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## United Nations Environment Programme Asia and the Pacific Office

Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific  
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Discussion Document for Agenda Item 7

**Review of implementation in Asia and the Pacific of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in 2016, and discussion of regional priorities for the United Nations Environment Programme in Asia and the Pacific**

## Implementation of United Nations Environment Assembly Resolutions and Key Regional Priorities for Asia and the Pacific

**Discussion Document -- Not for quotation or citation.** The purpose of this document is to facilitate discussions during the Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, 5 – 8 September 2017, Bangkok. Comments are welcome and should be sent to [uneproap@un.org](mailto:uneproap@un.org).

## I. Introduction

1. The Senior Official's meeting at the Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific will review progress of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions in Asia and the Pacific. This session will also discuss regional priorities and emerging issues and engagement of countries with the UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office. The session will consider two interrelated issues:

- Implementation in Asia-Pacific of the resolutions and decisions made at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2014 and at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2016.
- Asia-Pacific's priorities and emerging issues for potential regional delivery as well as for decisions and resolutions to the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in December 2017.

2. This background paper has three main sections. The second section provides an update of the implementation of the resolutions in Asia-Pacific. The third section identifies potential issues and priorities for Asia-Pacific for reflection in the preparations towards the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including potential decisions and resolutions to be developed by countries in the region. The final section looks at the processes and mechanisms for the Asia-Pacific region to convey its priorities to the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

## II. Regional and Country follow up on the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Asia and the Pacific

3. This section provides the follow up on implementation in Asia-Pacific of the following decisions and resolutions adopted during the first and second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly:

Resolution 2/6 Supporting the Paris Agreement  
Resolution 1/8 Ecosystem-based adaptation  
Resolution 2/8 Sustainable consumption and production  
Resolution 2/14 Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products  
Resolution 1/3 Illegal trade in wildlife  
Resolution 1/7 Strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality  
Resolution 2/21 Sand and dust storms  
Resolution 2/11 Marine plastic litter and microplastics  
Resolution 1/6 Marine plastic debris and microplastics  
Resolution 2/10 Oceans and seas  
Resolution 2/12 Sustainable coral reefs management  
Resolution 2/16 Mainstreaming of biodiversity for well-being  
Resolution 2/17 Enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions  
Resolution 2/7 Sound management of chemicals and waste  
Resolution 1/5 Chemicals and waste  
Resolution 2/9 Prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste

Resolution 2/5 Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
Resolution 1/4 Science-policy interface  
Resolution 2/4 Role, functions and modalities for UNEP implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

#### **A. Resolution 2/6: Supporting the Paris Agreement**

4. The resolution on supporting the Paris Agreement requested UN Environment to contribute to the implementation of the pre-2020 global efforts to address the challenge of climate change by strengthening efforts in education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation; reinforcing and stepping up participation in partnership programmes and initiatives; strengthening collaboration with relevant UN bodies and other relevant stakeholders on work related to adaptation, mitigation and the transition to a sustainable future; accelerating support to countries, especially developing countries, for building national readiness capacity to implement the Paris Agreement including implementation capacity and capacity to access finance and technology; strengthening support to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; and strengthening support for and contributions to global climate-change-related assessments.

5. In response to the resolution, UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office supported countries in the region to implement climate resilient and low carbon development measures including access to technologies and finance. On medium and long term climate resilient planning, support under National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme has enhanced ability of all Least Developed Countries and most of the Non-Least Developed Countries to advance their National Adaptation Plan and/or process. The National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme has trained climate change focal points and representatives from the ministry of planning and finance on different elements of National Adaptation Plan and/or Process within the overall framework of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, and enhanced Adaptation Plan and/or Process under the Paris Agreement. Support will continue to enhance technical capacity of all Least Developed Countries and other developing countries on how to mainstream climate change into development planning and budgeting system, how to appraise adaptation interventions, and how to develop project proposal to access climate finance. As a response to requests received from Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu, Asia and the Pacific Office has started its support to these countries to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plan and/or Processes during 2017-2020.

6. On low carbon development, support has enhanced ability of member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to promote energy efficient appliances through the introduction of minimum performance standard for air conditioners and lighting appliances with an aim to transform markets. This will also reduce long-term climate pollution and help countries to meet their commitment under the Paris Agreement. Current support also goes to Indonesia, Myanmar and Pakistan to promote energy efficiency interventions in the lighting sector and strengthening institutional coordination mechanism in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Maldives, and Philippines on Short-lived Climate Pollutants that also bring health benefits. As Asia and the Pacific region presents large potential to reduce emission of greenhouse gas through energy efficiency and renewable energy, efforts will continue to foster energy efficiency in the region including the Pacific.

7. On supporting countries to build national capacity to implement the Paris Agreement including capacity to develop medium and long term adaptation plan, capacity to access finance and technologies, in addition to National Adaptation Plan support as stated earlier, technical support is provided to 16 countries under the Climate Technology Network and Finance Center (CTNFC) and Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) to foster cleaner and climate resilient technologies. UN Environment Subregional Office for the Pacific has supported a Pacific Regional Forum in Tonga in February 2016 that provided opportunities for National Designated Entities to CTCN, Network Members and climate technology stakeholders to meet and discuss key issues related to CTCN's support as well as sharing experiences. UN Environment also supported Tonga to access Green Climate Fund to develop an Energy Efficiency Master Plan. On direct access to climate fund, our support has built capacity of Cook Islands, already accredited by the Adaptation Fund; and Bhutan and Nepal to access climate finance directly from the Adaptation Fund. Our efforts will continue in supporting countries build capacity for direct access.

8. On strengthening collaboration and partnership, UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office sees collaboration and partnership as one of our strengths in promoting climate technologies (adaptation and mitigation) to address climate vulnerabilities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. UN Environment and the United Nations Development Programme are jointly implementing the National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP) which delivers training in close collaboration and partnership with other UN and non-UN agencies such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, Global Water Partnership, and Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. Significant progress has been made in strengthening institutional collaboration and partnership with several key organizations in the region including the Pacific Community on the development of the Pacific Energy Efficiency Project; Asian Development Bank in delivering Asia Pacific Adaptation Network Adaptation Forum and collaboration on closing adaptation knowledge gaps; Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology on desalination technology; Ministry of Environment Korea and Korea Environmental Industry and Technology Institute on development of Green Climate Fund full project proposal for Myanmar and Vanuatu; and Science and Technology Policy Institute in collaboration with the Climate Technology Centre and Networks on technology assessment. The Asia Pacific Adaptation Network Adaptation Forum which was held in Sri Lanka in October 2016, has developed concrete outcome and further enhanced partnership with the Asian Development Bank, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development for mobilizing adaptation knowledge including the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative of the UNFCCC to close adaptation knowledge gaps.

