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REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Desertification and Land Degradation in North-East Asia

Note by the Secretariat

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I. OVERVIEW OF DLD PROGRESS

1. This year has been an important year for desertification and land degradation (DLD), with new DLD commitments being made not only within the traditional arena of DLD, but also under various new global agreements of climate change and wider sustainable development.
2. A breakthrough agreement was reached at the Twelfth Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), to adopt the land degradation neutrality target (LDN) and its indicators. It has been estimated USD 2 billion will be needed annually for actual land restoration activities, which could be mobilized through the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (to be in operation by end of 2016) together with diverse sources of financing including from the private sector¹.
3. DLD has vast interconnected causes and consequences in all three dimensions of sustainable development. Approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide are affected by degraded land. The global community is losing up to 5% of total agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) due to land degradation, costing some USD490 billion per year. DLD also threatens agricultural productivity to meet the world's growing population and affects the provision of ecosystem services and maintenance of biodiversity. Addressing land degradation is therefore of utmost importance to alleviate poverty, ensure resilience and offer substantial opportunity to generate multiple benefits.
4. As such, the critical role of DLD in ensuring global sustainability is reflected in the dedication of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the 2030 Development Agenda, Goal 15, to *"protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss"*, with targets including LDN and sustainable management of forests.
5. The 2030 Development Agenda aims to transform development through including, for the first time, a comprehensive set of interlinked goals in order to support integration of social, economic and environment to achieve sustainable development. For that reason, DLD is not an isolated aspect and also a significant contributor to other SDGs.
6. For instance, land degradation is both a cause and a consequence of climate change. Almost half of global carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution were due to land use change and soil cultivation. Currently landuse sector represents almost 25%² of total global greenhouse gases emissions. This has led to the adoption of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) to create financial value for carbon stored in

¹ http://www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/the-bodies/the-cop/COP_12/Pages/default.aspx

² IPCC AR5 and

http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/2015Nov_Land_matters_For_Climate_ENG.pdf

forests to offer incentives to reduce emissions, which later on evolves onto REDD+ to also include roles of conservation and sustainable management. Apart from the significant greenhouse gases contributions, there is great mitigation potential from carbon sequestration through improved land-use and management (e.g. low emissions agriculture, agro-forestry, ecosystem conservation and restoration) which can further reduce remaining emissions gap by up to 25% in 2030. The recent Paris Climate Agreement on climate change has therefore recognized the role of forests in combating climate change through policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries; and alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests.

7. DLD has also been shown with importance in climate actions of North-East Asian countries: China, for example, has committed to increase forest carbon stock volume by 4.5 billion cubic meters from 2005 levels as outlined in its intended nationally determined contribution (INDC). Its national climate change plan also emphasized on increasing forest and ecosystem carbon sink as a major mitigation approach and identified a number of pilot projects such as the coastal wetland carbon storage project. In its INDC, Mongolia intends to include actions for mitigation and increase adaptive capacity through reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Russian Federation has emphasised in its INDCs that forests will be a key factor in meeting its targets, which is subject to the “maximum possible account of absorbing capacity of forests”.

8. Apart from global commitments, the subregion has also continued to work together through intergovernmental mechanisms as well as the civil society on a number of joint activities:

9. The Korea Forest Service of the ROK, the State Forestry Administration of China, and the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Green Development of Mongolia held the fourth North East Asia Deforestation, Land Degradation and Drought Network (DLDD-NEAN) Forum and Steering Committee Meeting in Incheon in December 2015. The Forum gathered and showcased works carried out by the three governments, UNCCD, NEASPEC Secretariat and the civil society. The Meeting discussed the Greening Drylands Partnership project proposal in Zamiin Uud, Mongolia. It is a 3-year project (2016-2019) to be supported by the 3 countries with UNCCD as project manager, which includes the development of tree nursery and windbreak shelters, transfer new technology and increase stakeholder awareness and participation.

