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Law Concerning the Promotion of the Measures to Cope with Global Warming

On 9 October the Government of Japan promulgated the world's first law created for the express purpose of preventing global warming. The Bill for the Promotion of Measures to Prevent Global Warming passed at the national Diet on 2 October. The law is in response to the COP3 meeting last year for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto, and prescribes actions of the national and local governments, industry and citizens. The actual implementation of the Law will begin in about six months, but the Environment Agency is now preparing a Basic Policy on measures to tackle global warming. The June issue of JEQ covered the contents of the Bill. 

Environment Minister Manabe at COP4, Buenos Aires

Minister of State and Director-General of the Environment Agency Mr. Kenji Manabe attended the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP4), held in Buenos Aires from 2 - 14 November. At the Conference he emphasized the need for countries to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions domestically, and the need to reach agreement on key issues in order to put into force the Kyoto Protocol negotiated last December at COP3, which was hosted by Japan. Discussions at COP4 this year covered details of three mechanisms (namely emissions trading, joint implementation and the clean development mechanism) the issue of developing country participation in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and various matters

relating to the Climate Convention. COP4 resulted in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action which sets forth a timetable for achievement of concrete results on various issues by COP6 in the year 2000. 



Mr. Manabe addresses COP4 participants

New Symbol for Global Warming Prevention



After considering 7,618 entries, a committee selected this design submitted by Matsuoka Hideo of Yamagata Prefecture to be used each December during Global Warming Prevention Month. The symbol will be commonly used by national and local governments and industry to raise awareness about global warming.

Environment Minister Manabe to China

Environment Minister Manabe visited China from 22 to 26 October to exchange views with his Chinese counterpart, Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Director of the State Administration of Environmental Protection, on environmental issues, in particular about global warming and bilateral cooperation in the environmental field. Mr. Manabe also met with Vice Premier Wen Jiabao of the State Council and Minister Tang Jiaxuan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Manabe visited the Japan-China Friendship Environmental Protection Center in Beijing, and Dalian, one of three “model environmental cities” involved in an initiative of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA), based on the joint declaration for “Japan-China Environmental Cooperation for the 21st Century” stated by the former Prime Minister Hashimoto when he visited China in September 1997. 🌍



Mr. Manabe with Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs in Beijing

Informal Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change

An Informal Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change was held on 17 and 18 September in Tokyo. The meeting was attended by representatives of 22 developing and developed countries and economies in transition, and one organization.

The aims of the meeting were to maintain momentum in discussions about measures to tackle global warming, to discuss issues relating to the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and to confirm political commitment to promote discussions leading up to COP4 and thereafter.

While recent subsidiary meetings on the UNFCCC in Bonn had not provided substantive discussions, the Informal Ministerial Meeting sought to avoid formality and focus discussions on issues of substance. At the Informal Ministerial Meeting there was consensus that each country involved would try their own share of work in order

to achieve success at COP4.

Discussions were in three parts: individual country domestic efforts and international cooperation; mechanisms; and prospects for COP4. About the first topic, each country explained its efforts, with many referring to more efficient use of energy. Developing country participants explained their efforts and emphasized their differing stages of development. There was recognition that countries at different levels of development should have different targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

There was consensus that the clean development mechanism should provide ‘win-win’ options for countries involved. Involving project-based reductions of GHGs, for developed countries the clean development mechanism will help meet goals of GHG reductions, while for developing countries it can promote the needed technical and financial transfers and give them emissions credits. Regarding emissions trading and

implementation, many speakers pointed out the need for a reliable and transparent system; thus monitoring and verification are important. All agreed that discussion should continue, and confirmed that the prevention of global warming is the goal of the Climate Convention.

About international cooperation, the meeting expressed the need for strong leadership at COP4 and during the subsequent process, and for open discussion since the positions of many countries differ. A number of countries expressed the view that the private sector (businesses and NGOs) should be more involved, and that some way should be found to get more of their involvement at COP4 and in the future.

In all, participants in the Informal Ministerial Meeting felt that it had been a success in that views were exchanged frankly, and that there was general convergence of opinion in how countries should go forward towards COP4. 🌍

Japan-China Joint Announcement on Environmental Cooperation toward the 21st Century

On 26 November in Tokyo Prime Minister Obuchi and President Jiang Zemin had a discussion about environmental cooperation between two countries during their summit talks. It is an indication of the importance both leaders place on the topic. The announcement made during the talks of Chinese participation in the preparatory-phase activities of the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia represented significant and welcome progress.

