



Distr.: General
22 April 2015
English Only

United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific
Bangkok, 19-20 May 2015

Discussion Document for Session 5
United Nations Environment Assembly

Implementation of resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and Future Priorities for Asia Pacific

Discussion Document -- Not for quotation or citation. The purpose of this document is to facilitate discussions during the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, 19-20 May 2015, Bangkok. Comments are welcome and should be sent to uneproap@un.org. The document will be revised to reflect all verbal and written comments received no later than 31 May 2015.

I. Introduction

1. The Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific will include a Session focusing on strengthening the engagement of the countries of Asia and the Pacific in the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and in UNEP's major strategic planning processes including the Medium Term Strategy (MTS). The session will consider three inter related issues:

- Implementation in Asia Pacific of the resolutions and decisions made at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-1) of UNEP held in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2014¹
- Asia Pacific's inputs and priorities for decisions and resolutions to the next UNEA in 2016
- Asia Pacific's priorities for decisions on UNEP's Medium Term Strategy for 2018-2021

2. This Background Paper has three main sections. The second section provides an update of the implementation of the resolutions made at UNEA-1 in Asia Pacific. The third section identifies potential issues and priorities for Asia Pacific for reflection in the preparations towards UNEA-2, including potential decisions and resolutions to be developed by countries in Asia Pacific and potential accomplishments that from the Asia Pacific perspective could be reflected in the development of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2018 – 2021. The final section looks at the processes and mechanisms for the Asia Pacific region to convey its priorities to both the UNEA and the UNEP MTS.

II. Regional and Country follow up on UNEA-1 in Asia and the Pacific

3. This section provides the follow up on implementation of the following UNEA-1 decisions and resolutions in Asia Pacific:

Resolution 1/1: Ministerial outcome document of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

Resolution 1/3: Illegal trade in wildlife

Resolution 1/4: Science-policy interface

Resolution 1/5: Chemicals and wastes

Resolution 1/6: Marine plastic debris and microplastics

Resolution 1/7: Strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality

Resolution 1/8: Ecosystem-based adaptation

Resolution 1/10: Different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

Resolution 1/11: Coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group

¹ Decisions and resolutions adopted at UNEA-1 included: Strengthening UNEP's role in promoting air quality; the science-policy interface (SPI); marine plastic debris and microplastics; relationship between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements; ecosystem-based adaptation; implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment; illegal trade in wildlife; and chemicals and wastes.

Resolution 1/12: Relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements

Resolution 1/13: Implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

A. Post-2015 development agenda

4. UNEP is supporting SDG readiness by working with the UN system and member states at the national and regional levels. At the national level UNEP, working with UN Country Teams (UNCTs), is supporting the preparation of national SDG data assessments. These assessments focus on a) reviewing SDG targets and identifying relevant and appropriate national indicators and data needs, data gaps, and data systems for monitoring and reporting on SDG progress and b) identifying internationally agreed normative standards including MEA commitments that need to be integrated into SDG targets and indicators where feasible. Also at the national drawing on UNEP's long standing engagement with and knowledge of mainstreaming environment sustainability into national and UN planning processes, UNEP working with UNCTs, will support national mainstreaming workshops for planning officials across government. These workshops will support national authorities in: increasing awareness of the SDGs among national and local planning officials; identifying entry points in national strategies, plans and regulatory frameworks for integrating SDGs; Identifying potential roles and lines of authority within government for the implementation and monitoring of each SDG, and; Reviewing options for national and local SDG reporting processes including data availability (with SDG data assessments to inform these discussions).

5. UNEP is also supporting the mainstreaming of SDGs within the UN system. UNEP has provided post-2015/SDG briefings at UN Country Team (UNCT) Annual Retreats in Indonesia, Maldives, Bhutan, and Cambodia. UNEP also supports preparation of SDG oriented Climate Change and Environment Summaries as input into UN Development Assistance Frameworks. UNEP has also provided support/training to UN Country Teams in mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate change in UNDAFs for Maldives, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Malaysia and will use that experience for similar work focusing on mainstreaming the SDGs.

