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Japan, China, Korea Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting

On 13 January the first Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among Japan, China and Korea was held in Seoul at the invitation of Mr. Choi Jae-Wook, Minister of the Environment of Korea. China was represented by Minister Xie Zhenhua of the State Environmental Protection Administration and Japan by Minister Kenji Manabe of the Environment Agency.


The ministers expressed their concerns about ongoing environmental degradation in the Northeast Asia resulting from dynamic development of the region, despite individual nations' efforts to prevent environmental pollution. They recognized that because of the important roles of the three countries in the region, environmental cooperation among them is indispensable for sustainable development there.

They identified particular areas of cooperation that should be given priority and expressed their intention to tackle a number of issues, including raising awareness that the three



Environment Ministers (from left): Mr. Kenji Manabe, Mr. Xie Zhenhua of China, and Mr. Choi Jae-Wook of Korea

countries are in the same 'environmental community'; activating information exchange; strengthening cooperation in environmental research; fostering cooperation in the field of environmental industry and on environmental technology; pursuing appropriate measures to prevent air pollution and to protect the marine environment; and strengthening cooperation on addressing global environmental issues such as biodiversity and climate change.

The ministers decided to hold a similar meeting every year. 

Fujimae Tidelands Landfill Project Cancelled

The tidal wetland of 260 hectares including the Fujimae tidelands at the mouths of the three rivers of Shonagawa, Shinkawa, and Nikkogawa in Nagoya harbour is the last remaining wetland at the head of Ise Bay. Each year about 60 species of waterbirds regularly come to the area, making it the first or second most important migratory area in Japan for shorebirds. At the peak period in spring over 7,000 shorebirds can be sighted at one time. Fujimae attracts international attention as an important wetland for migratory birds flying from Australia to as far as Siberia and Alaska.

Until recently Nagoya City in Aichi Prefecture was planning to construct a garbage

(cont'd pg.2, Fujimae)

(from pg.1, Fujimae)

landfill site, saying it was needed due to a predicted shortage of space for waste disposal. However, due in part to actions of the Environment Agency, Aichi Prefecture and Nagoya City decided to abandon the landfill project and seek another location, making possible the protection of the Fujimae tideland.

Eighteen years ago, in June 1981, Nagoya City allocated 105 hectares of Fujimae for waste landfill and pier as part of the Port of Nagoya Harbour Plan. Later, after the Environment Agency stated the opinion that adequate measures were needed for the protection of wild bird habitat in the meeting of the Council for Ports and Harbours of June 1992 about the revised Port Plan, the area of planned landfill was reduced to 46.5 hectares in December of 1995.


In July 1996, Nagoya City and the Nagoya Port Management Organization released the preliminary report of an environmental impact assessment stating that the environmental impact of the plan would be small, with the view that there was no alternative site, and that only a few years remained in the capacity of the existing waste disposal site. They commenced procedures for a full environmental impact assessment. Later, at hearings and council meetings for the local assessment process, considerable debate was held regarding the impact on birds of the loss of wetland at the planned

site, water purification functions of the wetland, and appropriateness of the site as a garbage disposal site. In March 1998 after receiving the resulting opinion of the Environmental Impact Assessment Review Committee of Nagoya City that “the impacts of the landfill on the wetland ecosystem have been revealed”, the Mayor of Nagoya expressed support for the project. In addition, during the fall and spring additional studies were conducted of birds and benthos, and in August 1998 the Governor of Aichi Prefecture gave his support after receiving a report of the Aichi Prefecture Environmental Assessment Review Committee indicating that various impacts on migratory birds were foreseeable.

In August 1998, even though it was recognized that the impact on the environment would be large, the entrepreneur (i.e. Nagoya City and the Nagoya Port Management Organization) proceeded to complete the environmental impact assessment procedures, published and opened for viewing an environmental impact statement stating that environmental protection objectives could be met by gradual construction, and by creating an artificial wetland as a compensatory measure. At the same time, in order to obtain the required permit to landfill the Fujimae tideland, after a decision by the City Council, Nagoya City applied to the Nagoya Port Management Organization which is empowered

to grant such permits under the Public Waters Reclamation Law. In October 1998, the local procedures were completed after the Nagoya City Mayor’s opinion based on the decision of the Nagoya City Council to concede the application was given to the Nagoya Port Management Organization. The next step would have been procedures involving the national government.

