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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

(Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT ON ITS SECOND SESSION**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The second session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development was held at Bangkok from 13 to 15 October 1999. The Committee reviewed selected issues related to its work: policy issues in integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making; efficient utilization of energy in supply-side facilities and demand-side management; and integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development.

The Committee urged the secretariat to continue its activities in the area of integration of environmental considerations into economic policy-making processes and its work on the strategic environmental initiative in close collaboration with other international agencies. It also urged the secretariat to facilitate greater capacity-building in the integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making through information exchange, the promotion of public awareness, community participation in environment-related issues and the incorporation of environmental issues into human resources development.

The Committee recognized the challenges faced by policy makers in the region in addressing issues related to sustainable energy development. It emphasized the importance of developing regulatory frameworks for the realization of improved energy efficiency. It also emphasized the need to promote market-driven policy instruments and to facilitate the transfer of technology on both the supply side and the demand side and to facilitate access to low-cost international funds. It recommended that the secretariat should facilitate regional consultations on the development of the energy sector and the promotion of energy efficiency as a contribution to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The Committee stressed the importance of geographic information systems in the integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources and urged the secretariat to strengthen national capabilities in that field. It requested the secretariat to assist members in the adoption of the United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities by convening a workshop on "eco-friendly" practices in mining operations.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the preparatory work carried out by the secretariat for the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000.

The Committee commended the secretariat on the wide range of activities undertaken in the fields of environment, energy, water resources, mineral resources, space technology applications and natural disaster reduction. It expressed its deep appreciation of the useful advisory services provided by the secretariat in the fields of environment, energy and mineral and water resources and recommended that the secretariat continue to provide those services. It directed the secretariat to make additions to its programme of work, 2000-2001 and to the draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 to reflect the importance of strategic environmental planning.

The Committee indicated its strong support for the implementation of the current programme of work and that of the biennium 2000-2001, particularly for the organization of the two ministerial conferences.

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I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development

1. Policy issues relating to integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making

1. The Committee urged the secretariat to continue its activities in the area of integration of environmental considerations into economic policy-making processes, which were funded by the Government of Japan, and its work on the strategic environmental management initiative, which was supported by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands. Efforts to integrate environmental considerations into economic policy-making processes were an innovative way of addressing the issues and meeting the training needs, and of promoting the exchange of experience among the countries. It urged ESCAP, in implementing the project, to work closely with other international agencies in order to benefit from their expertise.

2. The Committee urged the secretariat to strengthen inter-divisional cooperation and collaboration with other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system with a view to greater integration of environmental dimensions in the programme of work of the secretariat, so that full use could be made of its multidisciplinary expertise in economic analysis, statistical methods, scientific knowledge and institutional management.

3. The Committee urged the secretariat to facilitate greater capacity-building in the integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making in the region through activities such as the exchange of information, the promotion of public awareness, community participation in environment-related issues and the incorporation of environmental issues in human resources development.

4. The Committee requested the secretariat to explore innovative financial mechanisms and economic instruments that effectively incorporated environmental considerations into economic decision-making and provided advice to members and associate members on those.

5. The Committee noted that the further promotion of the issue of strategic environmental management would require interaction at a high governmental level. For that reason it recommended its inclusion in the discussions of the forthcoming Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, to be held in Kitakyushu City, Japan, from 31 August to 5 September 2000, in particular in the context of the development of a regional programme of action.

2. Efficient utilization of energy in supply-side facilities and demand-side management

6. The Committee recognized the challenges faced by policy makers in the region in addressing issues related to sustainable energy development. In view of the significant increase in energy consumption in the ESCAP region, it regarded the need for increased energy development as urgent, particularly in developing economies where the gap between energy supply and demand was considerable. It stressed that future energy supplies should be both economically affordable and environmentally compatible.

7. The Committee noted that there was significant room for improvement in energy efficiency on the supply and the demand sides. It also took note of the information submitted by the delegations on their national experience and achievements in those areas, including in the context of recent international agreements on environment protection. It emphasized the importance of developing regulatory frameworks for the realization of improved energy efficiency. In that regard, it emphasized the need to promote market-driven policy instruments and to facilitate the transfer of energy-efficient technology on the supply and the demand sides and to facilitate access to low-cost international funds.

