



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000

Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials  
31 August–2 September 2000  
Kitakyushu, Japan

**ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

1. *Opening of the Meeting*

The Meeting will be opened by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The inaugural and welcome addresses will be delivered by representatives of the host country, Japan.

2. *Election of officers*

The Meeting will elect the bureau, which will comprise a chairperson, three vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur.

3. *Adoption of the agenda*

The Meeting will consider and adopt the provisional agenda.

4. *State of the environment and sustainable development policy*

The Meeting will discuss two documents under this agenda item, E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/1 and E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/2.

Document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/1 discusses the status and trends of environmental conditions in Asia and the Pacific. It provides information on the dynamics that are taking place in various areas of the environment such as land, water, forest, biodiversity, the marine environment and the atmosphere. Although elaborating upon some positive developments, the document generally provides a dire scenario of the regional environment. In addition to an assessment of environmental conditions and trends, a brief review of national and regional policy responses has been included to give an idea of the policies and actions that have been undertaken to cope with the growing environmental problems in the region. An evaluation of major challenges and emerging

issues is made to provide a snapshot of issues that may warrant urgent and immediate action in the region to overcome the environmental and sustainable development problems at the turn of the century.

With an overarching emphasis on the Asian and Pacific region and its specific situation and problems at the dawn of a new millennium, document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/2 raises certain key determinants of sustainable development such as consumption of resources, production through conversion of resources to desired goods, distribution of consumption, pollution and the environmental degradation resulting from resource extraction. Consumption beyond reasonable limits set by nature and technological knowledge; production characterized by inefficiencies in use of energy, water and materials; and inequitable distribution of resources and consumption are all seen to stifle sustainable development. In examining these issues, considerable emphasis is placed on poverty aspects of the region, and this is the central theme of this document.

The attainment of sustainable development in Asia is a particularly challenging goal because of the very dynamic processes of change that, over the years, have created inequality and environmental degradation. The document, reflecting a detailed analysis of the Asian Development Bank's forthcoming publication on sustainable development in Asia, and case studies of successful initiatives in sustainable development in the region, spells out needed changes in policy to correct market and institutional failures currently preventing sustainable development. Different paradigms for public-sector infrastructure planning and for public and private sector collaboration towards poverty reduction and environmental protection are examined.

The Meeting is invited to discuss the issues and challenges highlighted in the two documents and to provide guidance on ways and means of solving these problems through incorporating relevant action in the regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development for implementation during the period 2001-2005.

5. *Review of the implementation of Agenda 21, international environmental conventions, the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996-2000, and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*

The third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in November 1995, adopted the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996-2000, in consonance with the regional pursuit of the implementation of Agenda 21. The objective of this agenda item is to bring into focus issues surrounding regional efforts to implement Agenda 21 through the Regional Action Programme, 1996-2000, including national and subregional initiatives, major international environmental conventions (for example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in

those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal) and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1994.

The Meeting will discuss two documents under this agenda item, E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/3 and E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/4. Document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/3 serves three functions: description, analysis and prognosis of implementation. It will be supported by a background document providing more detailed information.

In its descriptive function, it provides a synopsis of the information given in background documents, surveying progress made since 1995 towards the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Regional Action Programme, 1996-2000. Consideration and assessment of the implementation of major environmental conventions will be integrated, as appropriate, into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral issues, consistent with the format of the Regional Action Programme.

In its analytical function, the document will identify constraints encountered in implementation processes at the regional, subregional and national levels. It is intended to go beyond the frequently cited constraints, such as lack of finances and political will, by exploring their underlying causes, such as weaknesses in institutions and governance, in the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, and in human resources capacity.

In constructing a prognosis, the document will review successful cases of implementation and present them as examples for emulation. The lessons learned may provide guidance to assist national governments and subregional and regional bodies to achieve greater success in future implementation efforts. On this basis, the document will consider priority opportunities, making recommendations for concrete steps to further progress towards implementation. This guidance could be considered in formulating the regional action programme for implementation in the period 2001-2005.

