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Results of 3rd APFED Meeting

The third meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Environment and Development (APFED) was held in Guilin, China, on 25 and 26 January 2003, under the joint sponsorship of Japan's Ministry of the Environment, the UN Economic and Social Committee for Asia-Pacific (ESCAP), the UN Environment Programme, the China State Environmental Administration, and the Japan-China Friendship Center for Environmental Protection.

Ryutaro Hashimoto, former prime minister of Japan, served as the chair of the forum, and Hironori Hamanaka, Vice-Minister for Global Environmental Affairs represented the Ministry of the Environment.

The aim of APFED is to propose a model by the year 2004 for equitable, sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. It was established in October 2001 at the annual congress of environment ministers of the Asia-Pacific region (ECO ASIA). The first meeting was held in Bangkok in January 2002, and the second in Jakarta in June 2002.

At the third meeting, new APFED members were introduced and reports were given on the APFED parallel events held in connection with the Johannesburg Summit. Participants discussed the contents and structure of the APFED final report to be completed by 2004, and the orientation for the implementation of projects related to APFED commitments submitted at the Johannesburg Summit.

As a result of discussions, participants agreed that the final report would be composed of a message of about ten-pages that provides proposals and recommends actions to be taken, and a report of about 100 pages, plus appendices. In addition, among the three projects comprising the APFED Commitments (collection and analysis of best policy practices (BPP),

(cont'd pg. 2, Results of 3rd APFED Meeting)



Group photo from the 3rd meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum on Environment and Development

(from pg. 1, Results of 3rd APFED Meeting)

the building of a network of researchers and research institutions (NetRes), and preparation of an inventory of capacity building programs (CPB)), it was decided that APFED members would start with the BPP project.

In the coming months, Mr. Hashimoto as chair and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) as secretariat will use the opinions obtained from members in the preparation of the contents and

composition of the APFED final report, and the plans for implementation of the projects committed to at the Johannesburg Summit. The next meeting is planned for the end of August. 🌍

Workshop on Environmental Monitoring of POPs in East Asian Countries

On 2nd and 3rd December 2002, the Ministry of the Environment hosted the Workshop on Environmental Monitoring of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in East Asian Countries.

Ten countries of East Asia participated in the meeting (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), as well as representatives of a number of international bodies, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Chemicals, UNEP/ROAP (Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) and the GEF/UNEP Persistent Toxic Substances (PTS) Programme.

Participants shared information on the levels of 12 POPs in the environment of East Asian countries and agreed that further efforts should be made to fill in the data gaps. In response to the requirements of article 16 of the Stockholm, participants recognized a need to draw an overall picture of environmental pollution caused by POPs. Participants shared an awareness that regional cooperation would be important in order to move forward, and that financial and technical assistance

would be a key factor for the promotion.

The workshop recognized that an expert working group should be established to discuss technical details for a regional monitoring plan, including sampling, analytical methods and harmonization of analytical protocols. Participants expected that the results of this workshop would be reflected at the UNEP Chemicals Workshop on Global POPs Monitoring scheduled for March 2003, and looked forward to a future workshop for East Asian countries. 🌍



Participants at the Workshop on Environmental Monitoring of POPs in East Asian Countries.

Symposium: “Sustainable Regional Management—To Utilize Environmentally Sound Technology for Urban Development”

In order to protect the global environment, our daily life and industrial activities must be transformed to ones that have less impact for environment.

In this context, on 8 February, the Ministry of the Environment, in co-organization with the city of Shimizu in Shizuoka Prefecture, and the Global Environment Centre Foundation, held an international symposium entitled Sustainable Regional Management—To Utilize Environmentally Sound Technology for Urban Development.

The 500-person hall was filled to capacity with participants who included citizens, environmental managers from companies, and environmental NGOs. Mr. Yoshio Mochizuki, Parliamentary secretary of the Environment, and Mr. Hiromasa Miyagishima, Mayor of Shimizu City, opened the symposium. A keynote address was given by Dr. Steve Halls, Executive Director of the UNEP International Environmental Technology Center. After the keynote there was a panel discussion about sustainable urban development issues of the twenty-first century.

