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ISSUES AND PROGRAMMES IN VARIOUS FIELDS OF ACTIVITY OF ESCAP:
REPORTS OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD SINCE
THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION, AND
SELECTED ISSUES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS

(Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda)

MINISTERIAL-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, 1990

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I. BACKGROUND

1. One of the major recommendations of the Committee on Industry, Technology, Human Settlements and the Environment, at its tenth session, held from 23 to 28 September 1987, was to convene a ministerial-level conference on the environment for the Asian and Pacific region in 1990. As stated in the report of the Committee:

"The Committee was unanimous in recommending the convening of a ministerial-level conference on the environment for the Asian and Pacific region in 1990 with the objective of reviewing the regional state of the environment, examining the problems and prospects of environmental management in the light of several new developments and considering the long-term environmental problems, and suggesting further measures for strengthening regional co-operation and effort in achieving better quality of life and environment. However, it was suggested that adequate preparation should be made in close consultation with the Governments, as a result of which a well-structured agenda should be prepared."^{1/}

2. The recommendation of the Committee was based on a review of the progress of implementation of the action plans of two ministerial-level conferences on the environment: the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, held in the Cook Islands in 1982, and the Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment in Asia, held at Bangkok in 1985. The Committee noted with concern that despite all the progress made, the region continued to battle such problems as deforestation, desertification and environmental pollution. The Committee felt that one of the major hindrances to overcoming such problems was the ineffectiveness of the existing monitoring and enforcement machineries for environmental protection and management in many developing countries of the region. In addition, a number of issues, such as that of environmentally sound and sustainable development, the long-term problems of the destruction of the ozone layer and the rise in sea level, regional co-operation on the environment and restructuring of economic and social sectors of the United Nations, had emerged in the recent past. The Committee believed that further measures for strengthening regional co-operation and effort would be necessary to deal with those problems.

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^{1/} E/ESCAP/592, para. 27.

3. While appreciating the efforts of the secretariat in strengthening subregional co-operation through its support to subregional environment programmes such as the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), the ASEAN Expert Group on Environment (AEGE) and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Committee suggested that the secretariat should keep in view the regional Asian and Pacific perspective of its work. It was of the view that such subregional group activities could be fostered and promoted in the expectation that their outcome should serve as an input to regional-level co-operation in the field of the environment among all the countries of Asia and the Pacific. This is an additional consideration for strengthening regional co-operation on the environment through a ministerial-level conference on the environment in Asia and the Pacific.

4. In endorsing the recommendation of the Committee to convene a ministerial-level conference on the environment, the Commission may wish to review some of the emerging problems and issues in the field of the environment and offer its views and comments, as appropriate. On the basis of this review, the Commission may wish to examine the tentative agenda for the proposed conference and endorse it, with revisions and modifications as appropriate.

II. STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

5. The Commission may recall its earlier directive to the secretariat to publish a regional state of the environment report. The report was prepared and published in 1985 and circulated at the Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment in Asia, convened in February of the same year. Considering the developments since that time and consequently the need for updating the report, the Committee on Industry, Technology, Human Settlements and the Environment, at its tenth session, suggested that a second state of the environment report should be prepared to establish a better conceptual link between economic development and environmental quality, and that a data collection system should be set up for the purpose of effective evaluation of the environmental situation in the region. In the 1985 report on the state of the environment, which reviewed the overall environmental trends during the period 1960-1980 and made projections for the period 1980-2000, the following conclusions were drawn:

(a) More forest cover would probably be lost in the last 20 years of the century, endangering critical watersheds and animal habitats and increasing soil erosion and the frequency of flooding and droughts;

(b) Deteriorating soil productivity due to overexploitation of the land would limit the anticipated potential of agricultural development projects;

(c) Increase in livestock numbers per hectare would push many marginal areas beyond their carrying capacity into desert states;

(d) Serious depletion, and often destruction of the nearshore fishery would result from inadequate technology, destructive fishing practices near coral reefs, clearing of mangroves and water pollution;

(e) The potential for production of the fishery would be limited because of uncontrolled pollution from domestic, industrial, and agricultural activities;

(f) Increase in the area of irrigated land was likely to lead to further salinization and water-logging and further incidence of malaria and schistosomiasis;

(g) Water-supply and sanitation coverage would increase only if the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade programme was adequately funded;

(h) Urban environmental quality (air, water, solid wastes and noise) would worsen with a doubling of the urban population, increase in the number of automobiles and an intensification of industrial and mining activity;

(i) The use of pesticides might double between 1980 and 2000, and their mishandling could increase health problems.

