



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials

22-25 November 1995

Bangkok

**REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21 AND THE REGIONAL STRATEGY ON
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING
TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY; CLIMATE CHANGE
AND POTENTIAL RISE IN THE SEA LEVEL; AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE
GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

**REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21 AND THE REGIONAL STRATEGY ON
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

1. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, sustainable development has been on the global agenda. International bodies, regional organizations, multilateral financing institutions and national Governments have been reorienting their policies and programmes to bring them in line with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21. Resolutions and declarations of United Nations conferences have established linkages and reinforced the complementarity of environment and development with other social aspects, such as those discussed at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995; and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. In the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul in June 1996, issues relating to sustainable development are expected to be central to the discussions.

2. In October 1990 ESCAP held the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, to promote the integration of environment and development. Subsequently, the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development was formulated and later endorsed by the Commission at its forty-seventh session, held in Seoul in April 1991.

3. These efforts focused, to a large extent, on creating a framework to enhance decision-making for sound and sustainable development. The challenge now is to implement mechanisms effectively in order to reverse the serious deterioration of the environment in the region.

4. As the next millennium approaches, it is becoming imperative for countries in the region to re-examine the present development thrust and assess its consistency with the sustainable development principles laid out by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Among the documents that guide the pursuit of sustainability objectives in the Asian and Pacific region are Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development. These documents provide a mutually supportive framework for addressing sustainable development issues in the region. As three years have already passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Governments in Asia and the Pacific should now critically assess the progress in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy and their effectiveness in attaining the sustainability objectives. Policies, tools and measures for economic development, along with the institutional mechanisms that purportedly strengthen the environment and development linkage, also need to be assessed in the light of recent developments favouring the globalization of markets. As the deterioration of the region's environment is expected to worsen, there is a need to align underlying policies and issues with Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy.

5. The present note analyses key policy issues in the context of Asia and the Pacific that will significantly influence the effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. Section I discusses the implications of implementing Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy, taking into view the new global trends in development. Given the complexities of the region's social and environmental problems, an examination is made of the macro-policies, key sectoral efforts and major institutional reforms that are being pursued and their consistency with the principles advocated by Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. Section II assesses the approach undertaken in implementing Agenda 21 and

the Regional Strategy. Section III focuses on regional cooperation. Section IV considers the constraints that impede effective sustainable development in the Asian and Pacific region and section V describes the issues for consideration by the Committee.

I. AGENDA 21 AND THE REGIONAL STRATEGY: ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE REGION

A. Economic and social dimensions

6. The level of integration of environmental considerations into the development process can be measured by looking at the kind of social and economic policies that countries have adopted. The broad parameters of social and economic policies for ensuring the attainment of sustainability objectives were set out in Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. Policy measures were directed towards encouraging behaviour that internalizes environmental costs. Economic growth will undoubtedly remain the main development thrust in the region. This growth is accentuated by the current shift in the global economic system which promotes the opening of markets and the liberalization of trade, as manifested by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the South Asia Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and which provides general support to the newly created World Trade Organization (WTO). Countries in the region will witness a dramatic transition in their macro-policies from a protectionist perspective to a more open and competitive market orientation. There are, however, environmental implications in blindly embracing policy shifts on liberalization and structural adjustments as these can also weaken the capability of Governments to cope with the worsening scenarios concerning the environment. Moreover, the social implications of such shifts have not been clearly determined. The following discussion focuses on the social and economic implications of these developments and how they relate to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. It also directs attention to the policy response needed to avert negative impacts on the environment.

1. Macroeconomic policies

7. The countries in the region still pursue some macroeconomic policies that are not conducive to environmentally sound and sustainable development. These policies tend to advance the concept that economic growth alone is sufficient to eradicate poverty and other social ills. Such policies often encourage unsustainable exploitation of resources, pollution of the environment and exposure of the human population to unhealthy and hazardous working conditions, all of which fail to address poverty alleviation or stop wasteful consumption. Among those policies that encourage unsustainable development, but whose direct effects and magnitude are difficult to estimate, are input subsidies that encourage inefficiency in resource use, distorted budget priorities, ineffective and inefficient domestic resource mobilization, and structural adjustments that severely affect the most vulnerable segments of the society. For example, the negative impact of fiscal policies based on taxes and subsidies have the same impact on monetary policies as increasing credit supply and decreasing interest rates. Devaluation of foreign exchange is often associated with the increased export of hardwood, which may result in the unsustainable use of forest resources. Similarly, the reduction of real exchange rates will correspondingly increase the domestic farm price of crops such as cotton, tobacco and basic food crops which are known to be grown in many environmentally fragile areas. Such a policy encourages heavy reliance on chemical inputs, which are detrimental to the environment in the long run.

8. Subsidy policies are applied in sectors where Governments plan to induce growth and at the same time cushion the cost impacts of such growth.¹ In the ESCAP region, the input subsidy policies used are in the energy, water and agricultural sectors and in industries that are directly managed by the Government. Overly subsidizing these sectors has an adverse environmental impact in the long run. For instance, in the energy sectors of developing countries that are dependent on oil imports, the price of fuel is subsidized in order to keep transport fares down and thus control the prices of public commodities. This in turn promotes the use of cheaper but dirtier fuels that cause degradation of air quality, especially in urban areas. The same situation occurs in the agricultural sector where inputs to agriculture, such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and farm machinery, are subsidized without taking into account their negative environmental impacts if used excessively. The availability of credit and lower interest rates will have a similar impact to subsidies which encourage investments that contribute to environmental destruction such as heavy machinery, cattle grazing and excessive use of external inputs. Likewise, a subsidy on irrigation water could lead to inefficient and inequitable use of water and could be held responsible for waterlogging, salinization and flooding.

9. Contributing to these distortions are domestic resource mobilization policies that encourage rent seeking, inefficient utilization of natural resources by charging low royalties on resource use, and the absence of fiscal mechanisms that discourage speculative land transaction in urban and resource-rich areas. The tax system can be utilized to promote sustainable development. The countries in the region may follow tax schemes that are fair and equitable and at the same time promote the rational use of resources. The prevailing revenue collection mechanisms, however, are generally inefficient, denying Governments the revenues needed to support social and capital infrastructure programmes that are oriented towards the environment. Taken collectively, these macro-policies do not often take into account the environmental externalities that accumulate in the process, such as the generation of wastes.

10. The sustainability objectives outlined in Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy call for a shift away from the paradigms of development that are prevalent in the region. At the core of these changes are policy reform measures that internalize environmental costs. As Governments in the region review their macroeconomic policies, they should incorporate environmental objectives. Similarly, where other sectoral policies are needed to complement macroeconomic measures, they must be designed to achieve sustainable development. The structural adjustments which some Governments are pursuing in the region offer wide opportunities to translate sustainable development principles into action. For example, in the energy sector, emphasis worldwide is now on end use and delivery efficiencies and the use of the less environmentally harmful renewable energy technologies. Innovative financial mechanisms needed to finance the capital cost of restructuring energy sectors, such as increasing the participation of the private sector, are now being advocated in China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and other countries. In the industrial sector there is a growing acceptance of a shift away from the command and control approach of pollution control

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¹ The general outcome of direct subsidy policies in sectors where they are applied enables producers to purchase inputs at prices below marginal production costs. Indirect subsidies are the discrepancies between the fees paid by users of publicly provided natural resources inputs and the long-run marginal cost of furnishing those inputs. The overuse of subsidies enhances economic inefficiency and contributes to air and water pollution, land degradation and the depletion of natural resources. See Jeffrey R. Vincent and David Fairman, "Multilateral consultations for promoting sustainable development through domestic policy changes" *Report for the Second Expert Group Meeting on Financial Issues of Agenda 21*, 15-17 February 1995, Glen Cove, New York.

to more efficient approaches that combine market-based instruments with regulatory measures as observed in Japan, the Republic of Korea and some members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Agricultural sector policies are likewise moving towards the use of less resource-intensive techniques for increasing productivity, such as the use of organic fertilizers, crop residues, recycling, and integrated pest management. The phasing out of costly subsidies, such as the pesticide subsidy in Indonesia and the oil subsidy in Thailand, are proving to be successful.² These experiences not only offer encouragement but more significantly, show valid proof that sustainable development is attainable. Such efforts should be supported by Governments in Asia and the Pacific.

