEASPEC more impactful and sustainable.

14. Ms. CHEN Haijun, Deputy Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China, delivered the opening remarks at the 27th Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC (SOM-27) by welcoming the delegates and representatives. Ms. Chen highlighted China's commitment to ecological civilization and environmental protection, emphasizing the country's active participation in international environmental cooperation. She proposed future cooperation focusing on strengthening experience sharing, building consensus on mutually beneficial initiatives, and exploring synergies among various mechanisms in Northeast Asia to promote regional green and low-carbon development.

C. Election of officers

15. The Meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. ZHOU Jun (China)
Vice-Chair:	Ms. CHO Gye Yeon (Republic of Korea)
Rapporteur:	Ms. TSOGZOLMAA Nanjaa (Mongolia)

D. Adoption of the agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
 - a) Opening remarks by the Head of ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office
 - b) Welcoming remarks by the Head of Delegation of the Host Government
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda

4. Statements by delegations of member States, UN and international organizations on issues related to sustainable development in North-East Asia
5. Review of programme planning and implementation
 - a) Air Pollution
 - b) Biodiversity and Nature Conservation
 - c) Marine Protected Areas
 - d) Low Carbon Cities
 - e) Desertification and Land Degradation
6. Review of the Core Fund and Project-based Fund
7. Preparation for the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030
8. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twenty-eighth Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-28)
9. Other issues
10. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting

E. Policy issues for sustainable development in North-East Asia

(Agenda item 4)

16. The representative of China highlighted the country's active role and contributions to NEASPEC's cooperation, emphasizing progress in five key areas. Firstly, on air pollution, the representative outlined the improvement since 2019 and also informed of China's Action Plan for the Continuous Improvement of Air Quality, which takes nine priority measures, targeting a 10% reduction in PM2.5 concentrations by 2025. Secondly, she mentioned the launch of an initiative to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the updated strategic action plan, and beginning of the Kunming Biodiversity Fund in May 2024, which supports projects in 15 developing countries. Thirdly, on marine protection, she referred to the Action Plan for Improving Beautiful Bays expanded bay development from 50 to over 110 bays. The Special Action Plan for Mangrove Conservation (2020–2025) is underway, and China launched its first national marine big-data platform to share open marine data. Fourthly, the representative emphasized China's commitment to low-carbon city development, with pilot cities achieving 5.8% average annual GDP growth while significantly reducing carbon emissions intensity. Innovations, like carbon trading, have driven a green, low-carbon transition, fostering broad participation in sustainable development. Lastly, on desertification management, the representative highlighted China's success in sand control and prevention, achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and setting an example in ecological governance.

17. The representative of Japan outlined measures being promoted domestically and internationally to achieve the SDGs from an environmental perspective, addressing the three global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution in an integrated manner. He emphasized that Japan worked with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ESCAP, and other related organizations to prepare a report on examples of synergies in countries of the Asia-Pacific. He stated that Japan

formulated its SDGs Action Plan 2022 based on the 2030 Agenda's 5 Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership), including priority areas such as global warming countermeasures, marine plastic litter countermeasures, and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. The representative highlighted the nation's ambitious goals, including a commitment to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a 46% reduction by 2030. He underscored Japan's engagement in international collaborations, such as the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM), to promote climate mitigation projects globally. He also stated that the country has taken steps to address the global issue of plastic pollution by advocating the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, which targets the elimination of additional pollution from marine plastic litter by 2050. Regarding biodiversity, he informed that Japan supported the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) through initiatives such as hosting the International Youth Conference on Biodiversity Yokohama 2024 and promoting a whole-of-society approach. Finally, Japan plans to share its experiences through the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

