



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Fifty-eighth session
16-22 May 2002
Bangkok

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

(Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda)

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

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The third session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development was held at Bangkok from 16 to 18 October 2001. The Committee reviewed selected issues related to its work: climate change: capacity-building for mitigation efforts, including sustainable energy development; improving access to water supply and sanitation services in Asia and the Pacific; and policy issues in decentralizing the management of mineral resources development to benefit local communities.

The Committee recommended that the secretariat should assist member countries in establishing data and information exchange on climate change through networking. Special focus should also be given to capacity- building and transfer of and access to new technologies with special emphasis on adaptation technology. The Committee also requested the secretariat to assist member countries in identifying funding opportunities under the Clean Development Mechanism and designing appropriate projects. Further assistance was also requested for feasibility studies on the utilization of renewable and alternative sources of energy.

The Committee called upon the secretariat to continue its efforts to promote policies for water conservation and public awareness of the importance of freshwater with emphasis on participatory approaches. It also requested the secretariat to arrange for activities to be undertaken in the areas of strengthening management capacities, sharing of experiences, application of GIS technologies and access to safe drinking water and technologies for reuse of wastewater for industrial purposes.

The Committee requested the secretariat to provide policy guidelines on decentralization of the management of mineral resources to promote the welfare of local communities and protection of the environment. It further requested assistance from member countries on rehabilitation of degraded environments due to mining.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the progress made by the secretariat on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999, the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, and the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000, and requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to implement the action programmes emerging therefrom.

The Committee commended the secretariat for the wide range of activities undertaken in the fields of environment, energy and water and mineral resources, space technology applications and natural disaster reduction. It stressed the importance of the activities undertaken by the secretariat on strategic planning and management of natural resources and requested the early finalization of guidelines for implementation. The Committee also recognized the importance of the project on efficient use of energy and water resources currently being implemented by the secretariat under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.

The Committee was of the view that the Report on the State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific contained valuable information for the countries in the region and requested the secretariat to continue publishing it. It also requested that the work on establishing a network of cities under the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment be continued.

The Committee expressed its strong support for the approved programme of work and priorities, 2002-2003, and requested the secretariat to include an analysis of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

CONTENTS

| | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR TO BE BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION..... | 1 |
| A. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development | 1 |
| B. Ministerial conferences and high-level meeting..... | 2 |
| C. Programme planning and implementation..... | 3 |
| II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE | 4 |
| A. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development | 4 |
| B. Ministerial conferences and high-level meeting..... | 7 |
| C. Programme planning and implementation..... | 10 |
| D. Other matters..... | 11 |
| III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION | 11 |
| A. Opening, duration and organization of the session | 11 |
| B. Attendance | 12 |
| C. Election of officers..... | 12 |
| D. Agenda..... | 12 |
| E. Adoption of the report | 13 |
| Annex. List of documents | 14 |

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

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

**1. Climate change: capacity-building for mitigation efforts,
including sustainable energy development**

1. The Committee recommended that ESCAP's work related to climate change and sustainable energy development should focus on capacity-building, technology transfer and improved access to new technologies with special emphasis on adaptation strategies.

2. The Committee recommended that the secretariat should assist member countries in establishing data and information exchange on climate change through networking.

3. The Committee requested the secretariat to assist member countries in capitalizing on funding opportunities, in particular under the Clean Development Mechanism, through information dissemination and technical assistance and urged the secretariat to play an active role in assisting member countries in identifying and designing appropriate projects.

4. The Committee requested the secretariat to continue its activities aimed at capacity-building in sustainable energy development in the countries of the region, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

5. In recognition of the potential for regional cooperation in pursuing sustainable energy development through the promotion of energy efficiency, the Committee requested the secretariat's assistance in carrying out feasibility studies and utilizing renewable and other alternative sources of energy.

2. Improving access to water supply and sanitation services in Asia and the Pacific

6. The Committee called upon the secretariat to continue its efforts to promote policies for water conservation and public awareness of the importance of freshwater, with emphasis on a participatory approach.

