

STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE OF UNEP

12th NEAC Meeting

24-25 November 2003, Toyama

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure and honor to be amongst you and to make a statement to this important meeting on behalf of UNEP.

As you know, there are several environmental cooperation mechanisms in this sub-region such as NEASPEC (Northeast Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation), NOWPAP (North West Pacific Action Plan) and TEMM (Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting). Among others, NEAC provides the unique forum for participating governments, international organizations and other stakeholders.

The Northeast Asia is one of the most dynamic and diverse regions of the world. It contains one of the richest and most highly developed countries of the world as well as some of the poorer and underdeveloped countries and areas. It also contains the largest country in the world with one fourth of the world population and high economic growth.

Because of the dynamism and diversity, the Northeast Asia is the most difficult sub-region in Asia and the Pacific in terms of sub-regional environmental cooperation. There is no legal framework and no institutional body for environmental cooperation in this sub-region unlike other sub-regions such as Southeast Asia, South Asia and South Pacific. Therefore, NEAC provide us with the valuable platform for environmental cooperation in this sub-region.

Keeping the uniqueness of the Northeast Asian sub-region in mind, let me report to you some of our Office's important movements and activities in relation to this sub-region after the last NEAC Meeting in Hainan, China on this precious occasion.

First of all, I am pleased to inform the meeting that "Strategy for UNEP Asia and the Pacific 2003-2005" was developed in April this year by the leadership of the new Regional Director. The Strategy consists of four objectives: (1) Assist implementation of national, sub-regional and global priority environmental programmes, (2) Host a Regional Knowledge Centre, (3) Lead response to emerging environmental issues in the region, and (4) manage human, financial and physical resources to maximize effectiveness of delivery.

One of the important points of the Strategy is focusing on innovative mechanisms for collaboration with our partners to avoid duplication and maximize service. UNEP will advocate a segmentation of UN agency responsibilities to enhance collaboration and delivery. This acknowledges UNESCAP as the lead agency for leading the regional Ministerial Conference process; UNEP supporting sub-regional institutions and programming, and UNDP maintaining its national level coordination role.

There are lots of other important points in the Strategy, but in terms of time constraints, I have to omit to introduce them here. It would be appreciated if you could have a chance to visit our website to go through the Strategy paper, later.

Secondly, I would like to introduce to the Asia-Pacific Sub-regional Environment Policy Dialogue (SEPD) held on 19 September 2003 in Beijing. As you are aware, one of the major outcomes of WSSD is the emphasis on regional implementation through partnerships between governments and civil society. The political leadership has voiced the need for the region to reach a common position through policy dialogue. SEPD was established in response to this need, consisting of 5 Ministerial representatives and 5 eminent persons from the region, one each from one sub-region, respectively.

The establishment of SEPD is based on the Strategy's fourth objective. It was decided that the meeting should be held annually in order to provide consolidated Asia-Pacific views on global environment issues, regional inputs to global events and policy guidance for the effective implementation of UNEP's programmes in Asia and the Pacific.

Thirdly, UNEP China Office was newly established in Beijing last September. This office is a country office for China, coordinating various UNEP activities including GEF projects in China with the Government, in particular SEPA. However, in the future, this office is expected to upgrade into a sub-regional office for Northeast Asia. Again, please note that this also comes from the Strategy saying UNEP supporting sub-regional institutions and programming.

Fourthly, various projects are being promoted by the leadership of UNEP. One example is an epoch-making ADB-GEF project on Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms in Northeast Asia. As introduced in the Public Symposium this morning, this is a collaborative project of 4 international agencies (UNEP, ADB, ESCAP and UNCCD) and 4 countries (China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan). In this Project, UNEP is the lead agency for regional monitoring and early warning network of DSS, one of two major components of the Project. DSS is shown as one of emerging environment issues in the region in the Strategy paper.

EANET (Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia) is also actively promoted by UNEP since the secretarial role was transferred from the Interim Secretariat at MOE of Japan to UNEP/RRC.AP at Bangkok early last year. The 5th Inter-governmental Meeting will be held this week in Bangkok just after this NEAC Meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but not least, let me remind you that the GC/GMEF (Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum) will be held late next March in Cheju, Korea. Although the GC/GMEF is a global event, some kind of regional focus, input or flavor is needed as this is for the first time in Asia region. I believe that all the above activities are related or linked to this milestone event to some extent.

UNEP would like to be actively involved in environmental cooperation in this sub-region in association with NEAC and hope to make as much contribution as possible to effectively addressing the urgent and important environmental problems in the sub-region. I thank you for your kind attention and for giving me this valuable opportunity to share with you the UNEP activities as a committed partner in managing the Northeast Asian region's environment.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.