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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the ESCAP regional institutions: Environment and development

Report of the Committee on Environment and Development on its second session

Summary

The second session of the Committee on Environment and Development was held in Bangkok from 22 to 24 February 2012. The Committee reviewed emerging and persistent issues in the field of environment and development, including the environmental sustainability of economic growth, energy security, water resources management, and sustainable urban development. Presented to the Committee were the outcomes of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in the Republic of Korea on 19 and 20 October 2011, and the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum held in Bangkok in June 2011. In addition, the Committee considered reports on the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development and, emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability, energy security, water resources management and sustainable urban development.

The Committee provided a number of recommendations, including that the Commission endorse the Seoul Outcome adopted at the Regional Preparatory Meeting, and recognize it as the consensus input of the Asian and Pacific region to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Other recommendations included the continuation and strengthening of regional and subregional cooperation, particularly with respect to the development of networks and knowledge platforms to share views, best practices and policies to achieve sustainable development, sustainable urban development and the development, dissemination and transfer of cleaner and lower emission technologies. The Committee recommended that the Commission welcome the offer of the Russian Federation to host the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in Vladivostok in 2013.

Furthermore, the Committee recognized the need for development partners, including, in particular, developed countries, to support developing and least developed countries in their efforts to shift to a green economy. The Committee also took note of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth and the Astana Green Bridge Initiative and the projects being implemented under them by member States.

The Commission may wish to consider the matters calling for action or brought to its attention and provide the secretariat with further guidance.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention	2
II. Proceedings	5
A. Outcomes of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)	5
B. Presentation of the outcomes of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum	7
C. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development.....	8
D. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme	15
E. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session	16
F. Other matters	16
G. Adoption of the report	16
III. Organization.....	17
A. Opening, duration and organization of the session	17
B. Attendance	17
C. Election of officers.....	18
D. Agenda	18
E. Side event	18
Annex	
List of documents	19

I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The Committee recommends that the Commission endorse the Seoul Outcome, adopted at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on 20 October 2011, and recognize it as the consensus input of the Asia-Pacific region to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Seoul Outcome

1. The participants of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development met in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 19-20 October 2011.

2. Recognizing that the Asia and Pacific region is one of the most diverse regional groupings, characterized by high economic growth rates while being home to the largest number of the world's poor,

3. Further recognizing that the diverse range of States in the region, including but not limited to Small Island Developing States, high-mountain States and land-locked States, continues to face many special and particular vulnerabilities,

4. Reaffirming the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development Agenda 21, as well as the instruments further adopted for the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,

5. Also reaffirming that the main objective of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges,

6. The participants considered that the outcome of the Rio+20 conference should be: Based on the Rio Principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities Action-oriented Forward-looking Consensus-based Inclusive Supportive of global partnerships for sustainable development.

7. Participants agreed that a green economy has to be seen in the context of the overriding objectives of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The green economy approach should take into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in particular, in the context of the Rio Principles. In that regard:

It should:

- Promote sustained economic growth for poverty eradication
- Be one of the means to achieve and promote sustainable development
- Facilitate trade opportunities for all countries, in particular, developing countries
- Address the three pillars of sustainable development in a comprehensive, coordinated, synergetic and balanced manner
- Allow sufficient policy space and flexibility for governments to pursue sustainable development strategies, based on national circumstances and respective stages of development
- Promote the inclusion of vulnerable sections of society, women and youth
- Involve all stakeholders
- Facilitate technological innovation and transfer and promote access to green technologies at affordable costs
- Address the challenges of delivering a green economy in Small Island Developing States in particular, along with high-mountain and land-locked States
- Increase resilience to natural disasters.
- It should not be used as a pretext for green protectionism.

8. There is a need to reform and improve the institutional framework for sustainable development. The reforms should:

- Strengthen coherence and coordination
- Enhance implementation at all levels
- Strengthen governance in all three pillars
- Promote the spirit of multilateralism
- Improve balance and integration among the three pillars
- Promote institutional capacity-building at all levels
- Be aimed at enhancing the role of the United Nations at all levels, including regional and subregional levels.

9. The participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea, ESCAP, UNEP and ADB for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality.