7. The Committee requested the secretariat to address the problem of arsenic contamination of groundwater. It also requested the secretariat to consider the possibility of compiling and consolidating information related to arsenic and other potentially hazardous chemicals and of organizing a regional workshop on fluoride-contaminated groundwater.

8. The Committee requested the secretariat to undertake the following additional activities: (a) providing support for strengthening management capacities to protect freshwater resources from contamination, (b) formulating a mechanism for sharing mutual experiences and knowledge with regard to water resources development and management among developing countries, (c) applying the use of remote sensing and geographic information systems technologies in the identification of critical water areas for the preparation of

conservation strategies, (d) designing and implementing a regional programme to achieve the target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation and (e) encouraging the transfer of technologies for recycling and reusing wastewater for industrial purposes.

3. Policy issues in decentralizing the management of mineral resources development to benefit local communities

9. The Committee requested the secretariat to provide policy guidance on decentralization, keeping in view the need to promote the welfare of local communities and protection of the environment. It also requested assistance to relevant countries through demonstration projects for reclaiming abandoned coal mines. It requested the secretariat to organize subregional workshops on the rehabilitation of degraded environments caused as a result of mining activities.

B. Ministerial conferences and high-level meeting

1. Report on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999

10. Recognizing the progress made by the secretariat and members on the follow-up activities to the Ministerial Conference at both the regional and national levels, the Committee urged the secretariat to continue playing its important catalytic role in promoting regional cooperation in applications of space technology for sustainable development.

11. The Committee recommended that the secretariat's role in supporting the regional cooperative mechanism of the second phase of the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development should be continued in order to mobilize the necessary resources for capacity-building and facilitate the extension of successful practices in space technology applications to support members in their development efforts.

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

12. The Committee supported resolution 57/2 on the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, which had been adopted by the Commission at its fifty-seventh session and requested member countries to participate actively in the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference.

13. The Committee recommended that the secretariat should continue to play a catalytic role in the further implementation of the Regional Action Programme particularly by promoting regional and subregional cooperation; capacity-building; mobilization of financial resources; and promotion of networking, information sharing and dissemination of best practices to enable informed decision-making.

14. The Committee requested the secretariat to assist countries in harmonizing the processes of development and implementation of national Agenda 21 and medium- and long-term national development

plans.

15. The Committee recommended that the secretariat should continue to support the development of the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation, in particular in the formulation and implementation of subregional projects on the environment.

16. The Committee recommended that the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference, particularly the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005, and the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, be reported to the World Summit as major achievements in the implementation of Agenda 21 in the region.

3. Report on the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000

17. The Committee noted that the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme was an important instrument in promoting sustainable energy development at the national and regional levels and also agreed to its implementation plan. The Committee requested the secretariat to strengthen its activities to assist in national and regional capacity-building in implementing the Action Programme.

C. Programme planning and implementation

18. The Committee commended the secretariat for the wide range of activities that it had undertaken in the field of environment, energy, water and mineral resources, space technology applications and natural disaster reduction.

19. The Committee recognized the importance of the activities undertaken by the secretariat related to strategic planning and management of natural resources and requested the early finalization of guidelines for implementation. It also attached importance to the project on rational and efficient use of energy and water resources being implemented within the framework of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.

20. The Committee requested the secretariat to include activities on adaptation measures for climate change in its work programme.

21. The Committee requested the secretariat to continue its work on establishing a network of cities under the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.

22. The Committee considered that the report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific contained very useful information for the countries of the region and requested the secretariat to continue publishing it.

23. The Committee expressed its strong support for the approved programme of work and priorities, 2002-2003, and requested the secretariat to include an analysis of the outcome of the World Summit on

/...

Sustainable Development in the work programme.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

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

1. Climate change: capacity-building for mitigation efforts, including sustainable energy development

24. The Committee considered document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/1 and recognized that climate change had a profound negative impact on the countries in the region.

25. It recognized that implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005, as well as the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, 2001-2005, would assist member countries in building their capacity to combat the threat of climate change and make a substantial contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

26. The Committee emphasized the importance of strengthening national capacities for addressing climate change and its adverse impacts on development through policies and programmes at the national, regional and global levels. The Committee also stressed that space technologies should be used for systematic observation and monitoring of sea-level rise and the occurrence of natural disasters.