18. The representative of Mongolia informed that the country has updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to reflect enhanced mitigation targets and is working toward achieving GHG "Net Zero" by 2050, as well as launching the National Adaptation Plan in March 2024. The representative noted the threats to and status of NEASPEC's five strategic areas. She recognized air pollution as a critical issue and informed that Mongolia has promoted cleaner heating solutions, expanded renewable energy, and improved air quality monitoring systems. She emphasized biodiversity conservation through initiatives such as the Billion Tree Campaign and the expansion of protected territories to 30% by 2030. Addressing water resource scarcity, Mongolia has adopted an integrated water management programme and advanced smart irrigation technologies. Efforts to build low-carbon cities included energy-efficient housing projects, renewable energy projects, and the proposed Northeast Asian Super Grid. With regards to land degradation and desertification, she mentioned that Mongolia has implemented sustainable pasture management and reforestation efforts. She acknowledged support from China and the Republic of Korea but also called on NEASPEC to strengthen regional cooperation in addressing land degradation. While challenges such as resource constraints persist, Mongolia called for NEASPEC's support in fostering technology transfer, regional dialogue, and cross-border cooperation. Lastly, the representative expressed Mongolia's intention in hosting the 28th Senior Officials Meeting in 2025 and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP in 2026.

19. The representative of the Republic of Korea expressed its gratitude to China for hosting the meeting and to the NEASPEC Secretariat for its work throughout the year. She highlighted three key pillars—Financing, Implementation, and Rule-Making—toward achieving sustainable development goals in Northeast Asia. Recognizing the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, Korea underscored its commitment to green development through increased Official Development Assistance (ODA), pledging \$300 million to the Green Climate Fund and \$7 million to the Loss and Damage Fund, and advancing initiatives like P4G. On implementation, the government set ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and launched the Carbon-Free Energy (CFE) Initiative to promote diverse carbon-free sources. Significant progress in reducing air pollution was achieved through comprehensive fine dust management plans and leveraging new technologies such as AI for air quality improvement. Highlighting the importance of regional collaboration, the delegate from the Republic of Korea advocated for robust rule-making, including

the development of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and advancing transboundary air pollution strategies. The Republic of Korea remains committed to fostering regional cooperation and aligning efforts for a sustainable future in Northeast Asia.

20. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed appreciation to the host government for its hospitality and commended the NEASPEC Secretariat for the well-coordinated arrangements, highlighting NEASPEC as a critical platform for knowledge sharing and capacity building. He emphasized the country's active role as a reliable partner. Currently, the Russian Federation is funding the "Connectivity Conservation for Habitats of Flagship Migratory Birds" project, focusing on three specific species. The representative emphasized the aspect of land degradation, pointing to specialized centers in Moscow and Volgograd that are developing action plans and technologies for combating desertification and are ready to share their experience. Moreover, significant strides have been made in waste management. Efforts to reduce air pollution resulted in a 13.3% reduction in selected industrial cities by 2023. Additionally, the Russian Federation prioritizes water body restoration, including projects to clean the Volga River and reduce pollution in Lake Baikal, while expanding protected areas by 5.4 million hectares. He also highlighted improvements in forest conservation, with 6.3 million hectares restored. Finally, he emphasized that the Russian Federation is ready to share its experience and expertise in the corresponding programmatic areas of NEASPEC to strengthen the partnership further.

F. Presentations and discussions on substantive agenda items

(Agenda items 5, 6, and 7)

21. The Meeting heard presentations from the secretariat on agenda item 5: Review of programme planning and implementation; agenda item 6: Review of the Core Fund and Project-based Fund; agenda item 7: Preparation for the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030, followed by interventions from the member States, partner organizations and experts. Key outcomes of discussions on these agenda items are included in the Conclusions and Recommendations in Section I of the Report of the Meeting.

Agenda item 5 (a) Air Pollution

22. The Meeting acknowledged the progress made in addressing air pollution in 2024, in line with the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP) Work Plan 2021-2025. The Meeting was briefed on activities, including the Policy Analysis Report, the 1st Policy Dialogue, the Symposium, and other outreach efforts. It also took note of the recommendations from the 6th meeting of the NEACAP Science and Policy Committee (SPC) held on 24 September 2024 in Incheon, Republic of Korea.

23. Highlighting the limited number of participants in the First Policy Dialogue due to scheduling conflicts with other regional meetings, the representative of Japan requested thorough planning and coordination for future events to maximize attendance and promote active discussion. He also suggested mapping regional activities to avoid duplication, producing a discussion paper to streamline objectives and reduce burdens on member States, and holding a back-to-back meeting with the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) Working Group Meeting,

tentatively scheduled for June 2025, to enhance efficiency.