These conclusions were based on the assumption that between 1980 and 2000, there would be no significant changes in environmental policies, strategies and regulation in the countries of Asia and the Pacific.

6. As an ongoing activity, the secretariat is taking the necessary steps to prepare a more comprehensive and updated report before the forty-fifth session of the Commission in 1989. The Commission may wish to urge its members and associate members to provide data and information, particularly related to developments since the preparation of the first state of the environment report in 1985.

III. STRATEGIES FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

7. Environmentally sound and sustainable development generally demands that the basic needs of all the people are met and that they are provided with the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better quality of life. In the context of the Asian and Pacific region, this requires a significant change in strategies for the exploitation of natural resources (keeping fully in view their long-term sustainability), reorientation of industrial and technological development policies, redirection of investment and trade policies, and institutional and legislative framework for environmental protection and management.

8. During the past several years, the secretariat, on the basis of several resolutions and decisions of the Commission, has continued to play its role in assisting countries in their efforts to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development. During the period under review, the secretariat has developed a series of technical guidelines on environmental impact assessment of development projects, provided technical assistance to selected countries in integrating environmental considerations into their development projects and programmes, conducted training programmes for development administrators and policy planners on environmental management, and promoted environmental awareness among the people of the region through a regional network of environmental journalists and communicators.

9. ESCAP convened the Regional Conference on Media and the Environment in Asia, from 20 to 25 January 1988. It was attended by 69 journalists from 18 countries, and 16 representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies, and other international and non-governmental organizations. Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and Prime Minister of Norway, in her videotaped message, stated that ESCAP was the first regional commission to hold such a conference and the first to react in the follow-up phase of the work of WCED. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Emil Salim, member of WCED and Minister of State for Population and the Environment of Indonesia. In it he called on the media to help raise public awareness and support the concept of sustainable development, which would make it possible to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Conference was inaugurated by Dr. Arun Panupong, Minister attached to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Royal Thai

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Government, and addressed by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The Conference adopted a resolution calling on practising journalists to focus, through the media, on environmental issues of vital concern to the people of the region, and formally constituting the Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists (AFEJ) to promote the exchange of ideas, data and information on environmental matters. In this resolution, the Conference further requested the strengthening and/or establishment of national forums to emphasize the ever-growing importance of the need to create public awareness on environmental issues. Another outcome of the Conference was the finalization of a guidebook on environmental reporting. The Conference requested the ESCAP secretariat to provide initial support for two years during which period AFEJ would seek funding support from various donor agencies and countries for its future activities. The Commission may wish to take note of these developments and offer its views, if any.

10. The Commission may wish to recall that, at its forty-third session in 1987, it endorsed the establishment of a regional network of research and training centres on desertification control in Asia and the Pacific, on the basis of the recommendation of the Intergovernmental Meeting on a Regional Network of Research and Training Centres on Desertification Control. As a follow-up, the secretariat requested UNDP to provide programme support for the network. The Commission may be pleased to note that UNDP has since approved the ESCAP request to provide funding support for the network for the initial period, covering 1988-1989, on the assumption that counterpart contributions from the participating countries will be forthcoming. To date 17 Governments and international organizations or agencies have joined the network and have pledged their support for its activities. Such support includes a UNEP/ESCAP regional seminar on agricultural development in arid and semi-arid zones and its environmental and socio-economic aspects, scheduled to be held in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1 to 20 August 1988; a regional training workshop on desertification control technologies for local government officials, tentatively scheduled for October 1988 in India, and a regional seminar-cum-study tour on desertification control in China, tentatively planned for 1989. The Commission may wish to urge interested countries to participate in the various activities of the network and to pledge their technical and financial support for its operation.