## **B. Resolution 1/8: Ecosystem-based adaptation**

9. The resolution on Ecosystem Based Adaptation called for UN Environment, in partnership with Governments, scientific institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to continue providing and enhance support to developing countries, at their request, for the development and implementation of community-based, national and regional ecosystem-based adaptation programmes and activities through, inter alia, practical tools and pilot projects to demonstrate the use of those tools and other policymaking technical support. In response to the resolution, UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office supports countries in the implementation of climate resilient interventions for vulnerable people, ecosystem services, and nature through ecosystem based adaptation approach. It has developed projects and raised fund for Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal for the implementation of climate resilient

interventions for vulnerable people and ecosystem, enhanced ability of countries (Cambodia and Myanmar) to foster adaptation technologies (e.g. mangrove for coastal protection in Myanmar, forest management for water supply in Cambodia). Efforts will continue to support countries such as Myanmar and Vanuatu on whole island ecosystem based adaptation approach to access Green Climate Fund for climate resilient development.

### **C. Resolution 2/8: Sustainable consumption and production**

10. UN Environment has progressively promoted resource-efficient green growth practices in the Asia Pacific region. Through the SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Support Component, in partnership with the European Union, UN Environment has contributed to strengthening regional, sub-regional and national policy frameworks that promote the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns and resource efficiency. This has led to the establishment of effective policy dialogues on sustainable consumption and production through which high level policy makers from member States, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector has shared lessons and set priorities for Asia-Pacific. In the agriculture sector, promotion of sustainable production is mainly spearheaded through the Sustainable Rice Platform.

11. Support to mainstream sustainable consumption and production and resource efficiency in regional, sub-regional and national development programmes through the development of institutional knowledge, skills and capacities among stakeholders in the project countries (e.g. government, private sector, and civil society). Inter-ministerial and public-private policy dialogues on sustainable consumption and production have been facilitated and designed to strengthen and institutionalize national policy via formal platforms and learning from existing initiatives, and outcomes of regional gatherings such as the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production, Asia Pacific Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production and the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme. Moreover, UN Environment as the co-founder and host of the Sustainable Rice Platform, a multi-stakeholder alliance dedicated to promoting sustainable consumption and production in the global rice sector, UN Environment has facilitated adoption of resource-efficient best practice among rice smallholders in developing countries across the Asia-Pacific region. The Sustainable Rice Platform and its over 70 institutional members include governments and international agencies, private sector actors, traders, research institutes and civil society organizations.

12. One of the major achievements at the regional level has been the development of the Asia Pacific Roadmap on Sustainable Consumption and Production 2016-2018. The roadmap was a result of a broad consultative process, in collaboration with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, which included all countries across Asia-Pacific. The roadmap reflects countries' needs and priorities and constitutes a strong mandate for action and will be an important document for strengthening the region's ability to deliver on the 2030 Development Agenda and the sustainable consumption and production-related Sustainable Development Goals. At the national level, UN Environment has equipped policymakers and other stakeholders with several tools and knowledge products to support the formulation and monitoring of strategic solutions that accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production. Through the facilitation of National Sustainable Consumption and Production policies and Action Plans, knowledge products and policy tools developed are increasingly being acknowledged by governments and businesses in Asia Pacific aiming to decouple economic activity from environmental pressure and impacts. These national policy

level interventions have empowered countries including Bhutan, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan and Viet Nam, to embark on the implementation of sustainable consumption and production policies aimed at achieving green growth targets. Under the Sustainable Rice Platform, the world's first sustainability standard and performance indicators were launched in 2015, and have already shown promising reductions in input costs, emissions and profitability. In Pakistan, the platform works closely with both the public and private sector – linking more than 500 farmers in a Swiss Government-funded programme to save water, improve productivity and reduce emissions. Similarly, in Viet Nam, the alliance engages with millers and exporters in the Mekong Delta, with 150 contract farmers producing rice in compliance with the Sustainable Rice Standard. The programme will expand to 4,000 farmers in 2017-2018 with support from the Sustainable Rice Platform, International Finance Corporation and the International Rice Research Institute. The alliance is now working to help reduce water, energy and biodiversity footprints, reduce emissions from flooded rice fields and improve livelihoods for one million smallholders by 2021.

#### **D. Resolution 2/14: Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, Resolution 1/3: Illegal trade in wildlife**

13. UN Environment has undertaken several key activities to support countries in Asia and the Pacific to implement resolutions 1/3 and 2/14 concerning the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Highlights of this support includes: (a) Awarding 13 recipients from Cambodia, China, India, Philippines, Tonga, Thailand and Viet Nam to publicly recognize excellence in enforcement against environmental crimes through the Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards held in Bangkok in May 2015 which was organized with Freeland Foundation; (b) Hosting 24 countries representing Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, and Timor-Leste in Bangkok in August 2016 for the Asia Regional Joint Preparatory Meeting for the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; (c) Participating in the high-level Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in November 2016 hosted by the Government of Viet Nam; (d) Regional implementation of the global United Nations Wild for Life campaign and country level awareness-raising events in China and Viet Nam; and (e) Convening the Asia Regional Partners Forum on Combating Environmental Crime in February 2017.

14. UN Environment will strengthen its support to countries in the region on combating the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Key ongoing and/or planned initiatives include: (a) Convening of the Africa-Asia Pacific Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime, together with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products, in partnership with the World Bank-led, Global Environment Facility-financed Global Wildlife Program, and the United States Agency for International Development, on 4-5 July 2017 in Bangkok. Participants invited were from Afghanistan, Angola, Botswana, Cambodia, China (including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; (b) Ongoing support to Viet Nam to review and strengthen legislation relevant to combating wildlife crime; and (c) Proposed support to the Solomon Islands in the development of implementing regulations under the recently amended wildlife legislation to incorporate obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

15. As a result of UN Environment's support, highlights of key outcomes include: (a) increased efforts by national governments in Asia-Pacific to develop and implement national laws and international obligations to combat wildlife crime; (b) heightened awareness and reduced demand by Asian consumers of illegally traded wildlife and wildlife products; and (c) strengthened partnerships between key stakeholders engaged in combating illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products within Asia-Pacific.

#### **E. Resolution 1/7: Strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality, Resolution 2/21: Sand and dust storms**

16. UN Environment and its partners have focused to consolidate regional effort to improve air quality through the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership, now with 16 member countries. Under the leadership of the Government of the Philippines, the Asia Pacific Forum on Environment and Health at its 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum in Manila in October 2016 reaffirmed its commitment to promote further the Integrated Approaches to Environment and Health to prioritize and address issues such as air quality.

17. At the national level, the integrated approaches are being pursued to reduce air pollutants with the most serious threat to public health such as Particulate Matter 2.5 and to support countries to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for indoor and outdoor air pollution in countries such as Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. As of June 2017, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Philippines and the Republic of Korea are state partners of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition on Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, and, together with non-state partners, generate and fund technological options, mitigation measures, application of measurement tools, and policy development concerning black carbon, methane, tropospheric ozone and some hydrofluorocarbons. In June 2017, the Asia Center for Air Pollution Research, which is the network center of the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia also offered funding for the technology transfer project on Particulate Matter 2.5 monitoring to countries through the *Integrated Programme for Better Air Quality in Asia* of Clean Air Asia. Policies and strategies that foster the move toward low sulfur fuels and cleaner diesel vehicles have emerged. As to sand and dust storms, the Islamic Republic of Iran championed the issue and hosted the International Conference on *Building Climate Resilience for Combating Sand and Dust Storms* in Tehran, on 3-5 July 2017, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/219, with support from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UN Environment.