Keynote Speech

Using his background with the IETC, which works to promote the transfer and use of environmentally sound technologies (EST), Dr. Halls in his keynote speech, entitled “Regional Management and Environmentally Sound Technologies—Building a Sustainable Future,” explained efforts to improve in the quality of life for individuals and to strengthen local activities, and the need to deal with urban environments that are worsening



Invited speakers at the symposium.

due to growing human populations and other factors. To improve the situation, Dr. Halls showed that new ways of thinking are needed that find a balance between the environment and economy, and he gave as examples buildings that are designed with their eventual demolition in mind, and eco-industrial parks that use environmentally sound technologies. He emphasized that higher citizen awareness is important in order to promote recycling-oriented urban development that is energy-efficient and recycles resources. He also stressed that environmental education should be seen as part of a life-long learning process, and that now is the time for action on all of these issues.

Panel Discussion

Next, a panel discussion was held with Dr. Halls and Dr. Tsuyoshi Fujita, Associate Professor of Osaka University, as coordinators.

Shimizu is a port and industrial city, located between the metropolises of Tokyo and Nagoya, that grew as its port expanded. In March 2002 the city created the Shimizu Fourth Comprehensive Plan, with the overarching goal of being a “sustainable city connected to the future.” Making use of its

strategic location at the convergence of land, water and air transportation routes, and using such advantages as its concentration of diverse industries, the city is considering the creation of a distribution system for recycling of resources, coastal environmental restoration, water improvement, and a variety of public amenities.

The initiatives of the host city were discussed as a model case. Prof. Shun Fung Chiu of De La Salle University in the Philippines, who also serves as a consultant for environmental planning, suggested the idea of making use of Shimizu’s port functions to attract recycling businesses to unused land, create an “eco-town” that uses water and energy efficiently, and build resource-recycling systems and networks.

Dr. Keisuke Hanaki, Professor of Tokyo University, pointed out the importance of using the positive aspects of a port—that it is possible to reduce the environmental burden of transportation by making a modal shift from road to marine transport. He urged the city to become a model “eco-town” based on the port. Mr. Seiji Harada, Managing Director of the Shizuoka Shimbun newspaper, stated the view that this type of scheme will not


(cont’d pg. 4, Sustainable Regional Management)

move forward unless the citizens recognize the importance of having companies in the region with environmentally sound technologies. For example, in tenders for public works projects, he thought that criteria for selection should include not only costs but also environmental aspects.

Dr. Yuichi Moriguchi, Head of the Resources Management Section of the National Institute for Environmental Studies, said that the global information network is now highly advanced. He urged a city like Shimizu to learning from local

history and culture, but also to have an international perspective, to think about things from new angles, and to collect information from around the world. At the same time, it is also important to disseminate information to the rest of the world.

Based on the proposals made from other panelists, Mayor Miyagishima commented that many people may approve of the general discussion of an eco-town, but when it comes to creating a recycling town in one's own area, opposition starts to emerge and progress is sometimes not so easy.

Local citizens have a high environmental awareness, however, so he expects to see progress in nurturing environmental industries in a way that will benefit the total region and help to make Shimizu an eco-town. Dr. Fujita closed the meeting, saying "I believe that today's symposium was a good opportunity for citizens, businesses and local governments to start considering urban development that balances the environment and the economy. I hope that this will be the start of something new." 

Ministry Seeks Volunteer Chemical Advisors

The Ministry of the Environment recently announced to initiate a pilot project in order to invite and train civilian "chemical advisors." Through the project, the Ministry hopes to attract specialized volunteers to help explain issues about chemicals and environmental risks to the public, companies and other sectors of society.

