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REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Item 5(b) of the provisional agenda)

Migration of Dust and Sandstorms in North-East Asia

Note by the Secretariat

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Annex: Outline of the NEASPEC Training Workshop on Combating Desertification

I. BACKGROUND OF THE WORKSHOP

1. During 2010-2012, NEASPEC had carried out a project “Implementing the Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms (DSS) in North-East Asia”, which directly responded to the Regional Master Plan by piloting one of its proposed transboundary DSS prevention areas in Zamyn-Uud, Dornogobi Aymag of Mongolia bordering with Erenhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. The project involved a demonstration project on tree planting, development of a GIS-based database on Desertification, Land Degradation and Droughts (DLDD) projects in Mongolia, production and distribution of awareness raising materials in Zamyn-Uud, workshops for knowledge sharing and training workshop.

2. Following the Capacity Building Training Programme for Mongolian Experts which was held in Erenhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China on 19-26 September 2011 by NEASPEC and the Institute of Desertification Studies (IDS) under the Chinese Academy of Forestry, the SOM-17 recognized the capacity building training as a very useful and essential approach to addressing dust and sandstorms (DSS) challenges. Subsequently, the Secretariat has facilitated consultations between the China National Bureau to Combat Desertification and the Mongolia National Committee to Combat Desertification to hold the second training programme for Mongolian officials and experts, and also invited other member States to join the programme.

II. OVERVIEW OF TRAINING WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION

3. The Training Workshop on Combating Desertification was jointly held by the NEASPEC and the IDS during 22-28 September 2013 in China. The Workshop was attended by ten Mongolian participants from a range of professions and background, including government officials, researchers and media representative, etc. The training workshop consisted of two parts: (i) lectures on policies and technical measures at the IDS in Beijing during 22-24 September, and (ii) field study in Inner Mongolia during 25- 28 September. (refer to Annex for the outline of the training workshop)

4. Lectures in Beijing were given by senior officials of the State Forestry Administration (SFA) Office of Desertification Control and Prevention, the SFA Deputy Director General Office for Combating Climate Change; and technical professionals and researchers from the IDS. An overview of China’s desertification status was provided as follow.

5. In China, desertification threatens over 25% of its landmass (over 2.6 million km²), affecting more than 400 million people in total. Desertification hinders the progress on poverty reduction and has adverse impact on health. In addition, desertification worsens climate change

through reducing vegetation cover which is a carbon sink and releases carbon into the atmosphere. Estimation suggests that desertification in China has released 1,500 million tons of CO₂ equivalent to the atmosphere during the 20th century. Factors contributing to desertification in China include over-grazing, overuse of water and changes in land use. However, the underlying causes are population growth, low level of education and economic development in areas most badly affected by desertification, resulting in over-exploitation of natural resources in these areas.

6. In addition, a comprehensive range of topics relevant to desertification control was covered during the training workshop. China's desertification control approach, results and case studies, as well as its national policies on desertification control and forestry were discussed. The enactment of China's Law on Prevention and Control of Desertification in 2002, is the world's first law which dedicates to desertification prevention and control. China has also initiated other national mechanisms such as the National Plan for Desertification Prevention and Control in 2005 and the first National Desertification Prevention and Control Conference held in 2007. Since 2000, China's annual investment in key desertification control projects had exceeded USD 100 million, and more than nine national research centres on desertification prevention and control have been established since the 1950s to enhance monitoring capacity and promote technical advancement.

7. Bottom-up measures have also been a vital part of China's desertification control. These measures aim to promote community ownership of desertification control responsibilities and benefits, such as through providing compensation to farmers for restoring vegetation cover. Incentives to invest in desertification control projects have also been provided through tax measures to encourage private investment.

8. China has been active on the international cooperation of desertification control. Apart from being a signatory of the UNCCD to have developed and implemented the National Desertification Prevention Action Plan, China has also established long-term working relationships with the international community. China hosted a number of UNCCD ministerial meetings and other international forums. Moreover, it has been working with bilateral and multilateral agencies such as GIZ and LADA on desertification control.

9. The results of China's commitment in desertification prevention and control have been encouraging. Throughout 2000-2009, China has achieved annual net reduction in degraded land area, and the annual area under desertification control has reached almost 1 million hectare. Furthermore, it has brought along economic and social development, and accelerated the progress in poverty reduction.

10. Other topics covered by the workshop include technical knowledge and methodology of reforestation, implications of desertification on climate change and application of control measures in different landscapes such as the Tibetan Plateau.

11. A field study was organized as the second part of the workshop to visit a number of sites in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China to understand the application of the desertification control measures and approaches in the field. Sites visited include: organic agricultural practices in Heiyupaizi Village, which was made possible after desertification control took place to restore vegetation and most importantly, the spring water supply, providing income to local communities; aerial seeding afforestation and seedling nursery in Bairin Right Banner; integrated sand control project of Tuha Line and Sudu Line, where roads were built into the mobile sand dune areas solely to build sand grids with straws to stabilize sand and eventually to grow shrubs for further and long term stabilization; the Uranaodu Ecological Experiment Station for research; as well as the *Picea Mongolica* Nature Reserve in Bayna Obo and Asihatu National Geopark in Hexigten Banner. The field trip provided the opportunity for participants to observe field practices and exchange directly with local professionals on their experiences, technical details and discuss applicability of the desertification measures in their respective local context.