8. The Committee noted that private companies, consumer organizations and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could significantly assist in influencing consumer behaviour towards selecting energy-efficient equipment and appliances. The important role that NGOs could play in securing public participation and involvement in the promotion of energy efficiency had also been mentioned.

9. The Committee stressed the importance and the usefulness of ESCAP activities in facilitating the exchange of information, promoting regional cooperation in energy development, enhancing energy efficiency and promoting the utilization of renewable energy resources.

10. The Committee expressed its appreciation of the advisory services provided by the secretariat and requested the secretariat to continue providing those services. It also recommended that the secretariat should facilitate regional consultations on the development of the energy sector and on the promotion of energy efficiency in cooperation with the international consultation process on energy, transport and the protection of the atmosphere, as a contribution to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2001. It also recommended that an item on the energy sector, in particular on issues relating to the promotion of energy efficiency, should be included in the agenda of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000.

3. Integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development

11. The Committee stressed the importance of geographic information systems (GIS) in the integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development and urged the secretariat to strengthen national capabilities in that field.

12. The Committee expressed appreciation of the activities of ESCAP in the application of GIS for the assessment and development of mineral resources in North-East Asia and requested the secretariat to continue those efforts.

13. The Committee requested the secretariat to assist members in the adoption of the United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities by incorporating common definitions in national classification systems.

14. The Committee requested the secretariat to convene a workshop on "eco-friendly" practices in mining operations, including detailed strategy and rehabilitation methods for biological reclamation of mined-out areas in different geomorphological and climatic regions.

B. Ministerial conferences

1. Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000: achievements since 1995 and agenda for 2000

15. The Committee endorsed the schedule of the Conference, according to which the preparatory meeting of senior officials was to be held from 31 August to 2 September 2000 and the Ministerial Conference was to be held on 4 and 5 September 2000. The Committee welcomed the organization of the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific in 2000 (ECO ASIA 2000) which would be held at informal ministerial level on 3 September 2000. It was emphasized that the deliberations of ECO ASIA 2000 should reinforce the outcome of the Ministerial Conference.

16. The Committee held the view that the ministerial declaration would be an important outcome of the Conference. It should be developed through wide-ranging consultations and adopted by consensus among the countries to reflect the vital environment and sustainable development issues and concerns of the region. The Committee took note of the comments made by delegations on the strategic themes and main programme areas to be reflected in the final outcome of the Conference, and agreed to take them into account at the preparatory meeting of senior officials to be held early in 2000.

2. Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: final preparations

17. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the preparatory work done by the secretariat and the Government of India for the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee also urged the secretariat to prepare itself to take follow-up action to implement the recommendations of the Second Ministerial Conference.

18. The Committee noted the importance of the initiatives and the network established under the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP) and the need to further strengthen that cooperative mechanism for expanded and effective use of space technology in the region.

C. Programme planning and implementation

19. The Committee commended the secretariat on the wide range of activities that it had undertaken in the fields of environment, energy, water resources, mineral resources, space technology applications and natural disaster reduction, while also preparing for the two ministerial conferences. It expressed concern, however, over the relatively high number of unfilled posts reported.

20. The Committee directed the secretariat to make some additions to the programme of work, 2000-2001 and to the draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 to reflect the importance of strategic environmental planning.

21. The Committee indicated its strong support for the implementation of the current programme of work and that of the biennium 2000-2001, particularly for the organization of the two ministerial conferences.

22. The Committee expressed deep appreciation to the secretariat for the considerable number of useful advisory services provided by the regional advisers on environment and on water resources and strongly recommended that their services be continued in the next biennium, considering the vast experience of those advisers and their profound knowledge of the region.

23. The Committee also expressed gratitude for the valuable services of the expert on energy efficiency and conservation, generously provided on a non-reimbursable loan basis by the Government of Japan, and indicated its strong desire that those services be continued for as long as possible. The Committee noted the usefulness of the ad hoc advisory services provided in the field of mineral resources and requested that those services also be continued.