On the same day, Japanese and Chinese Foreign Ministers issued a joint announcement which strengthens environmental cooperation between the two countries. The “Japan-China Joint Announcement on Environmental Cooperation

toward the 21st Century” gives recognition to the achievements made so far, and strongly supports further efforts in pursuant to the objectives and principles of sustainable development agreed to at the Earth Summit in 1992. It recognizes the benefits for both countries of cooperation in environmental areas.

Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Director of Chinese State Administration of Environmental Protection, who accompanied President Jiang, met with Minister Manabe of the Environment Agency during the official visit of the President. They exchanged their views about environmental cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to strive for cooperation to obtain the best results. 🌍

Main elements of the Japan-China Joint Announcement on Environmental Cooperation toward the 21st Century

- cooperation on development for three “environmental model cities” in China, i.e. Dalian, Gulyang, and Chongqing, including antipollution measures
- establishment of “environmental information network” at the city level in 100 locations
- confirmation of support for the Japan-China Environmental Protection Joint Committee
- support for the Japan-China Forum on Environmental Cooperation
- Chinese involvement in the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia and cooperation to improve the environment in the region
- cooperation for early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, and cooperation including implementation of relevant projects



Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Director of China's State Administration of Environmental Protection, listens to explanation of a low emissions vehicle at the Prime Ministers Residence in Tokyo. At center is Cabinet Secretary Nonaka, at right is Mr. Manabe, Director-General of the Environment Agency.

Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET)

The First Inter-Governmental Meeting of the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) was held in March this year toward the establishment of EANET of which the objectives are to create a common understanding of the state of acid deposition in East Asia and to provide useful inputs to decision-making aimed at preventing adverse impacts of acid deposition. EANET is now conducting the preparatory-phase activities. An Interim Network Center was established in Niigata, Japan, and each participating country has a

National Center.

Two meetings held in Yokohama recently promoted the further development of EANET. The First Meeting of the Interim Scientific Advisory Group for the Preparatory-Phase Activities of EANET (ISAG) was held from 12 to 14 October, followed by the Third Meeting of the Working Group on the EANET, from 15 to 16 October.

The ISAG discussed various technical issues, including preparation of technical manuals, quality assurance/quality control programs, data reporting

procedures and formats, and training of personnel.

The Working Group reviewed the status of the preparatory-phase activities since its inauguration in April this year and discussed the future activities. Countries participating in EANET at present include Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Vietnam. China also decided to participate in the preparatory-phase activities of EANET in November 1998. 🌍

New Environmental Quality Standards for Noise

Japan set environmental quality standards for noise in 1971 by Cabinet decision. Since then, more research has been done on the effects of noise, noise measurement technology has advanced, and in recent years Equivalent Noise Levels (ENLs) have been adopted internationally to standardize evaluation methodologies.

Responding to these circumstances, the Environment Agency proposed revisions in environmental quality standards based on new methods. The revisions were announced on September 30 in Environment Agency Notification 64, based on Article 16 of the Environment Basic Law.

The gist of the Notification is:

(1) Adoption of ENLs as a method of evaluating noise. This replaces the old standard based on a central value. An ENL expresses the average energy level of noise data in equivalent decibels. ENLs are


advantageous since they accurately reflect the level of exposure to noise and are suitable for environmental assessments along roadways, for example, where traffic data can be used to establish clear methods to evaluate noise levels.

(2) New principles for evaluation. There are two forms: One is evaluation based on noise level by which each single house is affected. The noise level is measured at the most affected side of the building. The other is the evaluation in terms of number and rate of houses affected by noise levels that exceed environmental quality standards in a given area.

(3) The new standards themselves, which are graded for different types of districts and time zones. (See table below.)

(4) Period of adjustment to the new environmental quality standards during which they are to be gradually met. This will be basically within ten years of the date the standards go into effect, but as soon as possible after ten years in the case of areas that have difficulty meeting them, such as near major traffic arteries.

(5) The new environmental quality standards will go into effect on April 1, 1999.

The Environment Agency will request all involved ministries and agencies to promote measures to help meet the new environmental quality standards. It will also join forces with the involved ministries and agencies to promote comprehensive measures against noise, including improving the institutional arrangements aimed at reaching the new standards. 