Meanwhile, after newspaper reports that the entrepreneur had plans for compensatory measures to create artificial tidelands by raising the height of the wetland, and that experiments would be conducted at the wetland before obtaining the permit to landfill, the Environment Agency, in December 1998, expressed the view that altering the important Fujimae tidelands, creating artificial wetlands, and conducting of such an experiment, were “extremely inappropriate in view of preservation of the environment.” In January 1999, the Nagoya City announced that it was abandoning the plan to landfill Fujimae tideland, based on the opinions of the Environment Agency and Ministry of Transport, the intervention of the Governor of Aichi Prefecture, and after discussion at the City Council.


At present, Nagoya City is striving to obtain a new waste disposal site, and actively taking action to reduce the volume of garbage, including warnings to citizens about the urgent garbage problem in the city. 

Japan–U.S. Meeting on Migratory Birds

The Japan–U.S. Meeting under the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds and Birds in Danger of Extinction, and their Environment was held in Tokyo on 3 and 4 February. The meeting discussed migratory bird management programmes, legislation and organizations in both countries,

the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, the Anatidae (geese and ducks) Network, the Shorebird Network, short-tailed albatross conservation issues, and other topics.

Progress was made on a number of issues. The U.S. indicated its intention to join the Asian-

Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network and the Anatidae Site Network in the East Asian Flyway, both of which are supported by the Environment Agency of Japan. In addition, the two countries agreed on joint research of dunlin using color markings, with preparations to begin this summer. 

Japan Receives 2 Crested Ibis from China

In November 1998 Chinese President Jiang Zemin presented the Emperor of Japan a gift of two crested ibis (*Nipponia nippon*) as a sign of cordial relations between the two countries. The actual transfer of the birds was conducted in Xian, China on 31 January this year with the attendance of Mr. Hirohisa Kurihara, State Secretary for Environment of Japan. The crested ibis is an endangered species which had all but disappeared. After 7 birds were rediscovered in China in 1981, China established a breeding

center. By 1998, 60 of the birds were thought to be in the wild and 71 in captivity in China. Japan had only one crested ibis at the end of 1998 named Kin, a 31 year old

female who was not capable of breeding. Japan and China have been cooperating to increase the numbers of the bird, and have been studying breeding and care of it.




Yang Yang (female) and You You (male) at the Sado 'Toki' (crested ibis) Center

Comprehensive Environmental Learning Zones

In order to promote experience-based learning about the environment, the Environment Agency developed a model project to help establishing "Comprehensive Environmental Learning Zones" by supplying equipments and materials. Children and adults will be able to stay overnight at the facilities and participate in a wide range of activities. Each of the four zones

selected for the project have different characteristics which offer a number of different sites for environmental learning.

The activities will include investigating water quality, collecting litter, studying environmental problems associated with the quality and quantity of snow, forest expeditions, using simple analysis kits to investigate air quality and noise levels,

observing wildlife and creating wildlife maps, studying ways to reduce, recycle and reuse trash, providing children a chance to learn about the environment from specialists, providing a chance for businesses and people of the region to investigate the environment together and find ways to improve it, and many more topics. 