27. The Committee reiterated its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and its follow-up process. It recognized the Clean Development Mechanism as a useful means to promote sustainable development, including promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy in developing countries. It also acknowledged the imperative need to support adaptation measures undertaken by developing countries.

28. The Committee noted the many achievements in the countries of the region in implementing policies, strategies and programmes to mitigate climate change, including policies and strategies on sustainable energy development. It also noted that to promote sustainable energy development, many challenges remained to be faced, including mobilization of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building. Assistance was needed in facilitating access to and transfer of advanced environmentally sustainable technologies, such as integrated gasification combined cycle, coal beneficiation and clean coal technologies. In that context, the Committee noted that the secretariat could play a catalytic role in removing barriers to transfer of technology and in assisting developing countries in building their national capacities. Attention was drawn to the need for technical support for developing clean technology databases in the energy and transport sectors. The Committee supported the efforts of ESCAP in strengthening subregional cooperation among North-East Asian countries in promoting clean technologies and environmentally sound energy development. It stressed that those efforts should be duly encouraged and supported.

29. The Committee stressed that developed countries should take substantial emission reduction actions as an obligation in accordance with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities".

/...

30. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government of Japan in organizing the annual Asia-Pacific Seminar on Climate Change and providing financial and technical assistance for projects related to climate change to assist the developing countries in capacity-building.

31. The Committee welcomed the Russian Federation's proposal to convene a world conference on global climate change in Moscow in 2003 and encouraged ESCAP members to participate actively in the Conference.

2. Improving access to water supply and sanitation services in Asia and the Pacific

32. The Committee considered document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/2, which analysed the causes of inadequate water supply and sanitation services in the region and outlined possible action to improve access to such services.

33. The Committee noted with great concern that, although significant progress had been made in the water and sanitation sector, millions of people, mostly the poor, throughout the region still lacked access to an improved water supply and were not provided with adequate sanitation. It recognized that access to improved water-related services was a basic human need and an essential factor in poverty alleviation and that unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation were the cause of the major share of all diseases in the developing countries.

34. The Committee also noted the activities carried out at the national level in several countries of the region to improve access to water supply and sanitation services, as an integral part of poverty alleviation efforts as well as to introduce water conservation approaches and carry out public information and education campaigns and programmes.

35. The Committee recognized that there was an urgent need for concerted action by all parties involved to increase the coverage of the population, predominantly the poor, with equitable access to water-related services in order to achieve the Millennium Declaration's target of halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who were unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. That daunting task was exacerbated by wasteful use of available water supplies, depletion and contamination of many developed water sources, limited managerial and technological capacities to develop new and alternative sources of water supply, insufficient investments in the water supply and sanitation sector and negligence of the needs of the poor in water allocation and provision of services.

36. The Committee recognized that improved access to water-related services could be achieved through the introduction and implementation of appropriate water management policies aimed, inter alia, at promoting water conservation. It acknowledged that private sector participation in the development and operation of water-related infrastructure was crucial for improving access to water supply and sanitation services. However, it was noted that in countries which had a large share of the population living below the poverty line and which were not in a position to bear the financial burden, the practical implementation of that concept

/...

would be difficult. The Committee therefore proposed that the secretariat provide guidance on potential options for mobilizing financial resources from various sources.

37. The Committee appreciated the activities of the secretariat to promote policies for water conservation and increase public awareness of the importance of freshwater. It called upon the secretariat to continue its efforts to promote water conservation in countries of the region, with emphasis on a participatory approach, as well as to support national information and awareness campaigns related to both water supply and sanitation.

38. The Committee expressed support for the initiative taken by the secretariat to address health hazards posed by arsenic and certain other chemical contaminants in groundwater, which was the major source of drinking water supply in rural areas in many countries in the region.

39. The Committee noted that Japan, recognizing the importance of the resolution of water-related issues for social and economic development, would be hosting the Third World Water Forum and the International Ministerial Conference in March 2003 and encouraged all members to participate actively in the forthcoming events.

