

Japan Environment Quarterly

News from the
Environment Agency

Vol. 1 No.1 December 1996

ADVISORY PANEL ON GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SUBMITS

Report on Climate Change

TO THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

On November 1, the Sub-panel on Climate Change under the Advisory Panel on Global Environmental Issues for the Director General of the Environment Agency, submitted an Interim Report on climate change to Mr. Sukio Iwatare, the then Director General of the Agency. This document, which includes a number of specific recommendations, is expected to provide valuable input for Japan's environmental administration, as Japan will host the Third Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Kyoto in December 1997. The report is also expected to help stimulate open discussion on climate change among the general public.

The Sub-panel, chaired by Professor Akio Morishima of Sophia University, met 20 times since its first meeting in July 1995. In developing its findings, it took into account the views of various sectors of Japanese society including academics, industry representatives, local governments, environmental NGOs and the general public through special hearing sessions and surveys. It also considered the views of relevant ministries and agencies within the government.

The following points were translated for this Quarterly to summarize the main thrusts of the report, which is available only in Japanese. The views expressed by the report do not necessarily reflect those of the Government or the Environment Agency.

BACKGROUND

UNFCCC was adopted in 1992, with the ultimate objective of stabilizing concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHG) at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

(cont'd pg.2, Climate)

Survey of Japanese Companies' Affiliates

ACTIVITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

In September the Global Environment Department of the Environment Agency released results of a study of affiliates of Japanese companies operating in four Asian countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. The study was conducted with questionnaires and interviews in fiscal 1996, with the cooperation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce. Of 2,070 companies which were sent questionnaires, 425 replied. Main results of the study were:

Although only 28.7% of responding companies were required by local law to conduct environmental impact assessments, 46.1% of respondents conducted assessments.

74.1% of respondents felt that they would like to use more than the minimum costs and investment required to meet demand of current regulations for environmental conservation.

(cont'd pg.4, Survey)

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NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL

Ms. Michiko Ishii, member of the House of Councillors, took over from Mr. Sukio Iwatare in November 1996 as Minister of State and Director General of the Environment Agency. Ms. Ishii graduated from the Tokyo University of Pharmacy and Life Science, and served as member of the Saitama Prefectural Assembly before she was elected to the House of Councillors.

(from pg.1, Climate)

Under the convention, all signatory parties have commitments, such as plans to develop GHG inventories, to formulate national plans containing measures to mitigate climate change. In addition, developed country Parties committed themselves to adopt national policies and take corresponding measures aiming to return to earlier levels of anthropogenic GHG emissions by the year 2000, and to report information to the Conference of the Parties. In 1995, the Conference of the Parties, at its First Session in Berlin, concluded that the provisions of developed country Parties' commitments were not adequate, and decided to begin a process to enable it to take appropriate action for the period beyond 2000, with a view to adopting the results at the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3). This decision is called the Berlin Mandate. The COP3 will be a critical meeting to arrest global warming in the next century.

INTERNATIONAL MEASURES TO ARREST CLIMATE CHANGE

Implications of the Berlin Mandate

The Berlin Mandate process is important but cannot be the final solution to the global warming problem, even if the best efforts were made until the end of 1997. Continued and longer term efforts will be required.

Responsibility of developed countries to meet their pre-2000 target

Attaining the existing common

target of developed countries (to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000) is an important milestone and intermediate goal to mitigate global warming. Because in the future developing countries must also strengthen their efforts to cope with global warming, it is important that developed countries achieve their commitments in 2000. From this point of view, the fact that many developed countries are not likely to achieve the target in 2000 is a matter of grave concern.

Post-2000 targets

If there is a need for tentative benchmarks for an ultra-long term internationally-shared objective, it is worth considering the stabilization of atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases with carbon dioxide equivalent in a range not exceeding 550 ppm (or 520 ppm for carbon dioxide alone if it is assumed that the concentration of other gases does not change in the future). As aggregate medium-term targets for developed countries which have ratified the Convention as a whole, it is worth considering reducing the accumulated emissions of the developed nations for a period such as 10 years by a specific percentage. When setting such targets, it must be recognized that attaining the reduction based on the targets is quite challenging for developed countries, including Japan, in view of the lack of progress they have made so far to implement the Convention.

Burden-sharing among developed countries, and targets of national mitigation measures

If the approach of allowing differentiation among country targets is accepted by all countries, developed countries as a whole should first decide on the overall reductions, and then within that framework continue negotiations on allowable differentiation among countries. In this context, the choice between differentiated national targets and uniform reduction targets results in the choice between two possible means to achieve the objective of protecting the planet. In making the choice between the two options, it should be kept in mind that the objective of achieving the reduction of GHG emissions should not be undermined.

Policy measures by developed countries

In addition to the international commitments to achieve targets, common commitments for specific policy measures will have significant benefits. For example, if each country independently adopts its own policy measures, countries that take relatively stronger measures may be less competitive internationally. On the other hand, common commitments eliminate this problem and allow adequate competition. In addition, if all countries work to implement similar effective policy measures, the achievement of targets becomes more certain. However, if common commitments limit the discretionary power of national authorities, and the common

international measures are not appropriate to the conditions of the country, they could cause inefficiencies and disadvantages for countries concerned. To attain a compromise between possible pros and cons associated with international agreements on concrete measures, the group suggested wise solutions be sought, such as introduction of an idea that countries commit themselves to accept common international performance indicators for policies and measures.