11. The above initiatives have made a significant contribution to promoting the concept of and developing strategies for environmentally sound and sustainable development in several countries of the region. However, the translation of these concepts and strategies into action programmes remains unsatisfactory. In this regard, the contribution of WCED in heightening political and public awareness on the question of sustainable development has been significant. The findings and recommendations of WCED as presented in 1987 in its report entitled Our Common Future has since been discussed by the United Nations General Assembly, which generally endorsed it in resolution 42/187. In that resolution, the Assembly welcomed the report of WCED and called for action by Governments, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies and bodies to promote sustainable development. It also invited Governments, in co-operation with the regional commissions and UNEP and, as appropriate, intergovernmental organizations, to support and engage in follow-up activities, such as conferences, at the national, regional and global levels. Lastly, in the Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-third session (in 1988), a sub-item entitled: "A long-term strategy for sustainable and environmentally sound development". Additional training and technical assistance activities to promote public awareness and to strengthen Governments' ongoing efforts to integrate environmental considerations into development processes are under way. The Commission may wish to take note of these developments and suggest a future course of action for member Governments and the secretariat in the regional follow-up of the WCED report and General Assembly resolution 42/187.

IV. LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

12. Recently, two significant long-term environmental problems have attracted attention at the global level as well as in regional forums. They are the depletion of the ozone layer and the rise in sea level. Although these problems are being dealt with by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the global level, the Commission may wish to take note of the situation and to indicate whether the matter could be raised at the proposed ministerial-level conference with the objective of developing regional strategies and inputs to grapple with these problems.

/Depletion

Depletion of the ozone layer

13. The presence of the ozone layer in the stratosphere and its crucial importance in protecting life on this planet and influencing the earth's climate have been known for many years. The ozone layer absorbs ultraviolet radiation, controlling the global climate and shielding the Earth's surface from such radiation, which can cause severe biological damage, for example skin cancer and degradation of flora and fauna. Recent studies have clearly indicated that owing to an increase in the concentration of several atmospheric trace gases, including chlorofluorocarbons, halons, methane, nitrous oxide and carbondioxide, the thickness of the stratospheric ozone layer is decreasing. The extent of depletion of the ozone layer, according to scientific predictions, will vary; but according to one UNEP study, the total reduction in the thickness of the ozone layer would be approximately 4 times greater at the poles than at the equator. Economic activities causing reduction in the thickness of the ozone layer are the use of aerosol sprays, cooling agents in refrigeration and airconditioning, the use of foaming agents in the plastics industry, cleaning agents in the computer industry and fire suppressants (halons); large-scale fossil-fuel burning and the use of nitrogenous fertilizers; and, lastly, the catastrophic increase in automobile exhausts.

14. In dealing with the global problem of the depletion of the ozone layer, a landmark achievement has been the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer on 16 September 1987 by 24 countries and the European Economic Community. The Protocol, which is basically designed to control chlorofluorocarbons and halons and is expected to enter into force on 1 January 1989, sets a target of a 50 per cent reduction in the production and consumption of chlorofluorocarbons by mid-1999 and freezes the production and consumption of halons, beginning in 1992, at 1986 levels. Under the Protocol, developing countries will have 10 years to comply with the provisions relating to the freeze and the reduction. In fact, they may increase their consumption of chlorofluorocarbons during the period to 0.3 kilograms per capita. It also provides for the provision of technical assistance to developing countries for the purpose of implementing or participating in the Protocol. A mathematical modelling study has shown that if the Protocol is enforced globally, 132 million cases of skin cancer and 27 million deaths from it, as well as 1.5 million cases of eye cataracts could be averted. In view of the fact that the thickness

of the ozone layer over the tropical stratosphere is less than it is over the temperate ozone, a large number of developing countries would benefit from the enforcement of the Protocol, saving as much as half of the total loss in the Asian and Pacific region.

Rise in sea level

15. Although there is still some controversy over the issue, scientists now generally believe that owing to large-scale deforestation, fossil-fuel burning and other factors, the temperature of the lower atmosphere will increase by 1.5-4.5°C by the year 2100. This will cause melting of the polar ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica, which, in turn, will raise the sea level. A number of scenarios have been offered by scientists as to how fast the warming of the earth will raise the level of the seas. According to one estimate, a one or two millimetre rise in the sea level each year is predicted until about 2050 AD; thereafter the rise could increase by as much as an order of magnitude. This may mean a rise in sea level of as much as two metres by the year 2100. This estimate is based on the assumption that the initial rise in atmospheric temperature will only be able to melt the floating glaciers in the polar regions, which will have a less significant effect on the level of the seas; however, a significant rise in sea level will begin when, because of a further increase in temperature, the bottom ice starts melting.