24. The representative of China suggested publishing the Policy Analysis Report only after member States reached consensus. The delegate from China requested amendments to specific sections of the draft Executive Summary, with a greater focus on ammonia in agriculture. The representative also proposed another online meeting or email exchanges to finalize the full report, focusing on commonalities and emphasizing the importance of consensus-building.

25. Emphasizing the need to finalize the report as a basis for the Second Policy Dialogue, the representative of the Republic of Korea entrusted the secretariat in finalizing the report and suggested avoiding redundant meetings as well as leveraging accumulated feedback to complete the report.

26. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed interest in participating in future discussion and the Second Policy Dialogue, noting the country's absence from the current report process.

27. The secretariat was requested to work with member countries to finalize the full report, aiming for completion in time for the Second Policy Dialogue planned in mid-2025. The secretariat was also asked to facilitate discussions on contentious issues to ensure consensus before publication. Recognizing the report's importance as a foundation for subregional cooperation and outreach activities, the secretariat will align the timeline for finalizing the report with preparations for the Second Policy Dialogue.

28. The Meeting approved the Executive Summary of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report, as suggested by the Chinese delegation, and the proposed activities for 2025, with an adjusted timeline for the publication of the full report before the Second Policy Dialogue.

Agenda item 5 (b) Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

29. Noting the progress achieved by NEASPEC on biodiversity and nature conservation, the Meeting was briefed on activities including the Workshop on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity for Transboundary Cooperation held in Incheon, Republic of Korea on 28-29 August 2024 and other outreach activities such as the secretariat's participation in the Korea Environment Institute (KEI)'s International Forum and the Asian Development Bank Regional Flyway Initiative Training Series. The Meeting also took note of the approval status and progress of the project on Connectivity Conservation for Habitats of Flagship Migratory Birds in North-East Asia funded by the Russian Federation.

30. The representative of the Russian Federation reaffirmed the country's strong commitment to the newly approved project for migratory birds. He expressed that the Russian Federation will work more closely with the secretariat in the future to advance the project's objectives. The representative also emphasized the importance of establishing a transparent process for identifying experts who will participate in the project, ensuring its goals are achieved in a timely and effective manner.

31. The representative of the Republic of Korea congratulated all those involved in establishing the transboundary reserve for Amur tigers and Amur leopards, the "Land of Big Cats," emphasizing its importance in safeguarding habitats and fostering regional cooperation. She highlighted the successful transboundary cooperation workshop hosted in Incheon, Republic of Korea, earlier this year, which reviewed conservation efforts for big cats and migratory birds and underscored the importance of knowledge-sharing. Expressing strong support for the proposed 2025 activity plan and the revision of the Black-faced Spoonbill action plan, the representative affirmed the Republic of Korea's commitment to enhancing regional cooperation and capacity to address biodiversity challenges.

32. The representative of Japan mentioned that, while the country is not a habitat for big cats species, being a committed member of NEASPEC, it will cooperate in discussions on migratory birds and their habitats, as well as transboundary cooperation in the Tumen River area. Additionally, the representative affirmed Japan's support for the revised Black-faced Spoonbill action plan by continuing to provide relevant information as a member of NEASPEC.

33. The representative of China expressed agreement with the proposed activities for biodiversity and nature conservation in 2025. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration, China committed to strengthening cooperation with other member States in protecting migratory birds and transboundary big cats. The representative highlighted the need to leverage existing international cooperation mechanisms to enhance mutual understanding, trust, and support, while sharing successful experiences and advancing technologies. China aims to collectively improve conservation and management capacities, contributing to global biodiversity conservation and promoting the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature.

34. The SOM appreciated the financial contribution from the Russian Federation to the new migratory birds' project, and extended gratitude to the member States for their generous support and commitments on activities under nature conservation.

35. The representative from the Hanns Seidel Foundation highlighted two key points for consideration. First, he shared the significant news that a Siberian tiger was recently photographed in the Pektu Mountain area on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) side of the border with China, marking the first sighting in 30 years. Second, he raised the ongoing debate within the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) about downgrading the conservation status of the Black-faced Spoonbill to "Least Concern," suggesting that this development should also be included in the discussions.

