



*Environmentally sustainable economic growth for the well being of all*

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**Regional Launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 Calls for Access to Sustainable Sanitation Services**

**“The only way to actively engage developing countries in global action is to develop a market mechanism that helps climate change actions become compatible with the needs of countries to pursue rapid economic growth.”**

**Noeleen Heyzer**

**Executive Secretary  
UNESCAP**

The Regional Launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 benefiting from the earlier efforts of the Ministerial Conference on Sanitation of South Asian Countries held in 2006 and the back-to-back East Asian Ministerial Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene held in Beppu on 30 November-1 December 2007, provided opportunities to exchange experiences for more effective contribution of the public and private sectors and civil societies as well as partnerships towards achievements of MDGs in water and sanitation.

Well attended by many countries in the region and a large number of the public of Japan. The Regional Launch reconfirmed the commitment to promote action at all levels as clearly stipulated in the Declarations of SACOSAN and EASAN in particular for the implementation of the Hashimoto Action Plan, including the formation of regional fora to address *inter-alia* the challenges of sanitation and hygiene.

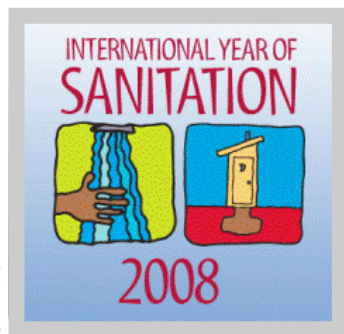
The Regional Launch pointed out the fact that if the MDGs are to be achieved, 2.4 billion people need to gain access to sustainable sanitation services, or 96 million a year between 1990 and 2015. Countries will need to see that enough wisdom, will, resources and creativity are invested to make such a huge change possible. Also, Governments and individuals need to understand the nature, magnitude and urgency of the sanitation crisis. Poor sanitation not only pushes already disadvantaged sections of society into deeper illness, poverty and indignity, which is also a key delimiting factor to sustained economic growth.

Experiences of success stories in a number of countries presented at the Launch provided good practices for possible replication, for which commitment of Governments at various levels and ownership of communities are essential. Experiences and analysis of past practices clearly demonstrated good opportunities for the private sector to contribute to the achievement of MDG in sanitation. Similarly, the extensive experiences of civil societies at the regional, international and national and local levels discussed at the Launching pointed to the important roles of civil societies in facilitating the development and implementation of policies and strategies on sanitation. In all these circumstances, good Governments’ policies and strong support of Development Banks and donors are essential.

The Launching also identified opportunities for the promotion of investments from all key stakeholders to promote a rapid up-scaling of progress in access to sanitation. It called on Governments in the region to also launch the International Year of Sanitation in their respective countries.

As most countries profess a strong commitment to reaching the MDG targets, what is now needed is an absolute commitment among country leaders to make a significant push for sanitation in the region. New institutional, technical and financial approaches will be needed and steadfastly implemented. Participation and regional cooperation will need to be strengthened so that the vision, responsibility and benefit from a prosperous and healthy region are shared by all Asians, poor and rich.

The United Nations Team consisting of UNDESA, WHO, UNICEF and UNESCAP in cooperation with ADB, UN-Habitat and the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank, offered their sincere appreciation to JBIC for its instrumental contribution and to the Japan Water Forum for its valuable support, in making the Regional Launching of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 a great success.



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## Food security already threatened by climate change

In November 2007, almost 100 delegates reviewed regional progress of the region in the areas of sustainable agriculture, rural development, land, desertification and drought, concluding that food security was again rising on regional agendas, in a context of climate change and increasingly frequent natural disasters.

The Regional Implementation Meeting for Asia and the Pacific for CSD-16/17 was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 26 and 27 November 2007, organized by ESCAP in collaboration with FAO, the UNESCAP Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops' Development in Asia and Pacific (UNCAPSA), the Asia Regional Coordinating Unit of the UNCCD and UNEP.

Mr. Tri Tharyat, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, skillfully managed the multi-stakeholder event to result in a comprehensive assessment of regional progress, and identification of regional priorities. The RIM agreed that there were still significant unmet needs in relation to hunger, under-nutrition and poverty, and that this held profound implications for the demand for land, water and energy. The overarching regional challenge lay in ensuring that increasing and competing demand for land resources and water could be sustainably met, while supporting the development of a vibrant and inclusive rural sector. Climate change was evident in many countries and already threatens food security. This added another dimension; participants considered how this challenge could be met in a context of increasing risk of drought and desertification, and undetermined ecosystem change.



The MODIS image of the Asia Pacific region reveals the diversity and daunting challenges posed by climate change.