2. Within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the Committee recognizes the need for development partners, including, in particular, developed countries, to support developing and least developed countries in their efforts to shift to a green economy, especially through new, additional, adequate and predictable financial resources, official development assistance, capacity-building, technology development and transfer, and rendering of financial support for green economy investments, including through special funds and other forms of support. The Committee recognizes that there is no “one size fits all” approach; every country has the sovereign right to adopt its own development paradigm.

3. In further recognizing the role of ESCAP in promoting sustainable development, the Committee recommends that regional and subregional cooperation be continued and strengthened, including the development of networks and knowledge platforms to share views and best practices and policies to achieve sustainable development.

4. The Committee takes note of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth¹ and the Astana Green Bridge Initiative² and the projects being implemented under them by member States.

5. The Committee recommends that international and regional cooperation be strengthened in order to address existing barriers and to benefit from opportunities related to the development, dissemination and transfer of cleaner and lower emission technologies.

6. The Committee recommends that regional cooperation on issues of sustainable urban development be strengthened, taking into account national specificities and the needs of the countries of the region, and recommends that ESCAP continue its work on the analysis of urbanization processes, capacity-building, in particular for urban local bodies, planning, innovative financing mechanisms, public-private partnerships and provision of data, as

¹ 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.

² See E/ESCAP/67/8, chap. I, sect C.

well as facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned on urban development.

7. The Committee notes the outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, held in Bangkok from 20 to 25 June 2011.³

8. The Committee recommends that the Commission welcome the offer of the Russian Federation to host the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in Vladivostok in 2013 at the ministerial level and urge member States to actively participate in the preparatory process as well as in the Forum. The Committee invites member States to work closely with the secretariat in identifying their priorities for consideration at the Forum, including access to modern energy services, energy efficiency, new and renewable energy resources, energy cooperation and trade, and regional and subregional energy connectivity.

9. The Committee recommends that the secretariat help member countries, at the regional and subregional levels, to share experiences, best practices and technologies in managing water resources. Integrated water resources management (IWRM) remains an option in balancing the water needs of the economic, social and environmental sectors.

II. Proceedings

A. Outcomes of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)

10. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/1 and Corr.1).

11. The secretariat and the representative of the Republic of Korea presented the highlights of the document and the outcome of the Regional Preparatory meeting, respectively.

12. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Mongolia; Pakistan; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

13. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the secretariat in having organized the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which had been held in Seoul on 19 and 20 October 2011, and the Government of the Republic of Korea for its hospitality and generous support. It noted with satisfaction that the secretariat had worked in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other regional partners.

14. The Committee underscored the importance of the Seoul Outcome document which was developed, negotiated and agreed upon with consensus during the Regional Preparatory Meeting. Based on the Seoul Outcome,⁴ the Committee asserted that the green economy approach: (a) is one means to achieve and promote sustainable development; (b) has to be seen in the

³ See E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2.

⁴ See chap. I.

context of overriding objectives of sustainable development and poverty eradication; (c) should take into account the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities in particular; (d) should promote economic growth for poverty eradication; and (e) should not be used as a trade barrier or green protectionism and, thus, an impediment to development.

15. The Committee noted that many countries in the region had undertaken various steps in preparation for the Rio+20 Conference, including the establishment of working groups, the holding of regional and global preparatory meetings, the development of national strategies and studies, and the provision of inputs and comments to the “zero draft” of a Rio+20 outcome document.

16. The Committee agreed, among other things, upon the need to improve balance and integration among the three pillars and that reforms to the institutional framework for sustainable development should be aimed at filling the gaps and strengthening governance in all the three pillars.

17. The Committee called for an action-oriented, forward-looking, consensus-based, balanced and inclusive outcome document from Rio+20, which would support global partnerships for sustainable development, reaffirming the principles of solidarity and equity, and ensuring support to reduce the vulnerabilities of developing countries to financial, fuel and climate crises.

18. In that regard, the Committee recognized that there was a need for developed countries to provide enabling resources, including technologies, in particular environmentally sound technologies, and predictable financing, knowledge sharing and capacity development.