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY STANDARDS FOR NOISE (unit: decibels)

(i) Areas not facing roads of two lanes or more

Zone	Daytime Maximum	Nighttime Maximum (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)
AA (in the vicinity of medical care facilities, etc., requiring quiet conditions)	≤ 50	≤ 40
A (entirely residential) or B (mostly residential)	≤ 55	≤ 45
C (mixed business and residential)	≤ 60	≤ 50

(ii) Areas facing roads of two lanes or more.

Zone	Daytime Maximum	Nighttime Maximum (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)
A	≤ 60	≤ 55
B or C	≤ 65	≤ 60

(iii) Areas adjacent to artery roads

Zone	Daytime Maximum	Nighttime Maximum (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)
Outside ENL of houses exposed to high levels of traffic noise	≤ 70	≤ 65

OECD Conference on PRTRs

Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) are frameworks for the register and public release of information about emissions and transfer as waste of chemical substances thought to be environmental pollutants. They allow information to be shared among various sectors such as governments, businesses and citizens/NGOs. PRTRs are a significant new methodology to promote measures to counter environmental risks of potentially harmful chemical substances.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) actively took initiative based on Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 which was agreed at the Earth Summit in 1992, leading to a Council Recommendation agreed at the OECD Environment Ministers meeting in February 1992 that member countries take steps to establish PRTR systems. The OECD, while evaluating results achieved so far, decided that the first international meeting on PRTRs would be held in order to consider future directions for PRTRs. Accordingly, the OECD International Conference on PRTRs was held in Tokyo over three days, from 9 to 11 September, organized by the OECD and hosted by the

Environment Agency in cooperation with UNEP Chemicals and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).


The Conference was attended by 80 experts responsible for PRTRs from overseas and 65 from Japan, representing a total of 38 countries (including OECD member and non-member countries), regions and international organizations as well as observers from the public, for a total of over 200. The feature of this meeting was that it included not only governmental representatives but also persons from industry and NGOs, and many attended from Japan.

Mr. Hirohisa Kurihara, State Secretary for Environmental Affairs, Environment Agency, gave the welcome address, Ms. Joke Waller-Hunter, Director of the OECD Environment Directorate, gave the opening address, and Dr. Nay Htun, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gave the keynote speech. Following this, presentations were made at the plenary session about initiatives in the Netherlands, U.S., Australia and UNITAR, and Japan reported on the PRTR pilot project which was implemented by the

Environment Agency starting last year.

Next the meeting actively discussed in twelve working groups the experiences of countries with PRTRs, their evaluation as methodologies for environmental policy, and their future directions. In the discussions, the importance of PRTRs as a tool for environmental protection was confirmed, and it was recognized that PRTR systems are also important tools for sustainable development. In addition, the importance was pointed out that citizens and NGOs are able to have access to information through PRTRs, and that they are able to participate in risk management at the community level, and in environmental policy. Developing countries expressed their expectations for assistance in the establishment of PRTRs.

On the last day, the discussions were summarized, and a declaration was adopted calling for strengthening of efforts on PRTRs by countries and international organizations.


Through the Conference, it was felt that recognition of the multi-faceted functions of PRTRs and their importance for environmental policy is growing internationally. 

Revised Effluent Standards

In order to promote counter-measures for eutrophication caused by excessive release of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) into enclosed coastal waters, an existing Ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office was reviewed and revised. The new regulations strengthen the provisional standards and put them into effect generally, but permit a very limited

number of industries to continue with provisional standards for 5 more years.

In October 1993, the Director-General of the Environment Agency designated 88 coastal waters to which the rules on discharge of nitrogen and phosphorus would apply. Industries that had trouble meeting these standards were given a grace

period of five years until 30 September 1998, during which the provisional standards applied. Japan's effluent standards for specified establishments with average discharges of 50 m³ or more of effluent are a maximum of 120 mg/ℓ and daily average of 60 mg/ℓ for nitrogen and 16 mg/ℓ and 8 mg/ℓ, respectively, for phosphorus. 

ECO ASIA '98 Ministerial Congress in Sendai

The Seventh Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO ASIA '98) was held this year in Sendai, Japan from 19 to 20 September 1998. It was hosted by the Environment Agency of Japan and Sendai City and attended by 49 representatives including 11 Ministers and 6 Vice-Ministers from 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and 16 representatives from 10 international organizations. Topics of the four main sessions this year are described below.

REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS IN THE PAST YEAR ON ECO ASIA PROJECTS AND OTHER INITIATIVES

Reports were given on "ECO ASIA Long-term Perspective Project" and "Environmental Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (ECO-ASIA NET)", as well as the "Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)" and "Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET)".

CLIMATE CHANGE – TOWARDS THE SUCCESS OF COP4

After presentations, participants pointed out that (a) there are many unclear aspects about the three mechanisms established by the Kyoto Protocol, namely international emission trading, projects under Article 6 and the clean development mechanism, and that it is important to promote international discussion about these three mechanisms in parallel, and (b) the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change held in Tokyo was seen as extremely beneficial to facilitate international negotiations, enabling significant progress at COP4. In this connection, the view was expressed that ministers should demonstrate political leadership in order to make COP4 a success. In addition, it was pointed out that the

promotion of technology transfer is important to further strengthening actions needed.


CLIMATE CHANGE – STRENGTHENING THE EFFORTS AND COOPERATION TO COPE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Discussions pointed out that, in order to address the climate change issue in the Asia-Pacific region, there are several problems to be emphasized, including (a) insufficient human resources for the preparation and implementation of policies; (b) shortage of funds to implement those policies; and, (c) needs for better access to and utilization of information on climate change. Regarding the implementation of policies to cope with global warming, views were expressed that (a) various measures are already being implemented in developing countries in the region; (b) it is very important that these significant voluntary actions by developing countries be better known, especially in developed countries; (c) prioritization is very important in developing the policies, in order to utilize limited resources efficiently; (d) various efforts to mitigate climate change, particularly in the energy sector may have significant positive values for economies, and therefore such aspects as "win-win" approaches should be well taken into consideration in developing policies for climate change; and, (e) greenhouse gas emission reductions need to be addressed within an integrated framework of sustainable development.

Relating to international cooperation to tackle global warming, participants emphasized the importance of cooperation in further promoting capacity building and technology transfer. It was agreed that at this stage action is needed rather than discussion.

TOWARDS THE SUCCESS OF "RIO + 10" ASSEMBLY IN 2002

In the discussion it was recognized that positive steps were being made in the implementation of Agenda 21, including the preparation of national Agenda 21 Action Plans by countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, however, participants from developing countries expressed views that overall efforts worldwide were inadequate in fulfilling commitments by the developed countries made at the Rio Summit. Consequently, participants expressed keen interest in utilizing this ECO ASIA forum to further implement the commitments adopted at the Rio Summit and to advance a positive Asia-Pacific approach in coping with global environmental problems. In this context, for the purposes of realizing a successful Rio + 10 Assembly, views were expressed that progress in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol is essential.

Regarding the role of ECO ASIA leading up to the "Rio + 10" Assembly, a suggestion was made to seek linkages between ECO ASIA and the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific planned for the year 2000 by ESCAP. In addition, views were expressed that ECO ASIA is expected to make a significant contribution through linkages with other activities in the region both in making significant progress in regional implementation of the Rio commitments as well as in preparing for the "Rio + 10" Assembly. It was also suggested that ECO ASIA should identify the areas of slow or no progress from the point of view of a successful "Rio + 10" Assembly in the year 2002, and that some mechanisms should be evolved to follow up with the members and monitor in close linkage with ESCAP. 

APEC Environmental Symposium on Environmental Education Towards Sustainable Cities

The APEC Environmental Symposium on Environmental Education Towards Sustainable Cities was held in Sendai, Japan from 20 to 21 September 1998. It was attended by experts from 12 APEC member countries and 7 organizations. Keynote speakers included Honorable John A. Frazer, Ambassador for the Environment, Canada, Prof. Dr. Kimiko Kozawa, Professor, Tokyo Gakugei University, and Mr. Guangyao Zhu, Vice Minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration of China.

The theme of “sustainable cities” has been an important one in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), being discussed as a priority area to promote sustainable development


in the Asia-Pacific region at meetings of APEC environment ministers in 1994, 1996 and 1997.

