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## Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2011-2015

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## **Introduction**

The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was held in Astana on 1 and 2 October 2010. The Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2010. This Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 2011–2015 is guided by the principles contained in the Astana Ministerial Declaration and presents options for action, taking into account the diversity and the development needs and capabilities of countries.

### **A. Objectives of the Regional Implementation Plan**

1. The main goals of the Regional Implementation Plan are to enable ESCAP and other organizations to further assist member countries in the implementation of programmes and for member countries in this region to use such elements of this plan for implementation as they may deem appropriate by promoting regional, subregional and national capacities for achieving sustainable development. To this end, the plan identifies action areas, and the roles of key stakeholders in order to enhance the capacities of countries to eradicate poverty, achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 in the context of sustainable development. The Regional Implementation Plan does not constitute in any manner a mandatory policy framework. It is only an indicative list of actions for provision of support to member countries by ESCAP and other organizations based on priorities identified by the countries themselves, in consideration of the Regional Implementation Plan. It is the prerogative of respective member States to choose relevant policy options according to their national circumstance, as appropriate.

### **I. Programme areas (sectoral dimensions)**

#### **A. Harmonizing rapid economic growth, employment generation and environmental sustainability**

##### **Action areas**

2. Action areas for harmonizing rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability in support of sustainable development may include, among others:

(a) Promoting the use of life cycle analysis, resource efficiency and material flow assessment;

(b) Promoting the process of mainstreaming environmental programmes into national development plans;

- (c) Promoting the use of strategic and integrated environmental assessments at the level of national planning;
- (d) Incorporating environmental costs into market prices and using economic and market-based instruments that are supportive of sustainable development and green growth as defined above;
- (e) Promotion of eco-efficient innovation through public and private investment in research and development of environmentally sound technologies, including through, among others, green public procurement;
- (f) Further development and application of eco-efficiency indicators for the formulation of policy that stimulates eco-efficient and resource-efficient productivity;
- (g) Creation of an enabling environment and mechanisms to promote green technologies and investments in innovation, as well as development, access and transfer of environmentally sound technologies at the national and international levels;
- (h) Development of a circular economy, stimulated by government-initiated investments and procurement, eco-industrial parks and sustainable waste management: waste-for-wealth and waste-as-resource-for-products;
- (i) Promotion of corporate social responsibility and green jobs.

## **B. Promoting sustainable urban development**

### **Action areas**

3. Action areas in promoting sustainable urban development may include, among others:

- (a) Sustainable urban planning and design, including promotion of eco-efficient infrastructure, particularly mass transit and public transport, green buildings and water infrastructure;
- (b) Integrated resource recovery as an economically viable approach to municipal wastewater and solid waste;
- (c) More effective harnessing of conventional and innovative financing measures for sustainable urban development, including, among others, the promotion of pro-poor and environmentally sustainable pricing policies for water and energy services; encouraging financing for urban housing and infrastructure that is accessible to the poor; tapping into social ventures and public-private partnerships, and supporting new international financing policies, including, among others, capacity building to enable local governments to access carbon financing;
- (d) Promoting sustainable and eco-efficient approaches to housing, including, among others, through the promotion of pro-poor eco-settlements;
- (e) Capacity-building for local governments and other urban stakeholders to mainstream climate change resilience into urban planning, development and management.

## **C. Enhancing ecological carrying capacity**

### **Action areas**

4. Action areas for enhancing the ecological carrying capacity may include, among others:

(a) Ensuring that land, marine and freshwater use has equitable poverty reduction benefits and maintains the critical functions of the natural environment, such as the provision of food, fibre and water, flood mitigation, absorption of wastes and maintaining biodiversity, as well as its cultural, spiritual and aesthetic values. Attention should be paid to ecosystems that contribute to climate adaptation and enhance socio-economic resilience. Action will include the establishment of appropriate management arrangements and partnerships and enabling national policy environments;

(b) Ensuring that attention is paid to the special requirements for the sustainable development of mountain eco-systems in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(c) Enhancing investments in agricultural and forestry research and development, while considering indigenous knowledge and traditional farming practices, as well as promoting eco-efficient agricultural development, including organic agriculture. The establishment/strengthening of policies that support environmentally sustainable consumption and production patterns in relation to food, fuel, water and agro-industrial products.