12. Feedback from participants suggests that the content of the training workshop, to a great extent, has been relevant and useful for potential adoption in Mongolia, and is very helpful in generating ideas for cooperation to combat desertification between China and Mongolia. There has been high level of satisfaction on ways in which discussions and field visits were organized. Participants also viewed that desertification control measures and approaches presented at the workshop are generally considered feasible in Mongolia, provided that details are locally adapted such as tree species and government administrative structure. The Chinese approach has also provided participants with new ideas and possibilities to combat desertification in the Mongolian context, such as the possibility of setting up a dedicated desertification control body and experimental research station. Participants' comments indicate that the field trip has been very useful in facilitating their understanding on applying desertification control measures in practice, it has been repeatedly suggested that this type of training workshop should be held annually and be expanded to allow more participants from local governments to attend.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. The Meeting may wish to request member States to provide their views on conducting more capacity building training workshops and expanding the workshop to allow more participants to attend.

14. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to indicate their intended contributions to the implementation of activities in the field of desertification.

15. The Meeting may wish to invite member States to share their views and intentions on new activities to be conducted in the field of desertification.

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Annex: OUTLINE OF THE NEASPEC TRAINING WORKSHOP ON COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

**NEASPEC and Institute of Desertification Studies (IDS)
22-28 September 2013, China**

Day 1 -3 (22-24 September)

Training Workshop in Beijing

Lectures on policies, methods and technologies for reforestation involving irrigation system, selection of tree species, restoration of native desert vegetation, and maintenance of plantations

Day 4 (25 September)

Travel from Beijing to Chifeng (Wuduntaohai Town) in Inner Mongolia

Day 5 (26 September)

Morning Heiyupaizi Village (黑鱼泡子)

Heiyupaizi Village is an agricultural village with a population of approximately 1,550. The village has rich land and water resources, and its key agricultural activities include rice cultivation and livestock breeding. Heiyupaizi Village's agricultural system integrates crop growing, livestock breeding, ecological and sand management as well as tourism.

Afternoon Aerial seeding plantation at Bairin Right Banner (巴林右旗直播造林)

The plantation was created during the emergency implementation of a desertification source-control project in 2000, over RMB 185 million had been invested. The project covers an area of 2,010,000 mu (approx. 1,340 km²), which consists of 793,500 mu artificial plantation, 86,000 mu aerial seeding plantation and 1,136,200 mu closed reforestation area.

Day 6 (27 September)

Morning Visit to Tuha Line (图哈线) and Sudu Line (苏都线) Comprehensive Sand Control Project.

The Tuha Line is a desertification control demonstration project since November 2009, covering an area of 300,000 mu (approx. 200km²) with 4 core areas along a trans-desert road. This highly successful project has adopted the use of several techniques including aerial seeding, closed reforestation and artificial reforestation. The Sudu line is another desert-land integrated management project along a trans-desert road within Ashihan Sumu. It covers an area of 400,000 mu (approx. 267km²), i.e. 60% of sand land within the Sudu-Ashihan Sumu area.

Afternoon Visit to Uranaodu (乌兰敖都) Ecological Station

The Uranaodu Ecological Station was built in 1975. It has a temperate semi-arid climate and is in an ecologically fragile area under severe threat of desertification. The Urandaodu

Desertification Experimental Station (乌兰敖都荒漠化试验站) is key to research on the reconstruction of deteriorated ecological systems and other serious ecological challenges through experimenting the integration of various biological and engineering technology. The Station joined the National Forestry Bureau Desertification Monitoring Network in 2000. It has received a number of research awards in China and has over 30 doctorate and masters graduates.

Day 7 (28 September)

Morning Visit to *Picea mongolica* Nature Reserve in Bayna Obo (白音敖包沙地云杉自然保护区) .

The *Picea mongolica* Nature Reserve became a national nature reserve in April, 2000 for its unique *Picea mongolica* forests ecosystem, covering an area of 13,862 hectares. It is the only remaining *Picea mongolica* forests ecosystem in the world and is also known as a 'living fossil'. The *Picea mongolica* forest is a unique ecosystem because it is formed under an extended period of natural succession under very specific conditions.

Afternoon Visit to Asihatu National Geopark in Hexigten Banner (pay tour) (克什克腾旗阿斯哈图世界地质公园) .

The Asihatu National Geopark became a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2005. It covers an area of 1,750 km² including eight zones with various geological characteristics, including volcanic, glacial, and desert features. The Geopark lies at the convergence of several mountain ranges and sandland: the Greater Khingan Mountains (大兴安岭山脉) to the east, the Yan Mountains (燕山山脉) to the south, and the Hunshandake Sandland (混善达克沙地) to the southwest.