As awareness and concern about chemicals in the environment has risen in recent years, there has been a growing need of "risk communication." Often this requires specialized knowledge and the ability to communicate facts to people who are not specialists. The role of the chemical advisors is to explain the nature of chemical substances and their impacts, and to raise the general level of understanding in society about chemical.

Chemical substances are widely used in industrialized societies around the world, and many of them involve varying levels of risks for human health and ecosystems. For a society to address these issues, it is important for all sectors of society, including the public, media, industry and governments, etc., to share a

common understanding of the issues and options available. Japan recently introduced a law on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), and promotion of chemical management which requires companies to report the amounts of specified substances that they manufacture, release, and transfer. One outcome of this new law is that the amount of information available about chemicals has dramatically increased, and consequently, the need for clear explanations about them.

The pilot project involves the call for volunteer chemical advisors, establishment of a registration system for them on the Internet, and development of a curriculum for training.


For public groups, it is thought that these advisors will be able to speak at events organized by the groups. One high priority topic will be explanation of Japan's PRTR system, which most of the public do not clearly understand yet. Others may seek advise on what kinds of questions they should ask to learn about chemical safety issues about factories in their communities. The advisors could

also be asked to attend meetings held by companies and assist the local community to understand the information presented, or to help communities listen objectively to explanations from industry.

For corporations, it is thought that the chemical advisors could speak at company study group meetings about chemicals, explain the PRTR system for employees, or teach the companies how to explain their chemical-related activities to the local community.

Local governments will be able to invite the chemical advisors to speak at public events relating to chemical reduction plans, or ask the advisors to help explain the PRTR system to local companies.

Candidates for the pilot project were required to have a university-level background that relates to chemical substances, at least five years of working experience in a related field, a computer and Internet connection, and availability to attend the training courses.

The Ministry invited applicants to the pilot project in February and later made a selection of twenty persons in each training courses held in Tokyo and Osaka. 

Ministry Staff Encouraged to Volunteer


In December 2002 a special committee of the Central Environment Council, Japan's top governmental advisory body on environment policy, made some recommendations on how to build momentum for environmental protection in the country. They identified the important role of volunteers in improving the environment.

One of the suggestions made by the council included the creation of a framework for staff of the Ministry of the Environment to volunteer for environmental conservation around the country. A special site has been set up on

the ministry website (www.env.go.jp/volunteer) for organizations to register and make a request for ministry staff volunteers. Organizations expected to apply include local governments and their supporting citizen groups, non-profit organizations, companies and others. The definition of prospective activities is broad, but the key feature is that they must be activities that will help resolve environmental problems or improve conditions. Staff can review the requests and reply to indicate their interest.

It is hoped that ministry staff, with their experience and

knowledge of environmental issues and policies from the governmental perspective, will be able to add a new dimension to citizens' activities. At the same time, they will gain hands-on experience by working side by side with other volunteers and citizens.

Separately, a survey asked ministry staff their attitudes about volunteering. Of 624 staff asked, 36 percent responded. Of the respondents, 82 percent indicated an interest in volunteering. Their main volunteering interests were in nature protection, clean-up activities, and environmental education. 

Study of Fossil Fuel Alternatives


Fossil fuel alternatives such as biomass, dimethyl ether, and gas-to-liquid (GTL) fuels are attracting much attention for use in gasoline and diesel engines, in the hopes that they may reduce carbon dioxide emissions, as one way to help prevent global warming. The impacts of these fuels, however, on vehicle emissions and on the vehicles themselves have not yet been adequately tested.

For these reasons, Japan's Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation gathered

together a group of academics and experts and created the Study Group on the Environmental Aspects of Fossil Fuel Alternatives (tentative name) in order to examine the impacts of these fuels on vehicle emissions and on the vehicles themselves. The examination is oriented toward the development of regulations connected with alternative fuels, in terms of fuel standards, based on permissible limits for the fuels' properties in connection with the Air Pollution Control Law, as well as safety standards for road

transport vehicles.