19. The delegation of Thailand underlined that deliberations regarding the institutional framework on sustainable development in preparation for Rio+20 needed to highlight the unique and important role of the regional commissions as the regional platform for dialogue and policy setting, while the delegation of the Russian Federation stressed the importance of the joint efforts of all regional commissions in the preparatory process. It was emphasized that the secretariat had a role to play in promoting regional policy dialogue. Some delegations requested that the secretariat support them in assessing and developing various policies to move forward on the path to sustainable development.

20. The delegation of Thailand called upon the secretariat to work in close cooperation with relevant organizations, including UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and ADB, to identify development gaps and key barriers to achieving sustainable development in the region and assist countries in addressing the persistent challenges through the establishment of platforms for technical cooperation.

21. One delegation proposed that the secretariat continue providing support to countries in the region by: (a) establishing regional and subregional platforms for technological cooperation, capacity development and knowledge sharing in the areas of sustainable consumption and production (SCP), sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and energy efficiency, sustainable urban and transport planning, wastewater treatment, and municipal and hazardous waste management; and (b) forging new, and strengthening existing regional and subregional partnerships in research and

development and technical cooperation as well as data networking in the fields of natural disaster management, IWRM and climate change adaptation.

B. Presentation of the outcomes of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum

22. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2 and Corr.1).

23. Representatives of the Russian Federation and Thailand made statements on behalf of their delegations.

24. The delegation of the Russian Federation requested that the secretariat provide information on how the recommendations of the Forum might impact the regular budget of the Commission. The delegation stressed the need for close coordination with the regional offices of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to avoid duplication of work on urban issues and, in that context, highly commended the collaborative effort undertaken by ESCAP in preparing the first *State of Asian Cities* report jointly with UN-Habitat, UNEP and United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific.

25. The delegation of the Russian Federation was also in favour of strengthening regional cooperation on issues of sustainable urban development, taking into account national specificities and the needs of the countries of the region. In that context, the delegation found it important for ESCAP to continue its work analysing urbanization processes and regional trends as well as providing data on urban development.

26. The delegation of Thailand shared with the Committee the urbanization trends and decentralization policies in Thailand and noted the effects of the transition from an agricultural to an industrial/service economy as well as related alterations in resource and infrastructure needs, increased costs of living, urban sprawl and improper land use. The Committee was informed of Thailand’s experiences with the recent floods and of its intention to develop a water management plan, to construct additional flood protection barriers and strictly enforce land use control for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders. Apart from direct government assistance, the delegation highlighted the large and positive roles of voluntary and community organizations during the disaster period.

27. The delegation of Thailand also noted that the discussions and recommendations for action from the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum were very useful and should be implemented to promote sustainable urban development in the region, and particularly requested the secretariat to prioritize three areas of work: firstly, to develop criteria and standards for city classification, such as “sustainable city”, “eco-city”, and “green industrial city” to provide a guideline for benchmarking sustainable urban development at the regional and subregional levels; secondly, to develop databases and networks at the regional and subregional levels that would include urban and rural population statistics and economic, social and physical data, including environment and geo-climatic data; and thirdly, to hold a symposium on urban climate change among member States in order to exchange experiences and best practices towards achieving sustainable city development.

C. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development

28. The documents under agenda item 6 were introduced by the Director of the Environment and Development Division of the secretariat before the deliberation of the Committee.

1. Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability

29. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/3).

30. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Mongolia; Nepal; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

31. The Committee noted that the current high economic growth rate could not be sustained because the region continued to face global challenges, such as climate change, energy and food crises, and water shortages. The Committee also noted that poverty eradication and inclusive growth remained the overriding priority for sustainable development in the region. Hundreds of millions of people in the region still lived in poverty and lacked access to basic services. That required sustained growth, the expansion of energy access and the provision of decent job opportunities. In that regard, the Committee emphasized the need for a balanced weighing of all three pillars of sustainable development.

32. The Committee noted that population growth, water scarcity, desertification, the food crisis and climate change were exerting increasing pressure on the region’s carrying capacity and posing a great challenge for developing countries, especially the landlocked developing countries and the least developed ones. Environmental degradation had exacerbated poverty, undermined development gains and threatened livelihoods.

33. The Committee highlighted the importance of developed countries reducing their unsustainable patterns of consumption and the resulting ecological footprint and releasing ecological space for developing countries to achieve equitable and sustainable growth.

