

**16<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-16) of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)**

**1-2 September 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea**

**Chair's Summary: National and Subregional Activities and Processes in Preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)**

1. SOM-16 reviewed national and subregional activities and processes in preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in Rio de Janeiro during 4-6 June 2012 and exchanged views of member States, international organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) on both themes of the Conference – a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.
2. The Meeting recognized that North-East Asia has achieved remarkable progress in social and economic development and environmental sustainability since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992. At the same time, the subregion faces significant environmental challenges including water scarcity, air pollution, desertification and marine pollution as well as new and emerging challenges such as extreme weather events and climate change, volatility of food prices, global financial instabilities, etc.
3. The member States shared information on their efforts in the preparation of national inputs to Rio+20 and expressed their priorities in this regard. Most countries in the subregion established multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral national committees/working groups to coordinate national processes towards Rio+20.
4. Particularly, the delegation of China informed the Meeting about the work of the National Preparatory Committee for Rio+20. The delegation also stressed that Rio+20 plays an important role in reinforcing political commitment to sustainable development and should take stock of previous commitments, including the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. In addition, the delegation stressed that the global community should continue to follow the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” in adopting further measures to promote sustainable development globally.
5. The delegation of Japan updated the Meeting about the inter-ministerial framework and the National Preparatory Committee for Rio+20. The delegation stressed that Rio+20 serves as an occasion for international community to clearly express its commitment to the transition to a

green economy and encourage each country to adopt concrete policies concerning green economy. Touching upon the social aspects of sustainable development, the delegation stressed the importance of the “human security” concept which focuses on individuals and effectively ensures equity amongst them. Further, the delegation expressed its position that the outcome document of Rio+20 to be presented as “a focused political document,” should be a concise political declaration focusing on the two themes of Rio+20. Further, the delegation added that Rio+20 should provide meaningful insights to formulating international development goals after 2015 by sharing its vision for sustainable development in the 21st century

6. The delegation of Mongolia informed the Meeting about the establishment of the inter-ministerial Working Group for Rio+20. The delegation expressed its view that almost after two decades following UNCED in 1992 the concept of sustainable development is not yet fully understood globally and the three pillars that it embodies are not well integrated. In addition, the delegation shared the plans of Mongolia on elaboration of the National Green Economy Strategy which aims to shift the development of the country from “brown” to “green”.

7. The delegation of the Republic of Korea briefed the Meeting on the national research projects that were initiated to formulate national inputs to Rio+20. As the host of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20, the Republic of Korea welcomed the inputs of SOM-16 to the regional process. With regard to the green economy theme, the delegation reiterated that green economy can serve as a tool to bridge existing gaps between developing and developed countries, especially in light of current global environmental challenges.

8. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Meeting about the establishment of the inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder Working Group of experts which is tasked with drafting national inputs to Rio+20. Stressing the previous efforts of ESCAP member States towards the preparation to Rio+20, the Russian delegation recalled the significance of the Astana Ministerial Declaration adopted during the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific held in 2010. The delegation further stressed the importance of achieving sustainable development in long-term perspective and shared with the Meeting information on the efforts of the Russian Government to adjust the legal environmental framework.

9. The Meeting noted that the member States of the subregion have already put in place a number of groundbreaking rules, regulations, policies and programmes relevant to the themes of Rio+20. Examples include:

- China - adoption of bold quantified targets for energy and resource efficiency and air pollution reduction as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan in the context of promotion of circular economy and the resource saving society;
- Japan - green innovation policies under the New Growth Strategy, promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns through 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) policy and eco-points accrual mechanism;

- Mongolia – mobilization of the national efforts to develop the National Green Economy Programme and related policies and legislation;
- The Republic of Korea – the adoption of the Low Carbon, Green Growth strategy as the main development paradigm and elaboration of the short term and long term targets related to it;
- The Russian Federation - adjustment of the legal framework to transit to the new regulatory system and provision of economic incentives in the environmentally protected areas as well as in the field of waste management strengthening of environmental control, monitoring and auditing, including increased penalties for negative impact on environment, elimination of accumulated ecological damage and promotion of energy saving and efficiency.

10. The Meeting noted possible areas of mutual interest for subregional cooperation. These areas include: mainstreaming sustainable development into national development plans; exchanging information and best practices on environmental legislation, regulation and development of economic instruments; and promoting multi-stakeholder involvement in sustainable development.

11. The Meeting provided various perspectives on both themes of Rio+20. The participants exchanged views on the concept of green economy. For some, the concept of green economy provides tools to achieve sustainable development in coping with the ongoing financial, fuel and food crises. For others, the concept is unclear and it raises concerns that there could be conditionalities in trade, development, technology and financial assistance.

12. Regarding the theme of institutional framework for sustainable development, the Meeting noted that governments should scale-up their efforts to mainstream sustainable development into their national development agenda, for example, through an effective coordination mechanism for national efforts on promoting and integrating the three pillars of sustainable development. The Meeting also took note of the view that the issues of sustainable development need to be addressed at multiple levels with attention to horizontal and vertical integration and with participation of various stakeholders.

13. The Meeting noted the need for the United Nations to take the leading role in facilitating global efforts for sustainable development, and in this context, the need for further strengthening the roles of and the coordination among the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in promoting sustainable development.

14. Some representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) expressed the view that discussions on green economy to be clearly defined. Sustainable development in the context of balanced treatment of economic and social pillars – how can poverty eradication, social justice, livelihoods security etc., be addressed at the same time. Concerning the tremendous economic, social, and environmental costs of manmade and natural hazards, some representatives also

suggested that “resilience” should be revisited by all countries as one of the key concepts underpinning integration of all dimensions of sustainable development.

15. Some representatives of CSOs also called for the creation of a new architecture of financial support for developing countries (such as the North-East Asian Fund for Sustainable Development), technology transfer (North-East Asian Institute for Technology Transfer) and knowledge sharing mechanisms on subregional, regional and global levels. The Meeting also underlined that NEASPEC should act as a key part of subregional environmental cooperation.

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