Document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/4 refers specifically to the small island developing states of the region, notably the Pacific island developing countries. There was an expressed need to address separately some of the pressing environmental concerns and priorities of the small island developing countries in order to focus on those concerns. Climate change and the development of renewable energy technologies, in particular, stand out as priority issues where a number of implementation activities under the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States have either been carried out or are planned, subject to the support and assistance of the international community. Other issues requiring due attention include, for example, the integration of environmental considerations into economic decision-making, improving the management of coastal, biodiversity and freshwater resources, hazardous waste management,

ecotourism, and widespread access to information and Internet communications. These priorities were based on the outcome of the meetings of the Pacific island countries, including the subregional and regional preparatory meetings for the Conference. The regional assessment of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will be available as an information document.

The Meeting is invited to comment on the analyses provided in the documents, to endorse the recommendations or to make suggestions for their modification, and to make additional suggestions for action programmes which will facilitate implementation of Agenda 21. Representatives are also invited to state their national achievements in the implementation of Agenda 21 and related action towards the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, 1996-2000.

6. *Critical environment and sustainable development issues of the region and measures for promoting sustainable development, including partnership with private sector and civil society groups*

To promote implementation of Agenda 21 in the region, the third Ministerial Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996-2000, addressing the regional environmental priorities. Faced with rising populations, unbridled economic growth, overexploitation of natural resources, and the tendency to focus mostly on achieving short-term development objectives at the expense of longer-term sustainability considerations, many countries of the region are experiencing severe environmental problems. Some of the key environmental concerns are deteriorating air quality, declining water resources in terms of quality and availability, overloading of wastes due to unsustainable production and consumption patterns, loss of biodiversity, diminishing coastal resources, and exposure to hazardous chemicals and waste.

There is an urgent need to tackle some of these environmental problems in the near or short term as the situation has already reached critical dimensions affecting human health, the national economy and the natural ecosystem. It is therefore proposed that the environmental issues that are deemed most critical for the sustainable development of the region should be selected and studied in depth to bring the concerns to the attention of the Ministers to resolve or to address those issues. In this process, the decisions of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held in 1997, in reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, will be taken into consideration.

The Meeting will discuss document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/5 and an information paper under this agenda item.

As a study on the critical environment and sustainable development issues of the region, document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/5 essentially focuses on an overall assessment of the current status, including the impact at the regional and subregional levels, quantification of the trends, projections to be based on probable development scenarios and possible options to address those environment and sustainable development issues.

After consultations at the expert and intergovernmental level, it is proposed that the study should cover the following critical issues: environmental quality and human health, including air and water quality and solid waste management; water resources management for clean and adequate supply; biodiversity conservation management; coastal resources management; sustainable energy development; and partnership with civil society and the business sector in dealing with the critical environmental issues. It is realized that this is not necessarily an exhaustive list, yet these critical issues are nonetheless considered to be at the forefront of the sustainable development debate in the region.

In addition to the above, an information paper featuring research findings of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies will be brought to the attention of the Conference. These findings cover major policy implications of addressing critical environment and sustainable development issues of the region, such as an integrated approach to manage population, poverty and environment; new environmental investments and infrastructure-building strategy; sustainable forest management; and promotion of a society oriented towards recycling of resources.

Representatives will be invited to comment on the issues raised while presenting their national environmental and sustainable development concerns and priorities, as well as reflections on regional and subregional priorities.

7. *Development of a regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development, 2001-2005*

The development of the regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development for Asia and the Pacific for the period 2001-2005 will be based on the discussions and recommendations of agenda items 4-6. The draft regional action programme for 2001-2005 (E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/6) will elaborate on priority areas and activities to be undertaken at the regional level to enhance capacities to implement Agenda 21 at the national, subregional and regional levels. It is a distillation of environment and development priorities of the region as collated through views of governments, subregional and regional reviews and consultations and the preparatory process of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, including the five-year review of the outcomes of the 1992 Conference at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly held in 1997.

