



UNITED NATIONS

UNESCAP
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC

PROJECT DOCUMENT

1	PROJECT TITLE	Establishing Coordination Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia
2	IMIS PROJECT ID	
3	THEMATIC FOCUS	Managing Globalization
4	EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SUBPROGRAMME	EA 6(B) for 2008-2009: Increased national capacity to develop and apply socio-economic policy instruments to improve environmental management and performance.
5	PROJECT GOAL	Effective transboundary cooperation for nature conservation, which in parallel, contributes to sustainable development, established through subregional efforts coordinated by NEASPEC.
6	PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES	All NEASPEC countries with the primary group of countries, i.e., China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation.
7	TARGET GROUP	Government officials, research institutes, private sector, civil society and target area local residents
8	LEAD DIVISION AND OTHER DIVISIONS	Environment and Development Division
9	PROGRAMME CODE	
10	STARTING DATE	June 2009
11	PROJECT DURATION	Two years
12	DONOR INPUTS	US \$123,430 from the Russian Federation (\$75,000) and the NEASPEC Core Fund (\$48,430)
13	UNESCAP INPUTS	In-kind contribution for the operation of NEASPEC Secretariat and implementation of activities
14	OTHER INPUTS	

Approved on behalf of
UNESCAP

Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Secretary

Date

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 12th Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC unanimously endorsed the NEASPEC Resolution on the Framework of Nature Conservation Programme and NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy. The Strategy identifies a concrete subregional conservation approach with specific strategies to protect six flagship species, which are critically endangered and unique to the subregion.

Having developed the Strategy, NEASPEC is determined to take a further step to promote the Strategy by piloting some of its key recommendations in a transboundary area of high biological importance. Based on the core principle of the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Programme, the important linkage between nature conservation and sustainable development, as well as cross-boarder cooperation will be the main driving forces of the piloting.

As transboundary areas are often the periphery of major socioeconomic development, they have potentials to keep untouched nature from human activities. But this situation also causes lacking the appropriate enforcement of legal and administrative provisions pertaining to biodiversity conservation. Thus, multilateral and bilateral cooperation for the protection of natural resources and endangered species in transboundary areas have been perceived as a significant means to achieve national and global mandates on biodiversity conservation. Practical approaches for such cooperation are suggested to create coordination mechanisms between national protected areas adjoining international borders or unified protected areas such as Transboundary Protected Areas or Transboundary Biosphere Reserves, which contribute to not only coordinated actions on biodiversity conservation but also environmental confidence building among states as well as local stakeholders sharing an international border.

To this end, the project plans to carry out a follow-up project at the Lower Tumen River basin, which encompasses parts of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. The basin is home to both Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard, and part of either breeding grounds or migration corridors of White-naped Crane and Hooded Crane. All four are identified as the subregion's flagship species in the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy.

Undertaking this project will particularly take advantage of initiatives lead by UNESCO, the Secretariat of Greater Tumen Initiative and UNDP to strengthen transboundary cooperation. While those initiatives were not able to create formal mechanisms for environmental cooperation in the transboundary area, the processes and outcomes of the initiatives provide NEASPEC with a valuable ground for further work. Thus, NEASPEC will ensure that this project fully reflects all important experiences and lessons-learnt from previous initiatives into its goals and approaches.

2. SITUATION ANALYSIS

North-East Asia encompasses some of the most diverse mixture of ecosystems in the world, characterized by tundra, taiga, boreal forest, steppe, desert, alpine, wetland, coastal and marine environments. These ecosystems provide a complex mosaic of habitats for many critically endangered species – as captured by the North-East Asia Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) project on the Nature Conservation Strategy, flagship species such as Amur Tiger, Amur Leopard, Snow Leopard, Black-faced Spoonbill, White-Napped Crane, and Hooded Crane, represent some of the most highly endangered species in this subregion, which require immediate protection. As a whole, the subregion hosts nearly 50,000 species of flora and fauna, of which almost a half is endemic to the subregion. There are over 1,000 species listed as endangered.