3. Policy issues in decentralizing the management of mineral resources development to benefit local communities

40. The Committee considered secretariat document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/3.

41. The Committee noted that most countries in the region with mineral endowments were at various stages of decentralization of the management of mineral resources from the central Government to local government units.

42. The Committee recognized that such decentralization would involve transfer of authority, revenue sharing and bringing host communities to centre stage in resolving social, environmental and health issues related to mining.

43. The Committee further noted that there was uneven distribution of administrative capacity and personnel within local government units to effectively manage mineral endowments for commercial exploitation and, to that end, the need for training of officials in local government units with assistance from central Governments was recognized.

44. Based on the regional overview of policy issues related to decentralization, the Committee noted the advantage of bringing all stakeholders into the decision-making process in mineral resources development. To that end, the Committee also noted that in some countries there was a legal requirement to hold public hearings before approving mineral development projects, including mining.

45. The Committee noted with interest the case study related to decentralization in Thailand, which involved reorganization of the administration and promoted a high degree of participation in the decision-

making process of State entities in provincial and local administrations. It further noted that, in the minerals sector, the decentralization process included devolution of 60 per cent of royalties on minerals to local and provincial governments.

B. Ministerial conferences and high-level meeting

1. Report on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999

46. The Committee considered document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/4 containing the report on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999.

47. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the secretariat on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held at New Delhi from 15 to 20 November 1999, and acknowledged that the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development of ESCAP had played an important catalytic role in promoting regional cooperation and in space technology applications for sustainable development.

48. The Committee noted that space technology applications were important tools for environmental monitoring, natural resources development, natural disaster management, food security, poverty alleviation, human resources development and exploration for groundwater targeting. Successful applications of space technology could lead to informed decision-making and improved governance to foster economic growth and help the developing countries to narrow the information and technology gap and accelerate the process of development.

49. The Committee recognized that by implementing the Strategy and Action Plan laid out at the Second Ministerial Conference, both national and regional activities had been further enhanced and regional cooperation had been strengthened, leading to integration and optimization of the limited resources for the benefit of the countries in the region.

50. The Committee further noted that the second phase of the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP II) had contributed to national capacity-building and helped to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the regional cooperative mechanism for space technology development and applications in the region. A number of countries had been participating actively in the Programme and had benefited therefrom. The Committee expressed its continued support for the implementation of the Programme.

51. The Committee noted that a number of common denominator projects had been initiated with the financial and in-kind support of some members which had offered their expertise and experience to support ESCAP and other members in the implementation of the Delhi Declaration and the regional Strategy and Action Plan on space technology applications for sustainable development.

52. The Committee suggested that technical assistance and cooperation be provided to participating countries for both short- and long-term implementation of projects. Interested members should be encouraged to participate in the common denominator projects under RESAP II.

53. The Committee noted with appreciation the offer of capable member countries to share their experiences as well as space infrastructure to support, through the regional cooperative network mechanism of RESAP, the capacity-building efforts of other developing members. The Committee recognized that members with operational practices on space applications could provide support to other members by extending their successful practices. For that purpose, the role of ESCAP in supporting the RESAP regional cooperative mechanism was recognized as essential.

54. The Committee noted the suggestion by one delegation that ESCAP consider convening a third ministerial conference on space applications to support and consolidate the current achievements of ESCAP under RESAP II as well as to discuss ways to further strengthen regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation among members and associate members of ESCAP. The Committee also noted the suggestion by the same delegation that ESCAP address the issue of the high cost of high-resolution satellite data currently confronted by member countries.

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

55. The Committee had before it the report on the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, held at Kitakyushu, Japan, from 31 August to 5 September 2000 (E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/5). It recognized that the outcomes of the Conference would further guide the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as the regional and subregional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held at Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002.

56. The Committee noted the importance of the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 2001-2005, as an appropriate basis for regional and subregional environmental cooperation. It underscored the necessity of political commitment at the national level in ensuring its successful implementation, giving due consideration to the specific conditions in the developing countries.

