



## Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

### Seventh session

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

### Draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific

## Draft ministerial declaration on environment and development for Asia and the Pacific\*\*

1. *We, the Ministers for the environment and Heads of delegations of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,*
2. *Having met* in Bangkok on 7 and 8 September 2017 at the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific,
3. *Emphasizing our commitment* to promote the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources as a core element of sustainable development **{at the regional, subregional and national level}**,
4. *Reaffirming our commitment*, consistent with our national circumstances and priorities, to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>1</sup> the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,<sup>2</sup> the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,<sup>3</sup> the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030,<sup>4</sup> **{the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,<sup>5</sup>}** the SIDS Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action

\* E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/L.1.

\*\* The present document was submitted late owing to the need to take into account the views of member States, including during informal consultations of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, the last of which was held on 17 August 2017.

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1.

<sup>2</sup> See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7)*, chap. II.

(SAMOA) Pathway<sup>6</sup> and the New Urban Agenda,<sup>7</sup> all of which recognize the importance of sustainable management of the environment and natural resources,

5. *Recalling* the annex to General Assembly resolution 71/312 of 6 July 2017 entitled “Our ocean, our future: call for action” on the need to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development,

6. *{Acknowledging} {Noting}* the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>8</sup> in which the management of natural resources is described as one of the priority areas for cooperation,

7. *{Appreciating} {Noting}* the positive steps taken following the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 2010, by members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nation bodies, multilateral financing institutions and other intergovernmental organizations, in the pursuit of environmental sustainability as part of sustainable development, including through regional initiatives such as the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative: Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the Implementation of “Green Growth” and the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth,

8. *Recognizing* the importance of the platform provided for more than 30 years by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, through which environment ministers and authorities have been able to assess the state of the environment in the region, prepare concerted strategies for regional **{and subregional}** cooperation in response to emerging and persistent environmental challenges and bring their regional priorities and strategies to the attention of the highest political levels through the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

**{bis}** *Recognizing* the importance of the platform provided for more than 30 years by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, as the main venue to promote environmental policies in response to emerging and persistent environmental challenges in the region,} **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

**{ter}** *Recognizing* the importance of the platform provided for more than 30 years by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific to respond to emerging and persistent environment challenges in the region,} **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

**{quater}** *Recognizing* the importance of the platform provided for more than 30 years by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific to respond to emerging and persistent environment challenges in the region and the subregion, and recognizing also the importance of utilizing the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in particular its Committee on Environment and Development, as the **{main} {potential}** platform to promote environmental policies and strategies, including the sustainable management and development of the environment and natural resources,} **[Proposal to merge with paragraph 9]**

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

<sup>8</sup> E/ESCAP/73/31, annex II.

9. *Recognizing* the importance of utilizing the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in particular its Committee on Environment and Development as the **{main} {potential}** platform to promote environmental policies and strategies, including the sustainable management and development of the environment and natural resources,

10. *Expressing our appreciation* for the convening of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific **{jointly} {co-organized}** with the Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific of the United Nations Environment Programme, which is an exemplary demonstration of coordination and cooperation in the United Nations system for supporting member States in the implementation of their environment agendas, **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

11. *Recognizing* that, since the previous Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Astana in 2010, the environmental performance of the region has improved on several fronts but that many environmental challenges persist, potentially further undermining social **{and economic}** development and **{economic} {inclusive}** growth, **[Proposal to delete after ‘persist’]**

12. *Noting with concern* that environmental degradation **{, including degradation caused by climate change,}** also threatens human livelihoods, health, well-being **{and security}** and undermines efforts to achieve food security as well as to end extreme poverty and hunger and ensure healthy lives, especially for populations dependent on natural resources,

13. *Recognizing* that, while economic growth has improved the living standards of millions of people in Asia and the Pacific, it has not been sufficient to pursue sustainable development and that resource-intensive growth patterns have placed considerable strains on the natural resource base and on ecosystems, which underpin economies and societies,

14. *Noting* that environmental issues should be addressed together with economic and social issues in an integrated and balanced manner by promoting and addressing interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined in the outcome document entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015,