Name of Zone (prefectures concerned and approximate area)	Regional Characteristics
1. Japan Sea Side of Tohoku (Akita, Yamagata, Niigata, 2.9 mil.ha)	This region on the coast of the Sea of Japan gets much snow and has abundant nature, including natural beech forests. It is the home of thriving agriculture, forestry and fishing industries.
2. Tokai (north and central Mie, Aichi, Gifu, southern Nagano, Shizuoka, southern Yamanashi, 3.4 mil.ha)	At the center of Japan's "Pacific belt" region, this zone is the intersection of Japan's transportation system. This region has much interchange with all parts of the country. The climate is mild, and human activity of all types is abundant.
3. Keiji•Hanshin (Osaka, eastern Hyogo, Kyoto, Shiga, 1.5 mil.ha)	The part of Japan with the longest cultural history and a number of large cities. The water systems link each other and many secondary nature areas exist in the region.
4. Central Setonaikai (Okayama, Kagawa, Hiroshima, 1.7 mil.ha)	The part of Japan's only inland sea with many islands. The region gets less rain than other regions and the people living here have lived closely with nature for a long time.

World Heritage Committee Meeting

The 22nd annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee was held in Kyoto from 30 November through 5 December 1998, attended by participants from 20 committee member countries and observers from 33 nations and international organizations.

The Committee, established according to the Convention for the Preservation of World Cultural

and Natural Heritage, decides on places to add to the World Heritage List, and monitors the status of protection of the heritage sites. This year Japan's ninth site was added to the list, historic monuments in ancient capital of Nara, comprising the Buddhist temples Todaiji and Yakushiji and the eighth-century Shinto shrine Kasuga Taisha, and 617 hectares

of surrounding area.

At the 22nd meeting of the Committee, the first time it was held in Japan, 30 new sites were added, including the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, La Grande-Place in Brussels, the archaeological site of Troy and Quadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab) in Lebanon.

Symposium on Environmental Endocrine Disruptors

The Environment Agency of Japan hosted an International Symposium on Environmental Endocrine Disruptors in Kyoto from 11 to 13 December 1998. Attended by over 3,500 participants comprised of researchers, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and representatives of environmental non-governmental organizations, this was the largest meeting ever on the issue of endocrine disruptors, one of the newest of critical environmental

problems. A relatively new topic on the international stage, much is still unknown about endocrine disruptors, which disrupt the normal functioning of hormones in human and other living things and can have serious impacts on reproduction, etc. Environmental endocrine disruptors are found among chemicals used in modern industry, products and everyday life.

The symposium included presentations of latest research by

scientists, a new law on screening by the US Environmental Protection Agency, and one session about the impact of endocrine disruptors on humans. An exhibition was shown of results of research by the Japan Society of Endocrine Disrupter Research. A number of proposals were made by participants, including the need for information disclosure, and a system to reduce the amount of endocrine disruptors in the environment.

ESCAP Expert Group Meeting on Emission Monitoring and Estimation

A meeting of experts was held in Niigata from 27 to 29 January to discuss monitoring and estimation of air pollutant emissions, as a part of the North-East Asia Environmental Cooperation Project of the UN Economic and Social Committee for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Participants discussed


monitoring of pollutant sources and methods to estimate emissions in East Asia, and future regional initiatives to address these problems. The two outcomes were 1) a plan to prepare a manual for the East Asia region regarding monitoring of sources of sulfur dioxide and other pollutants, and

2) a plan to prepare a guidebook on estimation methods for emissions of these pollutants. Countries officially participating included China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Mongolia. Experts from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam also attended.

ESCAP Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia

The fifth meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia was held under the auspices of ESCAP in Kobe from 24 to 26 February. It was attended by 29

persons from China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Russia, and international organizations such as the ADB and UNEP. The deliberation focused on the promotion of environmental co-


operation in the North-East Asian region towards the 21 century, the progress of projects being conducted through this forum, and a framework for environmental cooperation in the region. 

Government as a Business Operator and Consumer

In December the Environment Agency released results of surveys about the efforts of the national government to reduce its impact on the environment. In 1995 the government announced the “Action Plan for Greening Government Operations” as established by Cabinet decision, which included numerical targets in several categories. The rationale for the Action Plan was that the government behaves as a large

entity which is both a business providing services, and as a consumer of goods and services, and that it should demonstrate a good example of efforts to reduce its environmental impact.