## **D. Improving energy resource management for sustainable development**

### **Action areas**

5. Action areas for fostering regional and subregional cooperation through promotion of policy dialogue may include, among others:

(a) Promoting a better understanding of the co-benefit approach that could be used by the energy sector to enhance energy security and achieve sustainable development;

(b) Promoting energy security through strengthening regional and subregional energy cooperation, in particular, in the areas of sustainable usage of energy resources, enhancing energy efficiency and energy conservation, clean energy technologies and development of alternative and renewable energy;

(c) Developing a programme to achieve national goals concerning the expansion of access to energy services through innovative policies and financing schemes, with the participation of various stakeholders;

(d) Expanding access to energy services for the poor may lead to an overall increase in energy consumption in some countries to meet these energy needs; the energy efficiency potential in many of these countries, however, particularly in urban areas, could go a long way towards offsetting this increase in consumption;

(e) Assessing and quantifying energy efficiency and renewable energy potential at the national level;

(f) Integrating the application and utilization of appropriate technologies into sustainable development strategies in assessing their financial implications;

(g) Establishing more innovative financing schemes at the micro- and macro-levels in order to implement strategies for accessing energy services and improving energy efficiency. Further to complement these at the national level by linking them more closely with the emerging carbon market and domestic financing schemes;

(h) Recognizing that development is the main priority in many developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, as one of the options to achieve energy security and sustainable development, more work is needed to provide member States with assistance in pursuing the low-carbon development path. Guidelines should be developed based on existing policies and a clearer analysis of co-benefits, in particular for development.

## **E. Improving water resource management for sustainable development**

### **Action areas**

6. Three major action areas are recognized to address the priorities of sustainable development in the region and subregions, especially those related to the Millennium Development Goals, including the follow-up activities for the International Year of Sanitation:

#### **(a) Programme of action for sustainable economic growth: sustainable urban development and water resources management**

7. This programme of action is expected to include, among others:

(a) Developing a regional strategy based on the experiences and achievements of major existing regional efforts, such as the Kitakyushu Initiative, the Seoul Initiative on Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (Green Growth),<sup>1</sup> the ESCAP Development Account project on eco-efficient urban infrastructure and the ESCAP urban community development programme for a new, comprehensive and integrated approach to water resources development in urban areas;

(b) Compiling lessons learned to expand the knowledge base on technologies and approaches that promote eco-efficient water infrastructure in the urban context;

(c) Developing a detailed road map towards sustainable urban development and water resources management;

(d) Strengthening partnership and generating support for this road map, working with Governments, the private sector, international banks and civil society;

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<sup>1</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2005* (ST/ESCAP/2379) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.F.31), Annex III.

(e) Soliciting the support and participation, especially as drivers of this programme, of key stakeholders in existing regional programmes, new initiatives and financing institutions for maximum synergy of regional efforts in urban development.

**(b) Programme of action for poverty eradication: provision of urban services to rural areas**

8. This programme may include, among others:

(a) The promotion of modernized irrigation systems, linking up with regional efforts made by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;

(b) The promotion of water eco-efficiency through rainwater harvesting, decentralization of wastewater management, the provision of urban water services for multiple uses and better household water adequacy;

(c) The reprioritization of access to water, including safe drinking water, and sanitation as a requirement for human health, productivity and livelihood creation, joining with systematic efforts made by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

**(c) Programme of action for better resilience**

9. This programme of action may include, among others:

(a) Compiling best practices in the region to support the integration of adaptation measures into the socio-economic development process in the region, with special attention paid to extreme floods and droughts in the region;

(b) Building a network of partners to share and develop required information on extreme water-related events and climate change projections on a scale that provides more detail than those that are currently available in developing countries in order to identify vulnerable areas within the region with better accuracy;

(c) Mobilizing efforts and participation for climate change adaptation;

(d) Assisting least developed countries, small island developing States and mountainous landlocked developing countries in improving forest management, watershed management, land use planning and ridge-to-reef resource management, with special attention paid to the contamination of groundwater and the impacts of climate change on freshwater, glaciers and groundwater resources.

**F. Enhancing the resilience of socio-economic development to climate change**

**Action areas**

10. Priority action areas may include, among others:

(a) Institutional support, capacity-building and technology transfer to facilitate action;

(b) Strengthening institutions and policies to facilitate and empower community action by harnessing local knowledge and bringing together diverse forms of knowledge, including traditional knowledge;

(c) The engagement of people, businesses and communities in monitoring the impacts of climate change and in identifying appropriate solutions, including the implementation of REDD-plus,<sup>2</sup> as well as public awareness and investment in related research programmes and assistance to vulnerable populations adversely affected by climate change;

(d) Investment in the protection of the natural resource base and eco-systems of economic and social significance for food security and sustainable development;

(e) Enhancing the capacity of people, businesses and communities to adapt to changing conditions, including higher disaster risk and vulnerability.