15. *Recalling* resolution 73/1 of 19 May 2017 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on a conference structure of the Commission aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to continue to undertake systematic monitoring and evaluation of the conference structure and its congruence with the programme priorities of the Commission with a view to increasing efficiency, effectiveness and synergies of the work of the Commission, keeping in mind General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016, **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

16. *Taking into account* different national socioeconomic circumstances, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities,

17. *Resolve* to promote approaches to the environment and development that deliver multiple benefits in pursuit of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant internationally agreed development agendas, **{in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances} {including} {inter alia}**:

(a) Addressing the **{harmful} {adverse}** effects of climate change **{through adaptation and mitigation strategies} {in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances}**; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

(b) Ensuring conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in particular by strengthening resource efficiency measures**{, the circular economy,} {the blue economy,} {the sustainable use of the oceans and seas, energy efficiency} {and renewable energy} {and reducing water, ocean, sea, marine, air, soil and land pollution, while addressing threats posed by climate change and environmental degradation}, {in accordance with internationally agreed principles and obligations and} {taking into account the different economic, social and ecosystem features of countries, thereby engendering sustainable consumption and production}**;

(c) Decoupling resource use from economic growth to improve the resource intensity and overall performance of the economies in the region **{by, inter alia, incorporating specific resource efficiency measures in development planning and growth strategies, improving public awareness and information availability to enable more informed choices on sustainably produced goods and services, promoting reducing, reusing and recycling waste, and improving water efficiency and wastewater treatment, including through financing for development as well as technical cooperation}**; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

(d) Promoting sustainable urban planning and spatial development to foster the opportunities of **{investments to be provided in}** urbanization and projected infrastructure, so as to create environmentally sustainable cities;

(e) Fostering sustainable agriculture practices that enhance food security while protecting natural resources and ecosystems and increasing resource productivity;

(f) Enhancing sustainable livelihood, including through access to resources and ecosystem services for all, in particular women and vulnerable groups of people, recognizing their critical role in the sustainable management of natural resources and their lack of access to resources and ecosystem services;

(g) Promoting the circular economy, the green economy **{and the blue economy}**, given that such models provide opportunities to enhance economic and social prosperity while reducing waste and pollution; **[Proposal to delete paragraph] [Proposal to merge with subparagraph b]**

18. *Decide* to work together towards:

(a) Promoting the transfer and use of environmentally sound technologies on mutually agreed terms **{in accordance with internationally agreed principles and obligations}** and the elaboration of resource-efficient policies and practices **{, including through technical and financial assistance} {through technical assistance from developed countries} {and} {as well as}** North-South, **{South-South}** triangular and regional **{fragile-to-fragile}** cooperation, in particular in countries with special needs;

(b) Strengthening regional and subregional cooperation for promoting **{and harmonizing}** regional and subregional environmental standards and labels, taking into account national circumstances, for goods and services; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

(c) Studying the effect of legal and regulatory environmental enforcement frameworks and environmental governance, as well as the impact of pricing of natural resources, on reducing unsustainable environmental practices and dealing with waste and pollution; **[Proposal to reformulate and/or reposition paragraph]**

(d) Promoting regional efforts and cooperation to improve the environment, livelihood, health and well-being of people who live in areas affected by sand and dust storms **{, and in this context} {emphasizing} {supporting} {the importance of the Tehran Ministerial Declaration adopted by the International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, held in July 2017}; [Proposal to delete paragraph] [Proposal to move to preamble]**

(e) Promoting effective development cooperation at the country level so that all development resources are used efficiently; **[Proposal to reformulate paragraph]**

**{bis Promoting effective development cooperation to reduce the negative impacts of pollution {which are transboundary in nature};}**

(f) Enhancing capacities of government **{institutions} {authorities}** and developing professional skills for **{environmental governance} {natural resources management}** to enhance coordination and knowledge exchange among all stakeholders participating in tasks **{, as appropriate}**, and activities related to the environment; **[Proposal to reformulate paragraph]**

(g) Strengthening technical support by member States that are advanced in the fields of **{renewable energy} {affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy} {, especially solar energy, and their contributions to less advanced member States on capacity-building for enhancing efficiency of renewable energy,} {on mutually agreed terms}; [Proposal to delete paragraph]**