2. Trade and environment

11. The phenomenal growth of trade in the region has resulted in the region's share in world trade rising sharply from 15 per cent in 1980 to 29 per cent in 1993.³ Over the same period the average export growth rate of the developing countries of the ESCAP region exceeded that of the developed countries, and the aggregate of all developing countries.⁴ However, during the same period serious environmental degradation in these countries has been noted. In the absence of complementary policies that are oriented towards the environment, trade liberalization can lead to increasingly negative environmental externalities. The present experience of most developing countries in the region, such as China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, highlights the fact that growth alone does not guarantee sustainable development. It is becoming evident that the quality of growth should be emphasized by supporting environmentally oriented policies. Such policies supported by regulatory measures that oblige those who consume more resources to bear the burden of environmental restoration promote less reliance on non-renewable raw materials and energy intensive processes. This issue figures clearly in the trade and environment debate. ESCAP is currently undertaking country and regional studies with assistance from the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea to elaborate on these concerns. ESCAP, with assistance from Japan, has also conducted a study for the countries in Indo-China on trade, investment and the environment.⁵

12. Because the Uruguay Round agreements have changed the rules of international trade and recognized that trade and environmental policies should be reconciled, many issues relating to trade and the environment are expected to become increasingly controversial. Although the Uruguay Round steered clear of the most contentious issues, these are likely to feature prominently in the new Trade and Environment Committee of WTO and perhaps in a new negotiating round. Among such issues are the following: the consistency of international environmental agreements with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); the unilateral use of trade measures for environmental purposes; the products, processes and production methods (PPM) issues; possible measures to equalize environmental control costs through border adjustments; the trade implications of eco-labelling schemes; and the opening up of the dispute settlement process to public scrutiny and input from the /...

² Ibid., p. 4.

³ See "Implications of recent global and regional developments for the trade prospects of the region towards 2000 and beyond" (E/ESCAP/981).

⁴ "Review and Analysis of Intraregional Trade Flows in Asia and the Pacific", *ESCAP/UNDP Studies in Trade and Investment* (ST/ESCAP/1506), p. 6.

⁵ "Strengthening capacities in trade, investment and the environment for the comprehensive development of Indo-China", study prepared for the Forum for the Comprehensive Development of Indo-China, 26-27 February 1995, Tokyo (ST/ESCAP/1482).

environmental community. Governments in the region should actively participate in these discussions if only to ensure that they would not be disadvantaged when new agreements are formulated. More importantly, countries in the region need to focus on capacity-building and the harmonization of domestic policies that have implications for the environment. Appropriate environmental policies should be put in place that internalize the environmental externalities generated by economic activity as well as discourage subsidies on the use of natural resources.

3. Population, poverty and consumption

13. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and more recently the International Conference on Population and Development stressed that demographic factors combined with poverty and lack of access to resources in some areas, and excessive consumption and wasteful production patterns in others, exacerbated environmental degradation. The interrelationship between poverty and consumption patterns has long been acknowledged to have implications on environmental stability. Despite the region's generally impressive economic growth, the stark reality in 1995 is that, of the more than one billion poor people in the developing world, between 700 and 800 million are in Asia and about 500 million of these live in absolute poverty. They reside in areas with severe environmental conditions, either in abysmal urban slums or unproductive and often marginal lands and coastal areas. Their access to common environmental resources is progressively lost through displacement, division and degradation⁶.

14. The Commission on Sustainable Development, during its third session held in April 1995, noted that past economic policies were among the key factors leading to the current poverty situation. The previous industrialization policy of import substitution had not provided the employment necessary for a swelling labour force.⁷ This failure led not only to an increase in the incidence of poverty but to the over-exploitation by the poor of the natural resources available to them. The long-term impact of this policy failure has been environmentally disastrous as well as socially damaging.

15. The brunt of the negative impacts of environmental degradation on human health and livelihoods is borne by the poor while most of the benefits of the economic growth that causes environmental degradation go to the richer sections of society. According to the World Bank, four million children in the world died in 1994 from acute respiratory diseases brought on by air pollution, while almost another four million died from diarrhoeal diseases caused by dirty drinking water.⁸ It is likely that most of these children lived in the ESCAP region and that most were poor.

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⁶ Poor people are displaced by development activities, the misappropriation of their resources by other claimants, or competition for the opportunities of the same land or employment. Division takes place when their resources are divided to satisfy the needs of generations or the exigencies of their poverty. Their resources are degraded by excessive use, inability to restore them, movements into environments that are unable to sustain the requisite resource use or such events as natural and human caused disasters. See Albert Kates and Viole Haarman, *Poor People and Threatened Environments: Global Overviews, Country Comparisons and Local Studies* (Providence, Brown University, World Hunger Programme, 1992).

⁷ In the decades preceding the 1980s, macroeconomic policies promoted industrialization through import substitution. This encouraged diversification from agriculture-based to industry-based activities which consequently led to more capital infusion in the industrial sector. The expectation was that the industrial sector would be able to absorb the rural labour force into higher productivity employment. The assumed conditions, however, did not come about as more government controls impeded industrial expansion while at the same time the rural labour population continued to increase, thereby increasing unemployment. See "Report of the Secretary-General on poverty eradication and sustainable development", third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/1995/14), pp. 5-6.

⁸ *The World Bank Atlas 1995*, foreword.

16. While poverty continues to cause environmental degradation, the unsustainable lifestyle and overconsumption of the rich and the well off also place undue stress on the environment, such patterns of behaviour promote inefficient use of resources and generate unnecessary pollution and waste while most poor people do not have access to even the most basic needs.

17. A workshop held in Seoul in September 1995 addressed these problems. It had the following objectives: (a) to analyse environmental problems that are caused by unsustainable consumption and production patterns; (b) to evaluate the performance of the policies and mechanisms adopted by developed countries to modify consumption patterns; (c) to propose and promote policies for sustainable consumption patterns; and (d) to establish cooperative relationships among developed and developing countries. The Commission on Sustainable Development during its third session emphasized the need for supporting studies at global, regional and national levels which would lead to a better understanding of the implications of the policies on resource consumption and the possible impact of changing those policies.⁹ To lend support to such studies, the Asian and Pacific countries could initiate actions that would intensify and expand the collection of data by improving environmental monitoring, initiating environmental resource accounting processes, compiling sustainable development indicators and consolidating consumer information and behavioural changes.

4. Role of women, children and people's participation

18. Among those most affected by environmental impacts are women and children. They suffer the most from the degradation of the environment as they have fewer options for escaping from pollution or environmental disasters. As experienced in the region, the prominent barriers to the active participation of women include unequal entry to education and skill development programmes, restricted access to resources, lack of information, discrimination in employment and terms of employment, persistent negative stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices and the lack of participation in community and national decision-making. These barriers are perpetuated by social and economic policies imbued with gender bias and thus generally discriminating against women.

19. Over the past decade, the position of women in the region has been evolving owing to the rapid economic changes taking place. Many examples can be cited to prove how women have been active in sustainable development activities in the region, such as the Chipko Movement and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India; Wanita Utama in Indonesia; Women in Environment (WE) in Nepal; Ruk Rekaganno (Tree Society) in Sri Lanka; the Council of Women's Organization in the Republic of Korea and the Women's Balikatan Movement in the Philippines. Nevertheless, women's real and potential contribution to economic development, policy and decision-making, as well as programme design and implementation has yet to be fully recognized by Governments. Even in the more vibrant economies of the region the gender issue is focused on whether or not women will continue to earn lower wages than their male counterparts. In the rural areas, however, the issue is more fundamental as poor women and children in the labour force also have the menial task of collecting water or fuel for survival. The challenge, therefore, is not only to increase the involvement of women in the use and management of natural resource, but more significantly to ensure that women are not excluded and marginalized in the development process.

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⁹ "Report of the Secretary-General on changing consumption and production patterns", third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/1995/13), pp. 16-18.

The role of women in development was highlighted during the Fourth World Conference on Women. The position of the Asian and Pacific region in this international event was reflected in the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific, which was endorsed by the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, held in Jakarta in June 1994. Governments in the region may consider initiating a review and assessment of their present social policies to remove gender bias and other provisions that prevent women from being actively involved or providing leadership in sustainable development activities.