16. Superimposed on this problem of an absolute rise in sea level is another significant problem, that of land subsidence, which is predominant in many coastal and deltaic countries of Asia and the Pacific. Land subsidence has natural (geological processes) and man-made causes, although the impact of the latter is much greater. The rate of land subsidence in these areas generally varies from one to five millimetres per year. However, in areas where extensive ground-water pumping or petroleum extraction is practised, the rate can be much higher. Thailand, for example, has one of the worst experiences of land subsidence, by as much as 10 centimetres a year, primarily due to large-scale ground-water withdrawal. Such land subsidence in coastal areas will obviously contribute to a relative rise in sea level.

17. A third cause of relative rise in sea level in deltaic regions is the construction of large dams, which significantly reduces the transport of sediment into the sea through estuaries. In the case of Asian rivers, the

annual discharge of sediment is 14.5 billion tons, comprising 70 per cent of the total discharge of sediment from all the rivers of the world. The massive discharge of sediment is the cause of land accretions in coastal and nearshore areas, which compensates for land subsidence.

18. Few countries of the world are as dependent upon their coastal regions and the sea as the deltaic countries of Asia. They comprise highly productive agricultural, forestry and fishery development areas with high population density. Unfortunately, because of their low elevation, a slight increase in sea level or coastal erosion would have significant adverse impacts on the socio-economic well-being of the people. As a specific example, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution of the United States of America has made a long-term projection of relative rise in sea level and its consequences on the deltaic regions of Asia which seems rather alarming. According to its predictions, the relative rise in sea level in the coastal areas of Bangladesh could be as much as 1.5 metres, which could result in the loss of 16 per cent of habitable land and 75 per cent of mangrove areas and could displace 13 per cent of the population by the year of 2050.

19. The countries of the region have some control over all three phenomena, namely (a) absolute rise in sea level owing to fossil-fuel burning, large-scale deforestation and other factors, (b) land subsidence due to ground-water pumping and petroleum extraction, and (c) a significant reduction of sediment flow in estuaries and coastal areas due to the construction of large dams. At the initiative of UNEP (Regional Seas Programme), a series of studies have been planned to examine the possible effects of the changes in level on the coastal ecosystems of the countries of the Asian and Pacific region. These studies would be based on the best available information and data on the coastal and marine environment of the region, with reasonable extrapolation, and are expected to be completed by 1989.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

20. At its forty-third session, held in 1987, the Commission welcomed the study on the environmental aspects of agricultural development undertaken in fulfilment of its objective of strengthening the environmental dimensions of its programme of work. The Commission may wish to note that the secretariat (the Environmental Co-ordinating Unit in close co-operation with the Agriculture Division) completed a special study on the environmental aspects of production, marketing and use of pesticides and submitted its report to the Committee on Agricultural Development at its seventh session, held from 16 to 20 November 1987.

21. The study revealed that, in the ESCAP region, while pesticides are regarded as an essential input to prevent significant crop losses, from an environmental health point of view, the problem associated with misuse and mismanagement of pesticides appeared to be quite severe. The study further revealed that the problem was particularly severe in the Asian and Pacific region because:

(a) A large percentage of the population was likely to come into contact with pesticides;

(b) Pesticide regulations, where they existed, were not strictly enforced;

(c) There was a lack of information and training for farmers in the safe use of pesticides;

(d) Highly-toxic varieties of pesticides were freely available in several countries;

(e) It was impractical for poor farmers in tropical climates to wear proper protective clothing;

(f) There was a high rate of soil erosion.

22. The study indicated that slippage of safety in the workplace and effluent control were two major environmental concerns in the manufacturing and formulation of pesticides, whereas accidental poisoning through leakage, re-use of empty drums, improper storage of pesticide with food and the ignorance of buyers concerning the choice of safe pesticides were of vital concern during the marketing phase. The environmental concerns associated with the use of pesticides were their effect on the health of the farmers and non-target organisms, residues in food, pest resistance, and resurgence and pesticide disposal.

