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Environmental Impact Assessment for International Cooperation

Furthering the Understanding of Environment Impact Assessment Systems for Experts
Engaged in International Cooperation Activities

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Foreword

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a system for identifying and introducing measures to prevent environmental adverse impacts caused by development project. EIA could be an effective instrument to achieve sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development was introduced at United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration, stated "In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it." Principle 17 stated that "Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority." In other words, integration of environmental consideration into any development project is required and EIA is the system to achieve the goal. For this reason, EIA has become increasingly significant in recent years.

Developing countries face a dilemma that had been common with Japan once experienced during the days of rapid economic growth. The pressure to escape poverty creates more demands for continual economic development, regardless of the grave pollution and destruction on natural environment, and emerging of global environmental problems. Recently, developed countries and international donor agencies increasingly demand developing countries for environmental considerations when providing development assistance. With these backgrounds, many developing countries have already introduced EIA systems. Demand to introduce and implement EIA system is critical for developing countries, for those driving towards economic expansion under seeking the equilibrium for sustainable development.

The origin of Environmental Impact Assessment system started with the enactment of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969 by the U.S. Japanese cabinet adopted EIA in the first half of the 1970's and promulgated the Environmental Impact Assessment law in June 1997, being the last to establish the law among the OECD members. At the supplementary resolutions at the House of Representatives and Councilors during the Diet deliberations on the Law, it was requested that Environmental Impact Assessment should be applied to the projects implemented by Japanese industries and official development assistant (ODA) in overseas countries, to ensure proper environmental consideration. In Japan, many experts go to developing countries to collaborate with them and facilitate technology transfer to preserve environment. This effort plays a main pillar in the international cooperation activities of the environmental protection field in Japan. These experienced environmental experts might have a comprehensive understanding on EIA system in Japan, but they are unfamiliar with EIA of abroad.

This publication outlined the EIA systems useful for development assistance project, in order to help those environmental experts who are involved in development assistance or technological

cooperation work in developing countries.

Many large-scale economic development programs are undertaken with the cooperation of financial support from bilateral and multilateral donors such as the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) or Japanese organizations such as JICA or JBIC(ex-OECF). Therefore there is a very close relationship between the EIA in developing countries and the EIA guidelines of these aid agencies. In particular, the environmental assessment of the World Bank is mandatory on all projects that may potentially have a significant influence on the environment, many countries plan to introduce a new environmental assessment system for preparation of the EIA report. With the efforts of these aid agencies, public-participation type development becomes the mainstream that places emphasis on public participation in each step of the structure, implementation and assessment of projects. The procedures introduced here differ from that of Japan, that the scope of assessment does not remain at environmental aspects, but also covers economic, social and cultural aspects as well.

In consideration of the above conditions, this document describes EIA systems for development assistance based on the World Bank, which is thought to play a leading role in environmental impact assessment systems for development assistance for developing countries.

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Acknowledgement

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