20. Children also suffer silently from the impacts of poverty and environmental degradation. Among the affected sectors, they are the least heard as the effects of malnutrition, susceptibility to neonatal diseases and inaccessibility to basic maternal health care may have already retarded their human capacities long before they were born. For children who are born under conditions of absolute poverty, lack of access to education, lack of protection from debilitating diseases such as diarrhoea, polio and tetanus, and in certain parts of the region inhumane abuse are depriving them of their capacities to contribute significantly to society. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its 1994 report on the *State of the World's Children*¹⁰ acknowledged the "mutually reinforcing relationship" between the worst effects of absolute poverty, continuing or rapid population growth and the degradation of the rural and the urban environment. Governments in the region face the most complex and difficult challenge to meet minimum human needs, stabilize the population and shift to an environmentally sustainable pattern of progress. The World Summit for Children produced the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child, which incorporated specific provisions for the protection of children and proclaimed the right of all children to basic health care, nutrition and education. This Convention along with Agenda 21 should help Governments formulate policies for the achievement of sustainability.

21. The issue of enhancing people's participation in the promotion of sustainable development is also of critical concern. All Governments in the region would agree that the participation of the people in the development process is a fundamental tenet of democratic societies. Accordingly, it is through the participation process that the general desires and aspirations of the people can be reflected in development discussions. Thus, people impacted by a project should, without question, participate in its planning, design and implementation. However, there is wide divergence among definitions of people's participation. Furthermore, in many rural areas in the region, the elite and those that have vested interests control the decision-making process. The formation of homogenous groups which would have enhanced decision-making autonomy, local self-reliance, and experiential social learning processes, is yet to be widely accepted in the region. Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy stress the need for ensuring open debate on, and accountability for, the environmental aspects of economic and sectoral policies. The documents also call for guaranteed access by the people to relevant information. Accordingly, poverty alleviation and the widespread provision of basic needs and social development infrastructure can take place most effectively with active and informed participation. This should be complemented by decentralization of authority to local governments, including the ability to raise financial resources and to plan and manage development at the local government level. There is a need for serious consideration in the region of policy measures to improve the participation of people, especially in the sustainable development process.

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¹⁰ UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1994* (New York, Oxford University Press), p. 5.

B. Management of natural resources and ecosystems

22. The 1995 report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific will highlight major environment and sustainable development concerns and trends. The Asian and Pacific region is noted for its rich natural resources and is home to some of the world's most unique and fragile ecosystems. This distinction, however, is fast fading as the region's resources are being degraded at an alarming rate owing mostly to increased human activities. The phenomenal economic progress enjoyed by many countries over the past decades has worsened the condition of the environment while the demand for maintaining the present pattern of development has intensified. It is envisaged that as the countries prepare to enter a new economic era the pressure on resources and fragile ecosystems will increase dramatically. This would push countries of the region over the threshold of ecological disaster. Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy have served as bases for the environmental platforms of most Governments in the region. Various programmes and activities have been designed, particularly in the management and conservation of natural resources, which closely relate to the principles advocated in the two documents. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that while Governments have been seriously pursuing sustainable development objectives, such efforts have hardly improved the conditions of the environment. Indeed, there has been a continuing decline in the quality and integrity of the region's environment. The countries in the region will need to make difficult choices in managing and conserving their natural resources in the face of current global economic trends.

1. Land, forest and biodiversity

23. Land resources in the region are under intense pressure owing to both rural and urban needs. Arable lands are demanded by farmers seeking to maintain food self-sufficiency. Productive agricultural lands are fast being converted to other purposes in order to accommodate urban expansion. Forests and marginal lands are being used for agriculture, commercial logging and firewood and fodder. These factors together have caused severe land degradation in the region. Compounding these conditions is the poor track record of most countries in conserving and managing natural resources. The region has the fastest rates of deforestation and species extinctions, the highest rate of commercial logging, and the highest volume of fuelwood removal. As a result, desertification is fast threatening some countries in the region, particularly those in Central Asia and other arid and semi-arid areas. The growing loss of habitat is resulting in the reduction of species and genetic diversity. These threats could deprive mankind from realizing the rich but as yet unknown potential of the region's unique biodiversity. The growing trend towards the adoption of modern varieties of crops with few species could lead to biotic and abiotic stresses. Conservation of genetic diversity is essential for developing strains of crops and breeds of animals that would be resistant to these stresses and could contribute to increased productivity. The impressive economic progress attained by a number of countries in the region for the past decade was made at the expense of their natural endowments. The region, therefore, faces the difficult challenge of securing production increases in agriculture and forestry without losing its remaining land, forest and natural habitat.

24. Land and natural resource degradation and depletion of key resources vary widely from country to country. In addition to the sheer size of the Asian and Pacific region, land and natural resources issues involve more uncertainties and technical unknowns than any of the other environmental problems. This poses difficulties in finding short-term solutions as the degradation of

land and natural resources is a long-term problem which requires long-term solutions. From a policy standpoint, environmental degradation and resource depletion are often perpetuated by short-sighted trade and development policies and improper economic incentives. This situation results when current activities do not capture the foregone values of other services that could have been derived from the resource. For instance, the conversion of forests to other uses very often does not take into account the service benefits of biodiversity, hydrological buffering, soil stabilization, forest protection and the like. Furthermore, the damage to the environment is not included in the market valuations, thus promoting further degradation. Supports, such as subsidies, infrastructure and services, which encourage farming on marginal land do more damage than good. This is exacerbated by poor tenurial systems, very low forest stumpage fees, trade policies that encourage overproduction and unrestricted open access to resources. Together with the prevailing policies and market environment that promote the inefficient use of natural resources, economic incentives also tend to exacerbate these conditions. The resource users, moreover, generally invest less time, effort and money in the sustainable use of the resources because of the high risks and uncertainties involved and the low profitability of the alternatives. The institutions mandated to oversee the proper management of these resources are often ill-equipped and the policies they enforce follow past approaches to management which emphasize maximizing revenue, enforcing technical regulations, collecting fees, and prosecuting "trespassers", a concept that is often ill-defined by the law. In the context of the present economic patterns, the collective effect of these measures on the environment will worsen unless appropriate sustainable development measures are taken immediately.

25. Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy outline the strategic interventions that are essential for addressing issues of land and natural resource degradation. Underlying these interventions is the recognition of the complexity of the problems as discussed above. The Regional Strategy stresses several approaches that could deliver both short-term and long-term benefits. These approaches contain the following elements: (a) the promotion of endogenous technologies including traditional practices that advance sustainable resource management; (b) the modification of policies and regulatory frameworks, which should discourage unsustainable resource use; (c) the strengthening of land tenure systems; (d) the improvement in institutional capabilities to design, implement and enforce programmes and regulations; and (e) the encouragement of people's participation in the decision-making processes through education, mass media coverage, and the participation of the major groups defined in Agenda 21. At the hub of these recommendations is the need for a strong political commitment to cause the necessary changes. Although the current situation indicates that arresting resource degradation will be difficult, there are notable modest gains in the region. For instance, owing to the intensification of reforestation programmes in many countries, the region registered a faster rate of plantation establishment compared with other tropical areas in the world.

2. Freshwater and marine resources

26. Problems relating to the quality and quantity of fresh water and the quality of the marine environment in the region are expected to worsen with increased economic activities, urbanization and population growth. Competition between users will intensify, which could constrain further development in a number of areas already suffering from a noticeable decline in water quality. These conditions have already been observed in certain provinces of China, India, and some parts of Bangladesh and Thailand where water scarcity is limiting development potential. The impacts of the

decline in the quality of surface water and groundwater are manifested in mega-cities such as Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila and Karachi. The effects of large withdrawals of water for agriculture and of surface water pollution are already adversely changing the river and coastal ecologies. The river waters which drain into the coastal zones carry residues of chemical fertilizers and pesticides that encourage eutrophication and the occurrence of red tides. The deterioration of the quality of water threatens the health and well-being of the population.

27. The marine environment of the region is also being severely affected by environmental deterioration. Nearly half of the largest cities in the world are coastal cities in the Asian and Pacific region. The movement of people to coastal cities has exacerbated land-based pollution from domestic sewage and industrial activities. Consequently, the expansion of human activities has also affected the state of the most fragile marine resources. Mangroves and coastal forests are being degraded at an alarming rate. In some areas these ecosystems have been destroyed. The coral reefs, which have the highest primary productivity and the most diversity of any coastal ecosystem are not spared from the degradation caused by increased human activities. More worrying than the physical loss of such ecosystems is the loss of the balance and protection that these areas provide. With their degradation, the coastal areas, and especially the population living in these areas, become more vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters.