Need to consider the situation of developing countries

Developed countries have the responsibility to promote transfer of technology to combat global warming to developing countries, and have been considering how to actively use existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) to this end. However, it is pointed out that current efforts have not been adequate and a better framework is needed. It appears that it will be necessary to expand the functions and size of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to this end.

The Eco Asia Long Term Perspective Project Workshop

The Environment Agency hosted the Fourth International Workshop of ECO ASIA Long Term Perspective Project on the 14th and 15th of October in Tokyo.

The Project was first proposed by the Environment Agency at the ECO ASIA '93 Congress with the goal of providing decision-makers in the Asia-Pacific region with a scientific basis for policy formation to achieve sustainable development, for the period leading up to 2025 AD.

With more than half the world's population and the highest rate of economic growth in the world, it is predicted that the region's consumption of energy and natural resources will increase sharply, putting greater pressures on the environment. According to forecasts made by the Project, primary energy consumption will rise 2.3 to 3.8 times the 1990 level by 2025 and CO₂ emissions will rise from the current 25% of the world total to 36% by 2025.

At the workshop participants discussed the finalization of the Project report and future plans, including a planned 'ECO ASIA Panel' presentation during the Fifth Session of the CSD in June 1997. It also was agreed that the project was entering the implementation and monitoring phase; that participating countries would make efforts to implement recommendations and follow-up activities of the Report; and that a Fifth International Workshop should be held in 1997.



The First International Workshop for Environmental Information Network in Asia and the Pacific (ECO ASIA NET) was held on the 16th and 17th, following the ECO ASIA Long Term Perspective Project Workshop. Participants discussed creation of a network for information exchange on Internet in the Asia-Pacific region.

The goals of the network are to support sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region; to assist the realization of concepts proposed in the ECO ASIA Long Term Perspective Project including Eco Partnerships, Eco-Technology and Eco-Investment, and Eco-Policy Linkages. It is hoped that the network will create a forum for exchanging opinions between policy-makers; promoting information sharing between government, private industry, and NGOs; strengthening search, editing, and management of environmental information; facilitating the access and use of existing environmental databases in the Asia-Pacific region; and collecting input and proposals from individuals and organizations.

It was agreed that case studies would be conducted in some countries to assess the use of Internet, the compatibility of existing systems, and the need for training. The Secretariat is to plan a workshop in 1997 to report the results of the case studies, and to prepare guidelines for the Homepages and management of ECO ASIA NET.

Junior Eco-Club

ASIA CONFERENCE IN NIIGATA

(from pg.1, Survey)

19.5% of responding companies had some experience of some problems in trying to reduce the environmental impact of operations outside the company; of these 48.5% indicated dealing with water pollution as an area of experience. Companies interviewed indicated that their wastewater treatment facilities of business operations were top class in the host country, but some were not treating their own domestic wastewater.

It was found that some companies were storing waste materials on their sites due to a lack of appropriate waste disposal, and that this is an important topic for future work.

In order to improve their activities for environmental management, they want from the Japanese government the following: environmental information on each host country (manuals, etc.) (59.8%); a consultation facility in the country (31.5%); advice, support and trainings to improve the environmental protection technology and measuring technology of government agencies in the host country (24.5%); and technical guidance for environmental measures in each country (24.2%).

Based upon these results, this year the Environment Agency is compiling the information on some experiences of their environmental management activities, so that such information would be available to Japanese companies, their affiliates, etc., for their reference to promote their environmental management activities.

The first Junior Eco-Club Asia Conference was jointly organized in Niigata by the Environment Agency and the Niigata prefectural government on November 2 and 3. The Conference, which aimed at promoting an exchange of experiences and information on children's environmental activities in Asia, consisted of three programs, namely a symposium, a meeting of governmental officials and NGO representatives from nine Asian countries, and an exchange of friendship among children. At the symposium which was attended by four hundred people, children from eight Asian countries reported their environmental activities in their countries.



Major English Publications from the Environment Agency

The Action Plan for Greening Government Operations (1995)

The Basic Environment Law (1993)

The Basic Environment Plan—An Outline (1995)

Environmental Protection Policy in Japan (1995)

Harmonizing Environment and Trade Policies (1995)

Nature Conservation in Japan (1995)

National Action Plan for Agenda 21 (1994)

Our Intensive Effort to Overcome the Tragic History of Minamata Disease (1994)

Quality of the Environment in Japan (1994)

Water Environment Management in Japan (1996)

Japan ENVIRONMENT Quarterly

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E V E N T S I N 1 9 9 7

January

27-29 Int'l Workshop on Local Initiatives for Sustainable Cities—Towards the Establishment of the 20% Club (Kanagawa)

February

16-20 Int'l Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Second Regional Workshop for the East Asian Seas (Okinawa)

March

22-24 Global Partnership Summit on Environment (Tokyo)

24-25 Second APN Scientific Planning Group Meeting (Tokyo)

26-28 Second APN Inter-Governmental Meeting (Tokyo)

June

Special Session of United Nations General Assembly (New York)

September

Sixth Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO ASIA '97) (Kobe)

December

1-12 Third Conference of the Parties, Framework Convention on Climate Change (Kyoto)