24. The Committee pointed out the need to avoid the duplication of work undertaken by other international agencies and directed the secretariat to continue its consultations and cooperation with

such organizations in order to minimize the waste of resources and achieve synergy. In that regard, the Committee noted with appreciation the close cooperation between ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in various areas to address the environmental challenges facing the region and requested that that cooperation should continue in the future. It also noted the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in various aspects of environmental management and natural resources development and its readiness to cooperate with ESCAP in those areas.

25. The Committee appealed to donor countries and organizations to continue and enhance their funding support to ESCAP for the benefit of the developing countries of the region.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development

1. Policy issues relating to integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making

26. The Committee expressed appreciation of the background document (E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/1).

27. The Committee noted that many countries in the Asian and Pacific region had made the integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making one of the highest policy priorities. In many countries of the region, national action plans and strategies had been developed to establish the concept of sustainable development firmly in all sectors of policy planning and decision-making. Those action plans had included environmental impact assessment; environmental legislation on air, land, water and forests; the incorporation of environmental dimensions in cost/benefit analyses; the incorporation of social aspects of environmental degradation; eco-labelling; environmental audits; and public awareness campaigns.

28. The Committee recognized that while countries had committed themselves to pursuing the goal of sustainable development, the attainment of that goal was difficult and still far off. There were serious problems in trying to integrate environmental considerations into economic policy-making processes and in preparing strategic plans to that end. Those ranged from problems with putting into operation a more holistic approach to development, to serious institutional and technical constraints and a scarcity of appropriately trained staff and of financial resources. The Committee also recognized that each country was entitled to choose ways of development appropriate to its unique set of economic, social, political and cultural characteristics. There was considerable scope for each country to learn from the experience of others in doing the following: designing sustainable development frameworks; enhancing coordination and cooperation between the economic and environmental sectors of government in particular, and with other actors in the country; devising various workable measures, using existing

techniques and tools and developing new ones to take account of the impact of economic policies and to formulate and implement strategic environmental plans.

29. The Committee noted that women played a major role in areas such as agriculture and irrigation and for that reason deforestation, famine and drought had serious adverse effects on their opportunities for work. In the formulation of environmental strategies, the Committee recognized that consideration should also be given to gender issues.

30. The Committee recognized the importance of information exchange, in particular that on environmentally sound technologies and their transfer. Countries in the region should, as much as possible, take advantage of modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of networking to develop training modules and other forms of information exchange. Since the integration of environmental considerations in economic decision-making required a cross-sectoral approach, the roles of respective decision makers and respective levels of government should be clearly defined, with a view to achieving greater decentralization and defining the role and responsibility of local governments.

31. The Committee acknowledged that there was a vital need for bilateral, regional and subregional initiatives to meet environmental challenges and emphasized the vast potential for regional and subregional cooperation in the field of environment. The Committee recommended that issues should be prioritized and effective programmes developed to enhance environment and sustainable development efforts through regional and subregional cooperation.

32. The Committee further acknowledged that the participation of many stakeholders, in particular NGOs and community groups, was essential for the effective integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making. Stakeholders should be brought into the planning process at the earliest possible stage.

33. The Committee noted with interest recent efforts by some of its members and associate members to promote sustainable development. Those consisted of the establishment of appropriate institutional frameworks and modalities for coordination and consultation involving government at national and local levels, local communities and the private sector; the development of relevant policies which integrated environmental and economic concerns; and the promulgation and implementation of necessary legislation. The Committee noted the serious administrative and financial constraints faced by countries in addressing environmental issues, in particular the challenges of implementing environmental policies and plans under unfavourable economic conditions.

2. Efficient utilization of energy in supply-side facilities and demand-side management

34. The Committee commended the secretariat on the document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/2, which analysed the current status of energy in the region, and trends and issues in its promotion and efficient production and utilization.