28. The need to manage water resources management poses one of the most critical challenges for most Governments in Asia and the Pacific. The region recognized this need in the past decade and policies were formulated in support of several ambitious programmes such as the building of dams and reservoirs, flood control, groundwater development and capital-intensive coastal resource management projects. Undoubtedly, these programmes brought tremendous benefits particularly in the agricultural, industrial and urban sectors which experienced enhanced productivity and growth. However, there were also unexpected trade-offs, such as the loss of forests, agricultural lands and other habitats due to inundation, waterlogging, increasing salinity, and acidification; increased sedimentation which changed coastal landscapes; health risks in local communities, for example, schistosomiasis, malaria and other water-borne diseases; and social and cultural losses owing to relocation or community fragmentation. Most of the shortcomings of the current resource management strategies revolve around the following: (a) preference for taking short-term and capital-intensive options instead of taking immediate and low-cost actions to prevent irreversible damage to water and marine resources; (b) the continued belief that water is a "free resource" and not an economic good; (c) inadequate legislation and unenforceable regulations relating to the proper use of water and marine resources; (d) poor planning, designing, preparation, implementation and maintenance of water and coastal development projects which in many cases fail to incorporate environmental and social concerns; and (e) inadequacy of the institutions whose task is to oversee the sound management of water and marine resources. The competition and conflicts of diverse uses are also expected to intensify because of increased economic activity in the region.

29. Improving the management of water and marine resources and protecting water resources are mutually reinforcing concerns. These concerns were explicitly discussed during the International Conference on Water and the Environment held in Dublin in 1992, in the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (1972) and International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 1973), and further bolstered by

Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. As the demand for water will more than double in the next decade, Governments in Asia and the Pacific should now take meaningful steps towards the realization of environmentally sound water resource management. Strategies that address the policy and institutional failures mentioned above can be designed and programmes initiated that are consistent with Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. Understandably, certain difficult choices, especially in the policy aspects that aim to change the present behaviour of users, will have to be made as these strategies are pursued. These choices, however, can be facilitated by the improvement of information and data gathering, education and public awareness campaigns and the introduction of demand side management. Given the magnitude of the task, countries should enhance cooperation among themselves and work closely with international and regional bodies in addressing this critical issue.

3. Atmospheric pollution and climate change

30. One of the negative consequences of unplanned but rapid urbanization is urban air pollution. Air pollution has a profound impact on people. Current data indicate that in many cities of the region the concentration of suspended particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, lead, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxides has been steadily rising and in many mega-cities it is in excess of the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Of all pollutants, atmospheric pollutants pose the biggest threat to people. The deterioration of the air quality is directly due to the increase in the demand for energy (particularly transport, industrial and residential sectors) and the difficulties in accessing clean production technologies. Vehicular and industrial emissions largely account for the atmospheric pollution of urban centres. The condition is compounded by a plethora of economic and planning policies that are at the root of the problem, such as the use of dirty fuels, incoherent traffic management policies that exacerbate traffic congestion, poor land-use planning, and in some countries the use of reconditioned vehicles and engines with poor emission standards. These factors suggest that interventions that do not consider the cross-sectoral nature of the issue would hardly improve the air quality situation.

31. The global ramifications of atmospheric pollution are also of critical concern to the region as many countries, especially the small island nations in Asia and the Pacific, would be adversely affected. Climate change is strongly influenced by the accumulation of greenhouse gases. Climate change as could lead to the inundation of many coastal areas, low lying island countries and even cities, an increase in climate-induced disasters and disruption of the agricultural economy of many countries in the region.

32. Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy provide recommendations for improving the atmospheric quality of the region while pursuing economic growth. It is acknowledged that many countries in the region are taking major steps to address their respective air pollution problems. Numerous programmes are being implemented in Bangkok, Beijing, Colombo, Jakarta, Karachi, Kathmandu, Manila and New Delhi to curb air pollution. A notable development in these efforts is the increasing participation of the private sector particularly in the introduction of new technologies that are adaptable to the region. The policy environment is likewise progressing with Governments now more inclined to introduce policy instruments that would induce behavioural changes and justify efficient energy utilization. For instance, the introduction of unleaded gasoline and cleaner fuels is gaining adherence in a number of countries. The installation of more environmentally-friendly power

generating plants by both the public and the private sectors is increasing. The use of mass transport systems are now slowly being favoured in the mega-cities. Institutional changes are likewise being noted as monitoring systems are being developed, complemented by reviews in the current environmental quality standards. Similarly, with respect to addressing the climate change issue within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the countries in the region are collaborating with international and multilateral organizations in undertaking joint evaluation exercises to determine precisely the impacts of climate change and related phenomena. As a certain level of economic achievement is attained, the economic and social options will become more contentious. Governments, therefore, may choose to continue to emphasize the cross-sectoral nature of the problem so as to attract the support of other sectors.

C. Managing sustainable development in the region

33. Almost all the Governments in the region have initiated measures to improve general environmental administration. These measures include legislative reforms and enactment of new laws that are consistent with Agenda 21 and national implementation of the various international environmental conventions and treaties; policy amendments and shifts; capacity-building and institutional strengthening through human resources and infrastructure development to improve monitoring and enforcement capabilities; and studies to understand the dynamics of sustainable development. These efforts are acknowledged to be in the right direction but it is still too early to show any positive impact on the environment. In general, the impact of these measures will depend largely on the preparedness of the institutions to accept policy changes. There are four interrelated aspects, as mentioned in Agenda 21, that would facilitate the integration of environment and development into the decision-making process: (a) integrating sustainable development principle at the policy, planning and management levels; (b) improving the legal and regulatory framework; (c) making effective use of market-based and economic instruments; and (d) establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting. These aspects should complement each other so as to attain maximum integration. The following discussion describes the implications of integrating environment and development concerns in the region into the context of the developments discussed in the preceding sections.

1. Integration of sustainable development issues in decision-making

34. The integration of environment and development in decision-making requires new approaches to the planning process. This would entail retraining planners to utilize new approaches to evaluating alternatives based on social and environmental objectives. It would also require the creation of new formal institutional linkages between government organizations such as sectoral line agencies, planning bodies, and fiscal policy bodies, and between the Government and the public at large as represented by non-governmental and private sector organizations.

35. The demands placed on public administration by liberalization and an expanding market economy seem to be largely unrecognized and thereby complicate integration efforts. The ESCAP secretariat during the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Development Dialogue held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1995 noted that the strains on government officials of pursuing market oriented-policies coupled with sustainable development and poverty concerns was

leading to a very visible need to rethink the content and conduct of public administration. Civil service cadres were having to learn about the modalities for monitoring and enforcing the myriad rules and regulations within which a market-oriented system functioned efficiently and did not degenerate into a free-for-all in favour of those with political power.¹¹ A fundamental element necessary for improving public administration is the openness of the decision-making process and people's participation.

36. Many countries in the region have initiated measures to improve their decision-making process along the lines outlined earlier. For instance, studies have been undertaken in Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea on the use of natural resource accounting. Similarly ESCAP and UNDP jointly supported a Consultative Meeting on Models for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, held in Bangkok in December 1992, to encourage sharing of experiences on the use of natural resource accounting¹² and market-based instruments. The application of market-based instruments in conjunction with traditional command and control approaches for pollution control are being piloted in several ASEAN countries. Despite their proven potential, the wide application of these approaches has been limited.

37. The reluctance to use these approaches widely can be attributed to the following complex factors: (a) lack of awareness and understanding both by policy makers and the people on the advantage and long-term benefits of using the methodologies; (b) limitations imposed by existing legislative and regulatory frameworks; (c) lack of institutional flexibility in accepting the new approaches owing to their traditional sectoral outlook; (d) lack or absence of trained personnel and support logistics to carry out these activities; (e) insufficiency of data and information which can reduce the degree of uncertainties when these methods are applied; (f) in some cases methodological imperfection and technical difficulties. Creating the right environment for the application of these approaches will be a policy challenge for Governments in the region.

2. Monitoring and evaluating the sustainable development process

38. Monitoring and evaluation is an essential component of any attempt to integrate environmental and social concerns into the development process. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, a number of Governments in the region in collaboration with organizations of the United Nations such as ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have initiated or intensified efforts to compile comprehensive environmental data and information. These include social and economic variables that have a bearing on the status and condition of the environment. Examples are: (a) the state of the environment report at the regional level and occasional national reports; (b) the conduct of pilot studies on environmental resources accounting; (c) the development of sustainable development indicators; and (d) capacity-building for monitoring environmental parameters. Except for environmental resource accounting where technical difficulties and methodological imperfections limit its adoption regionally, some progress has been made on the other exercises. For example, the

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¹¹ ESCAP, "Development issues and challenges of common concern to countries of the Asian and Pacific region", paper presented at the UNDP Regional Development Dialogue and Regional Cooperation Meeting in Asia and the Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, March 1995.