Statistics are collected each year of purchasing activities and consumption of goods and services at the level of governmental departments and regional offices. This data is compiled and reported in the Environment Agency’s

Annual Report on the Environment. When the Action Plan was established, numerical targets were also announced for FY2000 and detailed action plans were made for each category. This year’s results, shown in the table, show how the government is succeeding. Revised plans were announced to help meet the targets where more effort is required. 


Abstract of the Results of Green Government Action Plan (Overall Government)

Category	FY	Result	Comparison to FY1995 (%)	FY2000 Targets
Paper consumption	'95	30,572 (t)		no increase (i.e. 30,572 t)
	'96	30,283	99.1	
	'97	30,155	98.6	
Proportion of low emission vehicles among all government vehicles	'95	0.07 (%)		increase to about 10%
	'96	0.10		
	'97	0.13		
Electrical energy consumption per unit of office space	'95	105.70 (kwh/m ²)		reduce below 90% of 1995 (i.e. <95.1 kwh/m ²)
	'96	97.68	92.4	
	'97	106.66	100.9	
Water consumption per unit of office space	'95	1.35 (m ³ /m ²)		reduce below 90% of 1995 (i.e. <1.22 m ³ /m ²)
	'96	1.31	97.0	
	'97	1.24	91.9	
Gasoline consumption by government vehicles	'95	16,050 (kl)		reduce below 90% of 1995 (i.e. <14,445 kl)
	'96	14,916	93.0	
	'97	14,944	93.4	
Heating oil	'95	177,658 (kl)		reduce below 90% of 1995 (i.e. <159,982 kl)
	'96	172,986	97.4	
	'97	162,025	91.2	
Garbage from offices	'95	139,601 (t)		reduce below 75% of 1995 (i.e. 104,700 t)
	'96	138,247	99.0	
	'97	152,454	109.2	

Japan-UK Environmental Policy Dialogue

The second Japan-UK high level officials’ meeting to discuss environmental issues was held in London on 8 and 9 February. With Japan represented by Mr. Tanaka, Administrative Vice Minister of the Environment Agency, and the UK represented by Mr. Tony Brenton,

Director, Global Issues, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Main topics of discussion included climate change, preparations for the Meeting of G8 Environment Ministers at the end of March, and chemical substances. It was agreed that the two countries would

conduct joint research on environmental endocrine disruptors. Mr. Tanaka also met with the UK Minister for the Environment, Mr. Michael Meacher, during his visit. 

Second Follow-up of National Biodiversity Strategy

On November 10 the Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity announced the completion of the second follow-up of implementation based on the National Biodiversity Strategy. The follow-up covered implementation of various governmental measures and plans in fiscal 1997 relating to biodiversity. Some of the findings of the report were:


- The viewpoint of biodiversity conservation was reflected in Japan's New Comprehensive National Development Plan—Grand Design for the 21st Century.
- Additions were made to the list of Japan's New Comprehensive

National Development Plan. Endangered species, and areas with important plant communities and forest ecosystems were newly designated as biosphere reserves.

- Initiatives were undertaken for appropriate management of protected areas.
- Initiatives were undertaken for the conservation of the water environment and to establish networks to restore and improve local nature.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Law was enacted, which takes into account biodiversity conservation.
- Activities with cooperation among government ministries

and agencies, and local governments were started for raising public awareness.

- Improvements were made to information systems relating to biodiversity, and to on-site river research facilities.
- International cooperation was made for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in various areas and fields including research cooperation regarding migratory birds and technical cooperation regarding sustainable forest management.

The public was invited to make comments for a month after the report was released. 


Japan National Report to Ramsar Convention Secretariat

The 7th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will be held in Costa Rica this May. In accordance with the Recommendation 2.11 adopted at the COP2, Japan submitted a National Report to the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention in November last year, including inputs from various ministries and agencies concerned.