Despite its high biological importance, these ecosystems and species are under serious threat. The subregion's increasing intensity of land and natural resource use in recent decades, coupled with increasing population, has put immense human pressure on its environments through rapid urbanization, agricultural encroachment and native forest destruction, and has resulted in the destruction and fragmentation of habitats of many important species such as those flagship species identified in the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy. In addition, illegal hunting of endangered feline animals and birds in the subregion continues to put those species under serious threat of extinction due continuing pressure from illegal wildlife trade.

With regard to the NEASPEC flagship species, there are nearly a dozen or more key protected areas along the international borders in the subregion, particularly along the borders with the Russian Federation (RF). Those protected areas include: (i) the Tunkinskiy Natural Park of Mongolia, and Daurskiy Zapovednik and Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Zapovednik of the RF; (ii) Jilin Hunchun Nature Reserve and Heilongjiang Mudanfeng Nature Reserve of China, and Kedrovaya Pad Zapovednik, Bolshekhkheksirskiy Zapovednik, and Khankaiskiy Zapovednik of the RF; and (iii) the Far East Marine Reserve and Khansanskiy Nature Park of the RF and Rason Migratory Bird Reserve of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPPK); (iv) Changbai Biosphere Reserve of China and Paekdu Biosphere Reserve of DPRK. However, there are only a few systems installed for coordination and management of these adjacent protected areas, and because of this, nature conservation efforts by the NEASPEC member states have been faced with large setbacks and challenges.

To address this issue, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in consultation with experts and government officials from China and the Russian Federation presented a proposal for establishing a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve in the Lower Tumen River basin among China, DPRK and the RF. The basin is home to both Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard, and part of either breeding grounds or migration corridors of White-Napped Crane and Hooded Crane. Furthermore, a study by WWF Russia suggests that the basin represents roughly 60% of Russia's endemic mammals, 35% of Russia's endemic birds,

and 36% of Russia's endemic vascular plants. Despite these facts, this exceptionally rich biodiversity is under serious threat due to increasing human interference and lack of enforcement mechanisms across borders. Nonetheless, due to external factors, the proposal has not been realized to date.

Despite its status, the proposal called for the creation of transboundary coordination mechanisms to establish an extended protected area over international borders to maximize the entire area's conservation and protected areas management effectiveness. This could not have only increased the level of protection for those flagship species in the basin, but also enhanced the environmental and socioeconomic confidence of nearby residents through coordinated transboundary efforts. Elsewhere in North-East Asia, similar mechanisms have successfully been installed to benefit conservation. For instance, the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, located in the territories of the RF, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and China, encompasses mountain pristine forest ecosystems, surrounded by steppes in the north and east, and by deserts and semi-deserts in the south and west. It is home to Snow Leopards. Also, the Daurian Forest Steppe Ecoregion is another example, and its coverage extends over the Daurskii Zapovednik territories in the Chita region of the RF, the Mongol Daguur Strictly Protected Area in Mongolia, and the Dalai Nor Nature Reserve in China.

Based on the relevant initiatives and experiences in existing mechanisms for transboundary cooperation, this project aims to create multilateral/ bilateral cooperation mechanisms in the Lower Tumen River Basin, thereby promoting the sound management of habitats of four flagship species of NEASPEC. Such mechanisms could carry out joint works for wildlife corridors protection, wildlife survey and forest patrol to prevent illegal poaching. Needless to say, such transboundary cooperation would also greatly benefit the subregion's efforts to meet its commitments to the global conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

3. STRATEGY

Given the current status and need for enhanced and coordinated nature conservation efforts to ensure the protection of those flagship species in the Lower Tumen River basin, while improving the basin's prospects for sustainable development, ESCAP as the NEASPEC Secretariat proposes to take advantage of the existing momentum to once again attempt to establish such a cooperation mechanism at the basin to respond to the current need, perhaps not at the scale of a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, but rather based on practical cross-boarder arrangements. This will showcase how such transboundary efforts can be brought together effectively through NEASPEC and subsequently provide opportunities to replicate a similar process elsewhere in the subregion based on acquired knowledge and lessons-learned from this initiative.