The group first met in December and decided that the topics for study during fiscal 2002 (ending in March 2003) were to include examination of

... the properties of emissions and impacts on vehicles if biomass fuels were used as additives to gasoline and diesel fuels, and if biomass fuels were actually used as fuel, and ... topics such as low temperature flow properties and oxidative stability of biomass and other fuels. 

The Future of Chemical Evaluation and Regulation in Japan

Starting in September 2002, three Councils, Central Environment Council, the Health Science Council and the Industrial Structure Council reviewed the current evaluation and regulation system of chemical substances in Japan, and compiled a joint report

in February 2003. In line with the report, three ministries (the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and the Ministry of the Environment) worked on an amendment to the Chemical Substances Control Law

to include countermeasures against ecotoxic chemicals and to make the current chemical management system more effective and efficient from the standpoint of risk management. The amendment was submitted to the Diet in March 2003. 

Partial Revision of Agricultural Chemicals Regulation Law

Background

Japan's Agricultural Chemicals Regulation Law previously required the registration of agricultural chemicals for sale, but it became clear at the end of July 2002 that unregistered agricultural chemicals were being imported, sold and used in 44 of Japan's 47 prefectures. The problem became a public issue over a number of concerns, including lost confidence in food safety.

Through these events background, it became clear that the existing law had a number of serious shortcomings that hindered efforts to address the current problems. First, the existing law imposed regulations only at the selling stage and targeted only companies dealing with the chemicals. Although the importation by individuals through import agents was growing significantly, the law made it difficult to impose effective regulations on the distribution of illegal agricultural chemicals. Second, because the chemical usage stage was not regulated by the law, there was no way to stop the actual use of illegal agricultural chemicals. Third, the penalties were too small to deter illegal behavior.

Major Revisions

Japan's Agricultural Chemicals Regulation law was therefore revised during the 155th session of the national Diet (October to December 2002). The major revisions are described below:

1. Prohibition of the production, import and use of the unregistered agricultural chemicals

The revised law prohibits the manufacture and import of unregistered agricultural chemicals, and strengthens monitoring illegal importation, including that by individuals (article 2).

2. Advertising restrictions on import agents

Because some import agents were using the Internet to encourage the import of unregistered agricultural chemicals by individuals, advertising by these parties will now be restricted (article 10-2).

3. New restrictions on use

Because some farmers were knowingly using unregistered agricultural chemicals, the revised law prohibits the use of these chemicals in agricultural products, etc. (article 11).

4. Establishment of standards for use

In order to strengthen the prevention of problems of the residue of agricultural chemicals in agricultural products resulting from the use of agricultural chemicals, etc. the revised law establishes mandatory standards for the timing of use and the number of times the chemicals can be applied, and prohibits the use of agricultural chemicals in any ways that violate these standards (article 12).

5. Strengthening of penalties

Penalties for law violations as for agricultural chemicals were previously less severe than those as for livestock feed, another raw material of production. Even though penalties did exist, they failed to prevent the illegal sales of unregistered agricultural chemicals. As a result, the penalties under the revised Agricultural Chemicals Regulation Law were raised to the same level as for the Livestock Feed Safety Law. Of particular note, the maximum penalty for companies violating the law was raised to 100 million yen (about U.S.\$850,000) (articles 17,18,19).

