



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

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. *Opening of the Meeting*

The Meeting will be opened by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. Statements will be delivered by the respective co-sponsoring organizations, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The inaugural address is expected to be delivered by a representative of the Royal Thai Government.

2. *Election of officers*

The Meeting will elect the bureau, which will include a chairman, three vice-chairmen and a rapporteur.

3. *Adoption of the agenda*

The Meeting will consider and adopt the provisional agenda.

4. *Review of the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific*

The 1995 report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific highlights major concerns and trends relating to environment and sustainable development. 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 to an alarming extent, 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, as the demand for maintaining the present pattern of development has further intensified. It is envisaged that as the countries prepare to enter a new economic era, the pressure

on these resources and the fragile ecosystems will increase considerably from its present level. This scenario, unless appropriately addressed, will push countries of the region to the threshold of ecological disaster.

Since the Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, in 1990, and three years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit, the region has made some progress towards institution-building, enacting legislation, promoting a coordination mechanism and raising awareness of the environment.

However, the policies and programmes for promotion of sustainable development, with their implementation measures, are yet to be effective in reversing the deteriorating environmental trends in the region.

The document under this agenda item will present the environmental situation in the light of development trends and priorities in the region. The Meeting is invited to examine the situation and bring out relevant issues for incorporation in the regional action programme and the draft ministerial declaration on environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, to be considered under other agenda items.

5. *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*

The objective of this agenda item is to bring into focus the implementation issues of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy and analyse some of the key subject areas and issues as the bases for the regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development to be discussed under item 6 of the provisional agenda. There will be five documents for discussion under this agenda item.

The document on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development will be the first to be considered under this agenda item. The General Assembly, through its resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, endorsed Agenda 21, urging Governments, international organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to implement the recommendations of Agenda 21 and its provisions. As precursor to Agenda 21, the Asian and Pacific region through the 1990 ESCAP Ministerial-level Conference, developed the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development. Its implementation is being pursued as a regional priority alongside the global pursuit of the implementation of Agenda 21.

The document will analyse key issues on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy in the context of the Asian and Pacific region. The analysis will cover the economic and social dimensions and include macroeconomic policies, trade and environment, population, poverty and consumption, the environmental issues relating to women and children, and the involvement of the people in general in the sustainable development process. The document will also contain an analysis of policies and issues on the management of natural resources, ecosystems and other aspects of sustainable development in the region, focusing on the relevant recommendations of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy. An overall review of action undertaken through conventions and treaties on the environment, regional and global programmes as follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and major sustainable development initiatives at the national level, will be provided. The document will then discuss the key constraints to the effective promotion of sustainable development in the region and invite the attention of the Meeting to the proposals for their mitigation.

The Meeting is also expected to comment on the analysis provided in the document and, on the basis of country experience, identify policies and programmes to enhance further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy.

The document on the eradication of poverty for sustainable development is included for discussion at the Conference on the recommendation of the Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok from 1 to 4 August 1995. The document will assess the regional poverty situation, its linkage with the environment, its relationship with economic growth and the continuing incidence of poverty, and international and regional measures already under way, with examples of successful programmes; it will recommend measures for the orientation of ongoing and future poverty eradication programmes incorporating sustainable development objectives. The Meeting is requested to comment on the issues and recommendations presented in the document and propose appropriate action for the region.

The document on transfer of environmentally sound technology will be presented as a special topic related to the implementation of Agenda 21. As stipulated in chapter 34 of Agenda 21, the issue of transfer of environmentally sound technologies is a crucial component in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. The document will present the findings of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, regional responses and sectoral concerns, with broad identification of the technologies. The document will also deal with facilitation of the transfer of these technologies, such as information on the technologies, research and development, the role of centres on such technologies, clearing-house mechanisms, financing and networking. The general emphasis will be on endogenous capability to facilitate the transfer of the technologies in an effective way. The Meeting will review the issues presented in the document, as

well as the measures to be undertaken at the national, regional and international levels for promoting the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and building capacity in the region.