¹² ESCAP/UNDP, "Natural Resource Account: A Framework and Guidelines" (ST/ESCAP/1368).

ESCAP secretariat prepared the *State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific 1990* and is now currently producing a similar report for 1995. Several economies in the region have also been publishing their respective reports on the state of the environment: China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Pacific island developing countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. With respect to developing sustainable development indicators, work is under way to formulate indicators for regional application by the ADB. ESCAP has also prepared a guideline for monitoring air and water and hazardous wastes.¹³ UNEP, through its environmental assessment programme in Asia and the Pacific, is conducting activities for the establishment of an environmental database using common data and data standards, and promoting capacity-building in that regard.

39. As these efforts are now being given attention, Governments should maintain and even expand the scope of monitoring and evaluating the sustainable development process by including process indicators that measure whether or not multidisciplinary interactions are appropriately taking place, people's participation is increasing, access to information is improving, gender-specific analyses and data collection are actually being done, a range of project alternatives with different environmental and social impacts are being considered and intersectoral and cross-sectoral linkages are being analysed for their economic, social and environmental importance. Independent monitoring and evaluation exercises should be encouraged by Governments to reinforce their commitment to people's participation and transparency. Monitoring results should be integrated into public policy and the decision-making process.

II. ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21 AND THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

40. General Assembly resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992 on the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development endorsed Agenda 21 and urged Governments and organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to take the necessary action to give effective follow-up to Agenda 21 and the other important outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since its endorsement, Agenda 21 has become the blueprint for development. At the regional level the pursuit of sustainable development has revolved around Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development. The succeeding discussions assessed the implementation of the recommendations in the region.

1. Implementation at the global level

41. The General Assembly, in resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 on institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development created a Commission on Sustainable Development whose main tasks were: (a) to ensure effective follow-up to the Conference; (b) to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues; and (c) to examine the progress in implementing Agenda 21 at national, regional and international levels. The terms of reference for the Commission, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs and

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¹³ *Guidelines on Monitoring Methodologies for Water, Air and Chemicals/Hazardous Wastes*, (ST/ESCAP/354).

the organization of work were set out in the resolution. Likewise an Inter-agency Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific was created to coordinate the work of organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system on the implementation of Agenda 21.

42. Three substantive sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development have been held. The Commission at its first session, held in New York in 1993, addressed its future work and the general approach in assessing the progress of implementation of Agenda 21. Given the wide scope of Agenda 21, the Commission agreed to adopt a multi-year thematic programme of work.

43. At its second session in 1994, the Commission examined the first cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. It adopted a decision on inter-sessional work, which called for the establishment of a new ad hoc open-ended inter-sessional working group to examine the sectoral issues to be addressed by the Commission at its 1995 session (land management, agriculture, desertification, mountains, forests and biodiversity). The Commission noted the progress that had been so far achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21. It also noted the inherent difficulties in translating the Rio commitments into action, foremost of which related to increasing official development assistance (ODA), improving the international economic climate to alleviate the external debt problem of developing countries, and encouraging international financial institutions and development agencies to enhance their efforts in support of sustainable development.

44. The Commission at its third session, held in New York in 1995, made substantive progress in positioning itself as the focal point for the examination of sustainable development at the international, national and local levels. The revised format of the Commission included panel discussions, enabling the participants to enter into dialogues. "A Day of Local Authorities", combined with the NGO and government-sponsored panels and workshops throughout the session enabled the Commission to examine the local aspects of implementing Agenda 21. In keeping with its programme of work the Commission examined the second cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme. It also established an Intergovernmental Panel on Forests to "pursue consensus and formulation of coordinated proposals for action" with regard to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.¹⁴

45. The Inter-agency Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development pursued its mandate of strengthening inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system and with other international organizations and financial institutions. To facilitate its work, it appointed task managers who were responsible for coordinating work in the thematic areas of Agenda 21. ESCAP contributed to the global level discussions of Agenda 21 by firming up and advancing regional perspectives on the issues discussed. While the responsibility for implementing Agenda 21 rested with the national Governments, the secretariat played a catalytic role by assisting member countries in bolstering their stance on the issues reviewed and deliberated by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

46. Even prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it was acknowledged that there was a need to rationalize global aid philosophy and augment modalities of financial aid flow. Thus, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established in 1990 by UNEP,

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¹⁴ J.B.P. Chasek, Peter Doran and Virginia Hulme, *A Summary Report on the 1995 Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development*, International Institute for Sustainable Development (vol. 5, No. 42), 1 May 1995.

UNDP and the World Bank, to fund activities that address environmental concerns of a global nature. More specifically, GEF finances projects under four thematic areas: climate change, biological diversity, international waters, and depletion of the ozone layer. Desertification and deforestation are also eligible for funding provided they are related to the above areas. As of May 1994, GEF has funded projects amounting to US\$ 732.6 million. The scope and nature of the projects covered technical assistance, investment and small grants programmes involving NGOs and people's organizations. In the region, a total of 22 projects, amounting to US\$ 239 million, have been implemented in Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, including three regional projects granted by the Facility.¹⁵ In the last Commission meeting, it was noted that a restructured and replenished GEF would continue on an interim basis as the entity entrusted with the operation of the financial mechanisms of the conventions on biological diversity and climate change. The Commission emphasized the importance of a speedy implementation of the commitments and other responsibilities of GEF and noted that there would be a need for further replenishment of its funds to implement the commitments under the various agreements and objectives.

47. The member countries of the ESCAP region are also parties in different degrees to various global treaties and conventions dealing with environment related matters. A number of these global treaties and conventions that have considerable influence in the region are listed in annex. The response of the countries of the region in joining these conventions has been mixed. For instance, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer has been ratified by 18 countries. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal has been ratified by eight countries. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has been ratified by 11 countries. The Convention on Biological Diversity has been signed by 18 countries. The slow response in joining the conventions could be due to a number of factors including the lack of appreciation of either the necessity for or the advantages in doing so. In some cases, it could be due to internal procedures or to the failure to set up mechanisms for implementing the conventions. Through regional cooperation, it should be ascertained what help could be given to the countries of the region to facilitate adoption of the conventions.

2. Implementation at the regional and subregional levels

48. General Assembly resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992 requested the regional bodies to take meaningful steps to facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21. This decision was bolstered when the Commission, at its forty-ninth session, adopted resolution 49/7 of 29 April 1993 requesting the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission on Sustainable Development a report on specific plans to implement Agenda 21. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, ESCAP legislative bodies have been reorganized, leading to the establishment of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to meet annually, its first session in October 1993 and the second in October 1994. The Committee was given the task of monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21 and following the thematic approach of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The regional dimensions of Agenda 21 and the implementation of the Regional

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¹⁵ *Quarterly Operational Report of the Global Environment Facility*, (Washington DC, The Global Environment Facility Administrators Office, 1994).

Strategy were reviewed at a joint ESCAP/UNDP meeting held at Kuala Lumpur in February 1993. The meeting developed a framework of regional action for sustainable development which was subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its forty-ninth session. A regional action programme that was subsequently developed in the High-level Meeting on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific in Manila in 1995¹⁶ identified areas for priority action and the implementation strategy.

49. Apart from the above, the secretariat organized the following ministerial conferences that integrated environmental considerations into their discussions: the Meeting of Ministers of Industry and Technology, held in Tehran in June 1992; Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications, second session held in Bangkok in June 1992, Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok in November 1993; Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, held in Jakarta in June 1994; Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Beijing in September 1994; and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, held in Manila in October 1994.

50. At the subregional level, ESCAP has been collaborating with intergovernmental bodies in formulating their respective sustainable development programmes of action. The bodies are: ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN); South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP); and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) which have already formulated their plans for the implementation of Agenda 21. ESCAP is also holding regular meetings with subregional bodies such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), ASEAN, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Forum Secretariat, and the Mekong River Commission. In addition, ESCAP signed memoranda of understanding with a number of them. ESCAP is providing substantive support to a cooperative programme on the environment for the North-East Asian countries. Subregional activities were also promoted by ADB together with SPREP for the development of national environmental management strategies for the Pacific island development countries.