34. Some delegations discussed the adverse impacts of climate change, which they viewed as one of the most serious threats to sustainable development in the region. In particular, concern was expressed regarding the impact on agriculture, which still formed the backbone of some developing countries, especially least developed countries. It was emphasized that addressing climate change required adaptation and disaster risk reduction to be institutionalized and integrated into sectoral policy planning and implementation, including those policies related to transport, energy, water, communications and social infrastructure. It required the models of low carbon development and green growth to be developed and pursued.

35. The Committee noted that Asia and the Pacific was the fastest growing region in the world and that the manufacturing sector, one of the most resource-intensive, was growing steadily. That would place increased stress on the environment and would require enhanced natural resource management, increased resource efficiency and conservation of energy, water and materials.

36. The Committee was informed that initiatives related to payment for ecosystem services (PES) and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) had promoted resource efficiency while enhancing economic growth. One delegation requested that the secretariat facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding PES.

37. Some delegations recognized that the green economy and green growth approaches should be one of the means of achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. It highlighted the urgency of countries in the region shifting to a green economy and considering low carbon green growth models. In that regard, two delegations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the secretariat in providing support to member States through the green growth capacity development programme and for the development of the low carbon green growth road map and encouraged the secretariat to continue assisting member States in developing relevant policies tailored to their unique national circumstances and in respect to their common but differentiated responsibilities.

38. At the same time, the Committee expressed the view that any understanding of a green economy should take into account the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility, and that emphasis should be placed on making enabling resources — both financial and technological — available to developing countries. In particular, lack of access to new technologies, owing to financial and/or intellectual property right (IPR) restrictions, might limit the ability of developing countries to graduate to a green economy model.

39. The representative of Bangladesh informed the Committee that his Government had taken a number of steps to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change. They included investments in disaster risk reduction as well as the integration of climate change management into Bangladesh's Vision 2021 and its Sixth Five-Year Plan, and the creation of a Climate Change Unit.

40. Cambodia had developed a national green growth road map and established a national green growth secretariat and an inter-ministerial working group and was in the process of developing a master plan for implementing the road map and establishing a national committee on green growth.

41. The representative of Japan informed the Committee that his Government would organize the East Asia Low Carbon Growth Partnership Dialogue and hold it in Tokyo in April 2012 to share practices and knowledge and contribute to diffusing low-carbon growth models in the region.

42. The representative of the Republic of Korea informed the Committee that her Government had launched the East Asia Climate Partnership in 2008 and allocated \$200 million for regional cooperation for five years. She also informed the Committee that the Global Green Growth Institute had been established in 2010 in order to assist developing countries in pursuing green growth strategies.

43. The representative of Nepal informed the Committee that his Government would be organizing an international conference of mountainous countries on climate change, to be held in April 2012, as part of the Mountain Initiative for Climate Change,⁵ which had been announced at the fifteenth

⁵ See www.icimod.org.

session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁶

44. The Committee was informed that the Philippines was mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in local planning and that the National Economic and Development Authority had recently issued guidelines in that regard.

45. The Committee was also informed that the Russian Federation had recently adopted a legislative act to strengthen the legal and institutional basis of its national environmental policy. The legislation had introduced new mechanisms to create efficient ecological management, incentives for industrial modernization in view of nature conservation and restrictions on wasteful production and inefficient waste management.

46. The representative of Thailand informed the Committee that his country had implemented several projects and programmes related to the concept of the Sufficiency Economy and “New Theory” Agricultural Practices, initiated by the King of Thailand. The Government had also implemented several SCP policies, including the Green Government Procurement Programme and guidelines to promote green industry.

2. Emerging and persistent issues in energy security

47. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Emerging and persistent issues in energy security” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/4 and Corr.1).

48. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: Bangladesh; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

49. The Committee welcomed an offer by the Government of the Russian Federation to host, in 2013, the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum at the ministerial level in the city of Vladivostok. The delegation of the Russian Federation pointed out that, in accordance with Commission resolution 67/2, the Forum would facilitate continuous dialogue among member States with a view to enhancing energy security and to working towards sustainable development. The Forum would discuss the region’s energy needs and how they could be met with transparency and predictability while minimizing the impact of potential constraints on energy resources. The delegation also informed the Committee about a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation energy ministers under the theme “Energy Security: New Challenges and Possible Strategic Decisions” which would be convened in Saint Petersburg in June 2012.

