



Environmentally sustainable economic growth for the well being of all

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Improved Eco-efficiency of Consumption Patterns Necessary Condition for Continued Economic Growth In Asia and the Pacific

“The environmental costs of economic progress may already be too high— greener, more eco-efficient economic growth patterns urgently needed:”

UN REPORT

Can Asia and the Pacific continue its economic growth in the face of soaring prices of natural resources, including oil? Is sustainable consumption really only about environmental protection, or it is an economically viable necessity to sustain the economic growth needed for poverty reduction in the Asian and Pacific region? Is sustainable consumption really a western value system or is it actually a deeply rooted ancient Asian culture embedded in the Asian lifestyle?

These and other issues related to the role of public policy in providing sustainable consumption choices, in promotion of resource saving society and green growth were discussed during the 2nd Green Growth Policy Dialogue held from 23 to 25 May 2006 in Beijing, China, organized by UNESCAP in collaboration with the National Development and Reform Commission of China and the China Standard Certification Centre with generous funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea, Government of Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

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The Policy Dialogue is the second in a row of post 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (March 2005, Seoul, Republic of Korea) activities. The 5th MCED adopted the green growth approach as an instrument for the governments of the Asian and Pacific countries in continuing economic growth necessary for reducing poverty, while safe-guarding the environmental sustainability of the region. Participants at the policy dialogue included government officials from several countries in the ESCAP region including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, People’s Republic of China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Viet Nam. Several organizations including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA), and Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute as well as representatives of academic institutions also attended.

The 2nd Green Growth Policy Dialogue focused on the less debated public sector the role of which is to provide regulations for more sustainable production and to provide sustainable consumption choices, which the private sector has not made available to consumers so far. Progress has been achieved by countries of the region in improving the eco-efficiency of production by establishing cleaner production centres and introducing a number of cleaner production standards, and some have recently initiated steps to address the issue of eco-efficiency of resource consumption as well.



Seoul, the Republic of Korea

It is impressive to note that the People’s Republic of China is already taking giant steps to improve the ecological efficiency of its economic growth by pursuing a bold and ambitious Resource Saving Society Initiative. Building a resource-efficient society is the basis of the economic and social development of the country and has been included in the National 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) as an important guiding principle in designing various plans and projects across the country.



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Other similar initiatives include 3Rs in Japan, Gross National Happiness in Bhutan, and the Sufficiency Economy of Thailand. Many of these country initiatives draw on traditional Asian views that are similar to sustainable consumption and which are embedded in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Asian life philosophy which emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature.

Sustainable consumption in the face of rapid economic growth is a formidable challenge and therefore the focus of the Second Green Growth Policy Dialogue. Given the unmet needs of considerable portions of the population, particularly in developing countries, economic growth must continue. However, with current rising prices of natural resources, the growth needed to meet basic needs and improve quality of life can not continue without improving the efficiency of resource usage.

Furthermore, taking action now to prevent high consumption levels from becoming entrenched in developing countries will be less costly in the long run. By improving the eco-efficiency of consumption of resources the countries in the Asia and Pacific region could avoid repeating the mistakes of the "Grow first, clean up later" approach and leapfrog to environmentally sustainable economic growth "Green Growth" for the well being of all.

In an effort to support the activities of the countries in the region, as well as to provide increased opportunities for networking, information sharing and capacity building in the area of sustainable consumption and production, a regional Help Desk on Sustainable Consumption and Production in Asia and the Pacific to be hosted by the China Standard Certification Centre was jointly launched by UNEP and UNESCAP during the policy dialogue.

For more on the 2nd Green Growth Policy Dialogue please visit:
http://www.unescap.org/esd/environment/mced/tggap/2rpd_bm.asp



Smiling Green participants in Beijing, China

The Chinese Government (National Development and Reform Commission) Announces Six Measures for Resources Saving Society and Green Growth.

At the "Second Green Growth Policy Dialogue, Role of Public Policy in Providing Sustainable Consumption Choices: Resources Saving Society and Green Growth" held in Beijing in May 2006. Madame Zhao Jiarong, Director-General, Department of Environment and Resource Conservation of the National Development and Reform Commission of China in her opening statement and press interview, advocated the following six policy measures for resources saving society and green growth:

- Establish sound legislation, regulation and standardization framework;
- Speed up optimization of the industrial structure, including improvements of energy consumption and use of high quality energy;
- Promote improvement of technological processes and scientific research for energy efficiency and recycling technologies;
- Improve energy consumption management;
- Develop appropriate and further improve existing incentive policies;
- Develop new tools and mechanism such as energy efficiency labeling and energy conservation product certification to guide and provide sustainable consumption choices for consumers