51. ESCAP has also conducted activities together with UNEP for development of a methodology for monitoring, mapping and assessment of desertification in Asia and the Pacific. Together with UNEP, it provided support to the elaboration of the desertification issues of the region for inclusion in the Convention on Desertification. The countries of the region also met in Myanmar in July 1995 to promote follow-up of the Convention. A methodology has been developed for the integrated assessment of industrial and urban development in coastal areas including monitoring and assessment of environmental pollution. Guidelines have been prepared on the management of hazardous wastes and environmentally sustainable tourism development in the region. A study was launched to compile information on the current status of the application of technologies for the control and prevention of pollution, especially industrial pollution. In addition to the development and promotion of country-specific coastal environmental management plans, ESCAP, together with UNEP and SACEP, conducted studies for capacity-building for coastal environmental management in the South Asia which led to the adoption of the South Asian Seas Action Plan.

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¹⁶ ESCAP/ADB High-level Meeting on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, Manila, 7-10 February 1995.

52. Other organizations of the United Nations had programmes in the region. UNDP gave specific focus to the regional issues in Asia and the Pacific by assisting countries to address their common needs through strengthening subregional secretariats such as ASEAN; by assisting the Asian and Pacific Development Centre; and by creating and supporting regional institutions with a view to promoting technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), an element of capacity-building. UNDP is also looking at areas where common standards can be set as in trade nomenclature, equipment specifications and transport standards. It is also prepared to support joint resource management for cross-border cooperation through the work of the intergovernmental Mekong River Commission, the development project on the Tumen River in North-East Asia, and the project on the sustainable upland resource management in the Himalayas. The Inter-Country Programme for the period 1987-1991 addressed human resources development and technology transfer while in 1992-1996 it focused on human development through poverty alleviation, economic management and reform and environment and natural resource management. In addition, UNDP has launched a number of regional programmes with sustainable development dimensions such as the Programme for Asian Cooperation on Energy and the Environment (PACE-E), Least-cost Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy for Asia (ALGAS), Integrated Application of Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing for Sustainable Natural Resources and Environmental Management (GIS-RSRP), Urban Management Programme for Asia and the Prevention and Management of Pacific and Marine Pollution Control in the East Asian Seas.

53. UNEP has focused on the problems of environment and development in the Asian and Pacific region through the following: the International Environmental Information System (INFOTERRA); the Regional Seas Programme through the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre with regional action plans covering the five subregional seas; the Network for Environmental Training at Tertiary Level in Asia and the Pacific (NETTLAP) which emphasizes increasing environmental awareness, maintaining directories of institutions and individuals, conducting workshops for tertiary level environmental educators and trainers, disseminating resource materials etc.; follow-up on biodiversity, hazardous substance movement, control of ozone depleting substances, trade and environment issues; and monitoring of action on all conventions related to the environment by member countries.

54. The key programmes and initiatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the region include: (a) an integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources through the adoption of guidelines and new systems and technologies (for example, the use of GIS for soil surveys); (b) continuing assistance to Governments in the region in the formulation and implementation of their national forestry action plans including the improvement of the forestry curriculum in educational institutions; (c) combatting desertification and drought by actively providing the input and support studies in the final preparation of the Convention to Combat Desertification; (d) providing technical support to the Asia Soil Conservation Network for the Humid Tropics in developing a framework for action on land conservation in Asia and the Pacific for politicians, decision makers, administrators and donor/financing agencies; (e) promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development by supporting the use of environmentally sound sustainable soil management practices under the regional TCDC network on bio-organic fertilizers crop diversification and the region-wide adoption of the integrated pest management; (f) setting up of a Commission on

Plant Genetic Resources, at the subregional level for the assessment of new biotechnologies for natural resources management in Asia and the establishment of an Asian bio-informatics network; and (g) promotion of programmes on oceans and marine resources under the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission and strengthening of the regional fishery information programmes. A complementary database, FISHBASE, has been supported in collaboration with the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management.

55. Other United Nations organizations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) have specific programmes addressing the problems of the region. ILO has been promoting the improvement of the working environment including the setting up of a national system for chemical safety and the prevention of major industrial accidents which have a direct impact on the protection of the general environment. UNESCO continues until the end of 1995 with the very significant 'Man and the Biosphere' programme. They are initiating action, in collaboration with UNEP, on the setting up of a subregional programme that attends to the problem of the Caspian Sea. UNICEF focuses on health through their regional health and nutrition programme. UNCTAD, apart from their continuing efforts in trade and environment discussions, have set up activities that support sustainable development in small island developing States in the region. WHO collaborated on a number of programmes such as the monitoring of food contamination, health-related environmental studies such as the Human Exposure Assessment Location (HEAL) project, and its healthy city project for urban areas. In addition, WMO provided support in implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which includes information networking, improving endogenous capacities of countries, strengthening the warning and preparedness system through its atmospheric research and environment programme and the periodic assessment of climate change in the region. The Global Atmospheric Watch of WHO is also involved in monitoring and research related to the changing composition of the atmosphere.

56. The World Bank and ADB have also been active in the region in the light of their commitments to promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development and providing the necessary financial resources to achieve this end. These institutions have undertaken numerous studies on environmental policies in the region in order to improve general environmental management.^{17, 18} To ensure that sustainable development practices are observed in their lending operations, they have instituted environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures for all of their development projects. The criteria and procedures for EIA are being revised and updated regularly to incorporate lessons learned from past experience and emerging environmental concerns. Technical assistance programmes are also extended for capacity-building in the countries in the region. Some of these are undertaken in collaboration with United Nations sponsored programmes in the region such as the metropolitan environmental improvement programme implemented by the World Bank

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¹⁷ Carter Brandon and Ramesh Ramankutty, *Toward an Environmental Strategy for Asia*, World Bank Discussion Papers (Washington DC, World Bank, 1993).

¹⁸ Asian Development Bank, "The Environment Programme of the Asian Development Bank: Past, Present and Future" (Manila, 1994).

with UNDP, and the regional study of financing environmentally sound development between ADB and ESCAP. A very significant policy decision by ADB is the requirement for environment and social dimensions to be included in 50 per cent of their lending operations. ADB has also launched a study to promote investment in the coastal areas in the South China Seas to enhance environmental resources in cooperation with ESCAP and UNEP.

57. Inter-agency collaboration in the region was also enhanced through the Inter-agency Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee comprises the United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations and multilateral agencies which are actively executing financial and technical assistance to the countries in the region specifically the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, UNEP, ESCAP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), ILO, FAO, UNESCO, World Bank, WMO, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), ADB, ASEAN/ASOEN, SACEP, SPREP and the Commission of the European Communities (CEC). Bilateral aid agencies and NGOs are invited as observers to the Inter-agency Committee. Since its establishment in 1991, the Inter-agency Committee has been following up on the implementation of the Regional Strategy and Agenda 21. It has identified areas for joint action, for example, on monitoring and assessment of the environment, human resources development, exchange of information through an ESCAP newsletter (later ESCAP and UNEP joined to publish one regional newsletter on the environment) and the development of environmentally sound and sustainable development indicators. The Inter-agency Committee has also worked together to develop a coordinated plan of action on the implementation of Agenda 21 in the form of a database of their work programme and is pursuing regional follow-up to the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Barbados in 1994. The Inter-agency Committee has provided strong support to the preparation of the 1995 report of the regional state of the environment by providing data and information and participation in the process of development.

58. It is also acknowledged that many countries in the region are recipients of several assistance programmes through bilateral cooperation. Most of these programmes, to which donors made commitments during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, are geared towards capacity-building and institutional strengthening that are consistent with Agenda 21. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has programmes for coastal zone management as implemented in Sri Lanka and the Philippines and urban industrial environmental management in the ASEAN countries. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) of Germany has concentrated their technical assistance on capacity-building for local governance with special emphasis on environmental management. The same focus has been noted with the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) particularly in the small island nations in the Pacific. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been extending technical assistance in the preparation of master plans and capital infrastructure such as laboratories and equipment provision that will improve environmental monitoring in some countries in the region. Other countries that have established bilateral cooperation programmes in Asia and the Pacific include Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union (EU).

3. Implementation at the national level

59. The implementation of Agenda 21 together with the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development rests largely with national Governments. The recommendation to that effect in Agenda 21 stipulates that national Governments, where appropriate, with support from international organizations should adopt national strategies for sustainable development with a view to ensuring socially compatible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment. National Governments were asked to undertake a review of capacity and capacity-building requirements for devising national sustainable development strategies including those for formulating and implementing their respective Agenda 21 action programmes. Most of the countries in the region have responded to this call. The level and extent of compliance to the Agenda 21 recommendations varied widely depending on the urgency of the issues, priorities attached by the countries, and their capacities. For example, certain countries gave the main responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 21 to institutions that oversee, totally or partially, the environment as in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam. A different approach has been adopted by Brunei Darussalam, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal and the Philippines where the responsibility for implementation and coordination is vested in Ministries responsible for planning.