#### **F. Resolution 2/11: Marine plastic litter and microplastics, Resolution 1/6: Marine plastic debris and microplastics**

18. Pursuant to paragraph 21 of resolution 2/11, UN Environment is preparing an assessment report on the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and sub-regional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics. An advisory group was established to review and provide inputs to the report. The final assessment report will be presented at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly. Relating to awareness raising and capacity building on marine litter issues, UN Environment launched the #CleanSeas Campaign in February 2017 to raise awareness and to call for action by governments, private sector and the society to prevent and reduce marine litter. More than 20 countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines in Asia and the Pacific have joined the campaign. Specifically, in India, the Mumbai Versova beach clean-up, supported by UN Environment, has brought a lot of attention to marine litter in the country and has received worldwide attention.

The work of Afroz Shah, UN Environment Champion of the Earth, was singled out in a national address by the Indian Prime Minister. For World Environment Day, a clean-up drive and coconut tree plantation was undertaken at Versova beach in June 2017, in line with Prime Minister Modi's 'Clean India' mission. Altogether, 2,000 volunteers participated, and total of 160 tons of plastic garbage was removed and 500 coconut trees were planted at the Versova beach. Furthermore, capacity building initiatives in relation to marine plastic litter and microplastics include a revised massive open online course on marine litter which started on 22 May 2017.

19. The Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) and the Coordination Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) have continued supporting their participating countries through their respective regional action plans on marine litter. At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA, participating countries identified marine litter as a key regional priority issue, and efforts are underway to accelerate implementation of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter adopted in 2008. Implementation of the NOWPAP Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter is ongoing, including through joint activities with the Tripartite Environmental Ministers Meeting of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The Regional Northwest Pacific Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter was established jointly by NOWPAP and the Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center and provides regular updates on the status and issues related to marine litter in the region. NOWPAP continues close cooperation with various regional and global institutions (UN Environment, the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, North Pacific Marine Science Organization and others) by sharing regional knowledge and experiences related to the management of marine litter, including microplastics. NOWPAP and COBSEA are partners on numerous voluntary commitments addressing marine litter submitted in the context of the high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 held in June 2017 in New York.

20. At the high-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 held in June 2017 in New York, NOWPAP submitted or was listed as a main partner for the five voluntary commitments ahead of the Ocean Conference addressing issues of marine litter (#OceanAction17490, 17558, 17562, and 19068). COBSEA submitted one (#OceanAction 15986) and is listed on one (#OceanAction 19228) voluntary commitment addressing marine litter, and several countries participating in COBSEA also submitted voluntary commitments addressing marine litter. NOWPAP continues close cooperation with various regional and global institutions (UN Environment, the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, North Pacific Marine Science Organization and others) by sharing regional knowledge and experience related to the management of marine litter, including microplastics.

## **G. Resolution 2/10: Oceans and seas**

21. In response to the UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/10, UN Environment has implemented a series of initiatives in the past two years, including through existing mechanisms provided under the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. Pursuant to paragraph 17 of resolution 2/10 on oceans and seas, UN Environment has reviewed the effectiveness of its 2011 marine and coastal strategy, and currently in the process of developing a new strategy. Through the new strategy, UN Environment aims to strengthen its two core ocean programmes: Regional Seas Programme and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals provide opportunities for renewing and strengthening the long-lasting programmes. The Regional Seas Programme adopted the Regional Seas Strategic

Directions (2017-2020) in 2015 and agreed to make the Strategic Directions in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. UN Environment has prepared a guidance document to assist preparation of such strategic documents which propose how Regional Seas programmes will support their respective participating countries.

22. Relating to the East Asian Seas, under the framework of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), new Strategic Directions are currently being developed responding to regional priorities and needs and to ensure that the COBSEA mechanisms can be used effectively towards planning and tracking of actions to achieve ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA was held from 27-28 February 2017, where the participating countries agreed to finalize the new Strategic Directions by the end of 2017. Under the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP), member States are developing new Medium-term Strategy for the period of 2018-2023 for adoption in 2017 that would align further activities with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Within the Medium-term Strategy 2012-2017, NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit and four Regional Activity Centres continue addressing marine and coastal environmental issues such as marine litter and eutrophication, development of regional Environmentally Quality Objectives and indicators, introduction of alien invasive species, accidental spills, and threats to marine and coastal biodiversity. Members continued the implementation of the two Regional Action Plans – the Oil and Noxious and Hazardous Substances Contingency Plan and the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

23. Relating to the Pacific, UN Environment Subregional Office for the Pacific, based in Apia, Samoa collaborates with the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other partners in supporting 14 Pacific Island Countries in sustainable development, including the implementation of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, international conventions and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. On Sustainable Development Goal 14, the Pacific Office has collaborated with SPREP and other partners in facilitating the Pacific Preparatory Process and Pacific countries participation in the UN Oceans Conference, as a member of the Steering Committee and Working Groups. Related to South Asian Seas, UN Environment has been collaborating with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in supporting the development of a Regional Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy for South Asian Seas, which will be aligned with relevant Sustainable Development Goals and aims to enhance national and regional interventions in addressing coastal and marine issues, and serves as a framework for coordination and collaboration between countries.

24. Under UN Environment's coordination, the Regional Seas mechanisms have supported regional and national level efforts in adopting effective area-based conservation measures. For example, an area-based approach is central to the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea, including two ongoing initiatives funded by the Global Environment Facility, one focused on the establishment of a Regional System of Fisheries Refugia in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand Sea, and another one focused specifically on South China Sea Strategic Action Programme implementation. Furthermore, under the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, UN Environment provides technical assistance and capacity development to member States in addressing marine pollution from land-based activities, with specific focus on nutrient management, marine litter and wastewater. The fourth Intergovernmental Review of Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities will be organized in October 2017 in Indonesia, which will provide an opportunity for the Programme to reflect on its achievements and to see the future horizon to support the

countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those ones related to marine pollution. UN Environment will continue assisting countries in the region in implementing oceans-related Sustainable Development Goals, including the outcomes of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, held in June 2017.

#### **H. Resolution 2/12: Sustainable coral reefs management**

25. UN Environment and Indonesia jointly organized a consultation meeting on the implementation of resolution 2/12 (Manado, Indonesia, 28-29 June 2016), providing further guidance to UN Environment in the implementation of the resolution. With the Secretariat of the International Coral Reef Initiative, UN Environment leads the further development of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, towards a fully-fledged coastal ocean observing system. This will support identification and adoption of coral reef indicators that strengthen reporting in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international targets. It will also entail further alignment of Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network efforts with those of the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network, and anchoring of regional Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network mechanisms in the Regional Seas. Current support to regional Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network processes seek to improve access to coral reef data; generate actionable coral reef management and policy recommendations; and strengthen regular coral reef reporting. A Pacific Workshop was organized towards the preparation of a regional Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network coral reef status report. A summary for decision makers was announced at the Oceans Conference in New York, 5-9 June 2017. Preparation of a Regional Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network report for the Eastern Tropical Pacific is being initiated. The Global Coral Reef Partnership established by UN Environment and Regional Seas, has developed a range of tools to support regional and national efforts towards sustainable coral reefs management. A coral reef theme on UN Environment-Live provides access to projections of future coral bleaching, and a guide to coral reef resilience assessment for decision-support has been finalized, enabling identification and prioritization of specific management actions towards managing coral reefs in a changing climate. A pilot initiative being implemented at sites in the Caribbean seeks to identify, structure and implement investment in sustainable coral reef management, working in collaboration with governments, the local business community, first and foremost in the tourism sector, as well as international investment funds.