36. The Meeting approved the proposed activity plan on biodiversity and nature conservation for 2025.

Agenda item (c) Marine Protected Areas

37. The Meeting took note of the progress achieved by the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) since the SOM-26, including the study on climate change and MPAs, knowledge sharing and capacity building activities such as the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) Workshop held in China, and outreach activities including the East Asia Seas Congress 2024.

38. The Meeting approved the proposed activity plan on marine protected areas for 2025.

Agenda item (d) Low Carbon Cities

39. The Meeting acknowledged the progress of the North-East Asia Low Carbon Cities Platform (NEA-LCCP) activities, specifically, knowledge sharing and peer learning through the 4th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities held in Kitakyushu, Japan, on 8-9 October 2024.

40. The representative of Japan emphasized the urgent need for cities, which account for about 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, to transition toward decarbonization to achieve carbon neutrality. He shared that 191 subnational areas in Japan have declared zero-carbon city goals, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, with national and local governments working in unison to realize this vision. Highlighting the 4th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, organized in cooperation with the City of Kitakyushu, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), he noted that the forum successfully promoted knowledge exchange and cooperation among cities and networks for advancing low-carbon cities. The representative expressed gratitude to ESCAP, Incheon Metropolitan City, and other contributors to the forum and reaffirmed Japan's commitment to supporting NEASPEC's activities by sharing expertise from domestic and international initiatives.

41. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed interest in exploring opportunities to host the next International Low Carbon Cities Forum during the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in 2025. He encouraged the exchange of knowledge and experiences on climate actions among cities, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in advancing urban climate initiatives.

42. The representative of the Republic of Korea expressed deep appreciation to the city of Kitakyushu for hosting the 4th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities in cooperation with the secretariat and Incheon Metropolitan City. He highlighted the forum's importance as a platform for cities worldwide to share low-carbon strategies and policies. The representative encouraged NEASPEC to continue its role as a knowledge-sharing platform for local governments and to facilitate cooperation projects in the region, supporting the transition to low-carbon cities.

43. The representative of Mongolia raised a question regarding the review of programme planning and implementation on low carbon cities, acknowledging the value of organizing international forums. She inquired about the assessment of impacts and outcomes from these forums, specifically asking whether any targets or measures are in place to evaluate their effectiveness. Referring to the proposed organization of the 5th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, she sought clarification on how it would differ from previous forums and emphasized the importance of

understanding the results and overall effectiveness of these initiatives.

44. The SOM expressed its appreciation to the member States for their commitment and for sharing best practices on low-carbon development. In response to an inquiry from the delegation of Mongolia, the secretariat clarified the forum's objectives and provided examples of sub-themes from previous events to offer further context.

45. The Meeting approved the proposed activity plan on low carbon cities for 2025.

Agenda item (e) Desertification and Land Degradation

46. The Meeting noted the progress in implementing the NEASPEC approach to addressing desertification and land degradation (DLD). It was informed of the findings presented in the secretariat's working paper, *Overview of Desertification and Land Degradation in North-East Asia*.

47. The representative of Mongolia highlighted that NEASPEC activities should provide targeted solutions to address DLD in North-East Asia and promote large-scale investments. While appreciating the progress in the work programme, the representative of China suggested that the secretariat organize further consultations with the member States on the background paper before taking it as the reference of the official process.

48. The Meeting revised the proposed activity plan on desertification and land degradation for 2025 by removing the reference to the background paper and subsequently approved the plan.

Agenda item 6. Review of the Core Fund and Project-based Fund

49. The Meeting noted the status of the NEASPEC Core Fund and Project-based Fund as of 30 September 2024. It was reported that the balance of the Core Fund has decreased over the past few years, as expenses for the secretariat operations and programme activities have exceeded the contributions received. The Meeting also noted funding for a new project, "Connectivity Conservation for Habitats of Flagship Migratory Birds in North-East Asia" funded by the Russian Federation.

50. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the member States and partner organizations for their financial and/or in-kind contributions to the Core Fund and Project-based Fund.

51. The representative of Mongolia emphasized the need for integrated planning to facilitate discussions on collaborations and contributions from member States.