Related, emerging challenges identified by the RIM included changing food consumption, processing and retailing patterns and their impacts on production (farm sector restructuring), markets, trade, diets and public policy; the convergence of the agricultural and other economic sectors which use agro-industrial products, which signals increasing competition for agricultural/natural resources, depleting natural capital and land use change; higher land costs were also noted; and the feminization of poverty and changing risks for women, with other vulnerable groups also disproportionately affected by lack of support, aging rural populations, and lack of participation of major groups.



Watermelons left at the entrance of a courtyard in rural Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China

Substantial discussion also took place on biofuels. It was agreed that biofuel production and choice of energy sources must be approached more carefully than ever because of the growing convergence of energy and agriculture, and implications for land use. It was noted that the dilemma posed by the production of energy or food crops was more serious in Asia, than in Latin America, because of the low availability of land per capita and food insecurity.

The RIM addressed many other issues, including water resources management, and drought preparedness, as well as the UNCCD convention, which, they urged action to strengthen.

For more information, and to view the meeting documents, visit the ESCAP website at <<http://www.unescap.org/esd/rim/16th/>>.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure follow-up of outcomes from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Each two-year CSD cycle reviews different themes; the themes to be addressed by CSD-16/17 in May 2008.

## **EGM on Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 1-2 November 2007**

The Commission at its sixty-third session held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in May 2007 decided that the topic of the theme study for its sixty-fourth session to be held in Bangkok from 27 March to 2 April 2008 would be "Energy security and sustainable development". The theme study will be issued as a publication assessing the current status of energy security in Asia and the Pacific region and identifying policy options.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Energy Security and Sustainable Development was held in Bangkok on 1 and 2 November 2007 to review the initial draft of the theme study. The overall objective of the EGM was to critically review the draft theme study on energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific for enhancing the quality and ensuring accuracy of information and data. The EGM reviewed the overall structure, provided general comments relevant to energy security issues. It also reviewed and provided detailed comments on each chapter of the initial draft of the theme study.

The EGM was attended by expert representatives from China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States of America. It was also attended by representatives/experts from United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, Asian Development Bank, Eurasian Economic Community, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Energy Centre, Asian Institute of Technology, Centre for Energy Environment Resources Development, The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan, Korean Energy Economics Institute, and the World Institute of Sustainable Energy.

The draft theme study is currently being amended and updated based on the inputs from the expert group meeting.

## **UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), 15th session of the Project Working Group on Water and Energy Resources, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, November 14-15, 2007**

The 15th session of Project Working Group (PWG) on Water and Energy Resources took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 14 and 15 November 2007. The meeting was jointly organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

44 participants took part in PWG session, including delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation. Representatives from UNDP, World Bank, Eurasian Bank of Development, EurAsEC, Swiss Development Cooperation Agency, UNESCO, USAID, the Executive Committee of IFAS, SIC ICWC, International Association of Hydrologists also participated in the meeting. The PWG reviewed the implementation of work plan 2006-2007, cooperation strategy on rational and efficient use of water and energy resource in Central Asia, decisions of the second session of the SPECA Coordinating Committee, and discussed the work plan for 2008-2009.

The PWG noted with satisfaction that the Cooperation Strategy on the rational and efficient use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, approved in 2003, is a comprehensive basis for mutually beneficial international cooperation and again confirmed its principles and objectives, which are the development of coordinated regional policy stipulating equal and rational use of water and energy resources with due observance of social, economic and environmental interests of the countries of the region. It also noted that further implementation of this strategy can be done through a number of concrete projects, a list of which was considered during the PWG session.



**Plaza in Bishkek**

Participants of the PWG proposed to conduct the next session of the SPECA Project Working Group on water and energy resources in the autumn of 2008. The PWG expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as to the Institute "Vodavtomatika & Metrology" for the successful organization of the PWG session.

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## Senior Officials Committee on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia on its Third Session, Jeju, 13-14 December 2007

The third session of the Senior Officials Committee on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia was held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, on 13-14 December 2007, whereby the delegations endorsed the preliminary results of the study on the Energy Outlook which could serve as a platform of concrete activities to be included in future work plans. From 11-12 December 2007, the first session of the Government-Business Dialogue (GBD) on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia was organized, which could promote public-private partnership in energy infrastructure development.

The delegates attending the third session of the Senior Officials Committee on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia expressed their satisfaction on the progress of the implementation of the Intergovernmental Collaborative Mechanism on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia (ICM-ECNEA). They noted that given the tight energy market situation, more concrete steps are needed to realize the vision of the ICM-ECNEA.

The Senior Officials Committee (SOC) on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia endorsed the preliminary results of the study on the Energy Outlook. The SOC requested the Korea Energy Economics Institute (KEEI), the nodal institution of the WG-EPP, to finalize the Energy Outlook as soon as possible for sharing among the member States. It noted that the Energy Outlook could form the platform of concrete activities to be included in future work plans.