60. Furthermore, a number of countries of the region have also developed strong coordination mechanisms ranging from high powered ministerial councils or committees chaired by the Prime Minister, such as the Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development in Australia; National Environmental Committee in Bangladesh; National Commission of Environmental Affairs in Bhutan and Myanmar; State Council in China; National Development Council in Malaysia; Council for the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Resources in Nepal; Interdepartment Committee in New Zealand; Environmental Protection Council in Pakistan; the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development in the Philippines; Ministerial Committee for the Global Environment in the Republic of Korea; and the Office of Environmental Policy and Planning in Thailand.

61. With respect to the preparation of plans and strategies for the follow-up to Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy, individual countries have designed strategies based on their respective priorities. For instance, China and Japan have adopted a national Agenda 21 while the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka are in the process of developing the same. Other countries built their follow-up around existing strategies: Pakistan and Nepal where the national conservation strategy was developed with assistance from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN); Papua New Guinea which developed a national sustainable development strategy; the Philippines which converted its strategy for sustainable development into an Agenda 21 strategy; Australia through its national strategy for ecologically sustainable development; New Zealand; and Malaysia. Similarly, for countries in the region that have either signed and/or ratified the international conventions, follow-up actions on their implementation are pursued in some cases through the development of national action programmes and by responding to specific obligations.

62. Given the varying degrees of compliance in the region, it is still too early to determine the impact of the individual initiatives taken at the regional level. Generally the drawbacks encountered included the still predominantly sectoral orientation of the plans, the need for inter-institutional coordination arising from the plans, overall economic problems, and the limitation posed by insufficient funds.

III. REGIONAL COOPERATION

63. Agenda 21 recognizes the magnitude of effort and resources needed to meet global, regional and sustainability objectives. Section four of Agenda 21 is devoted to the means of financing the implementation of the programme of action. While national Governments are responsible for pursuing the sustainable development agenda, there are issues that are commonly shared by a number of countries in the region. The nature of these issues varies depending on what arises from the implementation of national programmes. Such issues include desertification which is the main concern in China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan and Mongolia, the use of regional seas in East Asia, the potential impacts of transboundary issues such as air and water pollution, and matters which have environmental implications at the regional and subregional levels. The fostering of regional cooperation through a joint programme that involves the countries concerned is the optimal approach in addressing these kinds of issues.

64. In general, regional cooperation programmes are pursued in the areas of human resources development and capacity-building through a range of activities from the joint conduct of research and studies on common problems to the sharing of the exchange of information and experts. Such activities may also include the sharing of results of case-studies, pilot and demonstration projects, and policy and programme development. Essentially these joint efforts provide benefits to the participating countries in their policy-making and planning capacities. Eventually the nature of the issues commonly shared becomes more clearly understood. The present levels of cooperation should be further expanded to include the possibility of pooling resources in addressing these common issues. Efforts along this line should be encouraged and supported as it hastens the achievement of the sustainable development objectives in the region.

IV. CONSTRAINTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21 AND THE REGIONAL STRATEGY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

65. The constraints on the achievement of sustainable development vary depending on the particular situation of the countries. Such constraints may include excessive demand on the natural resources owing to a large population base and a high rate of growth, the paucity of trained manpower, the low level of literacy particularly among women, inadequate financial and technological resources, widespread rural and urban poverty, the limited involvement of women in sustainable development activities, the low level of public awareness on the environment and limited people's participation, the rarity of prudent and sensible economic policies with adequate safeguards for

environmental protection, and the lack of adequately developed methodologies to deal with local, national, regional and global environmental issues. There are also constraints which relate to the weakness of institutions and legislation, particularly for the enforcement of measures for environmentally sound and sustainable development. The situation is further compounded by the need for countries to adjust to changes in the global economic environment. The following sections describe generic areas of constraints on the effective implementation in the region of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy.

A. Prioritization of action: short-term needs versus long-term benefits

66. The cumulative effects of environmental deterioration have increased the intensity and magnitude of facing sustainable development problems. As a result the countries in the region are now faced with the difficult task of urgently addressing the environmental issues along with the other social, economic and political issues demanding attention. This situation is compounded by the institutional deficiencies and budgetary constraints in most of the countries, which underscores the necessity for Governments to prioritize their actions. Ideally, actions should be based on relevant information and data, careful valuation of cost and benefits, and an analysis of the administrative capabilities. Furthermore, the options considered should be subject to public decision-making processes. These are, however, rarely done in most of the developing countries in the region. Consequently, most Governments face a choice of options that have short-term gains.

67. It is anticipated that the present constraints will continue to hamper the capabilities of developing countries in the region to address appropriately the sustainable development issues that confront them. The focus of support should be on upgrading capacities that would enable countries to set and choose priorities for sustainable development. There are noted national efforts, with support from multilateral financing institutions such as the World Bank and ADB, whose objectives are often to strengthen the country's institutional capacities. Along with these initiatives, other efforts such as the preparation of national conservation strategies or national Agenda 21 may be widely supported.

B. Consensus-building through awareness of environmental issues at all levels

68. Increased public awareness is a means to bring attention to environmental issues. But the dynamics of raising public awareness are more complex than just bringing people's attention to the key issues that impact the public as a whole. Further emphasis needs to be placed on translating available information on environmentally sound and sustainable development into positive action that can be taken by institutions and the public in general. However, as the quality of information is not always adequate, the options are limited for relevant groups and authorities to decide and apply policy and programme interventions that are environmentally sound. Moreover, in some countries the political commitment that is necessary to translate public awareness into action may be lacking.

69. Apart from EIA,¹⁹ many of the recommended approaches that are aimed at integrating environmental considerations into the planning process are based on new and non-traditional socio-economic concepts. The use of economic and market-based instruments for improving enforcement, tradable permits, and natural resource accounting are innovative methodologies that have not been widely applied except for a few areas where the approach has been piloted. As these ideas are non-conventional, their adoption as an integral part of the country's policy formulation process would be slow when the policy makers and implementors are not informed about and familiar with their principles. There is, therefore, a need to raise awareness of government institutions, related agencies, NGOs, and the people at large on new policy approaches that enhance the environment.

70. In the same vein, these new approaches promote long-term welfare gains. As most of the countries face urgent environmental problems, the demand for short-term palliative solutions are preferred to lasting remedies. From a political standpoint, this situation fits the need of the political decision makers as their interests are focused on delivering solutions to pressing problems notwithstanding the fact that the solutions offered may have adverse long-term impacts.

C. Capacity-building

71. Capacity-building, particularly at national level, remains an important prerequisite to the success of sustainable development in the region. This need is relevant to all levels of administration. It covers the enhancement of technical, managerial capabilities from institutions that oversee the preservation of the integrity of the environment to human resources development in major sectors that seriously impact on the environment.

72. Many countries in the region have considered strengthening capacity-building efforts in the formulation of their respective national-level Agenda 21 programmes in partnership with international organizations, such as UNEP, ESCAP, UNDP, UNIDO, ADB and bilateral programmes. Similarly, some of the well-off countries in the region have initiated capacity-building outreach programmes for their less developed neighbours. While these activities are commendable and steps in the right direction, there are still deficiencies in building coherence into the overall capacity-building programmes pursued by the Governments. Such programmes are usually sectoral in scope. It is noted that the current economic growth of the region is attributed to the expanded use of natural resources and relatively cheap, unskilled labour. Most of the capacity-building programmes do not respond squarely to this issue. Capacity-building in the region should be considered as an investment towards a more progressive future. The development of skills and technology aligned with the national sustainable development objectives is becoming a regional imperative. As repeatedly proven

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¹⁹ There have been noted limitations in the current EIA processes as practised in most of the countries in the region. As cited in the feasibility report "Social and environmental assessment: Trincomlee thermal power project" prepared by Black and Veatch for the Ceylon Electricity Board, Colombo, 1988. It is therefore evident that the entire feasibility study process, terminating with the EIA, has followed a policy known as decide-announce-defend...the EIA has become(sic) an ex-post facto document seeking to environmentally justify a project which was formulated without any environmental consideration whatsoever.. " See Peter Meier and Mohan Munasinghe, "Incorporating environmental concerns into power sector decisionmaking", World Bank Environment Papers No.6, (Washington DC, 1994), p. 11.

in East Asian experience, sustainable growth largely depends on enhancing domestic technological capacities through research and development, improving human capital formation and increasing labour force flexibility. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies is also crucial in the process. The removal of the impediments to these objectives should be the focus of the capacity-building strategies in the region.