26. An analysis of global and regional governance mechanisms and policy instruments relevant to coral reefs is being initiated, in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the International Coral Reef Initiative. Further analysis of the business case for coral reefs as a core asset in a Blue Economy is being undertaken, and development of guidance on the preparation of national and regional coral reef measures and action plans in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, related targets and indicators has been initiated. A global outreach campaign on coral reefs is being prepared and will be implemented in the context of the International Year of the Reef 2018, declared by the International Coral Reef Initiative.

27. One notable achievement is the preparation of downscaled climate model projections of future coral bleaching conditions. This meets the need for higher-resolution climate change projections, as called for e.g. in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway. The projections are available at four-kilometer resolution, for all the world's coral reefs, under business-as-usual and successful mitigation scenarios. The data has immediate management and conservation, education and outreach, as well as policy applications. It can be applied in a variety of spatial planning processes, including Marine Spatial Planning, Marine Protected Area zoning and network design, as well as sectoral planning, and

also supports vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning in coastal areas. The data is available in the coral reef theme on UN Environment-Live. Significant progress has also been made in the implementation of Green Fins in seven countries in Asia. Over 500 diving and snorkeling operators are now continuously improving their business practices to reduce negative environmental impacts. This provides a concrete example of broad-scale voluntary action by an industry highly dependent on coral reefs, and concrete delivery on Aichi Target 10 and other global commitments.

**I. Resolution 2/16: Mainstreaming of biodiversity for well-being, Resolution 2/17: Enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions**

28. In response to resolutions 2/16 and 2/17, UN Environment, in collaboration with partners, has supported efforts towards enhancing synergy related to biodiversity-related conventions. At the regional level, UN Environment Asia and the Pacific Office hosted and supported the organization of the Asia regional joint preparatory meeting for the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP 17) and the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 13) and the associated meetings of the Parties to the Protocols of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP MOP 8 and COP MOP 2), held in Thailand, from 1 to 5 August 2016. The meeting was held in collaboration with the convention secretariats, and attended by twenty four countries from Asia. UN Environment Subregional Office for the Pacific supported the joint preparatory meeting for the Pacific and Oceania, from 15 to 19 August 2016, in Apia, Samoa. The meeting was attended by sixteen countries (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). The meetings assisted countries in preparing for the respective meetings of the CITES and CBD CoP/COP and COP MOPs that took place in 2016 in a coordinated manner. The meeting resulted in proactive engagements of countries in their regional preparatory dialogues towards addressing common issues, particularly those related to the agendas of both CITES and CBD CoP/COP and COP MOPs. At the Asia regional joint preparatory meeting, UN Environment shared the information on the options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, developed through the project on “Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”.

29. UN Environment also contributed to promoting South-South cooperation, through the knowledge sharing workshop on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and Synergies, held in Nairobi, Kenya from 15-17 March 2016. The meeting was supported through the European Commission-funded Project for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and was attended by four countries from the Pacific, including Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, as well as selected countries from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting enabled the countries to share their experience in taking a coordinated approach towards revising and implementing biodiversity-related conventions.

30. Furthermore, UN Environment, in close collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature as well as South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, has supported selected countries in the region, namely Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Sri Lanka and Thailand on the effective implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Specifically, the efforts focused on promoting synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions in implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, as well as

strengthening linkages between efforts on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, including resource mobilization. With the support provided, key stakeholders in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sri Lanka and Thailand identified concrete actions that can ensure a coordinated approach towards implementing obligations of various biodiversity-related conventions through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, while ensuring their linkages with Sustainable Development Goals. For both Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, action plans developed and agreed include specific actions for mainstreaming gender into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans implementation, and in Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Women's Union was actively engaged in the consultations on the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and now represented in the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the country's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. On the basis of these initiatives, UN Environment will continue to support regional and national level efforts towards promoting a coordinated approach towards the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, while ensuring its strong linkages with key issues addressed through Sustainable Development Goals, including issues related to mainstreaming gender into biodiversity planning and implementation processes.

#### **J. Resolution 2/7: Sound management of chemicals and waste, Resolution 1/5: Chemicals and waste**

31. With the Entry-into-Force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 16 August 2017, countries intensified their preparation for the ratification as well as early implementation of the Convention. Afghanistan, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mongolia, Palau, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam will participate as Party in the first Conference of the Parties on 24-29 September 2017 in Geneva. In addition to co-financing a number of projects on Minamata Initial Assessment and National Action Plan for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in the region, the Global Environment Facility launched the Global Opportunities for Long-term Development programme (US\$49 million, multi-agency, multi-country programme), led by UN Environment to address issues of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining by promoting formalization of gold mining informal sector, by transferring cleaner and more efficient extraction techniques, and by reducing the length of the gold value chain to ensure a more direct access to international gold markets for the miners. Indonesia, Mongolia and Philippines will participate in Global Environment Facility - Global Opportunities for Long-term Development programme from this region.

32. UN Environment through the Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund is supporting Montreal Protocol implementation in all Asia and the Pacific countries. UN Environment manages the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer who adopted the Kigali Amendment to phase down Hydrofluorocarbon - refrigerants that has zero Ozone Depletion Potential but with high Global-Warming-Potential - at its 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Parties on 10-14 October 2016. It is estimated that the Hydrofluorocarbon phase-down could prevent warming of up to 0.1°C by 2050 and 0.5°C by 2100. The Montreal Protocol's implementation mechanism offers one of the most cost effective climate mitigation strategies available today. The UN Environment Compliance Assistance Programme to the Montreal Protocol, has already initiated the preparatory work with Article-5 countries (most of developing countries), explaining the implications of the Kigali Amendment and benefits for its ratification. Currently, four countries out of 20 required to bring the Amendment into effect, ratified it (of which two are from the Asia-Pacific region, namely Micronesia and Marshall Islands). The region is home to countries with major producers of Hydrofluorocarbon alternatives (namely China and India) thus offering South to South technology transfer

channels both in the region and globally. UN Environment is the lead implementing agency supporting Montreal Protocol implementation in the Pacific Island Countries. With UN Environment's support, the 14 Pacific Island Countries have reported 56 per cent of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons reduction from baseline which is well beyond the 10 per cent obligation of the Montreal Protocol. This success was achieved through capacity building, technology transfers, policy and legislation, South-South cooperation, networking awareness raising and other modalities. The Pacific Island Countries have raised into the global platforms the urgent call to address refrigeration management in the marine fisheries sectors. In April 2017, UN Environment delivered the first international conference on Marine Sustainable Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Technologies for Marine and Off-Shore Fisheries Sector which was attended by 13 Pacific Island Countries.