The SOC expressed its appreciation to the experts from various research institutions from China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea for presenting overview of energy supply and demand in their countries or the region, and their views on energy cooperation in North-East Asia. The SOC recognized that there are a number of bi- and multi-lateral initiatives on energy cooperation been implemented in the subregion. In that context, it recommended that activities of ICM-ECNEA should take those into account in designing its own activities to avoid any duplication.

The SOC expressed its satisfaction on the outcome of the first session of the Government-Business Dialogue (GBD) on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia, which could promote public-private partnership in energy infrastructure development.

## Highlighting UNESCAP's initiative on community resilience to natural disasters on the Third Anniversary of the Asian Tsunami

The tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004 caused an unprecedented human catastrophe in affected UNESCAP member states, destroying lives and livelihoods. Today, rehabilitation and reconstruction processes developed by governments, with the support from the international community, are promoting sustainable and coordinated approaches to reduce the impact of the tsunami disaster and enhance the resilience to potential future natural hazards among vulnerable communities.

The interdivisional UNESCAP initiative "Building community resilience to natural disasters through partnership" is supporting these national and regional efforts towards strengthened disaster resilience. The initiative is a joint effort from the ESDD, ESID and PDD Divisions of UNESCAP, which supports the building of community resilience through partnership at local, national and regional levels.

The overall goal is to strengthen the development and share experiences and expertise on community resilience in the region in which affected and vulnerable communities are especially targeted. In order to enhance the technical capacity and knowledge-building among Indian Ocean countries, experiences on community based resilience are derived from three pilot projects each targeting identified areas of gaps and needs in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and complimented with further experiences from the region.

ESDD, ESID and PDD, are each monitoring the following pilot project; (1) A community early warning system for multiple-hazards in Sri Lanka, (2) Capacity building to support OSCY in family and community settings in Aceh, Indonesia, and (3) Creating new sources of livelihoods in Tamil Nadu, India.

A regional consolidating report with lessons and experiences from the pilot projects and the region is being prepared as part of the work of sharing experiences made in the field of disaster resilience throughout the region. In order to further promote regional partnerships and enhance replicability of good practices a final regional workshop will be conducted in March to discuss and share the outcome of this UNESCAP initiative.

More information on the initiative and links to the divisional work on the pilot projects can be found on the following website: [http://www.unescap.org/esd/water/disaster/community\\_resilience.asp](http://www.unescap.org/esd/water/disaster/community_resilience.asp)



December 2004, Tsunami Devastation

## Fostering a Mutually Supportive Trade and Environment Regime

The linkages between trade, environment and development are multiple and multifaceted, and have important implications for sustainable development. In an ever more globalized economy, these linkages have grown in complexity and importance, and have increased the need for developing mutually supportive trade and environment policies. The need for policy coherence in the areas of trade and the environment can be placed in the larger context of policy coherence for sustainable development, which has received increasing attention. The outcomes of several major intergovernmental conferences in recent years are relevant to this debate.

World leaders gathered at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 recognized the need to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, and adopted this as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), MDG 7. At the 4th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in November 2001, WTO members emphasized the importance of the trade and environment nexus, by including negotiations on trade and environment in the Doha Development Agenda (Paragraph 31 of the Ministerial Declaration), as well as identifying priority areas for discussion (Paragraph 32) and recognizing the importance of technical assistance and capacity building in the field of trade and environment to developing countries, in particular the least-developed among them (Paragraph 33).

The Development Account project "Capacity Building in Trade and Environment" was formulated against this background. The project was jointly implemented by the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa (ECA); Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Western Asia (ESCWA); in partnership with UNCTAD, UNEP, and the WTO in the course of 2005-2007.

As a regional and interregional project, it focused on regional, sub-regional and national approaches such as sharing of good practices and networking. Activities included the preparation of regional studies in each region, as well as regional, sub-regional capacity building workshops and national roundtables.

The project aimed at building capacities to maximize positive economic benefit and minimize environmental pressure arising from trade expansion and liberalization. For this purpose the project analyzed some key linkages between trade and environment, both in terms of exports and imports, and focused on major issues, such as the relationship between environmental requirements and market access; environmental goods and services; the environmental impacts of trade liberalization, and policy coherence.

With a view to presenting the key finding from project implementation, ESCAP and the other project partners convened a "High Level Meeting on Fostering a Mutually-supportive Trade and Environment Regime: Perspectives and Lessons Learnt at Regional Level" on 29 November 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting was attended by policymakers and Geneva-based delegates from developing countries in all the regions, and provided useful recommendations for the development of a mutually supportive trade and environment regime, which were subsequently brought to the attention of the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) of the WTO at its regular session on 30 November 2007.