35. Reaffirming that access to adequate and affordable energy supplies was a prerequisite for equitable socio-economic development, the Committee observed that per capita consumption of commercial energy had remained low in the developing economies of the region. The Committee stressed the need to meet energy demand in the region.

36. The Committee noted that in some countries energy intensities had risen, and that energy consumption in some cases had grown faster than GDP. Considerable energy-saving potential remained in many sectors of the economies of its members and associate members. The Committee welcomed the various measures taken to reduce energy intensities in the various energy end-use sectors, including industry, commercial and institutional buildings, transport and residential households. It recognized that an adequate regulatory framework and a sufficiently developed institutional infrastructure were important for the attainment of energy efficiency.

37. The Committee noted the positive role that minimum energy efficiency product standards could play in curbing the growth of electricity consumption in the home appliance and residential sectors. However, in the same context, the Committee noted that product standards must not constitute undesirable barriers to international trade.

38. The Committee emphasized the need to make future energy systems as environmentally sustainable as possible. Limited fossil fuel reserves and growing environmental concern, as well as the rising cost of expansion of electricity capacity and of infrastructure development, were important factors underlining the need to increase efficiency in energy use on both the supply and the demand sides. The Committee noted the importance of utility demand-side management programmes.

39. The Committee stressed that environment-friendly fuels such as natural gas and renewable sources of energy would have an increasingly important role to play in future energy supply. The Committee noted the environmental advantages of hydropower and geothermal, biomass, solar and wind energy, which were either already economically viable in the region or had the potential to become so. Nuclear energy was also considered a possible option as an effective source of energy.

40. The Committee fully recognized the importance of energy pricing and tariff structures for the development of the energy sector. The raising of energy prices remained a difficult and controversial domestic policy issue in many countries.

41. The Committee recognized the importance of international cooperation mechanisms for channelling financial resources and technical expertise on preferential terms to projects for increasing energy efficiency and for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries and other interested countries of the region.

42. The Committee expressed appreciation of the opportunity for in-depth analysis and the sharing of experience among experts and participating delegations through an expert panel discussion on the subject of achieving a sustainable energy future for all. The panel comprised Mr James C. Martin, Regional Environmental Affairs Officer (Southeast Asia/Pacific), Embassy of the United States of America, Bangkok, as moderator, and the following panellists: Shri Shashi Shekar, Director, Ministry of Power, New Delhi, India; Mr Pongpisit Viseshakul, Director, Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy Division, National Energy Policy Office, Bangkok; Ms Jai-Ok Kim, Executive Director, Citizen's Alliance for Consumer Protection of the Republic of Korea, Seoul; Mr Masahiro Miyazaki, Asian Representative, New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization of Japan; and Mr Pranesh C. Saha, Chief, Energy Resources Section, Environment and Natural Resources Development Division, ESCAP, Bangkok.

43. The invited panellists, with wide experience in various fields, shared their experience and their views on supply-side and demand-side options towards sustainable energy development. The Committee expressed appreciation to the panellists for their valuable contributions on the following topics: (a) overview of energy supply-side options, including the future role of renewable sources of energy in sustainable energy development; (b) demand-side management programmes and related experiences from India; (c) energy conservation activities in Thailand; (d) consumer organization initiatives for the promotion of sustainable energy consumption; and (e) perspectives for Kyoto follow-up activities for the promotion of energy efficiency in Asia: overview of technical and financial cooperation.

44. The Committee agreed with the view of the panel that (a) energy consumption would continue to increase; (b) the challenges in formulating policies towards providing affordable energy services compatible with sustainable development were enormous; (c) the possible range of options might include fuel switching, demand-side management and energy conservation; (d) the important role of NGOs and consumer organizations in promoting energy efficiency through creating public awareness should be recognized and supported; (e) market-driven and/or regulatory policies were needed to promote public/private sector investment; and (f) the role of ESCAP and the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development should include regional and international consultations and collaboration.

3. Integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development

45. The Committee had before it a note by the secretariat on the integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development (E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/3). It noted that there was a need for a holistic approach to sustainable economic development, and identified social progress, effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources as major factors.