The project will first begin with a thorough review of the past experiences in the subregion - particularly the recent proposal development process, lead by UNESCO and

UNDP, as well as the experiences and lessons-learned of the Altai-Sayan and Daurian Forest Steppe Ecoregions - to develop a framework for transboundary cooperation mechanism. Needless to say, a key reference will be the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy as well as the Action Plan for Conservation of Amur tiger in Northeast China, which was developed through consultations among major stakeholders in China under the NEASPEC project on nature conservation. Furthermore, all existing conservation as well as relevant development strategies and plans concerning the basin should also be considered and incorporated in the proposal so as to avoid any unnecessary duplication of work, and to ensure increased cohesion and synergy in terms of nature conservation and the promotion of sustainable development over the basin.

Moreover, the project will engage all member countries, which are not directly involved in this proposal such as Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Mongolia, to provide additional support. For instance, technical assistance from both Japan and ROK in establishing biodiversity monitoring and data management systems would largely be beneficial, while Mongolia's experience and expertise gained through the establishment of both the Altai-Sayan and Daurian Forest Steppe Ecoregions with its neighbors would be of critical importance to the success of the project.

On the technical front, the proposal should rigorously explore ways in which the following areas of focus can be effectively addressed and demonstrated:

- A. Cross-boarder efforts on biodiversity monitoring, data collecting and sharing, particularly on those flagship species;
- B. Cross-boarder patrolling against any illegal logging and poaching under a common operational and legal platforms;
- C. Cross-boarder planning for sustainable local/ buffer-zone development through awareness raising, promoting sustainable livelihood options, local branding and labeling of sustainably harvested Non-Timber-Forest Products(TNFPs), etc., to support sustainable local development;
- D. Cross-boarder improvement of systemic and institutional capacities of the basin's protected areas to provide the enabling framework for establishing and managing a transboundary nature conservation mechanism;
- E. Cross-boarder cooperation to promote cohesive sustainable land management in areas surrounding the protected areas so as to maximize land use effectiveness, and to reduce unnecessary human encroachment into protected areas; and
- F. Facilitation of the NEASPEC-wide cooperation in nature conservation - e.g., technical support from Japan and Republic of Korea in biodiversity monitoring and data management, and knowledge sharing by Mongolia on its experience with the Altai-Sayan and Daurian Forest Steppe Ecoregions.

4. RESULT FRAMEWORK

Project Goal

Strengthening multilateral mechanisms for effective subregional responses to challenges in nature conservation in North-East Asia

Project Outcome

A coordination mechanism for nature conservation in transboundary areas is established through national- and local-levels agreements among China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation in order to overcome conservation and sustainable development challenges.

Outputs and Main Activities

Output 1. Subregional and location-specific conservation baselines and optimum milestones for establishment of a transboundary mechanism in the Lower Tumen River basin

Activity 1-1: Review subregional experiences and case studies of transboundary mechanisms for nature conservation – e.g., the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy, the previous and existing initiatives by UN and international organizations, NGOs, and the experiences and lessons-learnt through Altai-Sayan and Daurian Forest Steppe Ecoregions.

Activity 1-2: Define current subregional and localized conservation baselines and optimum milestones for the Lower Tumen River basin, with technical support from experts and institutions of NEASPEC.

Output 2. Framework for a transboundary mechanism in the Lower Tumen River basin

Activity 2-1: Develop a framework for establishing and operating a transboundary cooperation mechanism in the basin, which defines an overall structure and approach, combined with a set of practical activities

Activity 2-2: Undertake pilot projects based on the framework

Activity 2-3: Facilitate subregional and national consultations to validate the framework

Output 3. Endorsement of the framework by the NEASPEC member states

Activity 3-1: Prepare and facilitate a review of the framework by the governments of NEASPEC member countries concerned.

Activity 3-2: Facilitate the official endorsement of multilateral arrangements for transboundary cooperation on nature conservation focusing on NEASPEC flagship species.

Assumptions and Risks

It is important to note that the basic foundation of this project takes shape on the “Lower Tumen River Area Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Proposal” by UNESCO and UNDP. Although this proposal has not been fully endorsed due to external factors, the proposal defines many technically sound approaches and activities, which simply should not be abandoned. Based on this, NEASPEC believes that, by repackaging those technically sound components under a new framework, it is possible to bring all key actors together to establish such a vital transboundary conservation mechanism to help advance the status of nature conservation in the subregion, particularly through the protection of those flagship species in the Lower Tumen River basin.