## **II. Implementation strategy**

11. National-level implementation will be the responsibility of the respective Government. Based on the priorities identified by them, the efforts of Governments would be supported and supplemented by activities at the subregional, regional and global levels. In particular, such assistance could be obtained from regional and international organizations.

### **A. Resource mobilization and partnership-building**

12. Financing is crucial for the implementation of any plan. While it is appropriate and necessary to remind donor countries of their commitments to support the efforts of developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve environmental sustainability, it is also clear that self-financing, innovative financing and partnerships present substantial and immediate opportunities to support efforts to achieve environmentally sustainable economic growth. It is also clear that such efforts, in preventing environmental degradation, will protect future prospects for economic growth, reduce economic loss and in many cases result in net economic benefits. This would reduce the financing gap and place the region in a good position to show commitment to both environmental protection and economic growth objectives.

13. In Asia and the Pacific, there is enormous potential and opportunity (a) to increase eco-efficiency in the production and consumption of resources, (b) to develop and explore markets for environmental technologies, products and services, (c) to establish more effective environmental governance, (d) to redeploy resources, (e) to refine priorities through domestic policy reforms, (f) to develop public-private-civil society partnerships to promote investment in environmental protection, (g) to explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as clean development mechanism projects and debt-for-nature swaps, and (h) to invest in protecting their natural resources capital as a way of ensuring the sustainable provision of environmental goods and services that support economic growth.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.un-redd.org>.

## **B. Capacity-building**

14. Each programme area of the plan is strongly focused on capacity-building. Regional organizations such as ESCAP, international organizations such as UNEP and UNDP and development banks such as ADB have played a major role in capacity-building for sustainable development in the region. They have also facilitated regional, multilateral and bilateral cooperation, which is often the most effective means of capacity-building. It is recognized that sustainable development is the long-term objective of members and associate members and that resources should continue to be made available to support capacity-building efforts to this end. However, it is also acknowledged that, without environmentally sustainable economic growth, sustainable development will be difficult to achieve. With this in mind, international and regional organizations may consider refocusing support activities to build the capacity of members and associate members, especially countries with economies in transition and developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries, which may be facing critical challenges with respect to the impact of production and consumption patterns on their natural environment.

## **C. Access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies**

15. Another important approach for the achievement of sustainable development in the region is access to and transfer of technology that is economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable, as recommended in chapter 34 of Agenda 21,<sup>3</sup> and on a concessionary and preferential basis, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (“Johannesburg Plan of Implementation”).<sup>4</sup> Research, development and training activities conducted by pioneering institutions in the region show that the uptake of technologies that support sustainable development has been slow. However, through the work of such institutions as the International Environmental Technology Centre and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and in the expectation that the World Trade Organization will ensure the net benefits of globalization, mechanisms for the achievement of sustainable development, including the flow of additional financing and the transfer of technology, are likely to be strengthened.

## **D. Stakeholder involvement**

16. All stakeholders have an important role to play in the effort to achieve sustainable development. While Governments are expected to take the lead in particular as regards policy coherence, other relevant stakeholders also have important roles to play.

17. Civil society in general and non-governmental organizations in particular have shown a commitment to promoting sustainable development. Their full participation is necessary for the successful

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap I, resolution 2, annex.



implementation of the Regional Implementation Plan. The plan therefore advocates a participatory approach that fully involves non-governmental organizations and civil society in planning and implementation, including decision-making processes.

18. The private sector is already a major force in the economic development of the region and has the potential to play a strong role in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable ecosystem management. Public-private partnerships must be forged in order to internalize environmental costs and promote sustainable production patterns as an integral part of overall development strategies. The private sector can explore and develop markets for environmental goods and services and mobilizing investment.

19. The academic and scientific communities can offer all stakeholders opportunities for guidance on innovative measures for promoting sustainable development.