The report focuses on implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general, and of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in

particular. While the report recognizes “difficulties in achieving consensus on establishing protection areas to conserve wetlands due to the problem of coordinating land use”, the report enumerates many initiatives in Japan to study and protect wetlands and migratory birds, to raise public awareness and to cooperate internationally. New legislation and practices which will benefit wetland protection include the 1997 Environmental Impact Assessment Law, the 1998–Japan's


New Comprehensive National Development Plan, and the amended 1997 River Law. The report also refers to policies regarding wetlands in the National Strategy of Japan on Biological Diversity which is formulated in accordance to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The full text of Japan's report is available on the Internet at http://www.ramsar.org/cop7_nr_japan.htm. 

Japan–Germany Environmental Meeting

The first meeting of the Joint Committee on Environmental Cooperation under the Agreement between Japan and Germany on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection was held on 17 and 18 December in Bonn.

The two countries confirmed that four fields deserved attention: waste management, measures to deal with effluent, dioxins; and noise prevention (especially traffic noise). It was agreed to consider two meetings on waste


management in 1999, one for legal experts to be held in Germany, and one for technical experts to be held in Japan. The next meeting of the Joint Committee is likely to be held in the year 2000. 

Revised Vehicle Noise Standards

In December the Environment Agency released a notification of tougher noise standards for mid-sized buses, freight trucks between 1.7 and 3.5 tonnes gross weight, and cabover type light freight trucks. Although various measures are being taken to reduce the problem of vehicle noise, an increase in road traffic along major roads is challenging the progress that has been made. Accordingly, new efforts have become necessary to meet the permissible noise limits set in 1992 and 1995.

The government has been urging auto manufactures to improve technologies and has been

monitoring their progress, to provide input to determine the new standards. The Environment Agency set up a committee in 1995 to consider when road noise limits could be achieved. The current

revision is one outcome of those deliberations. Soon the committee will be reconsidering noise limits for large-sized trucks, which are required to meet objectives by 2002. 

Maximum Permissible Limits of Automobile Noise (dB)

Noise limits	Accelerating vehicles		Vehicles at constant speed (50km/h)		Proximity stationary noise	
	current	revised	current	revised	current	revised
Type of vehicle						
mid-sized buses over 3.5 t gross weight and powered by over 150kw engines	83	80	82	79	105	98
freight trucks between 1.7 and 3.5 t gross weight	78	76	78	74	103	97
cabover type light freight trucks						


Measures Against Soil and Groundwater Contamination

On 29 January the Environment Agency sent a notification of a new "Guideline for Surveys and Countermeasures for Soil and Groundwater Pollution" to all prefectures, designed cities by the Water Pollution Control Law, and related ministries and agencies.

Guideline for surveys and countermeasures to deal with soil pollution were first established after a number of cases in the early

1980s in which land previously belonging to national research institutes was found to have problems with contamination, and similar cases appeared in case of changes in land use.

In 1993 the Agency released "Guideline for Surveys and Countermeasures for Soil Pollution with Heavy Metals and Provisional Guideline for Surveys and Countermeasures for Soil and

Groundwater Pollution with Chlorinated Organic Compounds", but comprehensive revisions were required in the light of new information obtained on purification technologies and the recent setting of new environmental quality standards for groundwater. The table shows the main sections and chemicals covered in the old and new guidelines. 


1993 Guideline	New Guideline
	Chapter 1 Introduction
Guideline on Heavy Metals: cadmium, cyanide, lead, chromium (VI), arsenic, total mercury, alkyl mercury, PCBs, and selenium	Chapter 2 Survey and Countermeasures to Heavy Metals: cadmium, cyanide, lead, chromium (VI), arsenic, total mercury, alkyl mercury, PCBs, organic phosphorus, thiuram, simazine, thiobencarb, and selenium.
Guideline on Chlorinated Organic Compounds, etc.: [1] Chlorinated Organic Compounds: dichloromethane, carbon tetrachloride, 1,2-dichloroethane, 1,1-dichloroethylene, <i>cis</i> -1, 2-dichloroethylene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, and benzene. [2] Agricultural Chemicals: organic phosphorus, 1,3-dichloropropene, thiuram, simazine, and thiobencarb	Chapter 3 Research and Countermeasures for Volatile Organic Compounds: dichloromethane, carbon tetrachloride, 1,2-dichloroethane, 1,1-dichloroethylene, <i>cis</i> -1,2-dichloroethylene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, benzene and 1,3-dichloropropene.