Recycling television sets in Ordos City, Inner Mongolia, China

National Media publicizing the event and statement included Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV) & NDRC's website. For more please see the documents posted on: www.unescap.org/esd

Kitakyushu Initiative International Workshop - Urban Environmental Improvement and Socio-Economic Benefits through Transformation of Lifestyles

Representatives from local government, NGOs, and international organisations around Asia gathered to discuss how they are applying the win-win approach to urban environmental issues through local initiative addressing lifestyle change at the "International Workshop on Local Initiatives Addressing the Transformation of Lifestyles towards Achieving Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific." The Workshop, organised by UNESCAP and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) with financial support of the Ministry of Environment, Japan, was held on 23 June 2006 at the United Nations University, Tokyo as a pre-event for the 14th Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO Asia 2006). 35 participants included those from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand, and relevant international agencies.

These participants delivered presentations and held discussions on local initiatives and cooperation schemes aimed at improving the environment, coupled with economic and social benefits.

The workshop clearly demonstrated that, throughout the region, local initiatives are increasing, and developed as effective instruments addressing different aspects of transforming lifestyles to achieve sustainable development with win-win multiple benefits covering both poverty alleviation (MDG1) and environmental sustainability (MDG7).

The Workshop effectively facilitated exchange of information and experiences of local governments and NGOs on specific aspects of development and implementation of relevant local initiatives. Insights and wisdom for breaking through commonly experienced problems – such as lack of financial resources, technical skills and capacity, and public awareness and support – have been shared amongst participants. Further, the workshop incubated new partnerships aiming at concrete follow-up actions through city-to-city cooperation. The outcome of the deliberations at this one-day Workshop was directly reported to ECO Asia 2006, which is an informal annual meeting of environmental ministers from Asia-Pacific countries, in the form of Conclusions and Recommendations.

ESCAP and Khan-Uul District of Ulaanbaatar City Hosted International Seminar on Energy Efficiency Action at Municipal Level in Ulaanbaatar, 9-10 May 2006

Under the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, a demonstration project on end-use energy-efficiency has been implemented in the Khan-Uul District of Ulaanbaatar City, Mongolia since August 2005. The project was implemented by the Khan-Uul District in collaboration with the Ministry of Fuel and Energy and the Ministry of Nature and Environment, Mongolia, local and international consultants, and ESCAP. During 2005-2006, an energy audit in office buildings was carried out in order to demonstrate that substantial reductions in the energy consumption by local governments were achievable through small initial investment. The outcome proved that 20 per cent of electricity bills and 30 per cent of heating costs were reduced as a direct result of project implementation with strong leadership provided by local government officials.

The "International Seminar on Energy Efficiency Action at Municipal Level", which was held in Ulaanbaatar, 9-10 May 2006, was to take stock of the results of the demonstration project in terms of impacts on indoor climate, energy/financial savings, sharing of experiences from efforts to increase energy efficiency at the municipal level, and identifying constraints and options. The Seminar also included discussion on the next step forward to transfer the successful experience

from Khan-Uul District to other cities in the region. The event attracted 34 representatives, local authorities, private companies and experts from various nationalities.

The major focus of the demonstration project and the Seminar was on pollution reduction, cost savings, increased awareness and behavioral changes among staff on energy efficiency and conservation, plus knowledge and interest by other districts of Ulaanbaatar City. The Seminar concluded that the demonstration project had integrated Mongolia better into the Kitakyushu Initiative Network, and exposed the relevant local officials to a number of successful international experiences to strengthen a network with energy efficiency experts from municipalities in other parts of Asia. The Kitakyushu Initiative Network will continue providing a platform for further cooperation amongst the interested member cities, through conduct of pilot projects for replication of successful experiences and dissemination of key findings from such projects.

The project carried out an energy audit in office buildings in order to demonstrate that substantial reductions in the energy consumption by local governments were achievable through small initial investment.

Coordinated SPECA Energy System and Baku initiative on Energy Efficiency

The Special Programme for Economic Cooperation in Central Asia (SPECA) Economic Forum, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 25-26 June 2006, recommended an initiative on a SPECA energy system and the Baku initiative on energy efficiency. Energy infrastructure in the subregion is inadequate to meet the demand inside and outside the SPECA subregion and legislative structures are not conducive for energy sharing/trading, highlighting the need for harmonizing legislation and improving infrastructure both domestically and regionally.

During a session on “*Investing energy dividend for energy infrastructure: opportunities and challenges*”, panelists discussed the potential for inter-country energy cooperation to tackle these issues. The panelists represented various central Asian Governments and Institutes from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and International Organizations such as Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the United Nations organizations.

The discussions focused on strategies needed to develop energy infrastructure to expand the market in Asia, including critical elements for building these strategies and incorporating measures to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy and access to energy services.

