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Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials

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**DECLARATION, REGIONAL MESSAGE FOR THE “RIO + 10” REVIEW OF
AGENDA 21, AND THE KITAKYUSHU INITIATIVE FOR
A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**

(Item 8 of the provisional agenda)

**REGIONAL MESSAGE FOR THE 10-YEAR REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In 2002, the General Assembly will conduct a special session for a 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. In advance of this session it is anticipated that at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 a regional message will be discussed and a common vision will be developed on environmentally sound and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century. Based on the identified targets and actions for the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005, the Meeting will discuss and consider the draft message containing an assessment of the progress made in sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. In 1992, heads of government met in Rio de Janeiro for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was a landmark event in which countries of the world initiated a new global partnership for sustainable development, a partnership that recognizes the indivisibility of environmental protection and the development process. At Rio, it was acknowledged that the achievement of sustainable development required the full integration of its environmental, economic and social components. Nations must commit to work together to reinforce joint efforts to equitably meet the needs of present and future generations.

2. In this spirit of partnership, the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 is expected to foster the continuous dialogue and action inspired by the Rio Conference and the need to work towards a more efficient and equitable global community, thus creating a conducive international climate for achieving environment and development goals. The Ministerial Conference will serve as a recommitment among the countries in the region to work together to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21.

3. The eight years that have passed since the Rio Conference have been characterized by accelerated globalization in particular in the areas of world trade, foreign direct investment and capital markets. Globalization presents new opportunities and challenges. It is important that national and international social and environmental policies be implemented and strengthened to ensure that globalization trends have a positive impact on sustainable development. The impacts of recent globalization, with respect to developing countries, have been uneven. Only a limited number of developing countries in Asia and the Pacific have been able to take advantage of positive trends. In contrast, many developing countries have shown slow or negative growth. Furthermore, the recent economic downturn in Asia has had negative effects on those countries that had benefited from the trends towards globalization.

4. In 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations held a special session to review the implementation of Agenda 21. While it was acknowledged that progress had been made in areas such as the development of legal and institutional frameworks to address environmental issues, the overall progress of implementation was held to be inadequate. The special session noted that factors such as the persistence of poverty and the growing gap between developed and developing countries had frustrated efforts to implement Agenda 21 effectively.

5. Some achievements since the "Rio + 5" special session of the General Assembly in 1997 merit recognition. At the global level the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 1998 Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and steps to finalize a Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity saw the further establishment, at law, of certain environmental obligations. Regionally and subregionally, steps have also been taken to strengthen

cooperation in the field of the environment, for example, the Waigani Convention¹ and the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia which calls for increased regional cooperation in combating air pollution in South Asia. Similar instruments are under development in South-East Asia, largely in response to the forest fires and resulting haze problem of 1997-1998.

6. Furthermore, in most subregions of Asia and the Pacific, there are ongoing cooperative efforts in the form of subregional environment programmes such as the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme; the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Senior Officials for the Environment; the recently developed North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation; the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting in North-East Asia; the Caspian Sea Environment Programme; and the International Rehabilitation Fund for the Aral Sea.

7. Overall, however, the gains made since the Rio Conference and, more recently since the five-year review, are overshadowed by negative environmental trends. The state of the global environment continues to deteriorate and patterns of consumption and exploitation of natural resources continue at unsustainable levels, as noted in the *Global Environmental Outlook*² of the United Nations Environment Programme and the ESCAP state of the environment report for Asia and the Pacific, 2000. Significant environmental problems remain deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of countries throughout the Asian and Pacific region. While some progress has been made, particularly in the areas of institutional development, international consensus-building, public participation and private sector actions, overall environmental trends are worsening.

II. 10-YEAR REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

8. The 10-year review will focus on a comprehensive and critical assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21. Reviews and assessments are expected to be carried out at all levels, including local, national, regional and international, by governments and all other stakeholders. The review will serve to identify areas where progress has been made; areas where further efforts are needed; and new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since the Rio Conference, in particular those resulting from globalization and technological progress. This review is also expected to include an evaluation of the results achieved in the implementation of environment-related conventions and protocols as well as the effectiveness and adequacy of international financial institutions and mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility.

¹ Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes Within the South Pacific Region, 1995.

² Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

III. THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE 10-YEAR REVIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

9. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session held in New York, in April 2000, stressed the importance of early and effective preparations for the 2002 review and an assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be carried out at the local, national, regional and global levels by governments and the United Nations system, so as to ensure high-quality inputs to the review process. The Commission also noted that the regional commissions and regional offices of UNEP could greatly facilitate regional preparations and should be actively involved in the preparatory process. The importance of the preparatory process was also recognized by Ministers at the Global Ministerial Environment Forum held at Malmö, Sweden, in May 2000, who noted, in particular, that governments had to play a major role in the preparations at the regional and global levels, ensuring that the environmental dimension of sustainable development was fully considered. The Ministers further noted that the preparatory process should be accelerated. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs convened a meeting in New York with the representatives of the regional commissions and the UNEP regional offices to discuss the regional preparatory process. Future preparatory activities could include a regional preparatory meeting, subregional consultations and regional Agenda 21 roundtables involving eminent experts from the region and representatives of all key sectors of society.