The timber trade walks a thin line between economic benefit and environmental pressure

## Viet Nam requests Capacity Building Training on Green Growth

As the third sequential UNESCAP “Policy in Action” workshop, the Capacity Building Seminar on Green Growth Policy Tools and Application was organized by the Vietnam Agenda 21 Office at the Ministry of Planning and Investment in collaboration with UNESCAP and took place from 12 to 13 November at the Sofitel Plaza Hotel, Hanoi, Viet Nam.

More than 67 participants attended including representatives from line Ministries such as of Planning and Investment, Finance, Natural Resources and Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development, Transport, Construction, Industry and Trade, General Statistics Office, Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce, Hanoi Department of Planning and Investment, as well as the Viet Nam Science and Technology Academy, Social Sciences Academy, Viet Nam Centre for Cleaner Production, Centre of Development and Integration, Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs and representative of UNDP Country Office, WWF, IUCN and World Bank. Over 30 attendees were female.

The Capacity building seminar was held during two full days. Presentations were delivered by ESDD Director Mr. Rae Kwon Chung and the ESDD team introducing the Green Growth approach, the five main tracks and available policy tools for its application. The presentations were followed by lively discussions about the challenges for an environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive Vietnamese economy.

Since the “Doi Moi” renovation in 1986, Viet Nam has increasingly adopted market-economy traits, which have helped the country towards rapid economic growth. Despite its rapid modernization, the country has managed to retain crucial Vietnamese values that may help in avoiding an otherwise uncritical embrace of materialistic consumption patterns. In this regard, the ultimate goal of Green Growth in the Vietnamese case is to achieve environmentally sustainable economic growth that is socially inclusive.

At the workshop, participants elaborated and agreed that happiness ought to be the right target of our lives, however how do we measure happiness today? Looking back to history, there was big difference between the Western and Eastern concepts of happiness. In Western societies happiness was measured primarily through material possessions, while in the Eastern societies it was achieved by serving others, diminishing one’s desires for material possessions and through developing one’s mental capacity through meditation.

With the concurrent realization that consumerism is not bringing happiness and satisfaction with life, Western societies are beginning spiral back towards a more spiritual understanding of life, while at the same time in the Eastern hemisphere, a form of neo-consumerism is on the rise. It is therefore time to re-awaken traditional Asian values as described in the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism, because these may be able to aid in finding the necessary sustainable equilibrium between mass consumption and asceticism. In this regard, the Thai Sufficiency Economy philosophy can be viewed as a good example of how to merge traditional values with modern economics. In the case of Viet Nam, the participants agreed that the country has a good chance to achieve quality of growth and distributive equity rather than quantity of growth, because of its inherent socialist society-structure. However, it was emphasized that political will and cross-ministerial coordination will be crucial for implementation of any Green Growth policy tool.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The participants appreciated the capacity building activity, including the presentations, exchanges of opinions across ministries, and the discussions that took place between participants and resource people. The Vietnamese participants also found that ESCAP brought quality knowledge, practical examples and successful cases of applications of the policy tools described in the presentations. Finally, the participants underlined the need for continuation of such capacity building seminars for policy and decision makers from governmental institutions in the capital and in other cities of the country, especially in Ho Chi Minh City.

There was a high interest in additional assistance in the future for:

Preparation of green tax/environmental tax in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance;

Development of building codes with Ministry of Construction;

Improvement of energy efficiency with the Ministry of Industry;

Strengthening the public information and dissemination with the Cleaner Production Centre;

Development, training and capacity building courses for policy and decision makers in other provinces and main cities with the Viet Nam Agenda 21 Office.



Government officials at the workshop



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## ESDD Events: January through March 2008

January 2008		
February 2008		
19-20	13th SOM of NEASPEC	Ulaanbaater, Mongolia
3 days (open)	Expert Group Meeting Towards the Development of Trans-Asian Energy System	Bangkok, Thailand
2 days (open)	Concluding Workshop on the Pilot Project on Community Based Multi-hazard Early Warning in Sri Lanka	Colombo, Sri Lanka
2 days (open)	High level workshop on Community-based Disaster Risk Management in Partnerships for Disaster Reduction—South-East Asia Phase 4 (PDR-SEA 4)	Hanoi Viet Nam
March 2008		
1-6	35th Session of WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones	Muscat, Oman
21	World Water Day	Bangkok, Thailand
26-28	Fifth Disaster Management Practitioners' Workshop on Community-based Disaster Risk Management	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
2 days (open)	High level workshop on Community-based Disaster Risk Management in Partnerships for Disaster Reduction—South-East Asia Phase 4 (PDR-ESA 4)	Manila, Philippines

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