57. The Committee noted with appreciation the activities which had been carried out at the national level in many countries in the region towards the implementation of the Regional Action Programme and the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.

58. The Committee noted that, through regional cooperation, countries could assist each other in such areas as environmental monitoring, biodiversity, combating land degradation and desertification, coastal and marine environment protection, combating climate change, controlling transboundary air pollution, substitution to promote environmentally sound technologies and sustainable energy development.

59. The Committee noted that the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment was a major step
/...

forward in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme. In particular, the Committee recognized the benefit of the Kitakyushu Initiative as an effective means of disseminating information and best practices through networking among Asian cities.

60. The Committee noted with appreciation the assistance of the Government of Japan in the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference, particularly the Kitakyushu Initiative, the first network meeting of which was being organized by the Government of Japan at Kitakyushu on 20 and 21 November 2001.

61. The Committee welcomed the initiative of the Government of Japan on global mapping, which could be very useful for global change monitoring and environmental analysis.

62. The Committee noted the importance of regional and subregional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It expressed appreciation to the secretariat and other members of the Regional Preparatory Task Force for organizing subregional preparatory meetings as well as the High-level Regional Meeting to be held at Phnom Penh from 27 to 29 November 2001.

63. The Committee noted with appreciation the work being undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme to implement the Regional Action Programme and prepare for the World Summit.

3. Report on the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000

64. The Committee had before it the report on the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000 (E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/6).

65. The report contained the background and outcome of the High-level Meeting, and the plan for implementing resolution 57/6, adopted by the Commission at its fifty-seventh session, concerning the implementation of the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, Strategies and Implementation Modalities for the Asian and Pacific Region, 2001-2005 in support of the Bali Declaration on Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Energy and Sustainable Development.

66. The Committee noted that the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme was important in promoting sustainable energy development at the national and regional levels.

67. The Committee, in general, agreed with the implementation plan proposed in the document. However, it emphasized the need for international support in successfully implementing the Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme.

68. Within the context of the Action Programme, the promotion of renewable energy such as hydropower, solar and wind energy and energy efficiency as well as utilization of environmentally sound technologies for energy production were considered a priority and the Committee noted that technology transfer was a key issue in that respect. To that end, the Committee recognized the need to reinforce national

capacity.

69. The Committee was informed of the North-East Asia Expert Group Meeting on Inter-Country Cooperation in Electric Power Sector Development, to be hosted by the Russian Federation at Khabarovsk on 23 and 24 October 2001, which was expected to promote subregional cooperation in power sector development in the North-East Asian subregion. The financial support extended by the Government of Japan to organize that event in collaboration with ESCAP was appreciated.

C. Programme planning and implementation

70. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the progress made in implementing the programme of work during the period January 2000 to June 2001 as reported in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/7.

71. The Committee requested the secretariat to include activities on adaptation measures for climate change in its work programme.

72. The Committee recommended that the ESCAP secretariat should continue its support to the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation as its secretariat since the establishment of an independent secretariat was not feasible at present.

73. The Committee requested the secretariat to continue its work on establishing a network of cities under the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment.

74. The Committee felt that the report on the state of the environment in Asia and the Pacific provided very useful information to the countries of the region and requested the secretariat to continue to publish it.

75. The Committee reviewed document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/8 on the programme of work for 2002-2003.

76. The Committee supported the work programme on space technology applications. One delegation recommended that the secretariat, while focusing on applications of space technology for poverty alleviation in its 2002-2003 biennial work programme, should also take into account other space technology application goals as enunciated in the Minimum Common Programme of RESAP II.

77. The Committee noted with appreciation the offer of India to make use of its facilities for enhanced long- and medium-term fellowships in various space technology application fields.

78. The Committee noted with appreciation the ongoing and proposed activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization that were complementary to the ESCAP programme of work and welcomed its offer of cooperation with ESCAP on regional activities regarding energy, environment, water and mineral resources development.

79. The Committee took note of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 as approved by the General Assembly and presented in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/9.