23. The Committee on Agricultural Development, at its seventh session, commended the effort of the secretariat in undertaking the special study and generally endorsed several policy recommendations of the study, which included the following:

(1) The level of pollution and health risks at the production level should be reduced through the co-ordinated effort of the Government and the industry and by providing for an emergency response through the establishment of a chemical accident task force;

(2) Governments should play a significant role in ensuring that marketing of pesticides was undertaken in accordance with the FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution of Pesticides. They should also require mandatory training for all dealers in pesticides in their safe handling and use, as a condition for issuing licences;

(3) At the user level, risks should be minimized by adopting the integrated pest management approach;

(4) Institutional and regulatory frameworks should be strengthened and further regional co-operation to deal with the environmental problems of pesticide should be promoted;

(5) Information should be disseminated and training provided to various target groups such as plant managers and personnel, dealers, paramedical personnel and farmers, on the environmental management of pesticides;

(6) Awareness of the environmental aspects of pesticide should be promoted through media and the secretariat's existing programme of farm broadcasting;

(7) In view of the complex linkages between aquatic, atmospheric and terrestrial ecosystems, research programmes should be promoted to provide a better understanding of the impact of pesticides on the environment with special reference to the aquatic environment.

24. The Commission may wish to take note of the outcome of the special study on pesticides and urge its members and associate members to adopt the policy recommendations presented above and endorsed by the Committee on Agricultural Development at its seventh session. It may further wish to recommend that these policy recommendations should be translated into pesticide action programmes at the national level.

VI. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

25. In implementing its programme of work, one of the primary aims of the secretariat has been to strengthen regional co-operation in the field of the environment. Through its activities focusing on the problems of strengthening institutional and legislative framework, promotion of public awareness, control of deforestation and desertification and protection of the marine environment, the secretariat has been promoting regional co-operation on environmental matters among the countries of Asia and the Pacific. The secretariat has also made efforts to promote co-operation with subregional environment programmes, such as SACEP, AEGE and SPREP. The secretariat has also maintained co-operation with UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, IMO and other United Nations agencies and bodies through joint review meetings, the Meeting of Designated Officials on Environmental Matters (DOEM), participation in various meetings of these agencies and bodies, exchange and review of information on their work programmes and informal consultations.

26. At the intergovernmental level, each regional commission has developed its own institutional arrangements to strengthen regional co-operation in the field of the environment. At the first African Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment, held at Cairo in December 1985, the Conference decided to meet every two years, with a ministerial-level Bureau composed of its President, five vice-presidents and the rapporteur of the Conference providing guidance to the Cairo Programme of Action during the interim period. The Conference also recommended the establishment of an inter-agency working group, comprising representatives of the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies and other international organizations. Similar action was taken by the first Arab Ministerial Conference on Environmental Considerations in Development in 1986, where an Arab Ministerial Council on the Environment was established to ensure that the five-point Arab Declaration on the Environment was translated into action.

27. At ESCAP, the Committee on Industry, Technology, Human Settlements and the Environment has been the relevant legislative body. The Committee meets every year and concentrates its discussion on environment and human settlements in alternate years. The Ministerial-level Conference on the Environment in Asia was held in 1985. At its tenth session, the Committee considered a proposal for institutionalizing the ministerial-level conference on the environment and recommended that the matter should be placed before the conference itself for further consideration. It will be recalled that as a consequence of the current review of the intergovernmental structure of

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the United Nations system being carried out by the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission, at its forty-third session, decided that the number of legislative committees would be reduced to seven and that their sessions would be held biennially. At its present session the Commission will review under item 9 of the provisional agenda the steps being taken by the Executive Secretary to implement that decision. Because of the combined nature of the new legislative committees and their biennial frequency, it will be important that subsidiary forums for the consideration of technical issues are programmed carefully in order not to lose the technical competence of the Commission. In the field of the environment, in particular, it will be important and necessary to organize such a forum as a conference to consider newly-emerging issues at the ministerial level from time to time, as considered necessary by the members and associate members of the Commission. Institutionalization of such meetings, however, would require to be considered in the context of the revised conference structure.