Almost half of the world’s population now lives in urban areas, as a result of the rapid urbanization on a global scale in past years. Cities have become highly developed artificial areas, consuming enormous amounts of resources and energy, and place heavy burdens on the environment. Many serious environmental issues are closely related to urban consumption. In the Asia-Pacific region, home to a number of mega-cities, urban environmental problems must be dealt with in order to promote sustainable development on a regional scale.

This Symposium aimed to

- (1) recognize the role of

environmental education for realizing sustainable cities; (2) discuss issues and measures to promote environmental education; and (3) clarify the way forward in the process towards sustainable cities. The primary focus was on the environmental aspects of sustainable cities, in particular ‘sound material cycles’ and the ‘living environment’.

The Symposium resulted in a better understanding of issues relating to environmental education and sustainable cities, and created new links between concerned officials and specialists in the Asia-Pacific region. The general outcomes of the APEC meeting are shown in the box. 

Through the APEC Symposium discussions, participants shared a understanding of the necessity of a paradigm shift in environmental educational activities, not only for children but also for various sectors of society, such as decision makers and professionals in every field. The main elements of the discussion are summarized below.

a) Make environmental education a lifelong process

Mechanisms are needed through which all citizens can participate in education continuously throughout their lives. Partnership is needed among all stakeholders including citizens, governments, NGOs and businesses.

b) Make the invisible visible

The fact that many aspects of cities are not visible to the eye, such as energy, material flows and unsustainable consumption patterns, is a barrier to environmental awareness. These need to be made visible. It is important to provide comprehensive educational opportunities to raise interest in environmental issues, to deepen understanding and to be able to solve problems.

c) Share common and innovative approaches

To attain higher effectiveness in environmental education, common and innovative approaches, with flexibility for regional differences, should be pursued through exchanges of experiences and information. In this context, introduction of practical and action-oriented environmental education should encourage self-learning and self-training attitudes, and community-based activities. In formulation of the environmental curriculum, positive aspects of environmental improvements of our planet should be stressed, not just the negative aspects of environmental problems.

d) Seek formal and informal learning opportunities

It is important to incorporate environmental elements at every opportunity in formal and informal education (i.e. learning opportunities in everyday life), with close linkage between them and to integrate environmental education into every aspect of formal school curriculums. In this way, environmental education can be carried out in an integrated way.


e) Continue/strengthen international cooperation

Although environmental issues differ among countries and regions, many topics and experiences can be shared, such as in capacity building, preparation of teaching materials and approaches by incorporating concepts of ecological foot-print and sustainable development into them. In this context, it is essential to continue and strengthen international cooperation in environmental education including information networking.


Accession to UN Convention to Combat Desertification

On September 11, 1998, the Japanese Cabinet meeting decided to accede to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and deposited the instrument of accession with the United Nations Secretary-General. On December 10, 90 days after the date of deposition of this instrument, the Convention will enter into force for Japan.

The Convention stipulates drafting and implementation of action programmes by affected developing countries to identify the factors contributing to desertification and practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. It also stipulates provision of aid by developed countries and international financial institutions. Inter-governmental negotiations for the Convention started after the Earth Summit in 1992 based on Agenda 21. As of the end of August 1998, 136 countries were Parties to the Convention.

In addition to providing monetary aid and assistance in formulating and executing plans to reduce the effects of severe droughts and combat desertification in developing countries, Japan will also be responsible for transferring appropriate technology. 

Japan to Hold World Environment Day Celebration in 1999

The Environment Agency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs have agreed with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) that the main international World Environment Day celebrations will be held in Tokyo on 5 June 1999. World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to commemorate the opening of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment. By holding annual celebrations and other related activities on and around June 5, UNEP aims to raise environmental awareness, and to encourage global action in the protection of the environment. On the occasion of World Environment Day in 1999, the Global 500 Awards will be presented by UNEP and a symposium will be held. Related events will be held by governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations. 

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

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EVENTS

December 1998

- 11-13 International Symposium on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (Kyoto, Japan)
- 14-18 20th Consultative Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London, UK)

January 1999

- 25-29 2nd Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for An International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (Nairobi, Kenya)

February

- 2-4 4th Scientific Planning Group Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) (Jakarta, Indonesia)
- 14 - 21 6th Meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Biosafety (Cartagena, Colombia)
- 22 - 23 Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Cartagena, Colombia)

March

- TBA 4th Inter-Governmental Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) (Japan)

TBA = To Be Announced