

## **Twelfth Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO Asia 2004)**

### **Chair's Summary**

**Yonago, Tottori, Japan**

**June 20, 2004**

1. The Twelfth Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific, ECO Asia 2004, was held in the city of Yonago, Tottori Prefecture, Japan on June 19 and 20, 2004, hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, Tottori Prefecture, and the city of Yonago. The Congress was attended by national delegates from 20 countries, including six Ministers, representatives from 13 international organizations, and a wide range of other participants.
2. The Congress aimed to assess the region's efforts toward sustainable development, including the progress of environmental education, which is one of the most important tools for realizing such development, and to discuss the direction of cooperation in the region by recognizing ECO Asia as one of the opportunities for ministerial-level participants from Asia and the Pacific region to discuss sustainable development in a frank and informal manner. In accordance with these aims, the Congress proceeded as follows.
3. The Congress was chaired by H.E. Ms. Koike Yuriko, Minister of the Environment of Japan, and vice-chaired by H.E. Dato Sri Adenan Satem, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Malaysia, and H.E. Mr. Mai Ai Truc, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Vietnam.
4. Minister Koike addressed the Congress, giving participants her views on the upcoming Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and an overview of recent developments with regard to the 2005 Ministerial Conference on the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle), environmental technologies, and Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan. Mr. Yoshihiro Katayama, governor of Tottori Prefecture, then addressed the Congress, providing information on the prefecture's many proactive and dynamic environmentally-friendly policies and measures. Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, later spoke on the importance of the use of both technology and human capital in attaining sustainable production and consumption patterns. He congratulated APFED and APEIS on their substantial achievements to date and stressed his desire to develop further the interrelation between UNEP and ECO Asia and other regional initiatives.

## **Session 1: Environmental Education**

5. The first session, which took up the topic of Environmental Education, began with a keynote speech by Prof. Hisatake Kato, President of Tottori University of Environmental Studies, who overviewed the issue of sustainability in different contexts. Prof. Kato emphasized that the following three points need global agreement: (a) the timetable for switching over from exhaustible resources to renewable resources; (b) measures to protect all species from extinction; and (c) international cooperation mechanisms for safe management of wastes.
6. Following the keynote speech, Dr. Shuichi Katoh, Senior Vice-Minister of the Environment of Japan, reported the results of the “Environmental Education Symposium in Tottori,” held on June 18, 2004. The symposium was attended by more than a thousand participants and many local initiatives on environmental education were introduced. It was emphasized that the linkage between local initiatives and international processes was very important for promoting the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
7. Subsequently, three encouraging local activities for environmental conservation were reported by representatives of civil society and businesses, namely the Nakaumi Children’s Waterfront Summit in which children learned about environmental issues through experiential learning; the activities of TotoriNet to utilize local resources such as spring water and acorns; and innovative efforts of the Ecoma Co. to improve the environment via the utilizing of natural creatures as well as the recycling of materials. The participants shared their experiences regarding environmental education initiatives being undertaken in countries and international organizations.
8. Congress participants emphasized that environmental education undertaken by not only governments but also businesses and NGOs was crucial for sustainable development. Some countries reported that environmental education programs have already been incorporated into primary, secondary, and tertiary education curricula. The Congress indicated that the training of teachers and local initiatives are important in promoting environmental education. The development of national strategic plans to coordinate the activities of various sectors was noted as important for the long-term effectiveness of environmental education, and participants recommended that the sharing and exchange of experiences, strategies, and techniques for environmental education be more strongly promoted in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Session 2: Concrete Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development**

9. The second session shared and discussed the progress of two projects initiated by ECO Asia, namely (a) the Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) and (b) the Asia-Pacific Environmental Innovation Strategy Project (APEIS).
10. The main messages of the APFED First Draft and its accompanying draft Action Plan were presented to the Congress. Participants recognized a strong need for the Asia-Pacific region to build sustainable societies. In this respect, participants strongly supported the major recommendations contained in the First Draft. The Congress further supported the APFED draft Action Plan as a useful bridge between recommendations and concrete means of implementation. It was emphasized that APFED recommendations should be put into practice in a step-by-step manner, in collaboration with governments, civil society groups and international organizations which are committed to sustainable development. There was also a strong call for the ministers of Asia and the Pacific region to take on the political leadership and political will to make the recommendations of APFED a reality.
11. Furthermore, participants praised APFED's strong record of success in bringing together multistakeholders and reflecting voices of civil society in the APFED analyses and recommendations. The participants noted that APFED holds a unique position in the Asia-Pacific region and they expressed their strong desire that it continuously contribute to the realization of sustainable societies in the region as a "knowledge management" and "innovation facilitation" center by providing innovative recommendations to other bodies and agencies working in the region.
12. With regard to APEIS, the meeting shared the achievements of its three sub-projects, namely, (a) Integrated Environmental Monitoring (IEM), (b) Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA), and (c) Research on Innovative and Strategic Policy Options (RISPO), over the last two years. The meeting praised the very encouraging progress made by the three sub-projects. Congress participants also noted with appreciation extensive partnership among the many research institutes in the region, nurtured through the implementation of the three APEIS sub-projects. In addition, participants noted substantial contributions APEIS has made to international initiatives such as the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment.

13. The meeting expressed strong support to APEIS, which provides scientific tools and policy options for use in policy making for sustainable development in the region. The Congress recommended that the projects maintain a close relationship with policy makers to ensure policy relevance and utilize research outcomes in capacity building. Congress participants pointed out the need to translate the findings of APEIS studies into reality, and with this in mind, the Congress strongly supported the proposal to integrate APEIS as the key component of the Knowledge Initiative of the APFED draft Action Plan.
14. The Congress noted with appreciation that the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED 2005) will be held in the Republic of Korea in March 2005. The representative from ESCAP strongly recommended the creation of linkages and synergies among ECO Asia, APFED and APEIS, and MCED 2005.
15. Participants noted the increasing importance of regional-level actions, particularly in the years since the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and welcomed APFED's contributions to Asia and the Pacific at the regional level. APFED was noted as being able to contribute substantially to the CSD process, as the issues which it has taken up, particularly water, urbanization, and energy, coincide very closely with those being taken up by the CSD. It was recommended that APFED contribute actively to the sharing of knowledge and experiences with the CSD and other international bodies with a view to promoting the sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific region.
16. In this context, special efforts are to be given to manage greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable energy development in order to reduce the negative impacts of climate change, global warming, and sea level rise, especially in Asia's coastal areas and the island states of the Pacific. The Congress also expressed its strong desire for a successful conclusion to the ten-year review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.
17. The participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, the Tottori Prefectural Government, and the city of Yonago for organizing and hosting the Congress.

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Chair, ECO Asia 2004