

United Nations Environment Programme Asia and the Pacific Office

Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific Bangkok, 5-8 September 2017

Discussion Document for Agenda Item 16:

Adoption of the outcomes of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

Chair's summary of the second United Nations Environment Programme 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. Overview

1. The United Nations Environment Programme and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, co-organized and coordinated the Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment bringing together the United Nations Environment Programme's Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific from 5-8 September in Bangkok Thailand. The Ministerial Summit focused on addressing the linkages between resource efficiency and pollution reduction in Asia and the Pacific, under the theme 'Towards a resource efficient and pollution free Asia-Pacific'. The meeting was attended by the following countries served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kiribati; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. Participants included 23 Ministers, along with other senior officials of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations organizations, and representatives of civil society groups.

2. The second United Nations Environment Programme's Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific comprised of a Senior Officials Segment 6 September and Ministerial segment from 7-8 September.

3. The objectives of the Forum were to discuss:

- Progress in the region in implementing resolutions and decisions adopted at the first and second sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme; and identification of regional priorities for the third United Nations Environment Assembly (2017).
- Pressing challenges regarding a transition towards a resource efficient and pollution free Asia and the Pacific Region.
- Institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.

II. Opening of the session

4. Agenda item 12 (a) the Opening of the session, was presided over by H.E. Mr. U Ohn Winn, Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

5. General Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand made welcome remarks highlighting Thailand's progress towards sustainable development including through the National Committee on Sustainable Development chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. Thailand's role as a member of the global community includes engaging in international agreements and commitments.

6. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific made welcome remarks noting that the meeting was climate neutral. Focus areas for action were highlighted including policy coherence and consistency, resource efficiency, sustainable finance, and gender responsive policy and programmes.

7. Mr. Erik Solheim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme made welcome remarks. The one UN approach to the organization of the meeting was welcomed. The massive impact of pollution on health was highlighted as well as positive steps taken by countries across the region to address challenges of pollution and sustainable development. Need for action in three areas was emphasized including citizens that advocates for action against pollution, governments demonstrating political leadership, and business driving technological change and innovation.

8. Under agenda item 12 (b) on the Election of Officers, the Forum elected the following Bureau members:

- a. Chair: H.E. Mr. Masagos Zulkifli, Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, Singapore
- b. Vice-Chair: H.E Mr. Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan
- c. Vice-Chair: Hon. Lorna Eden, Assistant Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Fiji

9. Under agenda item 12 (c) Adoption of the agenda, the Forum adopted the following agenda:

- Opening of the session:
 - a. Opening addresses;
 - b. Election of officers;
 - c. Adoption of the agenda.
- Ministerial dialogue: “Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region”.
- Matters pertaining to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:
 - a. Policy perspectives on the environment and development in Asia and the Pacific;
 - b. Consideration of the report of the senior officials of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific;
- Matters pertaining to the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific):
 - a. Review of the first United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific and recommendations of the second Forum;
 - b. Regional input to the draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (2017);
 - c. Policy perspectives on a pollution-free planet.
- Adoption of the outcomes of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).
- Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific and of the report of the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.
- Closing of the Summit.

III. Ministerial dialogue: “Towards a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region”.

10. Under agenda item 13, the meeting benefited from a ministerial panel discussing measures towards achieving a resource-efficient and pollution-free Asia-Pacific region. The Panel was

moderated by Mr. Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives and member of the International Resource Panel. The session's Ministerial Panel and open discussion included the following issues and priorities for the region:

- Pollution Free Asia and the Pacific is achievable, as the region has overcome even bigger challenges related to public health and the poverty in the past.
- The leadership of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating regional cooperation on transboundary pollution, the international exchange of best practices among national, sub-national, and local governments on innovative solutions for the challenges of rapid urbanization and its associated use of resources and generation of pollution, and national capacity building for the integrated implementation of sustainable development goals.
- The panel discussion stressed the usefulness of inter-ministerial dialogue and cooperation towards mainstreaming environmental sustainability in national, sub-national, and local developmental plans.
- The importance of an inclusive green economy that leaves no one behind was emphasized.
- Curbing transboundary pollution such as Haze in Southeast Asia as well as sand and dust storms, and marine plastic litter requires stronger regional cooperation.
- The importance of enhancing public awareness, participation, and partnerships toward resource efficient and environmentally sustainable practices such as 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) approaches, was also emphasized.
- The specific challenges facing small islands developing states were highlighted including sea level rise due to climate change, waste management, and mercury entering diets through fish, marine plastic pollution
- The United Nations Environment Programme's clean seas global campaign on marine litter was welcomed as a tool to fight pollution.
- The importance of engaging citizens to raise awareness on and address the region's environmental challenges was emphasized.
- The importance of creating reliable public-private alliances for attaining resource efficient and pollution free societies was also noted.
- It was noted that establishing mechanisms in government to assess the implications of new policy and technologies can help to identify costs and benefits of action.

IV. Matters pertaining to the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).

V. Review of the first United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific and recommendations of the second Forum

11. Under agenda item 15 (a), Mr. Suho Seong, Vice Chair of the Bureau to the meeting senior officials meeting and Director of International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea, presented a report on the senior official's segment. The report and discussion identified the following issues and priorities for the region:

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

- The presentation on the report on the senior official's segment under agenda item 7 on progress in the region in the implementation of the first and second UN Environment Assembly resolutions welcomed progress made in implementation of the resolutions. The senior officials meeting identified the following regional priorities for the United Nations Environment Programme in Asia and the Pacific including: 1) Responding to environmental health risks associated with pollution; 2) Protecting natural capital and ecosystem integrity including wildlife, biodiversity and oceans; 3) Decoupling resource use from economic growth; 4) Strengthening environmental cooperation; 5) Strengthening environmental governance and institutions; 6) Strengthening scientific-basis of policy-making and knowledge sharing.
- Additional regional priorities for the UN Environment Programme discussed in Ministerial segment of the Forum included:
 - Need to promote sustainable consumption and production and resource efficiency to combat pollution.
 - Need enhanced environmental cooperation at regional and national level including through Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Greater Mekong Sub-region, Asian Development Bank's Core Environment Programme
 - Marine debris and plastics pollution.
 - Sound management of chemicals and waste in context of rapid industrialization as a means for pollution reduction.
 - Need for recognition that poverty can drive environmental degradation and is an issue to be taken into account.
 - Sustainable development goals and green economic principles provide a framework for action.
 - Support capacity building for the implementation of environmental laws, regulations, policies and plans.

Draft resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session

- H.E. Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan introduced the draft resolutions. Written comments on the resolutions are to be submitted by 22 September. The Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives meeting from 29 November -1 December will compile the resolutions for submission to the United Nations Environment Assembly. The presentation on the report on the senior official's segment under agenda item 8 (b) on draft resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session noted the issues below.

A. Draft Resolution on Marine Litter and Microplastics (proposed by Norway)

12. Need to address litter/(micro)plastics as a high priority was noted due to the impact on livelihoods and toxic material from plastics entering the food chain through fish. Scientific data and information gaps were emphasized including on micro plastics monitoring.

B. Draft Resolution on Eliminating Exposure to Lead Paints (proposed by the United States of America)

13. Welcomed and noted that cross ministerial cooperation was needed to address this issue as well as engagement with private sector.

C. Concept note on a Resolution on the Environment and Health Nexus (proposed by the EU)

14. Environmental health strategies at national and regional levels. “One health” approaches need to be examined from the environmental perspective since normally this concept was used by health not environmental authorities. PM10 and PM2.5 impact on human health. Strengthen intergovernmental cooperation to address transboundary pollution given the environmental health risks. Promoting sustainable production and consumption action key to reducing pollution at sources.