At the 12th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in 2007, the NEASPEC’s Nature Conservation Strategy was unanimously endorsed by its member states. This has given the necessary ground and justification for making this proposal for the Lower Tumen River basin. The proposal provides NEASEPC with a vital opportunity is to showcase its integrated ecosystem management approach, designed to harness both effective nature conservation and sustainable development tools, and to field-test its Nature conservation Strategy to conserve those flagship species in one of the key ecoregions in North-East Asia.

At the same time, there are a number of risks at various levels, which may become actual threats if not mitigated in advance. First and foremost, the level of commitment by each member state is one of the key factors, which inevitably determines the project’s success or failure; therefore, creating and keeping a collaborative environment among the member states through effective dialogue is critical throughout the process. Furthermore, the table below defines more specific risks along with their risk ratings and proposed mitigation measures.

RISK	RATING (Probability x Impact) on scale high - medium - low	MITIGATION MEASURE
1. Political (status: critical)		
Lack of political commitments (To establish a transboundary mechanism in the Lower Tumen River basin)	P=low, I=high Risk= medium	Through the next SOM, seek understanding and support from the member states by presenting a clear objective, justification (subregional significance), national and local benefits, process, expected contributions, etc. and facilitating open debates.

RISK	RATING (Probability x Impact) on scale high - medium - low	MITIGATION MEASURE
Lack of local support (Due to provision of misguided information, inadequate consultation, etc.)	P=medium, I=high Risk=medium	Ensure that local residents are well informed about the process well in advance, particularly their potential gains and losses. Facilitate open discussions to eliminate their concerns.
2. Financial (status: critical)		
Lack of financial resources	P=low, I=high Risk= Low	Though the implementation of this project is financially secured by the Russian Federation, the operation of transboundary coordination mechanism will require concrete commitment of member countries to financial resources.
Mismatched contributions, particularly in-kind contributions (human resources, equipment, etc.)	P=medium, I=medium Risk= medium	Conduct thorough discussions with the member states to communicate clearly of resources requirements. Practice adaptive management to make best use of available financial, human and material resources.
3. Operational (status: not so critical at this stage/ more mitigation measures under this means larger budget)		
Lack of protected areas (PA) management capacity (Financial management and accountability, general operations, public relations, human resources management, technical capacities such as species monitoring, data collection and management, patrolling, etc.)	P=medium, I=high Risk = medium	Facilitate opportunities for the transfer of knowledge among the member states and training of trainers to capitalize on the existing and subregionally matured expertise in PA management. This can additionally be coupled technical assistance through external sources as required.

Management Arrangements

The management of the proposed project will be conducted by the NEAPEC Secretariat together with national implementing agencies nominated by the national focal points of NEASPEC. Throughout the entire process, the NEASPEC Secretariat will seek the

involvement of all relevant UN and multilateral organizations, and NGOs to provide the necessary technical assistance.

INPUTS OF UNESCAP AND OTHER COLLABORATING PARTNERS

ESCAP Inputs

The Environment and Development Division of ESCAP will make the necessary in-kind contributions to manage the project implementation as part of its regular duties of the NEASPEC Secretariat.

Inputs by Collaborating Partners

The implementation of the project activities will be carried out in collaboration with other relevant UN and multilateral organizations including UNEP, UNESCO and UNDP, and with national institutions of the NEASPEC members.

Regular communications and coordination with key international convention secretariats, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), will also continue to ensure the reflection of global standards, best practices and ratified commitments through project results.

Annex I. Budget by UNBL

UNBL	Description	Budget (US\$)
10	Personnel	
1151	Consultants	20,000
1501	Mission Travel	7,000
1900	<i>Component Total</i>	<i>27,000</i>
20	Subcontracts / Grants	
2200	Grants to Institutions	30,000
2900	<i>Component Total</i>	<i>30,000</i>
30	Training	
3201	Group Training / Workshop Costs	50,000
3900	<i>Component Total</i>	<i>50,000</i>
40	Procurement	
4101	Expendable Equipment	2,000
4900	<i>Component Total</i>	<i>2,000</i>
50	Miscellaneous	
5301	Sundries/Communications	2,000
5601	PSC (13%)	14,430
5900	<i>Component Total</i>	<i>16,430</i>
99	Project Total	123,430