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Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific
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Discussion Document for Agenda Item 9

Discussion regarding institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific

Background Note on Institutional Arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia 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.

I. Introduction

1. This background note describes current and proposed institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (the Regional Ministerial Forum). It outlines relevant information on:

- Background of the Regional Ministerial Forum and resolution 2/2 of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) on the role and functions of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities (the UNEA-2 Resolution);
- Membership of the Regional Ministerial Forum;
- Rules of procedure of the Regional Ministerial Forum and the 2017 Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment; and
- Proposed future institutional arrangements for the Regional Ministerial Forum in consideration of the UNEA-2 Resolution.

2. States are invited to review and provide comments on the background note, particularly with respect to proposed future institutional arrangements for the Regional Ministerial Forum. Inputs received will contribute to the preparation of a working document for consideration and decision by States at the next meeting of the Regional Ministerial Forum, if needed. Inputs may also be used by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) to provide an update on progress made in implementing the UNEA-2 Resolution as appropriate.

II. Background on the Regional Ministerial Forum and UNEA-2 Resolution

3. The first meeting of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (the First Forum) was held in Bangkok on 19 and 20 May 2015. The First Forum was attended by high-level delegations from 33 countries in Asia and the Pacific. The objectives of the First Forum were, inter alia, to discuss and find common ground on key environmental issues, including identification of regional priorities that could be articulated at global and regional forums. The meeting was co-hosted by the Government of Thailand and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (the Asia and the Pacific Office) of the UN Environment. The Asia and the Pacific Office provided secretariat services for the meeting. The First Forum was chaired by Ms. Oyun Sanjaasuren, Member of Parliament of Mongolia and then President of UNEA.

4. As Chair of the First Forum, Ms. Sanjaasuren produced a 'Chair's Summary'. The Chair's Summary of 22 May 2015 reports that the First Forum identified regional priorities and recommendations to promote environmental sustainability for the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, and priority issues for consideration at the second UNEA, and for UN Environment's Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021. The Chair's Summary was to be communicated to different forums, including the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the High Level Political Forum, UNEA, and its preparatory processes and other relevant forums.

5. At its second session in May 2016, the UNEA adopted resolution 2/2 on the role and functions of the Regional Forums of Ministers of the Environment and Environment Authorities. This resolution, inter alia, welcomed the progress and achievements of regional forums of Ministers of the Environment and Environment Authorities to which UNEP provides support, and recognized those forums as important platforms for strengthening the engagement of countries in the preparation of and follow-up to sessions of the UNEA. It acknowledged with

appreciation the First Forum, and noted the request of the First Forum to the Executive Director of UN Environment to hold regular sessions of Regional Ministerial Forum. It requested the Executive Director to support and facilitate convening and/or strengthening the existing regional forums. It also requested the Executive Director, within the mandate of the UN Environment 'to support and to facilitate convening new regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities upon the request of the regions, through the intergovernmental process, with all countries in the respective regions, and subject to the availability of financial resources'.¹

III. Membership of the Regional Ministerial Forum

6. As far as participation is concerned, the Regional Forum is open to all countries in Asia and the Pacific. The UNEA-2 resolution refers to 'all countries in the respective regions' vis-à-vis the convening of new regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities. Invitations for the Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (the Second Forum) were sent to the 41 countries geographically served by UN Environment's Asia and the Pacific Office.

7. These countries are: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Zealand; Niue; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

8. On a practical level, it is noted that there are other regional ministerial forums where regional and sub-regional priorities can be identified and communicated. In West Asia, UN Environment provides secretariat support to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). UN Environment also provides secretariat support to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), and the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

IV. Rules of procedure for the Regional Ministerial Forum

9. The Regional Ministerial Forum does not currently have its own rules of procedure. In other regional ministerial forums supported and facilitated by the UN Environment, there has been a practice to adopt the rules of procedure of UN Environment's Governing Council, and now those of the UN Environment Assembly. More specifically, the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America routinely adopts, mutatis mutandis, the rules of procedure of the UN Environment Assembly to govern the procedures of the meeting. It does this at the beginning of each meeting. It elects a Bureau comprised of one Chairperson, seven Vice-Chairs, and one Rapporteur, in order to reflect geographical representation. In Africa, the AMCEN has its own Constitution that sets out relevant rules of procedure. It's 'Conference Bureau' comprises a President, five Vice-Presidents, and a Rapporteur. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Regional Ministerial Forum adopt the UN Environment Assembly rules of procedure to apply mutatis mutandis and as appropriate to its meetings. A copy of the rules of procedure embodying amendments and additions adopted by the UN Environment Assembly and

¹ A copy of all UNEA-2 resolutions can be accessed at: <http://www.unep.org/about/cpr/resolutions-adopted-un-environment-assembly-its-second-session>

previously the Governing Council up to May 2016 is available at: <http://www.unep.org/about/cpr/documents/rules-procedure>. Should the Regional Ministerial Forum wish to have rules of procedure for purposes of the Second Forum they may wish to consider adopting a procedural decision pursuant to which the UN Environment Assembly rules of procedure apply mutatis mutandis and as appropriate to the meetings of the Second Forum.

10. The Second Forum is being held alongside the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED) under the auspices of the 2017 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment. The MCED is an intergovernmental meeting organized since 1985 and convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The MCED follows the rules of procedure of the ESCAP as drawn up at its first session, adopted at the second session, and amended at subsequent sessions. A copy of the ESCAP rules of procedures is available here: <http://www.unescap.org/commission/about-the-commission>.

11. As far as the election of officers is concerned, to facilitate coherence and coordination during the 2017 Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment, it is proposed that the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons of the ministerial segment of the seventh MCED would be the same for the ministerial segment of the Second Forum. The Chairperson and the two Vice-Chairpersons of the ministerial segment of the Second Forum would serve until the next session of the Regional Ministerial Forum.

V. Proposed future institutional arrangements for the Regional Ministerial Forum

12. As outlined above, it is proposed that the next Regional Ministerial Forum decide to adopt UN Environment Assembly rules of procedure to apply mutatis mutandis and as appropriate to its meetings.