10. The preparatory process for the 2002 review should be designed to facilitate a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the region with particular reference to the main regional achievements; prospective outlooks and main constraints faced by the region, including common and specific constraints; and new initiatives and commitments within the region. It was expected that that would lead to a regional "platform", in advance of the 2002 review, which would outline key policy issues including sustainable development issues which required priority attention; issues which could be more effectively addressed at the regional and subregional levels; and specific proposals from the region regarding the strengthening of international cooperation.

IV. THE REGIONAL MESSAGE

11. The Ministers of the members and associate members of ESCAP who met at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 will present the following message at the 10-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the Rio Conference:

1. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 was a landmark event that launched a global partnership at the highest level of political commitment for sustainable development. Since then, governments of the Asian and Pacific region have, within the bounds of their limitations and constraints, drawn up and implemented national strategies, action plans and programmes to attain the objectives of sustainable development. International, regional and subregional organizations have tried to develop their respective action programmes to assist the concerned governments in their efforts.

2. Significant gains have been made, notably updating environmental laws and policies; strengthening institutions in the areas of environmental compliance and enforcement; improving decision-making processes for greater accountability and transparency; making efforts at capacity-building of institutions tasked to oversee environmental management; and formulating national conservation strategies and the national Agenda 21 of the countries of the region. Progress has also been achieved in intensifying reforestation efforts, increasing activities in the conservation of biodiversity by declaring new protected areas, implementing river revival programmes and promoting coastal rehabilitation. In addition, there have been policy initiatives to curb air and water pollution, to promote multi-stakeholder participation, in particular the participation of the business sector, non-governmental organizations, the scientific and academic communities, women and youth, and to pursue activities that would prevent, control and mitigate environmental degradation.

3. However, all indications point to the fact that the momentum of negative environmental change continues to outpace the best efforts of nations. The state of the global environment has continued to deteriorate. The overall outlook, especially for developing and least developed countries, is worse today than it was in 1992 and in 1997.

4. The Asian and Pacific region is rife with degradation superlatives: for example, it is the largest area of land affected by soil degradation and human-induced salinization in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of the world; it has the largest contribution of total sediment transport into the oceans and the highest level of water withdrawals for agriculture; the levels of smoke and dust in 10 Asian megacities are twice the world's average; the faecal bacteria in rivers is three times the world's average and 10 times the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development guidelines; and it has the largest population of the world's poor with a calorie intake still one third lower than in the developed countries.

5. Trends show a further increase, at alarming levels, of the pressure on the region's environment. The population in the region is expected to reach 4.8 billion by the year 2025 and 5.3 billion by the year 2050. By 2025, 11 more cities are predicted to reach megacity status when Asia's urban population reaches 2.5 billion people or half the world's urban population. Demand for water is anticipated to increase fivefold. Energy consumption, which now accounts for just over 20 per cent of world energy consumption, will increase to more than 30 per cent with an attendant increase in air pollution.

6. These new developments have benefits on one hand and risks on the other. While unprecedented opportunities for sustainable development are opened up by globalization and trade liberalization, they could also exacerbate environmental degradation as the scaling up of industry and the consumption of polluting goods increase the exploitation of natural resources and pollution within and across boundaries. The goals of globalization and trade liberalization are increased income and economic growth but, without a foundation for broad-based growth,

increases in inequality have occurred and could turn more serious. Information technology is growing by leaps and bounds and has all the potential for helping people use knowledge to solve their problems. However, its grossly uneven development and distribution creates even greater inequity within and among nations. Biotechnology allows the creation of genetically modified organisms which have enormous potential for increased food production. At the same time, great risks of ecological backlash, technological and economic dependence, as well as ethical issues, accompany these technologies. In all of these, cultural erosion, with its political and ecological repercussions is also a consequent risk, the irreversibility of which increases its potential damage. Ratification of the Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biology Diversity is crucial.

7. The priorities of Asia and the Pacific with regard to the environment focus on the critical issues of the region, namely: (a) environmental quality and human health: air and water quality, wastes, toxic chemicals and transboundary issues; (b) biodiversity: conservation of ecosystems (coastal and marine, riverine, wetlands, grasslands, forests and mountains, critical habitats), protection of threatened and endangered species, and biosafety; (c) the marine and coastal environment: land- and sea-based pollution, international waters, coral reefs, islands and tourism; (d) freshwater resources: conservation and integrated management; (e) desertification and land degradation: support for thematic programme networks; (f) environment and economics: environmental and economic policy integration, use of economic instruments, globalization, trade and environment issues; (g) climate change: in particular, the vulnerability of small island developing states and low-lying coastal areas; and (h) sustainable energy development.