D. Draft Resolution calling for the Synchronization of objectives and activities, especially the conduct of meetings of the conferences of the parties/ governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements and protocols for efficient implementation and monitoring of the agenda 2030 and for cost reduction and effective participation of UN member states (proposed by the Philippines)

15. Member states were encouraged to provide feedback to the Philippines or through UN Environment Programme.

E. Draft Resolution to Improve Air Quality in Cities (proposed by Sudan)

16. Template plans could be developed and adapted for use in developing national and regional plans to combat air pollution. Improve air quality monitoring and assessment. Strengthen air quality policies and strategies (at the sub-national, national, or regional level).

Institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific

- The presentation on the report on the senior official’s segment included the text of the senior officials report under Agenda item 9 on institutional arrangements: Forum invited comments on a Background Note on Institutional Arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific including senior officials. It was noted that this Forum is organized in response to UN Environment Assembly Resolution 2/2 on the Role and Functions of the Regional Forums of Ministers of Environment and Environment Authorities. As proposed in the note, the future meetings of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities will be invited to adopt UN Environment Assembly rules of procedure to apply mutatis mutandis and as appropriate to its meetings. One country noted the importance of a consensus approach to the running of the Forum.
- Additional issues discussed in the Ministerial segment included:
 - It was noted that the Forum serves an important role as a platform for discussion and identifying priorities. One country noted that the Forum is not a decision-making body and that a consensus based approach should be used by the Forum. It was noted that the UN Environment Assembly rules and procedures may not be appropriate for this Forum.

Inputs from Civil Society Groups

- The presentation on the report on the senior official’s segment noted issues raised by civil society groups in the senior officials meeting.
17. Additional inputs made by civil society groups and partners during the Ministerial segment of the Forum included:
- The generation of green and decent jobs is a priority and these workers can form the basis for a green and decent society. Need to invest in occupational environmental health and safety to avoid work related injuries and illnesses. Governments are encouraged to give whistle blower protection to workers who report environmental violations.

- Need to ensure that most vulnerable and marginalized can address their basic needs including use of clean air, water, soil.
- Called for increased engagement between governments and civil society including through provision of meaningful space for this including through participation in official programmes and establishing mechanisms for participation by stakeholders.
- 61 environmental defenders had been killed in the region.
- A Green economy approach was questioned in that it could result in ‘green washing’.
- Public private partnerships must ensure that they don’t result in negative impacts on communities or their natural environments.
- Call for the assessment of new technologies in the region to assess potential impacts.
- Need to ensure the role of women in addressing pollution to be recognized. The impacts of soil and water pollution also disproportionately affect women.
- International Labour Organization noted the need to identify and share good practices across the region in addressing pollution including as related to private sector and entrepreneurs. A co-benefit of tackling pollution is job creation.

VI. Regional input to the draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (2017)

18. Under agenda item 15 (b), a video message was presented from H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly. H.E. Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Pakistan introduced the draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (2017). The presentation on the report on the senior official’s segment noted the following issues under Agenda item 8 (c) on the draft declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session:

- Some common environment and development principles should be included such as those related to common but differentiated responsibilities, technology transfers, and financial assistance.
- Some noted a Declaration, rather than a Chairs summary, was intensive to agree on but Declaration does demonstrate collective commitment by member states.
- Paragraphs 1,3,5 contain figures with no references.
- Focus on progress achieved so far to provide a more positive perspective. Declaration refers to specific cases and regions which may not be appropriate for a Declaration.
- Strengthen intergovernmental cooperation at all levels to address and reduce the negative impacts of transboundary forms of pollution.
- UN Environment Assembly’s role as a platform for harmonizing and coordinating global action on pollution.
- Drawing on traditional knowledge was emphasized.

19. Additional issues and priorities on the Declaration discussed during the Ministerial segment included:

- It was noted that a chairs summary could be a more appropriate document than a Declaration as it is more action orientated. On the other hand it was also noted that a Declaration can help drive commitment and action.
- In Paragraph 1 of the Declaration the format does not follow regular practice and could give a negative message to the public. It was proposed to open the Declaration by summarizing progress made followed by emerging challenges and then action to take.
- Recommended to specify the meaning of ‘pollution free’. The concept of risk management should also be clearly stated.

