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**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**REPORT OF
THE TWELFTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING OF NEASPEC**

Beijing, 22-23 March 2007

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I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Meeting reaffirmed the need to strengthen NEASPEC into a comprehensive mechanism by developing new programme areas, enhancing ownership of the member countries, and making effective institutional arrangements, in which context the Meeting reviewed the proposal by the Republic of Korea (ROK) on the hosting of the permanent secretariat. While appreciating the initiative, the Meeting requested the Republic of Korea, in consultation with the Secretariat to submit the revised proposal in response to key questions raised during the Meeting in the two weeks time after the meeting, so that the member governments can build the consensus by 10 May 2007.

2. The Meeting adopted the Resolution on the Framework for Nature Conservation Programme in North-East Asia and endorsed the Nature Conservation Strategy, with necessary amendments.

The Meeting expressed its support for the project on the mitigation of transboundary air pollution from coal-fired power plants and expressed the gratitude to ADB for the continuing financial assistance. The Meeting also underscored the need to coordinate with relevant programmes and expertises existing in the subregion in implementing the project. The Meeting noted that the project will be commenced by holding inception meetings, tentatively scheduled in June 2007, the venues of which should be further consulted amongst the concerned member countries and the Secretariat. The Meeting expressed its general endorsement for disbursing the core fund for the project for supporting the participation of non-ADB countries, i.e. Russian Federation and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), subject to the final confirmation from one member country.

3. The Meeting reviewed the proposal on launching "Eco-efficiency Partnership in North-East Asia" and noted that the activities should be formulated taking full consideration of existing regional, subregional and national programmes on the relevant topics and taking into account different situations and development stages of the member countries, with focus on exchanging and sharing information as well as capacity building. The Partnership should open to all stakeholders in this region. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to develop a detailed activity plan for the Partnership in the above context and submit to the next Senior Officials Meeting (SOM).

Furthermore, the delegation of People's Republic of China presented its paper on building a resource conservation society. The Meeting welcomed new ideas for subregional cooperation suggested in the presentation and requested the Secretariat to incorporate those ideas in developing the activity plan for the Eco-efficiency Partnership.

4. The Meeting took note of the recent development with regard to the follow-up to the earlier subregional project on Master Plan on Dust and Sandstorms, and committed to continue working together towards the commencing of follow-up projects. The Meeting also requested the Secretariat to ensure full participation of NEASPEC member countries in such projects.

5. The Meeting discussed the proposal on North-East Asia Environmental Outlook and concerns were raised by some member countries regarding the overlap and duplication with other existing activities. The Meeting suggested the Secretariat together with UNEP to provide by mid-May 2007 further clarifications and justifications with focus on the necessity and value-added of such efforts for inter-session discussion.

6. The Meeting reviewed the report on the NEASPEC Core Fund 2005-2006, and budget planning for 2007-2008. The meeting accepted the report as well as budget planning subject to eventual decisions on the proposals on the North-East Asia Environmental Outlook and the institutional arrangement for the Secretariat. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for efficient use of the financial resources. The Meeting also expressed the appreciation for the contribution of People's Republic of China and Republic of Korea to the Core Fund in 2006.

7. The Meeting welcomed the Mongolia's indication in principle to host the 13th Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC. The venue and exact dates will be decided through further consultations and will be announced in due course.

8. The Meeting expressed a sincere gratitude to the Government of China for generously hosting the Meeting and for its warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE 12th SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

9. The 12th Senior Officials Meeting on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia was held in Beijing, China on 22-23 March 2007. It was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and generously hosted by the Government of China.

A. Attendance

10. The Meeting was attended by representatives of People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. It was also attended by representatives from Asian Development Bank (ADB), Institute of Global Environment and Society (IGES), Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

B. Opening session

11. The SOM was opened by Mr. Rae Kwon Chung, the Director of the Environment and Sustainable Development Division of UNESCAP. At the outset, Mr. Chung expressed his sincere appreciation to the Government of China for generously hosting this important meeting and excellent arrangements, and welcomed delegates and experts from the member. He stated that NEASPEC has finally arrived at a crossroad leading to a new institutional mechanism, and thus urged the member countries to make a change at this meeting. In addition to the institutional issue, he introduced a number of important agendas which have great potentials to strengthen the role of NEASPEC. In particular, he noted that the agendas, i.e. the framework of nature conservation programme, the eco-efficiency partnership, the project of air pollution from coal-fired power plants, the project of North-East Asia Environmental Outlook will help NEASPEC meet its ultimate goal, serving as a vehicle for sustainable development in this subregion.

