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**KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
MANAGING GLOBALIZATION**

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**REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

SUMMARY

The fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was held in Seoul from 24 to 29 March 2005. The Conference was organized by ESCAP with generous support from the Government of the Republic of Korea and in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank. The ministers for environment and development of the Asian and Pacific countries have supported the approach of environmentally sustainable economic growth or “Green Growth” to ensure and enhance synergies among the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic growth, social development and equity, and environmental protection. The Conference also endorsed a Ministerial Declaration, the Regional Implementation Plan, 2006-2010, and the Seoul Initiative, thus confirming the willingness of the Governments of the countries in the Asian and Pacific region to strive towards achieving sustainable development, improved livelihoods and new stewardship.

These outcomes will guide the ESCAP programme on environment and sustainable development, including the implementation of the Seoul Initiative.

This document presents the background to and a summary of the outcomes of the Conference.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was held in Seoul from 24 to 29 March 2005. The Conference was organized by ESCAP with generous support from the Government of the Republic of Korea and in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The overarching theme of the Conference was “Achieving environmentally sustainable economic growth (Green Growth) in Asia and the Pacific”.
2. In preparation for the Conference and to ensure interactive consultations with the Governments of the countries in Asia and the Pacific on the main theme and issues of the Conference, the secretariat held five preparatory meetings for each of the subregions, North-East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, North and Central Asia and the Pacific, as well as one regional preparatory meeting.
3. The Conference consisted of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials, held from 24 to 26 March 2005, and the Meeting of Ministers, held on 28 and 29 March 2005. The Conference was attended by more than 320 participants, including 29 ministers and deputy ministers from 52 members and associate members of ESCAP.
4. A special round table with a focus on the main theme of the Conference, “Achieving environmentally sustainable economic growth (Green Growth) in Asia and the Pacific”, was held during the Ministerial Meeting with the participation of various eminent persons.
5. Special briefing sessions on the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia were held at the outset of the Senior Officials Meeting and the Ministerial Meeting. The sessions provided a wide range of perspectives linking efforts on disaster reduction and preparedness to sustainable development and sustainable economic growth. The sessions also called for coordinated efforts in integration of disaster risk management into the formulation of policies and strategies on sustainable development and sustainable economic growth.
6. To create a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue, a number of side events were organized in conjunction with the Conference such as the Civil Society Forum, the Eminent Scientists Symposium, the Eminent Environmental Economists Symposium, the Private Sector Forum, the Briefing on North-East Asia Regional Cooperation for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms, the Multi-stakeholder Forum – APFED, the Japan Water Forum and the Asia-Pacific Women’s Conference on Environment. Representatives of those side events shared the outcomes of their respective events with the Ministerial Meeting of the Conference.

7. In reviewing the regional state of the environment, the Conference noted that rapid economic growth had exerted considerable pressure on the environmental sustainability of the region. It agreed that long-term, effective poverty reduction that ensured improved quality of life would require protection of the natural environment. Environmentally sustainable economic growth or Green Growth approaches were therefore considered necessary. Only through such approaches, which balanced the three pillars of sustainable development, could the region address priorities and commitments relating to poverty reduction, and to environmental sustainability, as expressed by the Millennium Development Goals.

8. Green growth was feasible when environmental performance in pollution control was coupled with environmental sustainability in improving ecological efficiency in the way societies produced and consumed and pursued economic growth. Pursuing economic growth while maintaining environmental sustainability also required a fundamental change in the nature of the interactions between environment and economy. A win-win synergy had to be created between environment and economy if economic growth and environmental sustainability were to be harmonized.

9. In order to achieve Green Growth, the Conference called for environmental and economic policies to be integrated and for environmental protection to be seen as a source of business opportunities. It also paid attention to the importance of strengthening interlinkages between environmental protection and traditional culture in the context of the promotion of sustainable consumption patterns in particular.

10. The Conference considered that, in the interest of present and future generations, there was a need to shift the development orientation from a “Grow now and clean up later” approach to one of Green Growth, as a way of communicating environmentally sustainable growth to the broader community.