33. All the countries of the Asia-Pacific region have been in compliance with the commitment for the hydrochlorofluorocarbons consumption reduction according to the set schedule for each country. They have been assisted on a regular basis by all cooperating agencies including UN Environment through compliance assistance services provided to all National Ozone Authorities set up in Article-5 countries of the region. Some 23 projects setting the right condition for alternative technology introduction and diffusion in countries, were completed in the Asia-Pacific region, and a total of USD 2.7 million in funds were disbursed to the countries in the region. All countries of the region have functioning and enforced licensing and quota systems. Bans for Ozone Depleting Substances-based equipments have been put in place in Bhutan, India, Maldives, Mongolia, Niue, Tonga and Palau. Other countries have established timeframes for importing the bans. Regular consultations and trainings are provided for customs officers on Ozone Depleting Substances trade control measures, including border dialogues (e.g. one involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, and Nepal and another between Cambodia and Thailand, both in December 2016). Regular trainings of servicing technicians are conducted in all countries. To formalize this process, the certification systems for servicing technicians are being put in place in Cambodia and similar processes are going on in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Maldives, Mongolia and Nepal. The surveys of Ozone Depleting Substances alternatives used were undertaken in 25 countries of the region and hydrofluorocarbon inventories were conducted in three countries to identify opportunities for the introduction of low Global-Warming-Potential alternatives. The issue of refrigeration technologies in marine fishing vessels and need to address the Ozone Depleting Substances use in this largely overlooked area was the focus of an international conference organized in April 2017 in Bangkok. The results will be guiding the Montreal Protocol assessment of priorities from this sector.

34. Following the success of leaded petrol phase-out in the region, Asia and the Pacific countries have embarked on a new challenge of phasing out leaded paint. In July 2016, two companies in the Philippines: Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines, Inc. and Davies Paints Philippines, Inc., became among the first in the world to earn the Lead Safe Paint® mark under a new certification programme established by the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN). That said, only Fiji, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand in the region have legally binding leaded paint control. The vast majority still have no legal limit on lead in paint.

35. In terms of the promotion of integrated solid waste management as well as transboundary management of chemicals and waste including e-wastes, Cambodia/Phnom penh, Maldives/Male, Viet Nam/Hanoi, Myanmar/Mandale, and Thailand/Bangkok developed or strengthened national and city-level waste management policies in 2016 and 2017. In July 2017, a new project, "Strengthening the capacity of policy makers and practitioners in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal to reduce green-house gases and short-lived climate pollutants from the

waste sector” commenced with support from the International Environmental Technology Center of UN Environment and the Government of Germany. Association of Southeast Asian Nations Working Group on Chemicals and Waste and UN Environment completed three waste management studies on General Waste, E-waste and Mercury Waste in 2017. In terms of enforcement effort of the national waste management plan, the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry of Malaysia began enforcing Act 672 of the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act 2007, making compulsory for residents to separate their solid wastes according to categories of paper, plastics and others or face fines between RM50 and RM500.

36. Concerned about environmental, health, and social adverse impacts of uncontrolled production and use of chemicals, countries are taking actions to strengthen institutional capacity for sound management of chemicals and waste. Viet Nam Chemicals Agency, established in 2012 under the Ministry of Industry and Trade, produced the National Chemical Inventory in March 2017 with 4,927 substances listed. Also in March 2017, the Government of Lao People’s Democratic Republic published the Law on Chemical Substances Management. This Law is expected to pave the way for the establishment of a dedicated agency for chemicals management for the nation. Bhutan in 2016 amended its Waste Prevention and Management (Amendment) Regulation and strengthened waste management capacity within the National Environment Commission Secretariat. Possibly as result of higher institutional capacity for chemicals management as well as of increasing public demand for cleaner environment, the region witnessed proactive national measures on chemicals and waste management such as Sri Lanka’s control and eventually cease import and use of asbestos and Viet Nam’s ban on Herbicides 2,4 Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid and paraquat.

#### **K. Resolution 2/9: Prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste**

37. UN Environment has supported multi-stakeholder initiatives through the existing partnership programmes related to food waste such as the “Think.Eat.Save” initiative which engages national and subnational governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and UN Environment. In 2015, a Think.Eat.Save: Bangkok event was held with OzHarvest, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and a large variety of private sector food supply actors. In total, 860 kilograms of surplus food was collected, avoiding a carbon footprint of close to one tonne. Well known chefs were engaged and converted the surplus food to 2,200 meals for the public to communicate the messages of food waste prevention. This event led to the establishment of two food rescue organizations: ThaiHarvest and VietHarvest. ThaiHarvest rescues surplus food from hotels, supermarkets and other food retailers and delivers it to charity groups. VietHarvest will follow a similar model, but also engages youth in vocational training in hospitality. These will join the growing league of food rescue and food bank organizations in Asia and the Pacific. A multi-stakeholders *Platform on Sustainable Food Supply and Consumption for Food Waste Reduction* was hosted on 26 November 2016, as part of EU’s programme Horizon 2020 on food waste called REFRESH. Additionally, the *no food waste* theme is also included at the 2017 China Sustainable Consumption Week for retailer and restaurant sectors to advocate for food waste and loss reduction.

38. UN Environment’s Asia and the Pacific Office raised awareness about the environmental dimensions of the problem of food waste by engaging chefs in a regional Sustainable Chef Challenge together with Dusit Thani Culinary School. Each chef was teamed with policy makers and were challenged to create a restaurant quality meal using surplus and additional sustainable ingredients. In this case, the awareness raising was done through

interactive experiential learning methods. On 18 January 2017, UN Environment's China office launched the nation-wide “Youth Food Waste Reduction Contest”, a food waste contest which called for innovative ideas from school children and youth. UN Environment’s Asia and the Pacific Office has also witnessed an increase in policy momentum on food waste measurement and prevention, with notable steps taken in Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

#### **L. Resolution 1/4: Science-policy interface**

39. The sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific was launched at the second session of the UN Environment Assembly and the regional priorities that underpin the assessment were identified by member States and stakeholders at the Regional Environment Information Network Conference held in Bangkok on 27-28 April 2015. The First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific held shortly after the Network Conference (19-20 May 2015) mirrored the same issues in deciding on priority environmental actions for the region. The sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific constitutes a credible source of information for policy and planning in the region. To disseminate its findings and policy messages, outreach activities were undertaken which were tailored to targeted audience: 33<sup>rd</sup> International Geographical Congress 2016, 21-25 August 2016, Beijing; Global Green Growth Week 2016, 5-9 September 2016, Jeju City; Asia-Pacific Leadership Programme on Environment for Sustainable Development 2016, 10-14 October 2016, Shanghai; Science Seminar, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 18 November 2016; and Graduate Seminar, Korea University, Seoul, 16 February 2017, and UN Environment Press Briefing and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand, Bangkok, 23 May 2017.

40. The Chinese version of the sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific was launched on 9 December 2016 in Beijing, attracting extensive conventional and web-based media coverage both domestically and internationally, including People’s Daily, Xinhua News Agency and China Daily. To reach out to youth in China, educational activities were organized in summer camps during school holidays in 2016 and 2017. Such activities organized since 2014 have gained recognition and attracted partners from both public and private sectors.

