Report of the preparatory meeting for the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level

1. A preparatory meeting for the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level was held online and in person on 18 March 2022. The meeting was informed by the following documents:

   a) ESCAP/EDD/PREP/CED7/1: Protecting our common environment in Asia and the Pacific
   b) ESCAP/EDD/PREP/CED7/2: Strengthening regional cooperation on air pollution in Asia and the Pacific
   c) ESCAP/EDD/PREP/CED7/3: Preparations for the seventh session of Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following members and associated members of ESCAP: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; Fiji; France; Georgia; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Nauru; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Thailand; United States of America; Uzbekistan; Viet Nam.

3. The meeting discussed the following agenda items:
   a) Agenda Item 1: Opening
   b) Agenda Item 2: Setting the scene: our common environment in Asia and the Pacific
   c) Agenda Item 3: Consideration of a regional modality on air pollution
   d) Agenda item 4: Consideration of a consultation process for the 7th Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level
   e) Agenda item 5: Other matters

I. Setting the scene: our common environment in Asia and the Pacific

4. Delegates stressed the centrality of a healthy environment for achieving sustainable development, and identified climate change and its impacts, including tropical cyclones, health of the ocean, air pollution and environmental degradation as the
biggest threats to the region. Linkages between climate, oceans food and health were noted by several delegates and the need for integrated environmental approaches, was highlighted. The One Health approach was mentioned by one delegate. Nature based solutions were also highlighted as a key approach to resolve issues of air quality, reducing carbon footprints and other environmental challenges. Natural capital accounting and ecosystem valuation were highlighted as another area of potential regional cooperation. It was emphasized that solutions, including for climate action, needed to be transformative, scalable, practical and affordable, in particular for Small Island Developing States. One delegation noted that development and environmental protection should be balanced, especially in developing countries, and emphasized the need to respect the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The important role of partnerships between developed and developing countries was also noted, including supporting developing countries in accelerating climate action. Delegates emphasized the need for multilateralism, regional cooperation and solidarity in addressing the environment and development challenges of Asia and the Pacific and called for the effective use of the Committee of Environment and Development and other platforms in addressing the environmental challenges of the region.

5. Delegates supported the proposed theme for the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level “Protecting our Planet through Regional Cooperation and Solidarity in Asia and the Pacific”, and voiced support for an ambitious outcome document at the level of a Ministerial Declaration, including an annex on air pollution.

II. Consideration of a regional modality on air pollution

6. Delegations highlighted the need for ambitious action on air pollution. Delegates stressed the interlinkages between air pollution and climate change. One delegation highlighted sand and dust storms as a cause and important component of air pollution. One delegation stressed the need for common but differentiated responsibilities in this area. One delegations also identified the One Health approach as key approaches to manage air pollution whilst another delegation emphasized nature-based solutions.

7. Delegates expressed support for the development of a regional modality on air pollution, emphasizing the need for regional cooperation. Delegations identified an example of the existing multilateral agreement on air pollution in Europe, and one delegation expressed interest in the future development of a legally binding transboundary agreement on air pollution and the plan to develop a proposal forward for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Delegations highlighted key elements for a regional modality on air pollution, including: addressing the full range of pollutants including fine particle emissions, ground level ozone and photochemical smog; the need for open data, data sharing and capacity building for data utilization as well as the possible contributions from machine learning and satellite data; the need to adequately manage mobile emission sources. The Secretariat clarified that the regional modality on air pollution is proposed as a non-binding instrument and that its format will be determined by the member States during the consultation process.
III. Consideration of a consultation process for the 7th Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level

8. Representatives highlighted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation and reiterated support to the preparation for the seventh session of Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial Level. Delegates recommended a review of the timeline of the consultation process, to take into account the holiday season as well as other ESCAP intergovernmental meetings, in particular the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation, taking place August 30 – September 1, and requested the secretariat to adjust the dates to allow for sufficient time to consult with their capitals. It was recommended to host the consultations for both the ministerial declaration and the regional modality on air pollution back-to-back, with an interval of at least two weeks between consultations to allow for circulation and review of documents. One delegation inquired about the possibility to provide interpretation services in Russian during the consultation process. Delegations requested clarity on the nominations process for the expert group to which the Secretariat responded that invitations would be channeled through the seats of Government as per usual practice.

9. The secretariat will proceed with the proposed consultation process, including a virtual expert group meeting, a written consultation for the zero draft Ministerial Declaration and its annex, as well a series of hybrid consultation meetings, after an adjustment to dates as recommended by member States. All member States as well as Associate Members will be invited, through a note verbale, to nominate experts to participate in the consultation process. Budgetary options to provide translation and interpretation services in Russian will be explored.
ANNEX: Revised timeline for a consultation process for the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development at the Ministerial level

The following presents a revised timeline for a consultation process for the seventh session of the Committee on Environment and Development which will be held at Ministerial level from 29 November to 1 December 2022, based on feedback received by member States at during the preparatory meeting held on 18th March 2022.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/ Action</th>
<th>Input provided by the Secretariat</th>
<th>Follow-up actions</th>
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| 30 May – 16 June 2022 | Written consultation on draft text                                             | • Zero draft of the Ministerial Declaration  
• Zero draft of a regional modality for air pollution                                           | The Secretariat will incorporate feedback received to revise the zero draft Ministerial Declaration and its annex on a regional modality for air pollution by 22 June 2022. |
| 4 July 2022    | First consultation meeting on a proposed draft Ministerial Declaration and the proposed regional modality on air pollution, hybrid | • First draft of the Ministerial Declaration  
• First draft of a regional modality for air pollution                                           | The Secretariat will incorporate feedback received to revise the first draft Ministerial Declaration and its annex on a regional modality for air pollution and share with the consultation group ahead of the second consultation meeting, by 15 July 2022. |
| 18 August 2022 | Second consultation meeting on the draft Ministerial Declaration and the proposed regional modality on air pollution, hybrid | • Second draft of the Ministerial Declaration  
• Second draft of a regional modality for air pollution to be incorporated as an annex           | The Secretariat will share a clean version of the negotiated document to all participants ahead of the third consultation meeting, by 24 August 2022. |
| 16 September 2022 | Third consultation meeting on the draft Ministerial Declaration and the proposed regional modality on air | • Third draft of the Ministerial Declaration  
• Third draft of a regional modality for air pollution to be incorporated as an annex           | The Secretariat circulates the clean agreed document for the silence procedure                  |
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<tr>
<th>Week of September 19</th>
<th>Silence procedure</th>
<th>• Ministerial Declaration and Annex with Regional modality on air pollution ready for silence procedure</th>
<th>End of the silence procedure</th>
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<td>If silence is broken: second silent procedure</td>
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In addition, an Expert Group Meeting will be held virtually on 22-23 June 2022 to discuss the draft 2022 flagship report on environment and development and a policy brief on air pollution and regional collaboration.