6. At the regional level, UNEP is promoting the integrated approach to the SDGs to ensure that environmental sustainability is integrated into SDG deliberations and post-2015 accountability framework planning including through the UN Development Group Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

B. 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

7. UNEP has continued and intensified its SCP activities at the national, regional and sub-regional level in Asia Pacific. Achievements to date include: a) The Establishment of the ASEAN Forum on SCP, including the workplan approved during the "ASEAN Senior Official's Network" August 2014 and preparations for Establishment of the South Asia Forum on SCP; b) The launching of the Asia Pacific Roadmap for the Implementation of the Programmes of the 10YFP on SCP; c) The start of the first UN global online course on "Introduction to SCP in Asia" and the first UN Winter School on SCP in Asia; d) Regional Policy-Industry Dialogue on SMEs, Finance and Technology for Resource Efficiency (Philippines), including a publication of the SCP Indicators for a Resource Efficient Asia to support the SDG negotiations These achievements have been supported through the EU

funded and UNEP managed SWITCH- Asia Regional Policy Support Component Programme and the 10YFP Secretariat.

8. The Asia Pacific Roadmap for the Implementation of the Programmes of the 10YFP on SCP² identified the following priorities for policy support and capacity building on SCP:

- National and regional indicators on SCP;
- Assessment of gaps in knowledge and practice;
- Sustainability reporting; benchmarking schemes for industry;
- Eco-labels, sustainable public procurement and sustainable consumption in general;
- Coordinated awareness-raising campaigns;
- Financing SCP, including financing for SMEs;
- Eco-innovation and adaptation of new technologies for cleaner production.
- On a sector level, energy, buildings, food, mobility and tourism are sectors of interest as expressed by most of the countries in the region with sustainable cities, water management and waste being also a cross-sectoral issues.

9. The regional priorities ahead of UNEA 2 will focus on these to create an enabling environment on strengthening national and regional policy frameworks and developing institutional knowledge, skills, and capacities among stakeholders in the countries to coordinate the effective design and implementation of policy-oriented activities that accelerate the shift to SCP.

10. With the report, “Indicators for a Resource Efficient and Green Asia and the Pacific: Measuring progress of SCP, green economy and resource efficiency policies in the Asia-Pacific region,” to be launched during the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific providing new data and indicators for 19 Asian and two Pacific developing countries, activities will be conducted to monitor progress in reducing environmental pressure and impact in selected countries in the region. The report and activities to be conducted aim to raise awareness of new policy issues, enable trend analysis and target setting, and facilitate the evaluation of progress of SCP, green economy, and resource efficiency policies across the whole economy.

C. Illegal trade in wildlife

11. As a direct response to the UNEA-1 resolution, UNEP is working on the development of a regional project under GEF-6 on combating illegal wildlife trade in Asia in close collaboration with countries and major partners such as Interpol. Furthermore, UNEP has been working with 25 countries in the region under the Regional Enforcement Network (formerly, MEA REN) in undertaking capacity building activities for frontline customs officials and other enforcement officials for combating environmental crime. Under REN, the Asia Environmental Enforcement Award, organized in collaboration with Freeland Foundation, will provide the incentive and recognition to individual enforcement officers and organizations, including in relation to illegal wildlife trade. The Award Ceremony is scheduled to take place on 20 May 2015 on the margins of the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.

² See Asia Pacific Roadmap on SCP at the following link:
http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/upload/publication_and_tool/file/309.pdf

12. UNEP also coordinates the like-minded enforcement organizations in Asia to address illegal trade through the Asia Regional Partner's Forum on Combating Environmental Crime (ARPEC). The last ARPEC meeting (15 January 2015) discussed how to use the anti-money laundering approach to target higher-level criminals in environmental crime. Furthermore, various other projects of UNEP, including those implemented under the UN – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) programme and Global Environment Facility (GEF), also touch upon promoting cooperation among governments and other partners in addressing illegal logging and trade. Relating to the support to national legislations, UNEP and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Secretariat will assist CITES parties to develop and/or strengthen their national legislation to comply with the convention.

13. UNEP will continue to collaborate with major regional partners and contribute to regional efforts in addressing illegal wildlife trade, particularly through the provision of capacity building and technical support to legal and judicial systems and enforcement measures, communication and outreach and enhancing regional cooperation. The work will be conducted in line with the strategy and policy priorities of UNEP's work towards addressing the illegal trade in wildlife and timber that are currently under preparation.

D. Environmental rule of law

14. In response to the call to advance environmental rule of law to ensure the accountability for just and sustainable development outcomes in the Asia and the Pacific region, UNEP is organizing an Asia-Pacific Roundtable on Environmental Rule of Law for Sustainable Development in support of the Post-2015 Development Agenda to be held in Bangkok on 20 May 2015. Back to back with the Roundtable, an Asia Environmental Enforcement Award ceremony will be held to award the leaders and outstanding enforcement officials (see also 3 above).