41. Targeted for young people, UN Environment in collaboration with regional partners, is initiating the development of a youth version of the sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific with its release expected next year. This publication aims at inspiring youth to participate in environmental management. The development of this youth version will follow Global Environment Outlook participatory approach and an open call will be made to invite young scientists and professionals from the region to serve as authors or reviewers.

42. Access to data and reporting on Sustainable Development Goals:

- UN Environment is implementing a project to strengthen countries’ capacity for environmental data sharing and reporting. In Asia-Pacific during 2017-2018, the project will focus on six countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal and Samoa. The country support will include assessment of country situation; and on that basis technical guidance and support on approaches and tools for improving environmental data management, and environmental reporting including for Sustainable Development Goals. Depending on country needs, UN

Environment will also make available its Indicator Reporting Information System which can help with data sharing and indicator-based reporting.

- UN Environment-Live platform continue to provide a gateway to environmental data and knowledge assets available from open data sources. Its content is regularly updated and at present it contains baseline datasets for at least a few indicators for each country in the region. The Platform is undergoing a major upgrade involving redesign of the user interface, adding a new “Sustainable Development Goal Dashboard”, and restructuring the database, to better support reporting needs related to the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development Goals.
- UN Environment is the custodian for 27 Sustainable Development Goals indicators and four of these are related to material flow accounting. In order to provide systematic support to countries in material flow accounting, UN Environment is inter alia developing a manual for countries’ use. To ensure that the manual meets country needs, UN Environment plans to invite a few countries from the Asia-Pacific region to participate in pilot testing of the manual. UN Environment also works with UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the UN Statistics Division in building capacity of countries in environmental statistics.

#### **M. Resolution 2/4: Role, functions and modalities for UNEP implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

43. UN Environment continues to engage and support Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through strengthening of its Pacific Sub-regional Office and partnerships within the Pacific region. The Pacific office was strengthened with a Global Environment Facility Task Manager and two consultants (resource mobilization and communications) bringing its total staff complement to four. The Medium-Term Strategy, Programme of Work and the five Strategic Priorities agreed with Pacific SIDS incorporates the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and Sustainable Development Goals. Key partnerships strengthened through collaboration and joint activities were: support to oceans through the Pacific Oceans Alliance, waste management and pollution through the Cleaner Pacific Partnership and the joint implementation of SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and Sustainable Development Goals through the Sustainable Development Working Group Partnership.

44. UN Environment continues to support the implementation and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific SIDS through its African, Caribbean and Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements Capacity Building Project. A five-year Global Environment Facility Regional Capacity Building Project starting in 2017 will establish National Environment Databases utilizing UN Environment's Indicator Reporting Information System in all 14 Pacific SIDS. The OzonAction project continues to assist Pacific SIDS to meet and report against their Montreal Protocol and also the new Kigali Agreement obligations including a well-received South-South cooperation modality where countries provide technical assistance to each other. The Pacific Office is collaboratively developing a pipeline of projects and initiatives to assist Pacific SIDS with the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway and Sustainable Development Goals in key areas such as green economy, climate resilience, energy efficiency, sustainable consumption and production and sustainable tourism.

45. A special focus for Pacific SIDS in 2016/2017 is oceans where UN Environment provided extensive support during the preparatory process for the UN Oceans Conference in key areas such as marine pollution, marine protected areas, integrated ocean management and

gender through highlighting the role of Pacific women champions of the ocean. A Pacific regional voluntary commitment on marine debris was tabled at the Conference in response to UN Environment's call for commitments to the Clean Seas Campaign. A number of projects and initiatives are being prepared to address outcomes and commitments from the Oceans Conference and will also contribute to the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway.

## **N. Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

46. In Asia and the Pacific, UN Environment has supported the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals by achieving the following results:

- Strengthened the science-policy interface for evidence-based decision making at regional thematic and intergovernmental forums including the Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on Environment in Bangkok, Thailand on 5-8 September 2017. UN Environment supported preparation and dissemination of science and data based assessments for the sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific and the fifth Association of Southeast Asian Nations State of the Environment Report. UN Environment also supported national capacity building for data gathering and analysis in support of the Sustainable Development Goals reporting in Indonesia, Mongolia and Samoa in partnership with the UN Development Programme. Through the UN Environment-Live platform, UN Environment provides countries and partners with improved availability and access to environmental data and knowledge to support reporting on the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Platform is currently being upgraded with the addition of a “Sustainable Development Goals Dashboard” and restructuring of the database to further this support.
- At the same time, UN Environment bridged the gap between civil society and governments as a means to strengthen the discussions and outcomes of key intergovernmental meetings by convening the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development in Bangkok, Thailand on 26-28 March 2017, jointly with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The outcomes of this meeting informed the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in Bangkok on 29-31 March 2017 and will feed into the third session of the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya on 4-6 December 2017. Similarly, UN Environment, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia the Pacific and the Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Organizations Engagement Mechanism will host the Civil Society Organizations’ consultation on 4 September 2017 to consolidate Civil Society Organizations’ inputs to the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development and the second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific on 5-8 September 2017.
- Strengthened private sector engagement to support sustainable development: Recognizing that private sector innovation and investment is needed to drive transformational change to sustainable development, UN Environment worked with 114 private companies in the Asia-Pacific region. This work included expanding green business and investment opportunities through the UN Environment Finance Initiative with 46 banks and insurance companies and integrating natural capital risks and opportunities into private sector operations and investments through the Natural Capital Declaration with five banks from Australia, China, India, Japan, and New Zealand. The Sustainable Rice Platform also completed its first pilot in 2017 with the Loc Troi Group, a leading Vietnamese rice exporter, with 150 rice farmers

who saw their incomes increase by 18 per cent while their chemical use and water pumping costs were reduced. The Rice Platform also works with 19 other rice and food producing companies in the region including Nestle and Mars to promote climate smart agriculture. UN Environment has also been working to mobilize and deploy clean technologies through the Clean Technology Centre and Network Asia Pacific with 23 technology and related companies in the region. In addition, UN Environment has worked with companies to promote sustainable lifestyles working with dive operators in Malaysia, Maldives and Philippines, and to promote sustainable tourism practices and with restaurants and food producers in Thailand to increase awareness on food waste.

- Enhanced and integrated delivery within the UN system on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: UN Environment, UN Educational, Science and Cultural Organization, and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific jointly organized a Roundtable on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Oceans as part of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in Bangkok, Thailand on 29-31 March 2017. Outcomes were used as an input into the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in New York. UN Environment co-chairs the UN Regional Thematic Working Group on Resource Efficient Growth with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN Development Programme in order to support regional coordination including preparation of a UN Environment-led draft five-year Association of Southeast Asian Nations-UN Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat. The Working Group also coordinated the UN Asia Pacific engagement in the HABITAT-3 Conference in line with the UN Environment Assembly 2016 resolution on delivering on the 2030 Agenda's (resolution 2/5) calling for UN Environment to coordinate with the UN Human Settlements Programme on sustainable urban development. UN Environment, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and United Nations University launched a joint Report on Transformations for Sustainable Development: Promoting environmental sustainability in Asia and the Pacific in April 2016.