The draft regional action programme for 2001-2005 provides a focused and concrete framework for action to redouble efforts at sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. It will attempt to cluster the issues around several strategic themes or programme areas: environmental quality and human health, biodiversity, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, desertification and land degradation, globalization and policy integration, climate change and sustainable energy development in order to provide a multidisciplinary and broad-based approach to problem-solving. In elaborating these themes, it will examine the rationale for problem identification objectives, and ways of alleviating the problems, for example, through setting targets as appropriate. Each of the programme areas will indicate the status and trends of the issues, action areas, an implementation strategy and activities and targets at the national level, including areas of support at the regional and subregional level. Further, it will elaborate the overall implementation, coordination and appraisal mechanisms, including the role of various stakeholders which will include the government, international, regional and subregional organizations and major groups such as local organizations, women, non-governmental organizations, the media and the private sector.

The Senior Officials will consider and finalize the draft regional action programme for 2001-2005 and recommend it for adoption by the Ministers.

8. *Declaration, regional message for the "Rio + 10" review of Agenda 21, and the Kitakyushu initiative for a clean environment*

The Meeting will discuss three documents under this agenda item: E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/7, E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/8 and E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/9.

The third Ministerial Conference raised the issues of environmentally sound and sustainable development with regional cooperation as the major focus. The Declaration of the 1995 Conference accordingly reflected those issues. The 1995 Declaration also reflected priority environment and development concerns in the region and called upon each member country of ESCAP to intensify efforts to protect and improve the quality of the environment through the adoption of strategic approaches that balanced economic growth and sound environmental management. The declarations of global summits such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 committed participant countries to the high ideals of sustainable development and the intercountry cooperation needed to realize those ideals.

The objective of the declaration of the present Ministerial Conference will be to acknowledge the special situation of the Asian and Pacific region in defining the commitment and support of national governments towards the realization of environmentally sound and sustainable

development into the twenty-first century. In particular, the declaration will seek to provide the impetus for governments to take appropriate policy measures which will accord high priority to environmentally sound and sustainable development; to articulate common sustainable development goals for the region through the promotion of regional and subregional cooperation; to urge governments in the region to initiate regular policy reviews which will set national priorities and policies that will involve all sectors in sustainable development activities; to promote development and implementation of national environmental action plans and stakeholder participation; to encourage governments to undertake an assessment of their environmental performance in pursuing sustainable development using nationally determined criteria that are based on the decisions covered in the draft declaration; and to commit themselves fully to the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. The draft declaration contained in document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/7 is submitted for review by the Senior Officials, and will be presented to the Meeting of the Ministers for consideration and adoption as the declaration of the Conference.

Document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/8 discusses the challenges, outlook and priorities for environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century. Based on the identified targets in the regional action programme for 2001-2005, the Conference will provide guidance for the development of a regional message for the "Rio + 10" review of Agenda 21 to be held in 2002 and recommend the substantive content and the regional priorities to be addressed in this message. The document will be reviewed by the Senior Officials for endorsement at the Ministerial Conference.

With increasing population growth and urbanization, many countries in the region are experiencing extreme environmental stress in an urban context. The Conference will consider the Kitakyushu initiative for a clean environment which, after a review of the critical environment and sustainable development issues in the region, will be highlighted to provide a mechanism for the implementation of the selected programme areas of the regional action programme. Issues to be addressed are expected to include air and water pollution, waste disposal, the development of urban green areas, and environmental management issues of megacities and intermediate cities. The initiative will be formulated on the basis of the past experiences of the city of Kitakyushu, which is renowned for having successfully overcome severe environmental pollution, and for continuing its effort to assist pollution control initiatives of participating local authorities to mitigate their environmental problems. In the implementation of this initiative, the experiences of other participating institutions, organizations and local bodies will be included. Participation in this initiative will be invited from among the organizations and bodies of the members and associate members of ESCAP.

Document E/ESCAP/SO/MCED(00)/9 contains a review of the past experiences on environmental management in Kitakyushu, including their technical, institutional, regulatory and partnership aspects. Based on these aspects, the document identifies specific priority actions to be replicated at the regional and subregional level, including the identification of measurable targets which could be achieved. It also explores supportive measures, such as technology transfer, exchange of experiences and promotion of regional cooperation. The Senior Officials will be requested to review the document with a view to recommending its endorsement by the Ministers.

9. *Other matters*

The Meeting may consider other matters raised by the Senior Officials or the secretariat.

10. *Adoption of the report*

The Meeting will adopt its report.

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