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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development
in Asia and the Pacific

Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials
10-13 October 1990
Bangkok

OTHER MATTERS

(Item 10 of the provisional agenda)

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

ON

ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Draft working paper

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
ON
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

We, the Ministers from (x) countries in the ESCAP region, met at Bangkok, Thailand, on 15 and 16 October 1990 at the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific;

Recalling resolution 267 (XLIV) of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held at Jakarta in 1988 on the adoption and implementation of the principle of environmentally sound and sustainable development in the Asian and Pacific region;

Recognizing the study by the United Nations Environment Programme on the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond;

Taking note of the findings and recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development;

Aware that the Report on the State of the Environment for Asia and the Pacific published by ESCAP in 1990 reveals further aggravation in the range and depth of environmental problems in the Asian and Pacific region;

Deeply concerned at the degradation and depletion of natural resources in countries of the ESCAP region, causing severe environmental problems of deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, waterlogging and salinization, destruction of mangroves and corals, extinction of species, pollution of air and water, as well as the potential rise in sea level and other serious effects on the climate caused by discharges of "greenhouse gases", and of their implications for the economic and social development of the region;

Acknowledging the special need for dealing with the environmental problems of the island countries of the region;

Recognizing further the global character of major environmental problems and the common interest of all countries in pursuing policies aimed at environmentally sound and sustainable development;

Reviewing the progress of implementation of the Declaration and Framework for Actions Plans for the Management of the Asian Environment, 1985 as endorsed by the Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment in Asia and the Pacific;

Emphasizing that mass poverty and uncontrolled urban growth and industrialization on the one hand and structural maladjustment in

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international trade and the international economic system on the other are the root cause of many environmental problems in the region;

Emphasizing also that unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in the industrialized countries, are severely depleting the resource base, and that the industrialized countries should share the major responsibility for solving the environmental problems;

Recognizing the urgent need to intensify efforts to protect and improve the quality of the environment at national, regional and global levels, by adopting an approach in which economic growth should be directed towards environmentally sound and sustainable development as recommended by the World Commission on Environment and Development;

Welcoming and pledging our full support for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992, which will provide a forum and opportunity to promote further the interests of countries of the ESCAP region in environmentally sound and sustainable development;

Welcoming also the efforts made by subregional organizations, including the ASEAN Environment Programme, the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in protecting and improving the environment;

Realizing the diverse and complex economic, social and political milieu of the countries of the ESCAP region and their varying capabilities for taking appropriate action;

Realizing also that the indebtedness of developing countries is a main obstacle to environmentally sound and sustainable development in many countries in the region;

Stressing therefore that new and additional financial resources as well as technical assistance need to be made available for developing countries in order to ensure their full participation in regional and global efforts for environmental protection;

Have agreed to the following Principles for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in the ESCAP region:

- (1) All economic and social development activities must be based on the concept of environmentally sound and sustainable development, which is to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- (2) Environmental considerations must be integrated with all development policies, programmes and activities. Every sector of development and section of the society must assume its share of responsibility for environmentally sound and sustainable development.
- (3) States shall have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their environmental policies, ensuring that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.
- (4) Developing countries have legitimate concerns and interests which must be given special attention in any global effort for the protection of the environment.
- (5) The responsibility for containing, reducing and eliminating regional and global environmental damage must be borne by the countries causing such damage.
- (6) A preventive approach should be adopted in developing environmental policy. The purpose of adopting such a policy would be to take action to attack the problem at its source and also to avoid potentially damaging effects even where there is no conclusive scientific evidence to prove a causal link between a human activity and its effect on the environment.
- (7) Environmentally sound and sustainable development can be achieved only with the active participation and support of individuals and the community. There must therefore be adequate recognition and legal protection of the right of individuals and non-governmental organizations to be informed of environmental problems relevant to them, to have necessary access to information, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of decisions likely to affect their environment.

We, the Ministers further:

Endorse the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development annexed to this Declaration;

Agree to prepare and implement action plans for our respective countries pursuant to the Regional Strategy;

/Urge

Urge the developing countries of the region to intensify consultations with the donor Governments and agencies and United Nations bodies and organizations to seek financial and technical assistance in support of programmes and projects for environmentally sound and sustainable development as identified in the action plans;

Request concerned United Nations bodies and organizations, regional and subregional organizations and multilateral funding agencies within and outside the United Nations system to develop and implement their own action plans in line with the Regional Strategy and actively support the development and implementation of action-oriented programmes and projects identified in the action plans of the countries;

Call upon the ESCAP secretariat, in co-operation with concerned agencies, to consider the need for developing legal instruments on regional co-operation in the field of preservation of biodiversity, transport and management of hazardous wastes, emergency planning and mutual assistance in the case of pollution accidents, and the prevention of water and air pollution;

Agree that environmental damage due to activities in a country shall be counteracted to the same extent whether the damage occurs within or outside that country, and agree to provide all relevant information to the affected countries at an early stage in the planning process when such activities cause or are likely to cause significant damage to the environment of other countries;

Call upon the concerned parties to develop adequate and appropriate administrative, financial and technology transfer mechanisms with a view to enabling the developing countries of the region to take full part in regional and global efforts for environmental protection, including the ratification of important international conventions and protocols;

Decide that a Fund for Regional Environmental Enhancement shall be established and administered by ESCAP in co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies and bodies as a regional trust fund to finance regional and national activities on environmental protection and sustainable development, and urge all donor Governments and agencies to make substantial voluntary contributions to the proposed regional trust fund, so that priority action identified in this Declaration may be implemented without delay;

Agree that a Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific shall be held in 1995 in order to continue the joint

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efforts towards promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development, and in particular to evaluate the progress in implementing this Declaration;

Decide to establish a Task Force of Senior Officials on Environment and Development entrusted with the following tasks:

- (a) To assess environmental conditions and trends and update and revise the report on the state of the environment every five years, and publish a third such report in 1995;
- (b) To monitor periodically the implementation of the priority action as endorsed by the Declaration and report to the Commission at its annual sessions;
- (c) To prepare the regional contribution to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as indicated in General Assembly resolution 44/228 of 22 December 1989.

Recommend the establishment of an Inter-agency Committee on Environment and Development composed of representatives from the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, multilateral funding organizations and bilateral aid agencies with a view to enhancing co-operation and co-ordination in the development and implementation of regional environment and development activities as envisaged by the Declaration;

Further recommend the strengthening of the activities of the Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists by providing adequate financial and technical support to it for promoting public awareness and people's participation in environment protection and management activities;

Request the ESCAP secretariat to establish and operate a regional network of research and policy institutes/centres dealing with environment and development activities with a view to promoting exchange of information, facilitating technical assistance and strengthening regional co-operation for activities relevant to environmentally sound and sustainable development;

Further request the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to keep the progress of implementation of this Declaration under constant review at the annual sessions of the Commission, and present a report of a five-year review at the next ministerial-level conference in 1995 depicting the state of environmentally sound and sustainable development in the Asian and Pacific region, to enable that conference to decide on the course of action for the remaining years of the decade and the century.

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