### III. Asia Pacific Issues and Priorities

47. The sixth Global Environment Outlook Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific was launched at the Science-Policy Forum held in Nairobi during the second session of the UN Environment Assembly in 2016. The report was guided by critical regional environmental trends identified by member States and stakeholders at the Regional Environment Information Network Conference, held in Bangkok on 27-28 April 2015. Its key findings and policy options are summarized below.

48. The region's economic growth and urbanization have helped lift millions out of poverty to middle class affluence, and improved access to basic services. The region recorded the highest rate of progress with regards to the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of demography, lifestyles and access to basic services. These achievements, however, have come with heavy costs to natural capital, biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and human health. These conditions contribute to gender and economic inequalities and starting to undermine the region's economic growth itself. Climate change is an accelerator for most of the environmental conditions and risks, and the largest threat to human and ecosystem's health. Air pollution, ecosystem disturbance, and new pandemics and diseases are other emerging issues with immense potential to reverse recent progress in economic development. The region has made

considerable efforts to respond to worsening environmental conditions. There have been increasing policy interventions at the national level across the region and countries' participation in regional and global multilateral environmental agreements. However, results have not been so promising due to several factors, including ineffective policy and law implementation, poor scientific basis of policy formulation, and the emergence of new environmental issues.

49. As the region consolidates the economic gains, looking back and reflecting on policy lessons of past decades could help the region move towards a future of sustainable growth. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals provide a comprehensive framework for pursuing future development within the boundaries of earth's life support system. One-belt-one-road initiative is expected to strengthen regional integration and open a whole range of possibilities for green economic development, with large investment in infrastructure expected over the next two-to-three decades. There is both commitment and optimism in the region to charter a course of development that is sustainable. The region's commitment to Paris Agreement specifically measures actions identified to climate mitigation and increasing resilience is demonstrated by the pledges made by countries through the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. By adopting transformative policy options and energy and resource efficient technology solutions, the region can achieve continuous growth that is sustainable. Below are the priority transformative policy pathways of regional relevance.

#### **A. Respond to environmental health risks associated with pollution**

50. Widespread pollution and the impacts of extreme environmental events are root causes of disease burden especially among lower economic strata and women. There is widespread risk of environmentally induced mortality and morbidity from indoor and urban air pollution, drinking water contamination, poor sanitation, and vector-borne diseases. Establishment and enforcement of air and water quality standards, environmental health impact assessment, Cartagena bio-safety protocol enforcement, climate and disaster related responses, and integrated vector management are critical policy responses for the region.

51. To reduce pollution requires both regulatory and economic approaches to accelerate needed energy and resource efficiencies, to promote renewable energy and develop sustainable transportation infrastructure to achieve lower emission. It also requires strengthening the linkage between environment and health which has been progressed in close collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific and Regional Office for Southeast Asia. Integrated land-water-waste management, including water supply and sanitation and the agro-forestry sector is necessary to reduce pollution of land and water resources and to control the spread of vector-borne diseases. It is important to promote waste as resource and promote waste to energy investment programs to handle waste disposal issue while creating business opportunities. Steps should be taken to make the transition to renewable sources, energy provision continues to rely on fossil fuels and the share of renewable energy remains small despite very significant investment in renewable-energy infrastructure.

#### **B. Build resilience to natural hazards and extreme climate events**

52. Given the recent increase in frequency, magnitude and impact of climate related disasters, ensuring the safety of people, security of their livelihoods, and protecting ecosystems and their services require multiple measures. A priority would be to reinforce early-warning

systems; and build regional and national capacity for disaster management, recovery and rebuilding. There are national frameworks and roadmaps for disaster risk reduction in many countries. Ensure that the causes of social vulnerability and the drivers of disaster risk are sufficiently addressed by these disaster risk reduction strategies and development planning.

53. Ecosystems approach addresses the crucial link between land, water and living resources thus provides a promising strategy to increase the resilience of ecosystems and support sustainable livelihoods. Introduce and strengthen ecosystem-based adaptation measures, which would essentially include alternative livelihoods, infrastructure upgrades, soil conservation, water regulation, etc. Adaptation strategies yield multiple development benefits and to maximize these synergies, mainstream climate change adaptation into national planning.

### **C. Protect natural capital and ecosystem integrity including wildlife, biodiversity and Ocean**

54. The Asia and Pacific region has some of the most diverse and rich ecosystems in the world, which support humanity with food, livelihoods, services such as flood protection and water purification, and income and development opportunities. However, population growth, rapid industrialization and urbanization are exerting pressures on the region's natural resource base, and the environmental, social and economic costs of declines in natural capital are increasing. Protecting ecosystems and maintaining natural capital is of particular importance for indigenous groups and rural communities in the region, who are dependent on services and materials provided by nature for their livelihoods. One of the key challenges faced is that many of the services provided by nature are currently taken for granted and their value is not sufficiently reflected in decision making processes. It is therefore essential to recognize full values of natural capital and ecosystem services in policy planning processes and economic choices. There is growing interest and efforts by some Governments in the region to account for natural capital and ecosystems services in their national accounts, which guide Government decision-making on development planning and investment decisions related to protecting but also restoring natural capital stocks including their ecosystems services. This includes concerns related to forest degradation and sources of freshwater for an ever expanding agriculture estate, coral reef degradation and fish stocks or their potential to sustain a growing tourism industry, or restoring peatlands to reduce carbon emissions. Creating positive incentives for sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services, including voluntary certification programmes and market-based instruments, as well as partnerships with the private sector and influencing the private sector's investment decisions, business plans and reporting should also be further promoted. Furthermore, engaging local communities in the protection and management of natural habitats and protected areas are among the most effective tools for resource protection in many countries, which could be up scaled and replicated.

### **D. Decarbonize the economy**

55. Most important areas for decarbonizing economies are energy, transport and cities, and the strategies would include diversification of energy mix to reduce the dependency on fossil-fuel, and increasing energy efficiency to lower emissions. In each sector, there is huge potential for achieving energy efficiency and it requires energy demand management combined with regulations, economic instruments and technology solutions. For transition to renewable energy requires stable regulatory regimes aligned with long-term vision for energy systems, to build investor confidence. Nationally Determined Contributions committed under Paris Agreement on climate change would be an important vehicle to pursue decarbonizing efforts. Strategies for transition to low carbon development inspire technology innovation, business

development and job creation. They also accrue other significant co-benefits such as improved health, energy security, and agricultural and land-use productivity, contributing to broader socioeconomic development.

56. Half of the world's population lives in cities, a share that is likely to reach 70 per cent in 2050. Cities consume as much as 80 per cent of energy production worldwide and account for a roughly equal share of global greenhouse gas emissions. The other sectors including industries, urban agriculture and animal farms, and waste and wastewater also contribute substantially towards total greenhouse gas emissions from cities. Therefore, it requires multi-sector approach to mitigate the emissions from cities. Alternative energy and energy efficiency along with changing patterns of food production and consumption including meat can help to substantially decarbonize the cities. Most of the cities in developing countries can focus on environmentally sound management of waste and waste water including waste and wastewater minimisation to further decarbonize the cities.