The outcomes include a recommendation to the SPECA Governing Council to launch a coordinated energy system in Central Asia and to promote energy efficiency by strengthening policies to support municipalities to embark on energy efficiency initiatives (Baku Initiative).

The Governing Council, held on 27 June 2006, accepted the idea and referred the proposals to the Project Working Group (PWG) on Water and Energy for its review and recommendation to the Coordinating Committee of the Governing Council later this year. It also requested the UNESCAP and UNECE to prepare detailed proposals for the PWG.

Energy infrastructure in the subregion is inadequate to meet the demand inside and outside the SPECA subregion

UNESCAP holds NEASPEC Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Eco-efficiency in North-East Asia to Transcend Unsustainable Models of Development

Soaring prices for oil and other commodities have revealed the fragility of the world economy dependent on the growing consumption of oil and natural resources. Attaining a new path of economic development based on less consumption of natural resources becomes a prerequisite for sustaining economic growth given the irreversibility of the trend. The crucial challenge for North-East Asia is to transcend old models of development and forge a new path of development which could be sustained with efficient and less consumption of natural resources and less production of environmental pollution. In fact, North-East Asian countries proactively pursue national strategies under the concept of Resource-Saving Society and Sound Material-Cycle Society, which are closely in line with the recommended new path of development, called Green Growth.

The new path in turn implies positive correlations between economic growth and socioeconomic investment in improving environmental sustainability. Considering the significant impacts caused by the rapid economic growth in North-East Asia, meetings of Senior Officials of NEASPEC in 2004 and 2005 discussed subregional responses to the issue and requested UNESCAP to organize an EGM for improving eco-efficiency of economic growth as a potential policy tool to reduce environmental impact of economic growth and in turn improve the sustainability of North-East Asia.

UNESCAP in collaboration with the China Standard Certification Center focused EGM meeting activities to identify challenges and policy options in connection with eco-efficiency in North-East Asia, and to develop subregional activities of NEASPEC to tackle the identified challenges at the end of May of this year. The meeting consisted of three main parts: country presentations on eco-efficiency, conceptual discussions and group exercise for developing potential activities. Through presentations and discussions, the participants were able to share relatively detailed information on eco-efficiency related issues and policies in NEASPEC countries as well as various eco-efficiency approaches undertaken by different stakeholder groups. A group exercise tried to identify priority subregional tasks for improving eco-efficiency and feasible implementation mechanisms, and resulted in building a common consensus on the direction of NEASPEC activities.

The key outcomes of the meeting included, identifying potential subregional activities such as the development of a strategy report, harmonized EPR (extended producer responsibility) system and eco-labeling, sound material cycle network in NEA, cross-border cooperation on energy efficiency, eco-efficiency indicator, and capacity building programmes. Overall, the need for joint activities on eco-efficiency was unanimously perceived as a meaningful agenda of NEASPEC to address eco-efficiency as well as to facilitate intergovernmental discussions and actions on the sustainable development of North-East Asia.



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Upcoming ESDD Events: July through September 2006

July 2006		
19-20	Southeast Asia Consultations on Climate Regime Beyond 2012	Bangkok
26-27	Sub-regional Workshop on the Trade and Environment Dimensions in the Food and Food Processing Industries in the South-East and North-East Asia	Jakarta, Indonesia
25-27	Capacity Building Workshop on Partnerships for Improving the Performance of Water Utilities in the Asia and the Pacific Region	Bangkok
August 2006		
7-11	Seventh Regional Meeting of Asian and Pacific Focal Points in preparation for the Fifth Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC5)	Bangkok
30-31	Mainstreaming Policies and Investment in Low Carbon: Opportunities for New Approaches to Investment and Flexible Mechanisms	Bangkok
Sept. 2006		
4-8	Regional Workshop on Integrating activities of the hydrology and related DPP components of the Typhoon Committee into the Hyogo Framework for Action	Macao, China
6-7	Sub-regional Workshop on the Trade and Environment Dimensions in the Food and Food Processing Industries in the South Asia	Colombo, Sri Lanka
6-8	Policy Consultation Forum under Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth	Seoul, Republic of Korea
12-14	Committee on Managing Globalization, 3rd session, Part I	Bangkok

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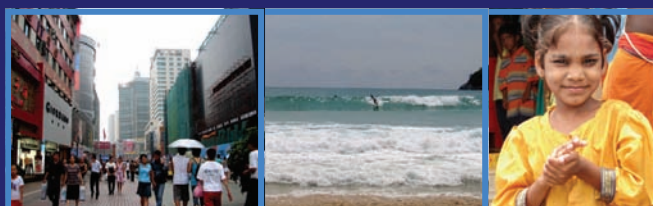
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