28. In so far as promoting inter-agency co-operation on the environment is concerned, the idea of establishing an inter-agency working group such as that mentioned in paragraph 26 above might be considered. However, the idea of constituting an inter-agency co-ordinating mechanism at the regional level, similar to the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters, as a formal method of co-ordination and consolidation of regional efforts might also be considered.

29. The above proposal was also discussed at the tenth session of the Committee. On this question, the Committee recommended that the matter should be discussed further with the Governments before the proposal was presented to the conference. The Commission may wish to offer its views on this matter.

30. The Commission may wish to note that with effect from 1 January 1988, UNEP has withdrawn one P-5 post, completing its process of gradual withdrawal of institutional support from the Environmental Co-ordinating Unit (ECU) of the secretariat. It may further be noted that the Commission, in its resolution 224 (XXXVIII) on the incorporation of environmental considerations into the economic and social development activities of the Commission, requested the Executive Secretary to ensure that three regular budget posts were available for Environmental Co-ordinating Unit by "exploring the possibility of redeploying existing resources within the United Nations or by other possible means". In response to that request, in order to augment the two existing regular budget posts at the P-4 level in the Environmental

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Co-ordinating Unit, the Executive Secretary has temporarily redeployed from the programme on food and agriculture one post at the P-5 level to replace the UNEP-funded post. Of the P-4 posts, one has been frozen in view of the financial crisis, and the other, officially reclassified at the P-3 level, has been filled internally.

31. The Commission may also wish to note that as an input into the overall review of the work of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation of the United Nations conducted a study on regional commissions, during the latter part of 1987. The report of the study, undertaken by a senior consultant, contained a recommendation that UNEP should seek common ground for combining its limited staff with those of the regional commissions and that UNEP programme effectiveness might be affected by phasing out joint staff arrangements with the regional commissions. It was also recommended in the report that UNEP should utilize optimally the United Nations system in view of the multi-sectoral nature of sustainable environment and development issues.

VII. TENTATIVE PROGRAMME FOR THE CONFERENCE

32. On the basis of guidance received from the Committee on Industry, Technology, Human Settlements and the Environment, at its seventh session, held in 1987, and further analysis of the emerging issues as presented in this document, the following tentative agenda for the proposed ministerial-level conference on the environment in Asia and the Pacific is suggested:

1. Policies and perspectives in environmental management in Asia and the Pacific:
 - (a) Review of the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific and progress of implementation of regional action plans;
 - (b) Regional follow-up of the United Nations call for action on sustainable development.
2. Long-term environmental problems of the depletion of the ozone layer and the rise in sea level: their implications in the context of the Asian and Pacific region.
3. Regional co-operation in the field of the environment: role of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies.

4. Declaration on the environment in Asia and the Pacific.
5. Other matters.
6. Adoption of the report.

33. In order to allow the maximum possible time for adequate preparation of the conference, it is suggested that it be held towards the end of September 1990. The duration of the conference could be five working days, which might include a three-day meeting of senior officials (Wednesday-Friday), followed by a two-day conference of ministers (Monday-Tuesday). Unless a Government offers host facilities for the conference, it will be convened at ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok.

VIII. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

34. The Commission may wish to review this document and offer its views on various substantive issues presented herein. In particular, the Commission's attention is drawn to and comments are sought on the following issues:

(a) Provision of country contributions in the form of technical and financial support for the operation of the Regional Network of Research and Training Centres on Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP);

(b) Preparation of a second regional state of the environment report and the co-operation of members and associate members of ESCAP in providing necessary information on the state of their environment;

(c) Review of the United Nations call for action on sustainable development and appraisal of the action undertaken or proposed by the countries of the Asian and Pacific region;

(d) Long-term environmental problems, as discussed in section IV above, and possible regional inputs to global studies;

(e) Strengthening regional co-operation in the field of the environment through appropriate intergovernmental and interagency mechanisms.

35. Lastly, the Commission may wish to endorse the tentative agenda of the proposed ministerial-level conference on the environment in Asia and the Pacific, 1990, as presented in section VII, with the revisions and modifications it may deem appropriate.