50. The Committee noted that member countries were stepping up efforts to conserve energy resources and enhance energy efficiency. Numerous initiatives and good practices were shared, such as: (a) the setting of energy intensity reduction targets (in Thailand, for example, a 25 per cent reduction in energy intensity by 2030); (b) the setting and enforcement of building codes; (c) fiscal measures, such as taxes and reform of subsidies; and (d) the promotion of energy services companies and eco-industrial parks.

51. The Committee recognized the importance of formulating and implementing policies for SCP and emphasized the need to enhance energy security by improving resource efficiency in general.

⁶ See A/66/294, para. 40.

52. The Committee noted experiences and progress in promoting the use of new and renewable energy sources and cleaner technologies in member countries. The representative of India informed the Committee that, in 2011, there had been record levels of investment in clean energy, enabled by positive policy frameworks, such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission. She indicated that ESCAP analysis of such policy measures would be helpful in providing further insights and options for promotion of renewable energy sources, while another delegation informed the Committee of efforts and progress to improve energy storage for electric automotive batteries and stationary cells.

53. The Committee also noted the existence of various tools for increasing the role of alternative energy in meeting energy demand and widening access to energy, in particular for rural areas, through the use of economic and financial instruments, policy development plans and targets and through the strengthening of research and development for new technologies. Several delegations called for active efforts in the area of integrated energy policy development, including the use of market mechanisms as well as dissemination of knowledge regarding new and renewable energy options.

54. The Committee further noted that universal access to energy was a priority for member countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States. Securing access to basic energy services was a prerequisite for poverty eradication and sustainable development as well as achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee took note of national initiatives for providing access to electricity, such as the solar home systems in Bangladesh, through microfinancing. The Committee also noted the importance of low-emission energy policies at the national level to ensure that the region's growth remained environmentally sustainable. Two delegations expressed concern that the lack of financial and human capacities could hinder efforts to use available energy resources, such as natural gas, coal and geothermal energy, in a sustainable and efficient manner.

3. Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management

55. The Committee had before it the document entitled "Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management" (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/5 and Corr.1).

56. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: Bangladesh; Mongolia; Philippines; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

57. The Committee recognized that the current challenges within the water sector as a result of climate change, natural disasters and rapid urbanization were interlinked with food and energy security and with the efforts to achieve sustainable development.

58. The Committee noted the existence of initiatives to better integrate water resources management into national development policies. Examples of such initiatives were the Mongolian National Water Programme and the formulation by Thailand of a master plan for water resources management. In that respect, the concept of IWRM remained the tool to manage and develop water resources in a way that would balance economic, social and environmental concerns for the Asia-Pacific region. One delegation pointed out that water was the basis for agricultural economy, but was interlinked with energy and food security issues. There was a need, therefore, not only to

strike a balance between food, energy and water security, but also to manage the increasing pressure on land and water allocation between food and energy crops.

59. Several delegations pointed out that urbanization and industrialization had resulted in significant threats to water resources. However, progress had been made across the region in introducing and enforcing water pollution control legislation, including in industrial areas, where water resources might be threatened by industrial waste and mining tailings. One delegation expressed concern over drinking water quality and the resulting health issues and emphasized the importance of establishing standards within the water sector. Some delegations expressed an interest in sharing best management practices, including the implementation of PES. One delegation, while expressing an interest in working with other member countries in the area of water resources and the provision of sanitation, stressed the importance of observing Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.⁷

60. The Committee stressed that poverty eradication was closely linked to access to clean water and basic sanitation and remained a challenge, particularly in remote rural areas. One delegation raised a question on the use of the term “household water security” as that term was not clearly defined in the international community or in official documents. The delegation requested that the secretariat work with the member States towards clarifying the term. The Committee expressed support for continued work on improved water resources management which would result in improved access to clean water and improved sanitation.

61. Several delegations expressed concern over the increasing severity of extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, alluding to them as the impact of climate change, which consequently exacerbated water resources management complexities and diminished the availability of water resources. In response to those challenges, several national initiatives were mentioned. The Government of Thailand, for example, which had suffered significant human and financial losses as a result of unprecedented floods in 2011, had proceeded to establish a National Water Resources and Flood Policy Committee as a single command authority in order to improve coordination between various national water authorities.