D. Other matters

80. The secretariat circulated a paper to the Committee on the regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Committee expressed appreciation to the Royal Government of Cambodia for hosting the High-level Regional Meeting for the World Summit at Phnom Penh from 27 to 29 November 2001 as well as to the Government of Japan for providing financial support for that Meeting.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

81. The third session of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development was held at Bangkok from 16 to 18 October 2001.

82. In his opening statement, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP stated that significant consolidation of consensus on important issues that impact on the environment as well as sustainable development of natural resources had taken place since the previous session in October 1999. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, a landmark document for the twenty-first century, had brought environment and natural resources development onto centre stage of the global development agenda with the main aim of achieving a 50 per cent reduction in absolute poverty by 2015.

83. He further stated that in line with the strong and sustained global commitment to achieve sustainable development as enunciated in Agenda 21, ESCAP was totally committed to the regional preparatory process for the 10-year review of progress in implementation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

84. Sustainable energy development, improved access to water supply and sanitation services, application of space technology, water-related natural disasters, decentralization of mining operations to benefit local communities and technological options for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions were also emphasized.

85. Finally, the Executive Secretary requested that the Committee provide guidance in reviewing the subprogramme on environment and sustainable development for the next biennium, 2002-2003, to reorient it to address priority needs under the theme "managing globalization".

86. In the inaugural address, His Excellency Mr. Sontaya Kunplome, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Thailand emphasized the importance of the current session of the Committee in view of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He emphasized Thailand's serious concern about sustainable development and stated that Thailand had adopted Agenda 21 recognizing its role in enabling the harmonization of the utilization of natural resources and environmental conservation. Thailand believed in the integration of socio-economic development and environmental protection.

87. The need to improve water supply and sanitation services, demand-side energy management, energy efficiency and decentralization of mineral resources development and the importance of space technology applications for sustainable development in Asia and Pacific were also stressed.

B. Attendance

88. The session was attended by the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Viet Nam.

89. A representative of Italy also attended the session, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the terms of reference of the Commission.

90. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Bank and World Health Organization.

91. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other agencies also attended: Coordinating Committee for Coastal and Offshore Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia, Economic Cooperation Organization, International Council of Women, International Water Management Institute, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Typhoon Committee Secretariat.

C. Election of officers

92. The Committee elected Mr. R. Paul (India) Chairperson, Ms. Wanee Samphantharak (Thailand) Vice Chairperson and Mr. Ramatha Letchumanan (Malaysia) Rapporteur.

D. Agenda

93. The Meeting adopted the following agenda as contained in document E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/L.1.

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Selected issues relating to the work of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development:
 - (a) Climate change: capacity-building for mitigation efforts, including sustainable energy development;
 - (b) Improving access to water supply and sanitation services in Asia and the Pacific;
 - (c) Policy issues in decentralizing the management of mineral resources development to benefit local communities.

5. Ministerial conferences and high-level meeting:
 - (a) Report on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999;
 - (b) Report on the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000;
 - (c) Report on the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000.
6. Programme planning and implementation:
 - (a) Implementation of the programme of work and priorities, 2000-2001;
 - (b) Programme of work and priorities, 2002-2003, and proposed programme changes;
 - (c) Medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report.

E. Adoption of the report

94. The Committee adopted the report on its third session on 18 October 2001.

Annex

List of documents

| <i>Symbol</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Agenda item</i> |
|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/L.1 | Provisional agenda | |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/L.2 | Annotated provisional agenda | |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/1 | Climate change: capacity-building for mitigation efforts, including sustainable energy development | 4 (a) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/2 | Improving access to water supply and sanitation services in Asia and the Pacific | 4 (b) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/3 | Policy issues in decentralizing the management of mineral resources development to benefit local communities | 4 (c) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/4 | Report on the follow-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 1999 | 5 (a) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/5 | Report on the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2000 | 5 (b) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/6 | Report on the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in 2000 | 5 (c) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/7 | Implementation of the programme of work and priorities, 2000-2001 | 6 (a) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/8 | Programme of work and priorities, 2002-2003, and proposed programme changes | 6 (b) |
| E/ESCAP/ENRD(3)/9 | Medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 | 6 (c) |

.