11. The Conference recognized the significance of the role of multiple stakeholders in advancing Green Growth and stressed the development of proper policies to support the private sector’s voluntary efforts to improve eco-efficiency in production patterns and in turn strengthen environmental sustainability.

II. OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

12. The main outcomes of the Conference were: (a) the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2005; (b) the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2010; and (c) the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth).

A. Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2005

13. The Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, which affirmed the commitment of the countries in Asia and the Pacific to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development¹ and the provisions of Agenda 21,² the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,³ in particular the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,⁴ which incorporates the priority initiatives of the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific,⁵ the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,⁶ the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action⁷ and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building.⁸

14. The Declaration called upon ESCAP members and associate members to seek improvement of environmental sustainability while addressing poverty by reducing the pressure of unsustainable economic growth on the environment, to endeavour to improve environmental performance and to recognize that the environment was not an obstacle to economic growth, but offered opportunities for sustainable growth.

15. The Declaration also confirmed the Johannesburg Political Declaration and the commitment to work for stable partnerships with all major groups, while respecting the independent important roles of each of them in promoting sustainable development.

16. The Declaration affirmed the importance of the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2010, as a useful framework for action keeping in mind national priorities and goals, as well as the regional and subregional initiatives it listed, which were developed as a follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the priority initiatives of the Phnom Penh Regional Platform as included in the chapter on “Other regional initiatives” of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

² *Ibid.*, annex II.

³ See *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I.

⁴ *Ibid.*, resolution 2, annex.

⁵ E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/8.

⁶ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁷ Adopted at the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States, held in Port Louis, Mauritius, from 10 to 14 January 2005.

⁸ Adopted at the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building at its third session, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 4 December 2004.

17. The Declaration also welcomed the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth), which addresses the emerging challenges highlighted in the Regional Implementation Plan with the goal of environmentally sustainable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific and affirmed its support for the further implementation of the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, while endorsing the Action Plan for the implementation of the Initiative as adopted by the Mayors and Senior Officials of member cities at the Third Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network, held in Kitakyushu, Japan, on 3 and 4 August 2004.

B. Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2010

18. The Conference adopted the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2010, which provides a guiding framework for action to bolster the efforts to achieve environmentally sustainable economic growth as an essential component of sustainable development. The Plan is clustered around four main programme areas: (a) improving environmental sustainability; (b) enhancing environmental performance; (c) promoting environmental protection as an opportunity for sustainable growth; and (d) integrating disaster risk management and preparedness in socio-economic development policies and planning.

19. The modalities for implementing the Plan, such as stakeholder participation, regional cooperation, capacity-building, technology transfer, financing, and follow-up, monitoring and review mechanisms, are highlighted. The implementation framework is based on a number of regional and subregional initiatives and projects that have been endorsed by the respective subregional and regional preparatory meetings for the fifth Ministerial Conference. Partnerships with the Governments of the ESCAP members and associate members, international, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and the private sector are reaffirmed as the key mechanism for the successful implementation of the Regional Implementation Plan and the associated initiatives. The Plan includes possible programme areas and actions.

1. Programme areas

20. The Plan contains four programme areas: (a) improving environmental sustainability; (b) enhancing environmental performance; (c) promoting environmental protection as an opportunity for sustainable economic growth; and (d) integrating disaster risk management and preparedness into socio-economic development policies and planning. Each programme area of the Plan identifies the issues to be addressed, the objectives, possible action areas and activities at the national, subregional and regional levels.

21. To assist members and associate members of ESCAP with implementation, follow-up activities under the framework of the overall programme of work of ESCAP on environment and sustainable development will be further developed.

