

Chairperson's Summary

The Eighth Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation

November 14-17, 1999

Maizuru City, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan

1. The 8th Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation was held in Maizuru City, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan. The conference was organized by the joint efforts of the Environment Agency of Japan, Kyoto Prefecture, Maizuru City, and The Academic Forum for Northeast Asia. Delegates from central and local authorities of the People's Republic of China, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, as well as representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), participated in the conference.

2. Local Authorities have played an important role in Northeast Asian environmental cooperation. For this reason, the overall theme of the present conference was "Environmental conservation initiatives of national and local authorities, and the reflection of those initiatives in environmental cooperation."

On the first day, the conference held a public symposium on the theme of "Local Initiatives for New Regional Cooperation and Environmental Conservation: A Message from Kyoto to the New Century." With local citizens in attendance, participants arrived at a better understanding of environmental initiatives in which national governments, local authorities, NGOs, businesses, scientists and citizens alike cooperate. On the following conference days

participants heard keynote speeches by representatives from the participating countries and international organizations. Session discussions comprised four topics

- (1) Environmental Conservation Administration Measures by Local Authorities
- (2) Environmental Cooperation Initiatives of Local Authorities
- (3) Aimed at Addressing Climate Change Problems: Domestic Policy Measures and Steps of Environmental Administration Bodies Themselves as Consumer and Executor
- (4) Practical Use of the Internet in Environmental Cooperation

3. At the symposium, a speech entitled "Perceiving Beauty in Landscapes – Village Designs Formed Through the Culture of Each Country," was delivered.

The speech praised agricultural “folk” projects as a natural way of preserving the environment. In Panel Discussion 1, "Possibilities for Local Community Initiatives on Northeast Asian Regional Environmental Cooperation," participants discussed issues such as information and communication gaps; and the idea that community initiatives - “citizen partnerships” - might contribute to the solution of a regional and global environmental problem. In Panel Discussion 2, "What Local Action Is Needed Now on Environmental Issues and Cooperation?," there was a discussion on the importance of forming a partnership which includes administrations, businesses, citizens, and academic communities, - first at the local, and then at the national and the regional/international levels. Also, panelists emphasized the importance of creating eco-friendly lifestyles.

4. In their keynote speeches, the representatives of each country and international organization observed that the Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation is an important forum for the exchange of information and views concerning environmental conservation in the respective nations. The importance of continuing the present conference, and of further strengthening its role as an opportunity to exchange

ideas on environmental protection measures, was discussed. Additionally, the delegates reported on the diverse environmental conservation initiatives carried out by governments and international organizations recently at the local, national and regional levels in Northeast Asia. It was emphasized that the linkages between these initiatives should be strengthened.

5. At Session 1, " Environmental Conservation Administration Measures by Local Authorities," there were reports on the various conservation initiatives by the local authorities of the represented countries. The participation of citizens, industries, and local authorities is an integral part of the success of environmental protection methods. The present conference discussed how the creation, development, and implementation of Local Agenda 21 initiatives can involve all relevant entities in environmental protection measures. The shared experiences of environmental actions carried out by participating countries provide indispensable help and support for all.
6. At Session 2, " Environmental Cooperation Initiatives of Local Authorities," there were reports on the diverse initiatives for international environmental cooperation that are presently undertaken by local authorities of the participating countries. It was mentioned that local authorities have great potential for implementing environmental cooperation. Concrete examples, such as sister city relationships, were presented to illustrate how local authorities can exchange information, expertise and technology for environmental management. Such experiences may be fed into the preparatory process of the next Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development for Asia and the Pacific, which is expected to address, *inter alia*, a special initiatives on cooperation and partnership for local authorities.

7. At Session 3, " Aimed at Addressing Climate Change Problems: Domestic Policy Measures, and Steps of Environmental Administration Bodies Themselves as Consumer and Executor," there were reports on how participating countries respond to climate change, and on how the environmental administrative agencies of the participating countries are taking initiatives in counteracting climate change. Also, there were suggestions that information exchange on the issue should be increased among NEAC countries, particularly as the coming year should see further development of the Kyoto Protocol – through the *UNFCCC COP6*. Also, there was a proposition that the establishment of a Northeast Asian Cooperation Network through the framework of NEAC could facilitate an increased flow of information on the issues of climate change.
8. At Session 4, " Practical Use of the Internet in Environmental Cooperation," there were reports on the ways in which the environmental administrative agencies of participating countries use the Internet. Open dialog on the Internet can enhance public awareness of environmental issues. Relevant problems, such as the cost of network expansion, and the demands of translating services, were also discussed. There was a further suggestion that the Internet should be utilized in the preparations of future NEACs.
9. At the session of "Decision on next NEAC venue and miscellaneous agenda items", the participants welcomed the offer of Mongolia to host the Ninth Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation for the year 2000. Further, Japan indicated willingness to provide financial support for the conference in terms of flight cost and DSA. Participants agreed that the schedule of the next meeting would be targeted for the end of July 2000. As for the miscellaneous items, these were the following suggestions from participating countries;

- (1) In order for the NEAC to show definite progress, it should strive to find opportunities for conducting substantive projects by utilizing existing mechanisms such as UNEP, ESCAP, and GEF.
- (2) The NEAC should have the opportunities in the working level to utilize the Internet in preparation for future NEACs.
- (3) The next NEAC should include the theme of “Environmental Business with a Local Authorities Cooperation” and “Water Contamination and Purification”.
- (4) In consideration of the several suggestions presented from participating countries , the next NEAC should include the theme of “Review of Environment Cooperation in Northeast Asia” and “Future of NEAC”.
- (5) The NEAC should continue to recognize the significant role of local authorities and “citizen partnerships” in environmental conservation and cooperation.

10. The participants expressed their appreciation for the gracious hospitality of the Environment Agency of Japan, of Kyoto Prefecture, of Maizuru City, and of The Academic Forum for Northeast Asia. Also, mutual gratitude for the successful conclusion of this Eighth Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation was exchanged.