62. One delegation requested that the secretariat further develop regional and subregional networks in which member States had a platform for sharing their experiences and best management practices in the areas of agricultural water management, infrastructure development, research and development and data sharing for IWRM as well as disaster risk management. One delegation requested that the secretariat review the water hotspots that had been identified, in order to better reflect and cover all the areas of Asia and the Pacific that were particularly vulnerable to different extreme weather events, including the impact of the melting of the permafrost on the national economy and on climate change globally.

63. The Committee was informed that the Government of Thailand would host the Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Bangkok in 2012, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, of which ESCAP was a member, together with some member countries and other regional and

⁷ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

international organizations. The Summit would provide leaders and participants with the opportunity to discuss water-related issues and was expected to make a positive contribution to the discovery of solutions regarding water resource development and management. The secretariat was assisting with the organization of that strategic event through the use of extrabudgetary resources.

4. Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development

64. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/6).

65. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: India; Mongolia; and Thailand. The representative of UN-Habitat also made a statement.

66. The Committee was informed that the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration had recognized the impact of rapid urbanization and the need for sustainable urban development. It was in the process of integrating the concept of sustainability into city planning and administration with several initiatives, such as the Action Plan on Global Warming Mitigation for 2007-2012, aimed at reducing the citywide greenhouse gas emissions by 15 per cent from the business-as-usual scenarios, and the “Striving for Green Bangkok” strategy, which laid out a 12-year road map for transforming Bangkok into a low-carbon society.

67. The Committee was also informed of two key challenges that Thailand needed to overcome to enable sustainable urban development, namely: (a) the lack of institutional and human capacity among local authorities and governments to induce a sense of ownership of their functions, increase technical capacity to perform their function, and integrate economic, social and environmental issues into local development practices; and (b) the lack of an integrated approach among multilevel and cross-sectoral government agencies to ensure sustainability in city planning.

68. The Committee was informed that the urban population in India was growing at a rapid rate, which had generated additional requirements for public infrastructure regarding basic health and sanitation services, creating challenges in achieving an organized urban landscape. In that connection, the delegation described two flagship programmes, called the “Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission”,⁸ which focused on the efficiency of urban infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms, and the “National mission on sustainable habitat”,⁹ which provided an overarching policy framework to promote sustainable urban development.

69. The delegation of India informed the Committee that some of the major constraints were the lack of: (a) capacity-building; (b) institutions capable of meeting capacity-building needs of urban local bodies; and (c) quality resource materials, trainers and data required for capacity development. Another key constraint was the inadequacy of public funds and innovative financing mechanisms, including market-based funds, land-based sources and public-private partnerships (PPPs) to meet investment needs in

⁸ See <http://jnnurm.nic.in>.

⁹ See <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/reports-documents/national-mission-sustainable-habitat>.

urban areas. It was suggested that work by ESCAP in those areas would be beneficial to member States.

70. The Committee was informed that the Government of Mongolia had joined numerous international conventions on hazardous waste and pollutants. That had been followed by the enactment of national legislation and the establishment of programmes, regulatory mechanisms and financial incentives related to the import and transit of hazardous and industrial wastes, waste reduction and management. Regarding air pollution, the Government had set up a clean air fund in 2010 and passed a law to impose penalties for polluting the air.

71. The representative of UN-Habitat informed the Committee that ESCAP and UN-Habitat were closely collaborating and complementing each other as ESCAP worked at the regional level and UN-Habitat at the national and global levels. Examples of that collaboration included joint programmes on “issues of urban water”, “climate change and cities”, and the joint development of the *State of Asian Cities* report.

72. The representative of UN-Habitat invited Committee members to attend the sixth World Urban Forum, to be held in Naples, Italy, from 1 to 7 September 2012.

5. Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

73. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/7 and Corr.1).

74. Representatives of the following countries made statements on behalf of their delegations: Kazakhstan; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

75. The representative of Kazakhstan provided an overview of the status of implementation of the Astana Green Bridge Initiative,¹⁰ which had been welcomed and endorsed during the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in 2010.¹¹ It was recognized that persistent environmental challenges required the establishment of practical partnerships, such as the Astana Initiative, between member States, businesses and other stakeholders to support green economy initiatives and investment. Emphasis was placed on multilateral and long-term actions, particularly for investment and technology, between developed and developing countries. It was highlighted that the Astana Initiative was meant to supplement existing programmes and create a bridge between environmental protection, investment and innovation to lead a transition to a green economy.

