

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

A. Status and Trends

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

2. The principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” should be affirmed as the cornerstone for the international cooperation in the field of environment and development and also a primary basis for establishing a new global partnership in achieving sustainable development and meeting the targets set in Agenda 21.

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

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

5. The Asian and Pacific region is rife with degradation superlatives: for example, it has the largest area of land affected by soil degradation and human-induced salinization in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of the world; it has

the largest contribution of total sediment transport into the oceans and the highest level of water withdrawals for agriculture; the levels of smoke and dust in 10 Asian megacities are twice the world's average; the faecal bacteria in rivers is three times the world's average and 10 times the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development guidelines; and it has the largest population of the world's poor with a calorie intake still one third lower than in the developed countries.

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

7. These new developments have benefits on one hand and risks on the other. While new opportunities for sustainable development are opened up by globalization and trade liberalization, they could also exacerbate environmental degradation as the scaling up of industry and the consumption of polluting goods increase the exploitation of natural resources and pollution within and across boundaries. The goals of globalization and trade liberalization are increased income and economic growth but, without a foundation for broad-based growth, increases in inequality have occurred and could turn more serious. Information technology is growing by leaps and bounds and has all the potential for helping people use knowledge to solve their problems. However, its grossly uneven development and distribution creates even greater inequity within and among nations. Biotechnology allows the creation of genetically modified organisms which have enormous potential for increased food production. At the same time, great risks of ecological backlash, technological and economic dependence, as well as ethical issues, accompany these technologies. In all of these, cultural erosion, with its political and ecological repercussions is also a consequent risk, the irreversibility of which increases its potential damage. Ratification of the Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity is crucial.

B. Priority Issues Emerged from the Asian and Pacific Regional Context

8. The priorities of Asia and the Pacific with regard to the environment focus on the critical issues of the region, namely: (a) environmental quality and human health:

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

9. It should be recognized that the sustainable development process has greatly been hampered by the problem of poverty and illiteracy in developing countries and poverty reduction is thus the key for them to achieve sustainable development. Nevertheless, the population in poverty has continued to increase while the gap between the least developed countries and the developed countries is not bridged but enlarged. In that, there is a need for the international community to give full support to the developing countries in their endeavor for poverty reduction and eradication of illiteracy.

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

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

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

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

11. In the spirit of “new global partnership”, the developed countries should honor their commitments made at the Rio Conference for official development

assistance to meet the target of 0.7% of GNP as soon as possible and the provision of “new and additional financial resources” from the developed countries to the developing countries is called for. In addition, developed countries must pursue the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and know-how under favorable terms to developing countries in accordance with Agenda 21.

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

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

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

C. Tools for the Asia and Pacific Region to Achieve Sustainable Development

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

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

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

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

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

(e) The importance of education is recognized in addressing the issues of environment. It is of critical importance to respond to the need for education, particularly for women in poverty stricken areas as they are one of the active agents in safeguarding of the environment

16. The countries of the region are committed to strengthening collective efforts at the regional level for the expeditious conclusion of ongoing and planned negotiations on international legal documents and agreements related to the environment and sustainable development. The region will pursue new environmental initiatives such as the establishment of transboundary protected areas, transboundary pollution monitoring and possible regionwide implementation of the proposed ASEAN framework protocol on access to genetic and biological resources and proposed agreement on forest fires. The countries of the region are also committed to promoting synergies among activities stemming from environment-related conventions and those undertaken by international organizations to ensure that international processes for formulating and implementing international agreements in sustainable development are clear and efficient, thus promoting compliance and the likelihood of more tangible results. In addition, it should be

noted that regional and subregional mutual environmental dialogues, such as the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the Interstate Cooperation on Environment and Development in Central Asia, and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment are effective measures to promote such activities. Taking note of the difficulties of preparing state-of-the-environment reports, better mechanisms need to be developed for monitoring the situation, collecting data, making the analysis so that cause and effect are known, and sharing the information for global assessments and policy development. An example is the improved and expanded Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia.

D. Determination Towards Sustainable Development in the 21st Century

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

Environment: providing adequate life-giving services to all, including safe water, clean air, fertile lands, bountiful forests and marine ecosystems; and overall ecological stability;

Economy: undoing the vicious cycle of poverty; building on the equitable sharing of resources and their benefits at national, regional and global levels; and transforming markets into instruments of environmental management;

Empowerment: including all peoples and stakeholders in the decision-making process; strengthening local government authorities, civil society and the private sector; and creating effective political will for national, regional and global action for sustainable development.

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

E. Venue of ‘Rio + 10’

19. The countries of the region, recognizing the importance of raising awareness of global issues, stress their conviction that the holding of the 10-year review conference in Asia and the Pacific will provide a driving force for realizing sustainable development in the region and beyond, and fully support the holding of the conference in Indonesia at the generous offer of the Republic of Indonesia.