- Recommended to include awareness raising and knowledge sharing under paragraph 5 as well as the importance of consultations with relevant groups to combat pollution.
- Support to reuse, recycling and sound management of chemicals and waste could be included under the third and fourth bullet points of paragraph 5.
- It is difficult to judge if the examples in paragraph 1 are correct or not. Paragraphs 3 and 5 contain data but lack references.
- Environment and development principles adopted in the Rio Declaration and elsewhere should be addressed in the Declaration including equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, technology transfers, and provision of adequate financial assistance.
- It was noted that the UN Environment Assembly President in his video presentation to the Forum referred to the Declaration as a negotiated outcome document but there was a question as to whether this was the case. It was noted that there may not be time for a prolonged negotiation at the UN Environment Assembly. On the other hand, it was noted a political Declaration was worth negotiating if it is concise, action orientated, meaningful and address issues related to people's every-day lives.

VII. Policy perspectives on a pollution-free planet.

20. Under agenda item 15 (c), the meeting benefited from a ministerial panel discussing policy perspectives on a pollution-free planet. The panel was moderated by H.E. Dr. Ramon J.P. Paje, Vice President for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. The session's panel and open discussion on policy perspectives on a pollution-free planet identified the following issues and priorities:

- Good practices from across the region were highlighted related to waste management; air quality including cap and trade regimes; national plastic bag standard; a '4 Rs' approach including 'return' was emphasized such as action to promote waste to energy initiatives by local governments; promote more sustainable consumption patterns by consumers including through schools; agro-ecology and organic farming; converting textile waste into bags and give to retail outlets; pay as you go solar power for households.
- Key challenges were identified including: addressing land based sources of marine litter, including from rivers; need to develop alternative options to plastics; balancing action on pollution with economic development including pollution from industrial fishing and mining which generate significant economic benefits; finding alternative sources of power following the phasing out of nuclear power.
- The need for coordinated international approaches to monitoring air pollution was highlighted. At the national level platforms to engage all relevant partners to address pollution and waste were encouraged.
- The importance of mainstreaming environment in national and local government planning and decision-making processes was emphasized.
- Need for increased capacity to monitor waste and pollution including related to chemicals and waste and transfer of relevant technologies.
- The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme's Cleaner Pacific 2025: Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy was highlighted as a framework for action on pollution in the Pacific.
- UN Environment was requested to develop memorandums of understanding with relevant organizations to support implementation of the UN Environment Assembly resolution on the role, functions and modalities for UNEP implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Noted that the establishing of the UN Environment Programme

Pacific Office for helped to facilitate partnerships in the region and should be further strengthened.

- Working with the private sector is an important part of addressing pollution, including engaging banks in the Green Climate Fund to mobilize and increase the flow of green finance through banking sector and to scale up renewable energy. The need to regulate private sector including an example of linking companies' environmental pollution impacts to access to bank lending was highlighted. Environmental economic instruments are important tools to fight pollution including a) planning to internalize externalizes into planning, b) to provide funds for environmental protection activities and 3) to provide incentives for action including soft loans to stimulate adoption of clean technologies and payment for ecological services, debt for nature swaps. An example of a national sustainable finance roadmap was highlighted as an effective tool for engaging the private sector in addressing environmental challenges.
- National environment funds could be established to fund action on pollution.
- There is a need to promote access to information by communities and civil society groups to support decision making and monitoring of pollution. This includes ensuring that data is user friendly.

VIII. Adoption of the outcomes of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific

(member States primarily served by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).

21. Under agenda item 16, the Forum endorsed the report of the senior officials of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/6) and this chair's summary of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/7).

VIV. Conclusion

22. The second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia and the Pacific reviewed progress in the implementation of resolutions from the first and second sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and identified regional inputs to the outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The Forum also reviewed institutional arrangements for the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.
23. The Chair's Summary and report of the senior officials of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific would be communicated to the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its preparatory processes and other relevant forums, including the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.
24. The Forum thanked the Royal Thai Government for their support to the meeting.