76. The representative of Thailand informed the Committee of her Government’s actions related to the implementation of the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference. Thailand had integrated sustainability and climate change into the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016). The Government was also pursuing sustainable urban development with an emphasis on enhancing quality of life through

¹⁰ E/ESCAP/67/8, chap. I, sect. C.

¹¹ See E/ESCAP/67/8, chap. II, para. 10.

environmental improvements. In terms of enhancing ecological carrying capacity, the Government was drafting a new National Environmental Quality Management Plan (2012-2016) that would aim at enhancing ecological carrying capacity through, among other things, SCP and conservation of biodiversity.

77. With regard to water resource management, the Government of Thailand had made flood mitigation and prevention a top priority as part of an integrated water resource management plan. In relation to energy resources, Thailand was implementing the Ten-year Alternative Energy Development Plan (2012-2021) and the Twenty-year Energy Efficiency Development Plan (2011-2030), and was drafting the Thailand Climate Change Master Plan for 2012-2050.

78. One delegation emphasized that the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2010,¹² could serve as a foundation for orientating the work of ESCAP in the area of environment and development in the succeeding five years. The role of the secretariat in providing support to member States in executing the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2011-2015,¹³ disseminating information and exchanging experiences was also emphasized, taking into account the non-binding nature of the Plan and their concrete requests for assistance.

79. The delegation of the Russian Federation emphasized that its Government provided financial and expert support for activities undertaken by the secretariat in the area of energy efficiency. In that regard, the delegation suggested that the secretariat should indicate clearly activities and programmes that were undertaken with extrabudgetary funding and donor support.

D. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme

80. The secretariat informed the Committee that the subprogramme on environment and development under the general direction of the ESCAP strategic framework for the period 2012-2013¹⁴ had been adopted by the General Assembly.¹⁵ The draft strategic framework for 2014-2015 was currently under discussion in the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission.

81. One delegation recommended that the subprogramme address the challenges of poverty eradication and inclusive growth in its current and future work on sustainable development, on the basis of the Rio principles,¹⁶ in particular equity and common but differentiated responsibility, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.¹⁷ The delegation suggested that the

¹² E/ESCAP/67/8, chap. I, sect. A.

¹³ Ibid., Sect. B.

¹⁴ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/65/6/Rev.1)*, Programme 15.

¹⁵ See General Assembly resolution 65/244.

¹⁶ See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

¹⁷ Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*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).

subprogramme should place adequate focus on areas of sustainable urban development and energy security. The delegation also suggested that the subprogramme continue to conduct analytical studies and capacity-building on sustainable consumption patterns, technology transfer, and financing for sustainable development, as well as the exchange of best practices in urban management, water supply, disaster management, public-private partnerships, energy efficiency and power-trading markets, among other things.

E. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session

82. The Committee had before it two draft resolutions submitted by the Government of Japan for consideration by the Committee: (a) Asia-Pacific Years of Action for Applications of Space Technology and Geographic Information System (GIS) for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2012-2017 (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/WP.1); and (b) regional follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (E/ESCAP/CED(2)/WP.2).

83. The Committee noted with appreciation the initiative of the Government of Japan in circulating the text of the draft resolutions well in advance to allow consultations prior to the convening of the informal working group on draft resolutions ahead of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission.

84. The Committee expressed an interest in engaging in informal discussions on the proposal for a draft resolution on Asia-Pacific years of action for applications of space technology and Geographic Information System (GIS) for disaster risk reduction and sustainable development, 2012-2017. One delegation noted that the provisions envisioned in the draft resolutions were outside the scope of the mandate of the Committee; the texts would constitute a sound basis for further discussions during the informal working group on draft resolutions.

85. The Committee deliberated on the proposal for a draft resolution on regional follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). It noted that, since the Conference was to be held in June 2012, it would be premature to discuss such an elaborate draft resolution at the current stage. The Committee also noted that a more general draft resolution referring generally to the outcomes of the Conference would be more appropriate. Some delegations suggested that the term “green economy” be used in the text of the draft resolution rather than “green growth” in order to maintain consistency with the theme of the Conference, and, while there was no consensus on either term, there was an emergent discourse on the term “green economy”.