22. Under the four programme areas, mainly national capacity-building activities are envisaged for formulating policy measures for: enhancing environmental sustainability by promoting changes in consumption and production patterns and harmonizing economic development with the protection and management of the environment; enhancing environmental performance by strengthening enforcement mechanisms, enhancing interagency cooperation and stakeholder involvement in decision-making and policy integration; promoting environmental protection as an opportunity for sustainable economic growth by means of a policy framework to enhance and utilize existing market potential; and integrating disaster risk management into socio-economic development policies and planning by addressing the intrinsic relationship between disaster reduction on the one hand and sustainable development on the other and by building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

2. Implementation strategy

23. While the activity areas at the national level in the plan will be harmonized and linked with the national strategies for sustainable development and national-level implementation will primarily be the responsibility of the respective Governments, in partnership with the private sector and civil society, the efforts of Governments will also be supported and supplemented by activities at the subregional, regional and global levels. In particular, such assistance will be obtained from regional and international organizations.

24. The Regional Implementation Plan will foster and strengthen the important roles of different stakeholders through participatory approaches that involve civil society, public-private partnerships and the private sector, in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable ecosystem management. The academic and scientific communities are expected to guide innovative approaches and technologies for promoting sustainable development. The role of the local communities will need to be further strengthened, particularly with regard to enhancing the interlinkages between nature, cultures and livelihoods.

3. Initiatives

25. Building upon the experiences and lessons learned from previous regional action plans and programmes, the Regional Implementation Plan includes a number of regional and subregional initiatives and projects supporting the programme areas of the Plan as major implementation modalities.

Regional and subregional initiatives

Initiative		Main partners identified to date	Likely funding sources
Regional initiatives			
	Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth)	ESCAP	Republic of Korea
	Environment as a business opportunity in the sustainable economic growth of the Asian and Pacific region	ADB, ESCAP	ADB
	Integrating disaster risk management and preparedness into socio-economic development policies and planning	ESCAP lead role	Republic of Korea
	Poverty and environment	UNDP, ADB	UNDP, ADB
Subregional initiatives			
Central Asia	Central Asian countries initiative on a land management programme for combating land degradation	ADB lead role with multiple partners	Global Environment Facility (GEF), ADB, other donors/national funding
	Central Asia Initiative on Sustainable Development and Regional Environmental Action Plan	Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development in Central Asia, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia	GEF, UNEP, European Union, national financial mechanisms
North-East Asia	Dust and sandstorm prevention and mitigation (phase II)	ADB lead role, UNEP, ESCAP, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	GEF, ADB, participating Governments
	Mitigation of climate change (innovative technologies and transport sector development)*	ESCAP	Funding required
	A Framework for Nature Conservation Programme for North-East Asia	North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), ESCAP	Core Fund of NEASPEC
South-East Asia	Education for sustainable development with a focus on sustainable consumption and production*	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ESCAP, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Consumer Association of the Republic of Korea	Funding required
South Asia	Land degradation*	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Funding required
Pacific	Sustainable community lifestyles in Pacific island countries (focus areas: adaptation to climate change, ecotourism, natural resource management)*	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, ESCAP	Funding required

* Initiative to be developed.

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C. Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth)

26. The Conference also adopted the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth), which is aimed at addressing some of the major policy issues highlighted in the Ministerial Declaration and the Regional Implementation Plan and furthering their successful implementation.

27. The Seoul Initiative provides a regional cooperation framework for Green Growth and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction and environmental sustainability in Asia and the Pacific, taking into account the economic, social, cultural and geographical features of the region. It also provides a framework for policy consultations, capacity-building and networking for the promotion of Green Growth at the regional level.

28. The Seoul Initiative identifies modalities of operation, including the establishment of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth (SINGG), to promote the exchange of information and strengthen policy support to the members and associate members of ESCAP.

29. As a follow-up to the fifth Ministerial Conference, the Seoul Initiative will commence with the establishment of SINGG. At its first meeting, SINGG will develop an implementation plan and activities with the participation of members and associate members of ESCAP.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMISSION

30. The Commission may wish to consider the outcomes of the fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific and the proposed follow-up activities. In particular, it may wish to endorse the focus of the secretariat on providing capacity-building for the required policy and system changes in the countries of Asia and the Pacific to improve the environmental sustainability of production and consumption, as well as providing technical assistance for the implementation of the Regional Implementation Plan and national environmental strategies and actions. Additionally, the Commission may wish to endorse the proposed Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2006-2010, and the subregional and regional initiatives, including the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth).

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