The document on climate change and the potential rise in sea level, with their socio-economic implications and response strategies, will present policy makers in the Asian and Pacific region with an overview of the scientific assessment and impacts of climate change and sea-level rise in the region. The presentation will also include the response strategies that could be pursued by the countries of the region, both individually and collectively, in line with the global consensus reached at the United Nations Conference in 1992 as well as in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The document will also highlight the activities already undertaken, in the form of national case-studies, the development of regional strategies and networks, and follow-up to the Convention.

As climate change is a complex issue having many elements and ramifications, including uncertainties, innovative and careful assessment will be required in developing action to combat the problem. The Meeting is expected to deliberate on the proposed action and provide guidance in its implementation in the region within the framework of the Convention.

The document on follow-up to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is intended to provide an updated overview of the implications and action on the follow-up to the Global Conference. The document will outline broadly the concerns of the national environmental management strategies (survival issues, basic needs, demographic trends and infrastructures) being pursued by the small island developing States and the coordination and monitoring mechanisms being established to monitor the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The document will also suggest several new initiatives for domestic policy improvement that may be undertaken in such States in Asia and the Pacific, with particular regard to regional- and international-level undertakings.

The Meeting will review and consider the initiatives proposed for the small island developing States to provide guidance on this matter.

6. *Development of a regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development, 1996-2000*

Based on the environment and development situation, the trends and priorities identified in the 1995 report on the state of the environment and other substantive issues to be raised under other agenda items, and following the guidance on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Strategy embodied in the Framework of Regional Action for Sustainable Development adopted by the Commission at its forty-ninth session held in April 1993, a draft regional action programme has been prepared. In drafting the action programme, ESCAP was further guided by the recommendations of

the High-level Meeting on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Manila in February 1995, and received the active support, cooperation and involvement of the relevant United Nations agencies and organizations, and multilateral financing institutions. The document was also reviewed at the two preparatory meetings of the Conference, held in Port Vila in July and in Bangkok in August 1995.

This objective of the regional action programme, which would operationalize the decisions and recommendations of the Ministerial Conference, is to enhance regional cooperation to strengthen national capacity for achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development; to identify the technical assistance needs and priorities of developing countries; and to promote the programmes and projects at the regional level necessary to support national-level activities. The regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development, as proposed in the document, is intended for implementation during the period 1996-2000, and would cover the following areas: (i) pollution prevention and control and enhancement of environmental quality; (ii) conservation and management of natural resources and ecosystems; (iii) improvement of sustainable development policy; and (iv) sustainable development indicators and assessment.

The regional action programme is intended to be seen as a system-wide regional environment programme, responding to emerging environment and development trends and challenges, to be implemented by the members and associate members with the cooperation and assistance of the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, multilateral financing institutions and interest groups within their respective areas of responsibility.

The Senior Officials will consider and finalize the draft regional action programme and recommend it for adoption by the Ministers.

7. *Preparation of a ministerial declaration on environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific*

ESCAP has recently organized a number of ministerial conferences on such issues as urbanization, population, women and social development, in all of which sustainable development was one of the main issues. The Ministerial-level Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok in 1990, also organized by ESCAP, raised the issues of environmentally sound and sustainable development with regional cooperation as the major focus. The declaration of the Conference accordingly reflected those concerns. There are also the declarations of global summits, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development committing the countries to the high ideals of sustainable development and the inter-country cooperation needed to realize those ideals.

The objective of the declaration of the Ministerial Conference could be to recognize the special situation of the region in defining its commitment and support towards environmentally sound and sustainable development, into the twenty-first century. The document to be submitted for discussion under this agenda item will raise the relevant issues that may be the object of this declaration.

The document will also contain a draft declaration for consideration by the Senior Officials that was developed at the High-level Meeting on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and reviewed at the two preparatory meetings for the Conference. The Senior Officials will consider the draft ministerial declaration for further elaboration, consolidation and refinement, as necessary, to ensure effective implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Conference. The draft declaration will be presented to the Meeting of Ministers for consideration and adoption.

8. *Other matters*

Any other matters pertaining to the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials relating to the Ministerial Conference, to be raised by the representatives attending the Conference, the secretariat and the co-sponsoring agencies, will be discussed under this agenda item.

9. *Adoption of the report*

The Meeting will consider and adopt the report.

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