D. Financing sustainable development

73. Agenda 21 provided an agreed political framework to finance sustainable development activities. An initial estimate was made on the global requirement to support Agenda 21 environmental programmes in the developing countries from 1993-2000. The bulk of this amount would have to be made available by the developing countries themselves by reordering their priorities and redeploying their existing resources. However, this needs to be augmented through external resources, increased flow of ODA and other means. In the recent Commission on Sustainable Development sessions, positive and negative developments on the financing of sustainable development efforts have been noted. The sessions have highlighted the disappointing performance with regard to the current ODA flows relative to the accepted targets of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP). In contrast, the rather encouraging trend of increasing private capital flow has been acknowledged. This trend has been further enhanced by the notable expansion in the cooperation and involvement of the business and the private sectors in the various sustainable development programmes of the Governments in the region. Apart from the infusion of private capital flows for environment oriented investments, increased activities have been particularly noted in the areas of research and development, opening access to environmentally-friendly technologies and the application of environmental management techniques such as environmental auditing, pollution management appraisals, waste minimization and resource recovery practices, and life cycle analysis.

74. For the ESCAP region, a recent ADB regional study²⁰ estimated that the cost of achieving certain environmental objectives by the year 2000 would be US\$ 12.9 billion based on the "business-as-usual" scenario to maintain the existing situation. Assuming however, that the anticipated policy reforms and the expansion of environmental services are accelerated to achieve by the year 2010 the same level of development as that of an average Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country, a total of US\$ 70.2 billion would be needed. In terms of sectoral spending, under the "business-as-usual" scenario, water quality, accessibility and sanitation accounts for 60 per cent of the total investment, with social programme costs taking a share of 22 per cent and natural resources sectors the remaining 18 per cent. It should be noted, however, that air quality improvement under this scenario would have close to zero investment. However, with the "accelerated progress" scenario, air quality would account for 40 to 50 per cent of the total investment and even increase to 70 per cent if acid rain and global climate change are accounted; 18 per cent

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²⁰ Study report on the "Financing of Environmentally Sound Development", ESCAP/ADB Regional Meeting on the Financing of Environmentally Sound Development, 15-17 June 1993, Bangkok.

would be for water quality; 11 per cent for social programme costs and 9 per cent for natural resource sectors. Among the countries in Asia and the Pacific, the investment needs of China and India would clearly dominate, accounting for 73 per cent of the total cost for the "business-as-usual" scenario and 58 per cent for the "accelerated progress". The remaining developing countries would account for 27 and 42 per cent for the "business-as-usual" and "accelerated progress" scenario respectively. The study highlighted the fact that in order to meet this substantial financial need, better utilization of existing financial mechanisms both at national and regional levels, as well as possible consideration of new financial mechanisms would be required. Moreover, the new financial mechanisms should include funding activities such as policy studies and programme development which would catalyse and enhance bilateral cooperation.

75. The declining trend of ODA as a percentage of GNP remains a matter of concern in the region for it presents an important source of external funding. In most developing countries of the region, ODA significantly contributes to addressing sustainable development concerns in areas that do not attract investment from private sources, in particular, commercial bank operations, private financing and foreign direct investment. The Governments in the region acknowledge that a significant portion of their resource requirements for sustainable development activities would have to come from redeployment of their existing resources. There are, however, serious policy obstacles that somehow impede the generation or allocation of the necessary funds to cover the financing of environmental activities even though environmental protection is high on the agenda in the region. Foremost among these policy obstacles are (a) the use of traditional economic tools for analysis such as the national income accounting, discounting and cost-benefit analysis which constrain the appraisal of environmental issues, (b) social impediments that do not reflect the relationship between environmental degradation and the victims and the beneficiaries, and (c) institutional obstacles.

E. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies

76. The effective transfer of environmentally sound technologies would go a long way in promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development for most developing countries in the region. There is a growing concern in the region that favourable access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries need to be supported and assistance provided. There is also a need for active support by the countries possessing environmentally sound technologies, particularly the developed countries, for the transfer to take place. The promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development would require reforms and innovation at the policy level, and the institutions and resources at the programme and project levels. While these two aspects are interrelated, the policy-level measures, as highlighted in this document, that have already been initiated in many countries may be further deepened with increased regional and subregional cooperation. Similarly, programmes and projects need to be augmented to support the policy measures so that concrete results could be achieved. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies is an important issue for this region and is, therefore, taken up separately in another paper (E/ESCAP/SO/MCED/4) for consideration by the Conference.

F. Addressing the issues of the environment

77. The concerns related to sectoral development activities will continue to be a central focus among the countries in the region. It is at this level that environmental damage is visibly manifested (see paragraphs 22-32 above). Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy have recognized the magnitude of these problems and thus the compelling necessity for regional collaboration. Following the United Conference on Environment and Development the activities of ESCAP, other United Nations organizations and multilateral financing institutions, within the guidelines of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy generally relate to: (a) capacity-building for improving institutions and legislation on environmental management, particularly in the areas of policy-making; (b) assistance in the formulation of subregional and national sustainable development strategies; (c) formation of regional information networks that enhance data and information exchange between scientists, policy makers, opinion makers (the media) and NGOs; (d) monitoring and assessment of environmental changes in the region using state-of-the-art technologies; and (e) publication of manuals and reports to assist Governments in responding to the current sustainable development issues that confront them.

78. It is noted that the influence of these interventions has been significant in many countries in the region, as manifested by progressive improvement of the capacities of their respective institutions. The environmental challenges, however, are becoming more complex and the gap between the problems and the solutions to the problems is further widening. The sectoral orientation in analysing and approaching environmental problems should now be evaluated. There is a need for a more flexible and pragmatic approach in order to adapt to global changes. The urgency of reviewing the sectoral environmental issues with the critical cross-sectoral perspectives which has not been given due attention now requires serious consideration. The regional programmes should be directed towards developing managerial responses that are solidly backed by scientific research.

V. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

79. The subregional, regional and global organizations can play a catalytic role in closing the policy gaps and promoting relevant programmes and projects, especially for those countries that are still in the process of attaining economic standards comparable with their more developed neighbours. The Conference may comment on the issues presented in this note to reflect country priorities and suggest ways to address those issues in the regional action programme proposed for adoption of this Conference. In particular, the attention is drawn on the following:

(a) Although the issues related to conservation and management of resources for development as identified in Agenda 21 are subject to annual discussion at the Commission for Sustainable Development and will continue to be a major concern, their assessment should also be made within the context of the emerging policy trends of the region as pointed out in section I of this paper. The present trends in the degradation of the environment will have a profound impact on the sustainable development pursuits of the Asian and Pacific countries. Their incorporation in the current policy review and subsequently policy design processes requires immediate consideration.

(b) Fostering regional and subregional cooperation on the issues discussed in sections I and II of this paper should be a major undertaking. In this respect, the Conference may provide guidance to the secretariat on the coordinating and catalytic actions it can undertake to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development policies in the region. The Conference may also consider involving the national institutional mechanisms set up for national conservation strategies or the high level councils that have been set up for follow-up to Agenda 21, in order to report to the annual sessions of the Commission.

(c) Financing the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy will remain a key problem in the region. The discussions on financing sustainable development should be carefully examined and, as appropriate, guidance may be provided so that programmes of action for environmentally sound and sustainable development can be appropriately formulated and implemented.

(d) The transfer of environmentally sound technologies is crucial to the sustainable development efforts in the region; cooperation and capacity-building in this regard are major issues which are highlighted in another document for the consideration and guidance of the Conference.

(e) Section III of the paper identified the major constraints in achieving the effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy . Items (c) and (d) above covered some of those aspects. The other issues on prioritizing actions, consensus-building through environmental awareness and capacity-building require the full attention and views of the Conference.

Annex

**STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, AS OF AUGUST 1995**

Selected international conventions	Actions taken by the Asian and Pacific countries	
	Ratified	Signatory
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar) 1971	16	-
Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris) 1972	20	-
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Washington) 1973	21	1
The Law of the Sea (Montego Bay) 1983	4	30
Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna) 1985	21	-
Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal) 1987	18	-
Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel) 1989	8	4
Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro) 1992	7	27
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Rio de Janeiro) 1992	11	25
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Paris) 1994	-	17

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