12. A welcoming address to the participants was delivered by H.E. Mr. Cui Tiankai, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. After extending his gratitude to

all delegates, he underscored that activities of NEASPEC have made positive progress and brought real benefits to member countries, and suggested to press ahead environmental cooperation with a view to benefiting all the people in the subregion. In this regard, he put forward three proposals: (a) Giving full play to our strengths and enhance cooperation, particularly, in the areas in which all six countries have interest while NEASPEC should take into full account the need for contributing to global endeavour; (b) Exploring new avenues and raising more funds; and (c) Staying focused and prioritizing the implementation of projects. In addition, Mr. Cui introduced the 11th Five-Year Plan on National Economy and Social Development of China and assured that the progress under the plan will contribute to international efforts in environmental protection and development.

13. A congratulatory message from Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, was delivered by UNESCAP. Mr. Djoghlaif recognized that the SOM is held at an important moment as the global society is moving closer to 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity. Considering the need for greater efforts by all countries and regions to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and the significant number of endangered or critically endangered species in North-East Asia, he expressed his wish for the nature conservation strategy of NEASPEC to play an instrumental role in enhancing national actions and subregional cooperation for the implementation of the CBD. In this regard, he stated that the outcomes of the SOM will be far-reaching not only for the further implementation of this programme but also for bringing this subregion much closer in common efforts to achieve common strategic goals and objectives of biodiversity conservation.

C. Election of officers

14. Mr. Wang Xiaolong (People's Republic of China) was elected as the Chairperson of the Meeting. Mr. Kim Chan-Woo (Republic of Korea) was elected as the Vice-Chairperson. And Mr. Alexander Pankin (Russian Federation) was elected as the Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the agenda

15. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of agenda.
4. Environment and development policies and issues of NEASPEC (statements by the delegations from member countries and international organizations).
5. Review of programme planning and implementation.
 - a) The Project on the Framework for a Nature Conservation Programme in North-East Asia.
 - b) Regional Technical Assistance: Mitigation of Transboundary Air Pollution from Coal-Fired Power Plants in North-East Asia.
 - c) The Outcomes of Discussions on Eco-efficiency in North-East Asia and Further Actions.
 - d) The Prevention and Mitigation of Dust and Sandstorm.
6. Consideration of future NEASPEC institutional mechanism (Conclusions and Recommendations from the Expert Group Meeting).
7. Consideration of Future NEASPEC Activities.
 - a) Proposal for a Project "North-East Asia Environmental Outlook".
 - b) Initiatives for Building a Resource-Conserving Society.

8. Review and Planning of the Core Fund.
 - a) Report on the NEASPEC Core Fund.
 - b) Budget Planning for the Biennium: 2007-2008.
9. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Thirteenth SOM.
10. Other matters.
11. Adoption of the meeting report.

**E. Environment and development policies and issues of the North-East Asian
Subregional programme for environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)
(Item 4 of the agenda)**

16. The representative of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Kim Chan-woo, firstly noted that NEASPEC has contributed to promoting environmental cooperation in North-East Asia through a practical and step-by-step approach. However, he proposed that more efforts need to be made for NEASPEC to develop into a comprehensive programme while it is meaningful to exchange our environmental policies, relevant experiences and visions among member countries under the current mechanism. In this regard, he put an emphasis on the need for having a new institutional mechanism, especially permanent secretariat, which would be able to provide continuity, viability and efficiency to NEASPEC, to facilitate development of long-term, medium-term and short-term action plan, and to ensure greater accountability.

17. The representative of People's Republic of China, Mr. Wang Xinhui, explained that the Government of China has developed its strategy to shift its growth pattern towards the scientific development path with policy measures in order to address the challenges of rapid economic growth and environmental degradation. In particular, the National Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2006 to 2010) provides the blueprint for a resource-saving and environment-friendly society in China. In this context, China strives for the reduction of energy consumption for per unit of GDP by 20%; and main pollutant emissions by 10% for the period 2006 to 2010, and formulates a series of policy measures to achieve the targets from strengthening and enforcing legislation to readjusting industrial structures. He also affirmed the willingness and efforts of the Government of China to actively participate the international, regional and bilateral environmental cooperation mechanisms.

18. The representative from Japan, Ms. Masako Ogawa, introduced environmental conservation measures of the Japanese Government, focusing on the Third Basic Environment Plan, measures combating global warming, and sound material-cycle society, in particular. The Third Basic Plan, which was prepared in April 2006, aims at achieving "integrated improvement of the environment, economy and society" through a long-term vision extending to 2050 and a plan for the implementation of quantitative targets and indicators. She also introduced that the policy for establishing a sound material-cycle society targets to improve 40% of resource productivity and cycle use rate, respectively, by 2010 from the baseline of the year 2000. Concerning emission reduction of greenhouse gases, she presented a number of policies including accelerated introduction of biomass energy and key technologies for housing and household appliances.