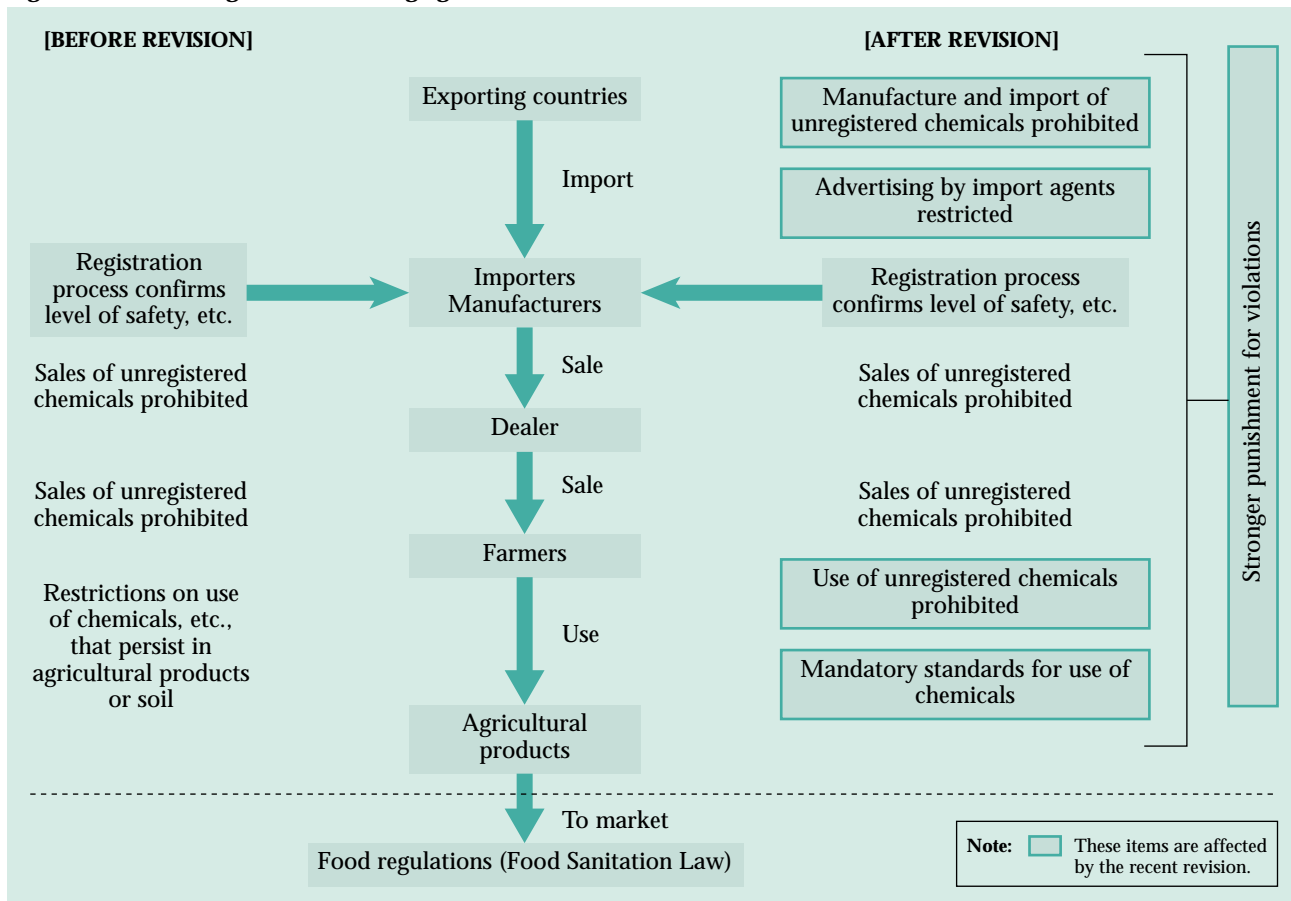
Involvement of the Ministry of the Environment

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) has been involved in policies relating to agricultural chemicals—from the perspective of environmental protection—through regulations concerning their registration and use. More specifically, among the standards that the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries must consider relating to application for registration of agricultural chemicals under the Agricultural Chemicals Regulation Law, the Minister of the Environment is responsible for

Fig. 1: Comparison of violation penalties relating to sales and use, before and after revision

	[BEFORE REVISION]	→	[AFTER REVISION]
Sales	Up to one year imprisonment Fines up to 50,000 yen		Imprisonment up to 3 years (natural person) Fines up to 1 million yen (natural person) Fines up to 100 million yen (legal person)
Use	Fines up to 30,000 yen		Imprisonment up to 3 years Fines up to 1 million yen

Fig. 2: Revision of regulations affecting agricultural chemicals



establishing standards relating to danger of causing damage.