86. The Committee noted that the Government of Japan would revise both proposals, taking into account the comments of other member States, prior to their submission as draft resolutions to the informal working group.

F. Other matters

87. No issues were raised under the item.

G. Adoption of the report

88. The Committee adopted the report on its second session on 24 February 2012.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

89. The Committee on Environment and Development held its second session in Bangkok, from 22 to 24 February 2012.

90. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered the opening remarks, reminding the Committee that its mandate was to review and analyse regional trends and identify priorities and emerging issues related to sustainable development with a view to encouraging dialogue and achieving common regional positions. He noted that there were challenges to be faced by the business-as-usual development model, and that a genuine commitment was needed to tackle those constraints. He invited member States to work closely with the secretariat to identify clear avenues for action and guidance on how the secretariat could assist efforts to achieve a resilient Asia-Pacific region that was founded on shared prosperity, social equity and environmental sustainability.

91. A keynote address was delivered by Ms. Mingquan Wichayarangsaridh, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand. In her statement, Ms. Wichayarangsaridh stated that Thailand would host the Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit later in 2012. She also explained how the concept of the Sufficiency Economy had been guiding the policies and initiatives of the Government in support of sustainable development. She noted that the second session of the Committee provided an opportunity to enhance the understanding of member States on the trends and progress towards sustainable development, while also providing the opportunity to exchange views and thoughts on how to operationalize sustainable development and finalize coordinated action to address the challenges in the region, including water and energy security, urban development and climate change, with a view towards further discussion at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Additionally, Ms. Wichayarangsaridh informed the Committee that Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn Mahidol would lead the Thai delegation in Rio de Janeiro.

B. Attendance

92. The session was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Australia; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Thailand; Turkey; and Macao, China.

93. The session was also attended by representatives of Egypt and Mexico.

94. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended: United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Environment Programme; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Population Fund; and United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

95. Representatives of the following specialized agencies and related organizations attended: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and World Health Organization.

C. Election of officers

96. The following officers were elected:

Chair:	Mr. Naoya Tsukamoto (Japan)
Vice-Chairs:	Mr. Abbas Golriz (Islamic Republic of Iran) Ms. Altynay Dyussekova (Kazakhstan)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Ahmad Kamal Wasis (Malaysia)

D. Agenda

97. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference).
5. Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum.
6. Trends and progress in the field of environment and development:
 - (a) Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability;
 - (b) Emerging and persistent issues in energy security;
 - (c) Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management;
 - (d) Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development;
 - (e) Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific.
7. Consideration of the future focus of the subprogramme.
8. Consideration of draft resolutions, recommendations and decisions for submission to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report.

E. Side event

98. A side event entitled “Green Growth Dialogue – Best Practices from the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth (SINGG)” was held on 22 February 2012 in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea and the Korea Environment Corporation.

Annex

List of documents

Document symbol	Document title	Agenda item
<i>General series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/1 and Corr.1	Outcome of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference)	4
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/2 and Corr.1	Outcome of the Fifth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum	5
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/3	Emerging and persistent issues in environmental sustainability	6(a)
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/4 and Corr.1	Emerging and persistent issues in energy security	6(b)
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/5 and Corr. 1	Emerging and persistent issues in water resources management	6(c)
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/6	Emerging and persistent issues in sustainable urban development	6(d)
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/7 and Corr. 1	Progress in implementing the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific	6(e)
<i>Limited series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/L.1 and Corr.1	Annotated provisional agenda	
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/L.2	Draft report	10
<i>Information series</i>		
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/INF/1 and Corr. 1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/INF/2 and Rev.1	(Revised) list of participants	
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/INF/3 and Rev.1	(Revised) tentative programme	
<i>Working papers</i>		
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/WP.1	Draft resolution submitted by the Government of Japan on Asia-Pacific Years of Action for Applications of Space Technology and Geographic Information System (GIS) for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2012-2017	8
E/ESCAP/CED(2)/WP.2	Draft resolution submitted by the Government of Japan on the regional follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)	8