(h) Strengthening intergovernmental cooperation at all levels to address and reduce the negative impacts of pollution which are transboundary in nature; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

19. *Invite* donors, financing institutions and development partners to consider the **{priorities identified} {thematic issues addressed}** in the present Declaration, in line with country strategies and priorities, when they are developing their funding plans and to support countries in the implementation of the present Declaration, as appropriate;

20. *Urge* donors, financing institutions and development partners to simplify the procedures for accessing adequate amounts of funds in time for environmental development programmes and projects; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

21. *Call for* the mobilization of financial resources and funding by member States, donors, international organizations and the private sector to meet the **{existing and}** emerging **{environment}** challenges in the region **{through rapid action in the management of water, soil, dust and coastal crises}**; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

22. *Request* the Executive Secretary to support members and associate members **{, in line with existing mandates,}** **{and within the in-house capacity of the secretariat}** in the **{effective}** implementation of the present Declaration by: **[Proposal to delete all subparagraphs below]**

(a) **{Strengthening}** **{Promoting}** regional and subregional cooperation for the conservation, sustainable use and management of natural resources **{, biodiversity and ecosystems}** in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

(b) **{Promoting}** **{Strengthening}** regional networks for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, lessons learned and good practices among member States, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and other United Nations bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies, in line with their respective mandates;

(c) Facilitating the collection and dissemination of information and the development of analytical products to support science- and evidence-based policies in collaboration with United Nations bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies, in line with their respective mandates;

(d) Continuing to provide technical support and capacity-building, with a particular focus on countries with vulnerabilities to climate change, environmental degradation and special needs, in collaboration with United Nations bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies, in line with respective mandates;

(e) Facilitating North-South, **{South-South,}** triangular and regional **{fragile-to-fragile}** collaboration to promote the transfer and use of environmentally sound technologies on mutually agreed terms **{consistent with internationally agreed principles and obligations}**;

(f) Promoting the review of progress at the regional level on the areas identified in the present Declaration through the Committee on Environment and Development, as appropriate;

(g) **{Ensuring}** **{Promoting}** **{effective}** coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme and other United Nations bodies, including programmes, funds and specialized agencies, as well as bilateral and multilateral development agencies, donors and private sector investors, in the implementation of the present Declaration, as appropriate;

(h) Providing technical support upon the request of member States for their efforts to increase resource efficiency by conducting studies and situational analyses and developing databases and **{policy}** guidelines within existing resources; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]** **[Proposal to merge with subparagraph d]**

(i) Supporting the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership project for promoting better air quality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals; **[Proposal to delete paragraph]**

23. *Agree* that the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific should continue to serve its function as a unique platform, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, providing environment ministers and authorities of Asia and the Pacific with the opportunity to assess the state of the environment in the region, prepare concerted strategies for regional cooperation in response to emerging and persistent environment challenges, and bring their regional priorities and strategies to the attention of the Governments of the region through the Commission and the Economic and Social Council; **[Proposal to delete paragraph] [Proposal to reformulate combining 23, 24 and 25]**

24. *Stress* that the Committee on Environment and Development may be convened at the ministerial level on an ad hoc basis to ensure high-level engagement on the issues to be addressed, if necessary, in line with Commission resolution 73/1; **[Proposal to delete paragraph] [Proposal to reformulate combining 23, 24 and 25]**

25. *Recommend* making full use of the existing conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific by convening the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific **{every four years starting in 2022} {in accordance with the provisions regarding the conference structure of the Commission or upon the request and consensus of member States}**,<sup>9</sup> and in close coordination with similar ministerial conferences organized by other United Nations bodies, as appropriate. **[Proposal to delete paragraph] [Proposal to reformulate combining 23, 24 and 25]**

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<sup>9</sup> See E/ESCAP/73/40, annex II, section III, paragraph 20, which reads: "In those years when a ministerial conference or intergovernmental meeting is held covering issues normally discussed in a committee, the corresponding committee need not be convened. Subject to the approval of the Commission, a committee may be convened at the ministerial level on an ad hoc basis to ensure high-level engagement on the issues to be addressed." See also Commission resolution 71/1, paragraph 2, which reads: "[the] Committee for Environment and Development shall meet in the even years".