Resumption of Ivory Exports to Japan

A decision to permit single shipments of existing ivory stocks from three countries in southern Africa to Japan was made at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) held from 8 to 12 February in Geneva. The Standing Committee's actions permit some highly controlled exports of elephant ivory for the first time since 1989.

The Standing Committee determined at the February meeting that Namibia and Zimbabwe have met conditions and allowed them to resume exports of 13.8 and 20 tonnes, respectively, from 18 March. Since Botswana, the third country desiring to export, had not met conditions, approval expected for export of 25.3 tonnes was not yet given.


The actions of the Standing Committee are a follow-up to the 10th Conference of the Parties to CITES in June 1997, where governments agreed by a large majority to transfer African elephant populations of the three countries from Appendix I (which completely bans commercial trade) to Appendix II (which allows international trade that is strictly managed.) In order to ensure that this decision does not have an adverse impact on the elephants' conservation status, the Standing Committee endorsed a monitoring system related to elephant populations and illegal killing in Africa and Asia, agreed to mechanisms to ensure its implementation, and that a comprehensive and rigorous set of verification and control procedures be put into place before any trade could resume.

The Standing Committee had determined that the required steps had been taken in Japan to meet conditions, including strengthening of structures for domestic management. From the perspective of Japan, as profits from the planned exports are to be used for elephant conservation in the three south African countries, this trade can help the sustainable use of wildlife, and provide a model of contribution towards conservation. 

APN Center to Open in Kobe

The Environment Agency announced plans to open the APN Center (tentative name) in Kobe by mid-1999 to strengthen the functions of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN). The new center will be supported by the national and Hyogo Prefectural governments. It will be in Kobe's new city center, inside the International Health Development (I.H.D.) Center Building where other international, health-related and development-related organizations are located.

The APN is an inter-governmental network created to foster research about global environmental change in the region, increase developing country participation in that research, and strengthen links between science and policy making. The APN cooperates closely with various scientific programmes and other networks to achieve these purposes. Linked with the planned opening of the new Center, the APN held the Fourth Inter-Governmental Meeting in Kobe this March.

For more information about the APN please see the Internet web page at <http://www.rim.or.jp/apn>. 

For more information about events and articles in JEQ please contact the Global Environment Department.

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1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8975 Japan
Tel: +81-3-5521-8244
Fax: +81-3-3504-1634
E-mail: globe.dep@eanet.go.jp
Homepage: <http://www.eic.or.jp>

EVENTS

March

- 15-16 WTO / High-level Symposium on Trade and Environment (Geneva)
- 18-20 4th Inter-governmental Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) (Kobe, Japan)
- 24-26 OECD / Environmental Policy Committee (Paris)
- 26-28 G8 Environment Ministers Meeting (Schwerin, Germany)

April

- 6-7 4th Inter-governmental Meeting of NOWPAP (Beijing)
- 12-15 15th Session of the IPCC (San Jose, Costa Rica)
- 19-30 7th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York)

May

- 10-18 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention (San Jose, Costa Rica)
- 24-June 5 23rd Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (Lima)
- 31-June 11 10th Session of SBSTA/SBI of UNFCCC (Bonn)

June

- 5 International World Environment Day Celebration (Tokyo)
- 5-6 Junior Eco-Club Asia-Pacific Conference (Tokyo)

July

- 12-15 9th Asia-Pacific Seminar on Climate Change (Hikone, Japan)

September

- TBA Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO ASIA '99) (Sapporo, Japan)

October

- 25-Nov. 5th Session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC / 11th Session of SBSTA/SBI of UNFCCC (Bonn)

November

- 15-26 3rd Session of the Conference of the Parties to CCD (Recife, Brasil)

TBA = To Be Announced