19. The representative of Mongolia, Ms. Badamdulam Tumenjargal, presented the current status of desertification in Mongolia. While 44.7% of the territory belongs to the Gobi desert and arid zone, the country faces growing threats of desertification due to the combination of natural causes (climate change and droughts and shortage of water

resources) and anthropogenic causes (land degradation by inappropriate use of pasture and overloaded mining industry, etc). In response to the challenges, the Government of Mongolia carries out a comprehensive national program consisting of three phases from 2003 and currently implements the first phase focusing on the evaluation of the current situation, the improvement of legal framework and the preparation of aggregated government policies.

F. Presentations and Discussions on Substantive Agenda Items
(Item 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the agenda)

20. The Meeting had presentations from the Secretariat on Agenda Item (5) "Review of programme planning and implementation"; Agenda Item (6) "Consideration of future NEASPEC institutional mechanism"; Agenda Item (7) "Consideration of future NEASPEC activities"; and Agenda Item (8) "Review and planning of the Core Fund". The Meeting subsequently had considerable discussions after presentation on each topic in the Agenda Items. The key outcomes of the presentation and discussion are included in the conclusion of the Meeting.

21. The Meeting received a brief summary of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM), which was held in the morning of 22nd March to discuss new institutional mechanism of NEASPEC. As the EGM was not able to reach a consensus, the SOM undertook further discussions on the topic. The result of the discussion is also included in the conclusion of the Meeting.

G. Venue, date and provisional agenda of the Twelfth SOM
(Agenda Item 9)

22. The Meeting discussed the venue, date and agenda of the 13th SOM. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Mongolia for generously offering to host the next Meeting. Considering the date of this SOM, the meeting discussed an option to hold the next SOM early 2008 instead of late 2007. The proposed dates and venue will be announced by the host government in due course.

H. Other Matters
(Item 10 of the agenda)

23. The host government announced a plan for an excursion to an eco-farming site on 23rd March, and requested all participants to join the programme.

24. The Meeting expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of China for generously hosting the 12th SOM and for its warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Meetings.

I. Adoption of the Report
(Item 11 of the agenda)

25. The Meeting adopted the conclusion of the Meeting on 22 March 2006. The report of the Meeting was finalized and adopted through circulation among the member countries after the SOM.

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ANNEX I

RESOLUTION OF NEASPEC ON THE FRAMEWORK FOR NATURE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN NORTH-EAST ASIA

Adopted by the 12th SOM of NEASPEC on 22 March 2007

NEASPEC,

Recalling the Framework on NEASPEC adopted at the 3rd SOM in 1996, defining the goal of the framework as a means to promote subregional environmental cooperation and sustainable development efforts,

Recalling the Vision Statement adopted at the 6th SOM in 2000, recommending the NEASPEC countries to promote common policy dialogue on approaches and views, and coordinated actions on subregional environmental issues,

Recalling also the decisions of the 8th, 9th and 10th Senior Officials Meetings, concluding the need to develop a framework for nature conservation in North-East Asia and endorsing the project on the subject,

Recognizing the national commitment of the NEASPEC countries to the conservation of biodiversity at national, regional and global levels as the parties of global biodiversity conventions, namely Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) in particular,

Recognizing the NEASPEC countries' supports and responsibilities for the implementation of 2010 Biodiversity Target of the CBD and the significant importance of joint subregional responses to the accomplishment of the Target,

Noting with satisfaction of the outcome of the project, "Framework for Nature Conservation Programme in North-East Asia",

1. *Endorses* the draft strategy, which was developed through collective efforts of national collaborating centres and experts, as the Nature Conservation Strategy in North-East Asia;

2. *Calls upon* the NEASPEC member countries, through the existing Senior Officials Meetings and the network of national collaborating centres, to work towards the implementation of proposed subregional and national actions in the Strategy;

3. *Invites* the NEASPEC member countries to initiate subregional actions and to take into account the agreed Strategy to facilitate the formulation of national policies and increase public awareness on nature conservation;

4. *Requests* ESCAP to consult with national collaborating centres and national experts to develop further joint actions based on the Strategy and facilitate the implementation of agreed actions;

5. *Also invites* the United Nations bodies including UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, and the CBD, international organizations including the ADB, international NGOs such as WWF and WCS, and national NGOs to support the Strategy as a practical mechanism for nature conservation in North-East Asia.