1. to men and livestock arising from residue of the agricultural chemicals in agricultural products, etc. (persistence in agricultural products),
2. to men and livestock arising from residue of the agricultural chemicals in agricultural products, etc., through its residue in soil (persistence in soil),
3. to aquatic plants and animals (toxicity to aquatic life), and
4. to men and livestock arising from water pollution by the agricultural chemicals (water pollution).


In addition, based on the regulations before the law's revision, the MOE also established the necessary policies affecting the usage stage after registration, including planning and making proposals for the establishment, revision and abolition of cabinet

orders concerning the designation of agricultural chemicals that persist in agricultural products or soil, and those that result in water pollution. It also set the standards that users must comply with for agricultural chemicals that persist in agricultural products or soil.

The recent revision of the law made two notable changes. First, for the manufacture and importation of agricultural chemicals that previously did not require registration but must now be registered, a system has been included that exempts "specified agricultural chemicals" from the need for registration if it has been clearly shown that they do not have a negative impact on men and livestock, based on consideration of the raw substances used. The purpose of this change is to avoid excessive regulation. The designation of these exempted chemicals will be done jointly by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Second, "standards that users must comply with" relating to agricultural chemicals that persist in agricultural products or soil (previously set by the Minister of the Environment) and "standards for safe use of agricultural chemicals" (previously set and announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) have been integrated. Now, both ministers will jointly be responsible for agricultural chemicals standards that must be observed by users—for the timing and method of use of all registered agricultural chemicals, for each type of chemical (as described in point 4 above).

Both ministries will now be working closely and giving full attention to promote the newly-introduced measures, in order to prevent environmental pollution and damage to human health from the use of agricultural chemicals. 

Japan's Global Environmental Protection Budget for FY2003

The Ministry of the Environment recently announced its budget request for the activities relating to global environmental protection for fiscal 2003 (1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004). The total proposed budget was 930 billion yen (about U.S.\$7.7 billion at 120 yen per dollar), representing a decrease of 5.1 percent compared to the previous fiscal year.

The details of the budget by general category are as follows (billion yen):

Creation of international frameworks	9.9
Research and monitoring	85.3
Technological development and dissemination	397.1
Environmental international cooperation	38.3
Environmental consideration	2.8
Domestic initiatives to achieve sustainable development	397

The “domestic initiatives to achieve sustainable development” category includes projects and activities aimed for reducing society burden on the environment, including more efficient use of resources and energy conservation. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology promotes science and technology, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers grant aid, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) offers technical cooperation, and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) offers loan aid. Their budget figures for the global environment are not included above.

The details of the global environment budget in terms of environmental category are shown below (billion yen).

Global warming	838.4
Ozone layer depletion	0.6
Acid rain	8.6
Marine pollution	1.8
Transboundary movements of hazardous substances	0.06
Forest loss and degradation	0.8
Biodiversity loss	4.1
Desertification	0.6
Environmental measures in developing countries	4.8
Environmental measures that are valued internationally	5.5
Other	65.6



2003

April

25-27 G8 Environment Ministers Meeting (Paris, France)

28-9 May United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) (New York, USA)

May

26-6 Jun. Third Session of United Nations Forum on Forests (Geneva, Switzerland)

June

2-13 18th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (Bonn, Germany)

2-4 OECD Joint Working Party on Trade and Environment (Paris, France)

7 Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (Eco Asia 2003) (Hayama, Japan)

23-24 International Workshop on Odor Measurement (Beppu, Japan)

30-5 July 27th Session of the World Heritage Committee (Suzhou, China)

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

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Published by the Global Environment Bureau, Ministry of the Environment

1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8975 Japan

Tel: +81-3-5521-8243 Fax: +81-3-3504-1634

E-mail: globe.dep@env.go.jp Homepage: <http://www.env.go.jp>