II. NORTH-EAST ASIA MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLAN (NEAMSP)

10. Since North-East Asian countries have been impacted by DLD for decades, the subregion has extended experiences in combating DLD and a continuously growing community involved in addressing DLD. The Secretariat thus carried out a review of subregional DLD activities; identifying the strengths, challenges, uncertainties and opportunities as shown in Table 1. The subregion has technological strengths and experiences but faces limitations from the fragmented works by multiple stakeholders. It suggests that there is much room to improve the scale and efficiency of current works by various stakeholders, through better information sharing and coordination, to facilitate cooperation and resource mobilization.

Table 1 Analysis Summary of North-East Asia’s DLD Activities

Strengths and Infrastructure	Challenges	Uncertainties	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological and Methodological Development • Policies and Initiatives • Deserticulture and economic opportunities • Soft infrastructure in provision and reception of funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporadic nature and limited coordination • Lack of long-term planning, monitoring and follow-up • Access to information • Language barrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better coordinated stakeholder community • More comprehensive project management • Enhanced information and knowledge sharing • Improved private sector engagement

11. The **North-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Plan (NEAMSP)** is therefore proposed as a practical tool to support stakeholders, including the public sector, private sector and civil society, through sharing their activity plans in a common place and common language. It will also supplement existing multilateral mechanisms such as the Northeast Asia Subregional Action Programme to Combat Desertification and Dust and Sandstorms (NEASRAP) and the DLDD-NEAN. NEAMSP will be a regularly updated living document that serves as a map to present works by various agencies. It can be utilized for:

- Reviewing overall DLD actions in the subregion to identify challenges and opportunities, and support subregional reporting
- Informing organizational planning and enabling identification of partners and opportunities for cooperation or resource mobilization

- Providing essential and latest information for potential donors to motivate participation and identify entre points and partners

12. **[International workshop on Desertification and Land Degradation, July 2015]**

NEASPEC Secretariat and the State Forestry Administration (SFA) of China jointly organized the International Workshop on Desertification and Land Degradation on 7-8 July 2015 in Beijing, China, to bring together stakeholders across sectors to review progress and challenges on desertification and land degradation (DLD), and to discuss on the development of the NEAMSP. The Workshop gathered participants from governments, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector from China, Japan, Mongolia and Republic of Korea, as well as subregional networks and international organizations working in the subregion.

13. The Workshop supported the proposal to develop a multi-stakeholder plan (MSP) to share information. It recognized the added value of the NEAMSP and recommended linkages to be made with current multilateral initiatives and that the NEAMSP can support national and subregional reporting to the UNCCD. The MSP will also act as a focal point for regular discussions to take place.

14. The Workshop suggested that considering the limited availability of resources and capacity, the NEAMSP could initially focus on sharing information of project activities and policies. When more resources be made available, it can expand to include the mapping of technology and research, and can synthesize knowledge and analytical output from information collected in the MSP.

15. The Workshop also recommended that regular forums or conferences be held to gather NEAMSP and wider participants for discussions and exchange, which can be theme-specific and linked with other major DLD events.

16. In terms of modality, the NEAMSP should aim to be an open and inclusive initiative, with a simple modality of stakeholder participation, instead of being an exclusive body of member organizations. The Workshop was informed that NEASPEC Secretariat will seek approval at SOM-20 to confirm implementation of the NEAMSP.

17. During the Workshop, the Secretariat has received information on planned activities by five agencies, through the questionnaires, including Asian Development Bank (ADB), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Green Asia Network, and Future Forest.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

18. The Meeting may wish to request member States to provide their views on the implementation of NEAMSP and invite member States to encourage national institutions to share information on their joint activities with international agencies and the civil society to be included in the NEAMSP.

19. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to indicate their intended contributions to the development and implementation of joint activities in the field of desertification and land degradation.

20. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to share their views and intentions on NEASPEC approaches and activities to be conducted in the field of desertification and land degradation.

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