52. Acknowledging the decrease in the Core Fund balance, the representative of the Republic of Korea reaffirmed its commitment to contributing to the NEASPEC Core Fund. Recognizing the contributions from China, the representative encouraged member States to make voluntary contributions to strengthen ownership and ensure the effective implementation of NEASPEC activities.

53. The secretariat expressed gratitude to the member States for their continued support of the Core Fund and Project-Based Fund.

54. The Meeting endorsed the financial report.

Agenda item 7. Preparation for the development of NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030

55. The Meeting discussed the background and the proposed plan for the secretariat's support in the development of the NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030.

56. The representative of Japan emphasized the importance of the next Strategic Plan, noting the need for clear distinctions between the roles of stakeholders and the member States during consultations. He highlighted concerns about the process's sequence, the balance of stakeholder representation, and the focus of expert meetings. Japan recommended aligning the plan with recent international achievements, such as the outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COPs) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and suggested using updated terminology like "decarbonization" instead of "low carbon." They also stressed avoiding duplication with existing projects and ensuring alignment with each country's needs and mandates.

57. The representative of the Republic of Korea emphasized the importance of clear goals, approaches, a well-defined scope of activities, and a draft funding plan in the development of the Strategic Plan. They echoed Japan's point to incorporate recent international achievements, such as UNFCCC COP 29 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, into the process. Additionally, she inquired about the possibility of conducting evaluations and stakeholder surveys during the development of the plan and requested further information from the secretariat on how such processes could be integrated.

58. The representative of China expressed no objection to the proposed timeline for the new Five-Year Strategic Plan but emphasized several key principles for its content. She stressed that the plan should build on the current work where tangible progress has been achieved, align with the actual circumstances and ecological and environmental priorities of each Member State, and minimize duplication with activities undertaken by other mechanisms.

59. The representative of Mongolia raised a question regarding the timeline for SOM-28, noting that organizing the meeting in November could be challenging due to Ulaanbaatar's cold weather. She suggested considering an earlier date, such as August or September. Additionally, she proposed incorporating a results-based framework into the Strategic Plan to provide a clear structure for activities and ensure alignment with international agreements. She highlighted the importance of showcasing results as the global community approaches the second half of the UN SDG agenda (2026–2030) and emphasized the need to align the strategy with these milestones.

60. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed no objection to the proposed timeline and emphasized the importance of communication and cooperation among the member States. He stressed the need to avoid duplication of existing activities while ensuring that contributions are harmonized with current strategies and initiatives.

61. The secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and support, noting the importance of avoiding duplication and aligning activities with existing strategies. The secretariat acknowledged Mongolia’s proposal to shift the SOM-28 timeline, indicating flexibility. The secretariat also welcomed suggestions for incorporating a results-based framework and evaluations. Responding to Japan, the secretariat proposed limiting the draft strategic plan review to the member States, pending the Senior Officials Meeting’s approval, and clarified that the expert group meeting on 13 December 2024 would focus on informal idea-sharing rather than prescriptive guidance. Regarding the expert group meeting’s composition, the secretariat explained that invitations were widely extended, with attendance reflecting stakeholder availability, and assured that feedback gathered would remain preliminary and non-binding.

62. The Meeting requested the secretariat to revise the timeline and proposed activity plan based on discussions accordingly and circulate it to the member States within two weeks after the Meeting.

G. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twenty-Fourth Senior Officials Meeting

(Agenda item 8)

63. The Meeting discussed the venue, date, and agenda of the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Mongolia for generously offering to host the next Meeting. The proposed dates, venue and the provisional agenda will be announced in due course, in consultation with the member States and the secretariat.

H. Other Issues

(Agenda item 9)

64. The Meeting expressed deep appreciation to the Government of China for generously hosting the Twenty-seventh Session of the Senior Officials Meeting with warm hospitality and arrangements, and to the secretariat for the preparation of the Meeting.

I. Adoption of the Report

(Agenda item 10)

65. The Meeting adopted the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Senior Officials Meeting on 13 December 2024. The report of the Meeting was finalized and adopted by circulating it among the member States after the Senior Officials Meeting.

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