20. The international community has an important role to play in assisting governments in the region in implementing the necessary changes at the national level, in terms of capacity development, technical assistance, technology transfer and financing. Such support on the basis of existing and new modalities should be geared, in particular, towards addressing the special needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Global and regional platforms are needed for exchanges of experience and information on innovative practices. Multilateral and bilateral financial institutions can play an important role in influencing financing decisions in the private sector, which values their ability to enhance the creditworthiness of projects, particularly for long-term infrastructure construction. International trade and investment can also play a key role in mobilizing appropriate technologies and financial resources. Environmentally sustainable economic growth will benefit from an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.

## **E. Modalities**

21. Priority regional activities involving all of the above stakeholders in assisting countries will include the following:

(a) Undertaking normative and analytical research on emerging issues and innovative solutions to develop policy recommendations and undertaking action research and analysis to develop replicable models;

(b) Catalysing high-level, high-visibility policy recommendations through regional policy dialogues, forums and specially convened ministerial conferences;

(c) Developing the capacity of countries to adapt, replicate and scale up innovative practices and policy initiatives through capacity development and training of trainers, including online training;

(d) Promoting North-South cooperation through the transfer of resources, networking and the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as through regional and subregional pilot projects, and the transfer of green technologies;

(e) Promoting South-South cooperation through networking and exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as through regional and subregional pilot projects and transfer of green technologies.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Initiatives

22. Important initiatives have been developed over the years to promote sustainable development within the United Nations system and at regional and subregional forums. The significant efforts made and the results already achieved highlight the importance of actions at all levels and call for their further development, as well as the need for interregional, intraregional and international cooperation in this respect. New and ongoing initiatives are important for sustainable development at the national level and need to be implemented by the countries in the region and subregions, taking into account those promoted by various regional and subregional entities. These initiatives may be utilized to prioritize and implement regional and subregional actions.

Asia-Pacific regional initiatives:		Aim and goals are to:
Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative		Facilitate the establishment of a Europe-Asia-Pacific partnership that will outline the blueprints for a shift from the current conventional development patterns to green growth, as defined above
Seoul Initiative on Green Growth		Promote the regional cooperation through capacity building and policy consultation for improving ecological efficiency of economic growth
North and Central Asia	Sustainable Development Strategy for Central Asia (SSDS CA, 5 countries)	Establish regional collaboration, assuring sustainable socio-economic development in parallel with the conservation and rational use of natural resources for present and future generations in the subregion
East and North-East Asia	North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)	Facilitate cooperation among member States on addressing transboundary environmental challenges and building national capacity for sustainable development
South and South-West Asia	Thimphu Statement on Climate Change (SAARC countries)	Jointly address the dual challenge of the negative impacts of the climate change in pursuing socio-economic development
	Subregional Strategy for the Sustainable Development of South Asia (SSDS SA, 8 countries)	Serve as a long-term policy planning tool. Identifies three main goals: eliminating poverty and creating national security, conserving natural resource endowments and securing an economic base, and strengthening the institutional system. It also sets priorities for cooperation among the South Asian countries, with innovative approaches.

<sup>5</sup> The General Assembly, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 62/209 of 19 December 2007, stressed “that South-South cooperation, as an important element of international cooperation for development, offers viable opportunities for developing countries in their individual and collective pursuit of sustained economic growth and sustainable development.”

Asia-Pacific regional initiatives:		Aim and goals are to:
South-East Asia	ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Joint Response to Climate Change (2010)	Reaffirm the vision of an ASEAN community resilient to climate change and strengthen subregional cooperation through the Joint Response to Climate Change, including ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI)
	Subregional Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Greater Mekong Subregion (SSDS GMS, 6 countries)	Set up the long-term vision, goals and targets of the GMS countries with short to middle-term goals intended to achieve the time-bound targets enumerated in the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The strategic goals are: (i) poverty eradication through sustained and equitable economic growth, (ii) sustainable management of shared environmental resources, and (iii) nurturing human and social capital for sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals
Pacific region	Pacific Green Growth Partnership	Coordinate among the regional and international organizations in the Pacific, their assistance to exploring and adopting options for green growth, as defined above
	Analysis of and Roadmap on Green Growth for Small Island Developing States	Undertake a Pacific-level analysis of the applicability of the green growth model as well as a draft road map for harnessing support for implementation

#### IV. Review and assessment mechanism

23. The Commission will undertake a periodic review of the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Implementation Plan based on information provided by members and associate members on a voluntary basis, as well as by collaborating international organizations. A midterm review will be carried out for submission to the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development in 2013. The final review report will be submitted to the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in 2015.