

Chairperson's Summary

The 10th Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation

16-19 October 2001, Incheon, Korea

1. The 10th Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation (NEAC) was held 16-19 October 2001 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The Ministry of Environment of the ROK and the City of Incheon hosted the conference, with support by the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement. Participants were from central and local governments, research institutes, and NGOs from the five member countries (the People's Republic of China, Japan, the ROK, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation), along with representatives from UNEP and UN-ESCAP, as well as other experts. Also attending were NGOs from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, the US, and Germany.
2. The conference opened with an introductory speech by the Mayor of Incheon, CHOI Ki Sun, followed by a welcoming address given by the Vice Minister of Environment, CHUNG Dong Soo, on behalf of the Minister, Dr. KIM Myung Ja. Congratulatory addresses were then given by CHOI Yul, Secretary General of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, and LEE Young Hwan, Chairperson of the Incheon City Council.
3. The subjects discussed at the 10th NEAC were as follows:
 - A. Roles, activities, and accomplishments of NGOs in environmental cooperation
 - B. Major environmental policies in NE Asia
 - C. Integrated coastal area management
 - D. Establishing sustainable energy policies
 - E. Review of NEAC activities in the past 10 years, and future prospects
4. Following the opening ceremony, NEAC held an open symposium on the role of NGOs for environmental cooperation in NE Asia. The symposium was planned and managed under the initiative of NGOs themselves. The NGOs represented various constituencies and cultures, including many from outside NE Asia; likewise their presentations addressed a number of topics, from migratory birds to education. Most presenters highlighted their respective organization's efforts, missions, and accomplishments. A few main themes emerged, however, centering on the view that cooperation at the international level is mutually reinforced and enabled by local, inter- and intra-institutional cooperation. Presenters emphasized the need for greater public education, outreach, as well as involvement in the policy process. Lastly, a number of NGO representatives noted that if NGOs are to seriously pursue international cooperation, then greater support is required in all forms—financially, educationally, and institutionally. In other words, empowerment of NGOs is needed to enhance cooperation in NE Asia.
5. The second day's first session was an overview of each NE Asian country's environmental policies. The heads of the five countries' delegations all emphasized the continued strengthening of regional cooperation through a number of existing forums and opportunities. Also, all the presenters touched on or directly promoted the need for incentivizing environmental policies across

sectors. One example is the Eco-2 Project, introduced by the ROK. The session's chair noted that the need remains, however, to translate policies into action across NE Asia.

6. The second session was on integrated coastal area management. The presenters all emphasized the following issues:

- A. A large portion of economic and social activity is concentrated along the coasts, which necessitates protection of coastlines.
- B. Coastal areas also have precious natural environments and ecosystems under serious pressure. Integrated management is necessary in order to achieve harmony between environmental preservation, disaster prevention, and sustainable use.
- C. Joint efforts are required from all stakeholders.
- D. Governmental efforts must be integrated (as opposed to merely being inter-dependent).
- E. Mechanisms are needed to ensure the sustainability of national plans for integrated coastal management.

7. The third session of the day focused on establishing sustainable energy policies. An expert from China compared historic rates of GHG emissions across countries, with particular emphasis on China's current measures to combat global warming. Other presenters introduced measures their respective governments have taken and are planning. One expert from Japan introduced a number of newly marketable technologies that may help abate emissions. All NEAC member countries are implementing and exploring a wide range of measures to encourage sustainable energy provision and use. The participants discussed the connection between economic growth and global warming, with an emphasis on identifying win-win strategies. Many speakers noted that economic incentives such as green taxes are useful policy levers, and that technological innovation must be part of the policy mosaic. Also necessary are demand-side and supply-side approaches, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation and sharing of information. Additionally, participants emphasized the need for the promotion of sub-regional cooperation, building upon coordination and synergies with existing international initiatives.

8. On the last day of the conference, there was a session for the review of NEAC activities over the past 10 years and prospects for the future. A number of presenters highlighted the main achievements of NEAC, including the free exchange of information and experience among various actors in the region, promoting regional policy dialogue, networking at the working level, and catalyzing new cooperative initiatives. Looking toward the future, presenters emphasized the ongoing need to expand and enhance linkages between NEAC and a number of other regional forums, including NEASPEC, TEMM, and international organizations, as well as linkages with international environmental conventions. In particular, it was suggested that NEAC harness its resources to contribute to formulating concrete projects with NEASPEC.

9. During the same session, participants also expressed the view that relevant stakeholders should be more closely involved in NEAC. The ROK representative presented anecdotal feedback from NGOs on their perspective of NEAC's current effort to involve them; the majority of the NGO participants reported that they would like to see greater time given to GO/NGO discussion during the conference. Some NGO members also felt that local communities and other stakeholders should be included in future meetings, a perspective echoed by an expert from Japan who suggested that NEAC include academic societies, in part to enhance expert knowledge.

10. The participants shared the view that NEAC should continue its present function as a free and open forum with wider participation of various stakeholders, such as local governments, NGOs, and research institutes. NEAC recognizes the importance to continue the governmental/NGO dialogue that was initiated at the 10th NEAC in Incheon.

11. The participants expressed their deep appreciation to the Ministry of Environment of the ROK and the City of Incheon for their warm hospitality and successful organization of the 10th NEAC.

12. The participants welcomed the proposal by China to host the 11th NEAC in 2002. The dates, venue, duration, and agenda of the conference will be decided by the host country in collaboration with the other participating countries at least three months prior to the meeting.