46. The Committee recognized that GIS was an important tool for the collection of data on geology and mineral resources and many countries in the region were using GIS for the assessment of mineral tracts within their land areas. In that context, the efforts of ESCAP in conducting two subregional projects and workshops to formulate a GIS-based mineral information system and the proposal to establish subregional training centres for the Greater Mekong subregion and North-East Asia respectively were acknowledged.

47. The Committee also requested the secretariat to assist member countries in adopting the United Nations Classification for Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities and noted that that system would facilitate the private sector in making decisions on investment with risk capital in exploration programmes, in particular in the developing countries of the region.

48. The Committee noted the initiatives launched by members and associate members to formulate and implement effective policy and regulatory frameworks to enable the mining industry to operate in an environmentally sustainable manner. However, the private mining companies should take the leading role in implementing such environmental management practices.

49. The Committee recognized that the incorporation of geological information in planning remained an important part of the multidisciplinary approach towards achieving sustainable development. It further recognized the usefulness of GIS as a tool to support decision-making in land-use planning, for which it had been used in some member countries for some years.

50. The Committee recognized that the delegation of authority from central to local government, as had occurred in some member countries, had been helpful in the generation and implementation of various development projects as components of national economic development plans. It further recognized that local government should be given encouragement to commit resources to the enhancement of urban and land-use planning.

51. The Committee stressed the need for further capacity-building to achieve higher-quality land-use planning, in particular in an urban context, and stated that assistance from ESCAP and the United Nations in general, in the form of human resources development and technical assistance, would be welcomed.

B. Ministerial conferences

1. Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000: achievements since 1995 and agenda for 2000

52. The Committee considered the note by the secretariat entitled "Ministerial Conferences: Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000: achievements since 1995 and agenda for 2000" (E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/4 and Corr.1), and the paper entitled "Summary report on the implementation of Agenda 21 and outcomes of the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 1995" (ESCAP/ENRD(2)/INF.1).

53. The Committee expressed warm appreciation to the representative of the City of Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture, for the excellent presentation on the preparations to host the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, to be held from 31 August to 5 September 2000. The Committee had taken note of the hosting arrangements for the Conference, and welcomed the initiatives of the host government to organize not only the meeting itself, but also the associated events, namely, the NGO/media symposium, the private sector symposium and the clean technologies exhibition, although the dates, content and modalities of organization of those events had to be finalized after further consultation with the secretariat.

54. The Committee recognized that it was necessary and timely that ESCAP should be holding the Ministerial Conference at the turn of the century, with a view to making substantive proposals relating to the environment and sustainable development in the Asian and Pacific region for the new millennium. It considered that one of the major issues that the Ministerial Conference should address was the implementation and follow-up of the previous agreements and commitments made by the international community at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992, and other international meetings of common concern, in particular those relating to financial support and technology transfer. The Committee also noted that the Ministerial Conference would further the aims of Agenda 21, lead to the adoption of the regional action programme 2001-2005, and formulate a regional message to the global community, to be presented at the "Rio+10" conference in 2002.

55. The Committee noted the support being provided in the preparation of the Conference by the Asian Development Bank, UNEP and the World Bank as co-sponsors, and other agencies including the World Health Organization. It also appreciated the assistance being provided by Japan, as the host country, and the Government of the Netherlands.

56. The Committee suggested that the establishment of a mechanism to evaluate and periodically review the conference results and their implementation should be considered. In that light, the role of the Committee should be strengthened.

57. The Committee generally endorsed the draft provisional agendas of the Meeting of Senior

Officials and the Ministerial Conference and considered the topics related to issue papers, as referred to in annex III of document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/4 and Corr.1. In particular, it suggested that the proposed structure and content of the strategic themes and main programme areas outlined for the regional action programme, 2001-2005, should be further elaborated during the intergovernmental preparatory process, in close consultation with member countries, and taking into consideration the comments made during the discussions in the Committee. The Committee suggested that attention should also be paid to striking a balance between focusing on key priority issues and all the diversified concerns of member countries; to correlation with ongoing activities, such as strategic environmental planning; and to policy issues on integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making.