8. It should be recognized, however, that poverty reduction is the keystone to sustainable development. What is needed is broad-based growth that meets the economic and social needs of the peoples of the region, while not leading to degradation of the environment.

9. To pave the way for the decoupling of environmental growth and environmental pollution, the following actions, inter alia, need to be taken:

(a) To use market mechanisms effectively and find ways to increase business and employment opportunities relating to global environmental issues;

(b) To move towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption through the implementation of appropriate policy mixes, which should include economic instruments, regulatory measures, awareness building and education;

(c) To identify areas in which more scientific data and probing assessments need to be incorporated, ensuring the best use of recent technological progress such as information technology for addressing problems, and developing innovative technology that can be used in resolving problems in these areas.

10. Owing to increasing financial constraints faced by many countries in the region, there is a need to honour the commitments made at the Rio Conference for official development assistance to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. In addition, developed countries must vigorously pursue the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and know-how, in particular to developing countries.

11. Additional resources could also be obtained through the increased participation by civil society and the private sector. Civil society is an important partner in improving environmental management and accountability. The business sector is a potent catalyst for development and a critical partner in the pursuit of greater eco-efficiency.

12. Regional and subregional cooperation could significantly facilitate resource mobilization and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and know-how. Strengthening regional and subregional cooperation is particularly important for activities that enhance national capacity-building processes.

13. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. Urgent action is needed to help countries rebound from the Asian financial crisis, including measures to prevent any recurrence in the future. The crisis also exposed the vulnerabilities consequent upon the increased interconnectedness that globalization continues to bring about. The impact of globalization must be constantly monitored and assessed and countries must be supported in developing their capacity to utilize the positive opportunities created and to mitigate negative impacts. This includes ensuring that trade and environmental policies are mutually supportive and promote sustainable development and that trade policy measures, for environmental purposes, do not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.

14. The countries in the ESCAP region are committed to supporting all global initiatives and activities that are designed to safeguard the environment, to promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development and to furthering the implementation of Agenda 21. They have been instrumental in undertaking several initiatives towards this end, including:

(a) A comprehensive assessment on the state of the environment for 2000 outlining the status and trends of environmental problems in the region along with their root causes;

(b) A regional action programme for environmentally sound and sustainable development for 2001-2005, which provides a framework for action at national, subregional and regional levels;

(c) The convening of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 from 31 August to 5 September 2000 and the adoption at that Conference of a declaration which reflects the commitment of countries towards achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. It also identifies the specific areas of concern in which the global, regional and subregional actions are required;

(d) The mobilization of a wide spectrum of intellectual potential in the region, through multi-stakeholder consultation, to further the process of the regional implementation of Agenda 21 and to contribute to substantial input for the preparation of the 10-year review.

15. The countries of the region are committed to strengthening collective efforts at the regional level for the expeditious conclusion of ongoing and planned negotiations on international legal documents and agreements related to the

environment and sustainable development. The region will pursue new environmental initiatives such as the establishment of transboundary protected areas, transboundary pollution monitoring and possible regionwide implementation of the proposed ASEAN framework protocol on access to genetic and biological resources and proposed agreement on forest fires. The countries of the region are also committed to promoting synergies among activities stemming from environment-related conventions and those undertaken by international organizations to ensure that international processes for formulating and implementing international agreements in sustainable development are clear and efficient, thus promoting compliance and the likelihood of more tangible results. In addition, it should be noted that regional and subregional mutual environmental dialogues, such as the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, are effective measures to promote such activities. Taking note of the difficulties of preparing state-of-the-environment reports, better mechanisms need to be developed for monitoring the situation, collecting data, making the analysis so that cause and effect are known, and sharing the information for global assessments and policy development. An example is the improved and expanded Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia.

16. The Asian and Pacific region envisions a future of continuously improving environmental quality sustained by dynamic and vibrant economies and supported by empowered peoples creating foundations for national unity, regional solidarity and global partnerships for sustainable development. In this, the governments and peoples of the region are committed to becoming architects of a sustainable future, building upon three areas:

- Environment:* providing adequate life-giving services to all, including safe water, clean air, fertile lands, bountiful forests and marine ecosystems; and overall ecological stability;
- Economy:* undoing the vicious cycle of poverty; building on the equitable sharing of resources and their benefits at national, regional and global levels; and transforming markets into instruments of environmental management;
- Empowerment:* including all peoples and stakeholders in the decision-making process; strengthening local government authorities, civil society and the private sector; and creating effective political will for national, regional and global action for sustainable development.

17. In transforming this vision into action, the countries of the region will take full leadership in doing what has to be done within a framework of long-term commitments that span sectors, countries and generations.

V. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

12. The Senior Officials may wish to discuss the proposal for the regional message, including the content and the preparatory process for its finalization which will be submitted to the Meeting of Ministers of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 for their endorsement.