#### **E. Decouple resource use from economic growth**

57. There have been successes in some countries in achieving decoupling growth from resource use but not the region as a whole. Decoupling would require reforms in procurement, production and supply chains, and consumer behavior; and the involvement of investors, producers, consumers and the Governments to drive the reforms. Introduce national policies and incentives to encourage businesses to review their industrial processes to reduce the use of raw materials and energy, and reduce waste and pollution by making systemic changes in their production and supply chains based on technology solutions, life cycle approach and 3Rs/4Rs, and eco-innovations. This can apply to range of industries and while lowering their ecological footprint, they could reap revenue benefits too. Environmental Impact Assessments provide an effective instrument for promoting green investments and innovations in business.

58. Reducing consumption needs change in people's mindsets, values and behaviour. A strategy with awareness-raising, education, and engagement of children and youth at the core along with complementary policies and market-based instruments are required to shift consumer preferences towards more sustainable practices. To push forward the decoupling agenda, Governments can set example by investing in stimulating green-reforms in key economic sectors, limit their spending in areas that deplete natural capital, and adopt green procurement for their operations. Many communities in the region already live within ecologically sustainable limits and steps should be taken to protect these lifestyles, as development takes place.

59. Cities require natural resources, energy, raw materials, food and goods to sustain the daily life of their inhabitants and their economic activities. Around three quarters of the world's natural resources are consumed in cities. The decoupling of city-based economic growth rates from the unsustainable increases in consumption of finite natural resources will help cities to reap major economic benefits. The prices of depleting natural resources continue to rise; hence, it becomes necessary to reconfigure urban consumption and production in ways that ensures sustainable development with available resources. Green economy, focusing on the externalities and true valuation of resources, and green financing to switch to green consumption and production patterns are key approaches for decoupling.

#### **F. Strengthen environmental cooperation**

60. The region has established many intergovernmental mechanisms and voluntary partnerships for environmental cooperation at regional and subregional levels, particularly to address transboundary issues. In terms of functionality, they can be broadly categorized as (i) networks that engaged in monitoring, knowledge sharing, assessment and research; and (ii) platforms that support coordinated policy, international law and management responses. Thematically, these mechanisms cover a wide range such as air quality, haze pollution, dust storm, marine resources, marine pollution, seas, corals, forests, wildlife trade, chemicals, waste, etc. These mechanisms essentially provide countries with platforms for dialogue and coordinate action against environmental issues that transcend national territories. Their effectiveness however, is quite diverse and in some cases lacking. To leverage the full potential of these mechanisms, there should be strong commitment and active participation in policy-programmes by the parties.

61. Asia-Pacific countries are parties to many global Multilateral Environmental Agreements, but their implementation at the national level has been insufficient due to limited capacity. Invest in strengthening countries' capacity in development and enforcement of national legislation and programmes to implement obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and in compliance monitoring and reporting.

#### **G. Strengthen environmental governance and institutions**

62. Implementation of national commitments under Multilateral Environmental Agreements and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires clear and coherent policies and laws transparently implemented and enforced by strong and mandated institutions. In some countries in the region, environmental governance has been weak, which has led to ineffective policies, poor enforcement of environmental laws and limited compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreement obligations and commitments. Furthermore, environmental governance is sometimes fragmented in national and local administrations as they are organized by sectors, another reason for weak environmental performance. The Sustainable Development Goals provide an unprecedented opportunity to remedy this situation as they bring together environment and development. This prospect should be seized by countries to invent whole new ways to position, finance, organize and strengthen environmental governance in political leadership, across ministries, and between national and local Governments. Governments should review and strengthen their laws to create the institutional and legal architecture needed to implement relevant national goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Key priorities include, but are not limited to, laws and regulations relevant to climate, wildlife, and pollution.

63. It is also necessary to ensure that national institutions are able to effectively discharge their responsibilities and take strong and decisive environmental actions. Broad-based environmental education and training targeting national administration could help build an equitable and gender-balanced workforce able to effectively implement environmental policy and actions across all economic and societal sectors. Governments should take opportunities to strengthen the capacity of judiciaries in environmental law issues, a key stakeholder in the effective implementation of environmental law at the national level.

64. The private sector has a huge stake in environmental issues both as a consumer of natural capital and polluter. Government must find ways to engage private sector along with other non-state actors to design and finance solutions at the local and community level on the ground and involve non-state actors in environmental decision-making to gather broader support and stewardship particularly for decisions which affect consumer choices, lifestyle

changes, etc. The private sector also needs clear and fair regulatory environments to facilitate private investment into low-carbon and climate resilient development.

#### **H. Strengthen scientific-basis of policy-making and knowledge sharing**

65. Achieving sustainable development is contingent upon development policy and planning guided by scientific knowledge and understanding of the complex relationship between economic activities and environmental issues. In order to build such knowledge base, elements of it should include current environmental state and impact, drivers of environmental change and interaction, and foreseen environmental risks and opportunities. Governments need to strengthen environmental monitoring networks, data management systems, and assessment and research capacity. To ensure that this knowledge is timely available and accessible for policy-making, and able to respond to policy questions, formal well-structured reporting regimes for regular reporting to parliament and other policy-planning processes should be established.

66. There is growing awareness and interest among public about environmental quality and health impacts. Capitalize on this situation and promote participatory processes and knowledge societies to enlist broader support of civil society and public to advance the environmental agenda. Establish national platforms that would help nurture alliance between the Government, and business, academia and civil society, to seek environmental solutions through dialogue and consensus building.

### **IV. Processes and mechanisms for promoting Asia Pacific priorities in 2017 United Nations Environment Assembly**

67. The UN Environment Assembly, the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, will gather in Nairobi, Kenya, from 4 to 6 December 2017 under the overarching theme of pollution. This year's Assembly aims to deliver a number of tangible commitments to end the pollution of our air, land, waterways, and oceans, and to safely manage our chemicals and waste. Member States, business, communities and people and all other stakeholders are invited to make a pollution free planet a reality by 2030 and therefore pledge contributions and commitments to achieve the vision. The outcome of the 2017 United Nations Environment Assembly will include the following:

- A political declaration on pollution, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, to signal that humanity can work together to eliminate the threat of pollution and the destruction of our planet
- Resolutions and decisions adopted by Member States to address specific dimensions of pollution
- Voluntary commitments by Governments, private sector entities and civil society organizations to clean up the planet
- The Clean Planet Pledge, a collection of individual commitments to take personal action to end pollution in all its forms.

68. In the lead up to 2017 United Nations Environment Assembly, important timeline and events are the following:

- 22 September: Second deadline for Member States to submit draft resolutions to the Secretariat.

- September – October: Informal consultations with regional and political groups, including the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi
- 10 October: 140th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to send off draft resolutions to 3rd meeting of the open ended Committee of Permanent Representatives.
- 29 November - 1 December: The Committee of Permanent Representatives will hold its third open-ended meeting.
- 2-3 December: Civil society will host the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, which facilitates the participation of civil society in the Environment Assembly and associated meetings.
- 2-3 December: The Science Policy Forum will engage policymakers, scientists, researchers, and civil society stakeholders in a discussion on the science required to deliver on the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

69. In addition, the second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific in Bangkok provides a timely platform for discussion and consensus building with regard to defining the priority environmental issues and opportunities in the region. Member States can optimize the Forum discussion to identify and recommend potential resolutions that benefit the region's needs.