58. The Committee welcomed the support expressed by other United Nations organizations, such as UNEP and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, in participating in the substantive preparations for the Ministerial Conference and the organization of concurrent events, and in cooperating in the implementation of the outcome of the Ministerial Conference. In particular, it noted the proposal of the representative of UNEP to consolidate the relevant work programmes of UNEP and ESCAP in the region, which would bring about optimal results in the implementation of the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference. The Committee also noted the preparations of UNEP to organize a photographic exhibition and a youth caucus in conjunction with the Ministerial Conference.

2. Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: final preparations

59. The Committee was briefed on the timely preparations for the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, which was scheduled to be held at New Delhi from 15 to 20 November 1999. The Committee appreciated the efforts made by the ESCAP secretariat and the Government of India in preparing for the Conference.

60. The Committee was informed that the Prime Minister of India would inaugurate the Second Ministerial Conference at New Delhi on 18 November 1999. India was organizing two parallel events: a science symposium on space technology for improving quality of life in developing countries and a technical exhibition. The delegation from India invited all members and associate members of ESCAP and concerned agencies to participate in the Conference.

61. The Committee noted that the Second Ministerial Conference was expected to consider and then adopt a strategy and an action plan, setting forth a vision for the next century, and would launch the second phase of RESAP.

62. The Committee recognized the importance of the Second Ministerial Conference and that full participation at the highest possible level would ensure the success of the Conference in further

consolidating the gains achieved under RESAP, to the benefit of the countries in the Asian and Pacific region.

C. Programme planning and implementation

63. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the progress made in implementing the programme of work during the period July 1998-June 1999 reported in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/6.

64. The Committee commended the review of the implementation of activities given in the document and noted that such reports should emphasize qualitative analyses of achievements in relation to the original objectives of the programme elements and highlight major impediments, and describe how the various programme activities were shared among countries and utilized in the formulation of policies and the implementation of related activities.

65. The Committee noted with satisfaction the high rate of implementation of the current work programme reported in the document, and the wide-ranging activities undertaken on priority areas.

66. The Committee commended the secretariat for its hard work on preparations for the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000. The Committee indicated that it attached great importance to the preparatory activities for that conference.

67. The Committee expressed support for subregional environmental cooperation programmes such as the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation as those were crucial to raising public awareness and to expanding the concept of sustainable development.

68. The Committee expressed appreciation for the considerable amount of valuable advisory services rendered by the Regional Adviser on Water Resources and the Regional Adviser on Environment. Many countries had greatly benefited from those services and the Committee expressed its strong desire for their continuation.

69. The Committee emphasized the importance of strategic environmental planning towards the promotion of sustainable development. It noted with appreciation the organization of the regional meeting on stakeholder participation in strategic environmental management with the support of the Government of the Netherlands.

70. The Committee reviewed document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/7 on the programme of work and priorities, 2000-2001.

71. The Committee noted the broad objectives of the programme of work and suggested that an informal briefing session should be held for clarification of the programme objectives.

72. The Committee requested that the importance of the development and implementation of environmental policies and plans should be given due recognition in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/7, by inserting "and for developing and implementing environmental policies and plans" in the table in paragraph 18 (a), under "Areas of focus", item 3, at the end of the sentence: "Enhanced national capacities for integrating the environment into economic and social policies." The secretariat took note of that request.

73. The Committee reviewed document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/8 on the draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.

74. The Committee observed that the results of a qualitative analysis on what was achieved compared to the original objectives of the current programme of work could be used as an input to the programme of work, 2000-2001, and an evaluation of the implementation of the current medium-term plan could be used as an input to the next medium-term plan.

75. The Committee requested that the elements of strategic environmental planning be duly reflected in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/8, by inserting "and to develop and implement strategic environmental plans and sustainable development indicators" in paragraph 5 (a) after "to promote the integration of environmental considerations into social and economic planning."

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

76. The second session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development was held at Bangkok from 13 to 15 October 1999.

77. In his opening statement, His Excellency Mr Savit Bhotiwihok, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Government of Thailand, emphasized the importance of the current session of the Committee, which was taking place during the recovery of economies after the economic hardships of the region. He stated that at that critical point, the challenge ahead was to retain the recovery while restoring the environment and protecting national resources to achieve sustainable development.

78. He informed the Committee that since energy played a vital role in contributing to the sustained economic growth of the countries of the region, in Thailand energy policies and strategies had been formulated to meet the challenges faced by the country.

79. Regarding the Second Ministerial Conference to be held at New Delhi next month, he looked forward to a successful outcome, which could provide the countries with additional tools necessary for formulating sustainable development policies.

80. He also considered the convening of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, to be held in Japan, as very timely, given that it would provide guidance on matters related to environment and development.

81. He wished the Committee success in its deliberations.

82. In his statement, the Officer-in-Charge, a.i., of the ESCAP secretariat pointed out that many of the national environment management plans or strategies in the region were rather reactive or ad hoc in nature. He expressed deep concern that while most countries felt the need for an integrated approach, they were facing constraints in translating the concept into practice. He therefore urged the Committee to deliberate on the key issues relating to the integration of environmental considerations into policy-making processes.

83. On the issue of increasing energy supplies to meet demand with minimum environmental impacts, the Officer-in-Charge informed the Committee that that could be achieved by improving supply-side efficiency and demand-side management. On the issue of integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources, he stated that the adverse environmental impact of the mining industry could be minimized by requiring developers to provide financial guarantees to ensure proper land rehabilitation. He also emphasized the importance of geology in urban planning.

84. Finally, he expressed appreciation to both bilateral and multilateral donors for their generous support of the activities of the secretariat in the areas of environment and natural resources development.

B. Attendance

85. The session was attended by the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; France; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Macau; Malaysia; Netherlands; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; United States of America; and Viet Nam.

86. The representative of Israel also attended the session, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the terms of reference of the Commission.

87. The following United Nations bodies were represented: Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The following specialized agencies were also represented: International Labour Organization; United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization; World Health Organization; International Maritime Organization; and International Atomic Energy Agency.

88. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other agencies also attended: Asian Development Bank Centre for Energy-Environment Research and Development, Coordinating Committee for Coastal and Offshore Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia, New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization, the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements, South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme, WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, and the Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

C. Election of officers

89. The Committee elected Malti Sinha (India) Chairperson, Wanee Samphantharak (Thailand) and Mitsuo Usuki (Japan) Vice-Chairpersons, and Abdolreza Ghofrani (Islamic Republic of Iran) Rapporteur.

D. Agenda

90. The Meeting adopted the following agenda, as contained in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/L.1:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development:
 - (a) Policy issues in integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making;
 - (b) Efficient utilization of energy in supply-side facilities and demand-side management;
 - (c) Integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development.
5. Ministerial conferences:
 - (a) Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000: achievements since 1995 and agenda for 2000;
 - (b) Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: final preparations.

6. Programme planning and implementation:
 - (a) Implementation of the programme of work and priorities, 1998-1999, including the recommendations of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development at its first session;
 - (b) Programme of work and priorities, 2000-2001 and proposed programme changes: subprogramme on environment and natural resources development;
 - (c) Draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.
7. Other matters
8. Adoption of the report.

E. Other matters

91. No other matters were discussed.

F. Adoption of the report

92. The Committee adopted the report on 15 October 1999.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/L.1	Provisional agenda	
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/L.2	Annotated provisional agenda	
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/1	Policy issues in integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making	4(a)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/2	Efficient utilization of energy in supply-side facilities and demand-side management	4(b)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/3	Integrated assessment, development and management of land and mineral resources for sustainable economic development	4(c)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/4 and Corr.1	Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000: achievements since 1995 and agenda for 2000	5(a)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/5	Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: final preparations	5(b)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/6	Implementation of the programme of work and priorities, 1998-1999, including recommendations of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development at its first session	6(a)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/7	Programme of work and priorities, 2000-2001 and proposed programme changes: subprogramme on environment and natural resources development	6(b)
E/ESCAP/ENRD(2)/8	Draft medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005	6(c)