15. At the national level, UNEP has continued its support to the government of Lao PDR for the implementation of its newly adopted revised Environmental Protection Law 2013, and to the government of Viet Nam for the implementation of its newly in force Law on Environmental Protection through the development of new regulations on the management of hazardous wastes and other wastes and the enforcement guidebook. Technical support has also provided to the governmental of Cambodia to complete a review of its existing environmental legislation with an aim to improve its legal frameworks for environment protection and sustainable development.

16. UNEP will continue dialogue on the environmental rule of law for advancing sustainable development, further develop the legal and institutional foundations that promote inclusive and equitable sustainable and work with all legal stakeholders on the enhancement of the capacity to ensure the accountability for just and sustainable development outcomes in the Asia Pacific region in the post-2015 period.

E. Science Policy Interface

17. UNEP continues to provide technical advice and assistance to governments to undertake State of Environment (SOE) assessments to support national policy and

planning. UNEP provides training in the application of the DPSIR³ framework and the use of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) core indicators. In 2014 UNEP has assisted Bangladesh, Myanmar and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for the South Asia sub-region, with preparation of Environment Outlook reports to strengthen science and policy interface at national and sub-regional levels. Bangladesh Outlook report was launched in August 2014 and UNEP is assisting the Government of Myanmar with preparation of its first SOE report. UNEP is also working to respond to specific requests from the Government of Iran and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to develop their State of the Environment (SOE) reports.

18. The global and regional processes for the development of the GEO-6 are well underway, supported by global and regional partners including the Ministry of Environment (MOE), Republic of Korea. Asia Pacific was well represented in the GEO-6: Intergovernmental Multi-stakeholder (IGMS) consultation in Berlin in 21-23 October 2014. UNEP is following up the participation of governments and regional partners from Asia-Pacific in the IGMS to seek their guidance on the development of regional inputs to the global GEO process and to agree on the collection and integration of national and sub-regional environmental data in UNEP-Live to feed the regional assessment process.

19. In Asia Pacific, UNEP will address the challenge of insufficient data and knowledge gaps, through connecting national and international institutions to UNEP-Live data sharing platform, which would enable open and easy access to environmental data held at national, regional and global levels. UNEP will also pursue building capacity of countries for environmental data analysis and reporting using its National Reporting System toolkit which could improve countries' ability to efficiently respond to their national and international reporting obligations. In addition, UNEP will continue to support countries with technical advice and assistance in undertaking state of environment assessments in order to support their national policy and planning with improved understanding of the environmental issues, underlying causes and possible responses.

20. As mandated by UNEA-1, UNEP has started the process of developing the sixth edition of the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-6). UNEP will first coordinate the development of regional assessments including in Asia Pacific as part of the process and in order to develop content to feed into GEO-6. The Asia-Pacific regional assessment of the GEO-6 process is being carried out through the year 2015 with expected completion in the first quarter of 2016. Accordingly, UNEP convened a Regional Environmental Information Network (REIN) Conference on 27-29 April 2015 in Bangkok to consult with Governments and stakeholders on the development of the Asia Pacific regional assessment.

F. Ecosystem Based Adaptation

21. UNEA-1 resolution on Ecosystem Based Adaptation called for UNEP, in partnership with Governments, scientific institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to continue providing and enhance support to developing countries, at their request, for the development and implementation of community-based, national and regional ecosystem-based adaptation programmes and

³ DPSIR is a causal framework for describing the interactions between society and the environment. The components of the model are Driving forces, Pressures, States, Impacts, and Responses (DPSIR).

activities through, inter alia, practical tools and pilot projects to demonstrate the use of those tools and other policymaking technical support.

22. In response to the Resolution, UNEP is providing support to developing countries in the region for the development and implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation activities under the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF). Integrating ecosystem-based adaptation is a key element in national adaptation planning processes under NAP Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP). GEF has approved a regional project “Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Asia-Pacific region (Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar). UNEP is also supporting the development of a number of strategic GEF and LDCF supported projects on EBA including: Ecosystem-based approaches to Adaptation in the drought-prone Barind Tract and Haor "wetland" Area, Bangladesh under LDCF; Catalysing Ecosystem Restoration For Resilient Natural Capital And Rural Livelihoods In Degraded Forests and Rangelands of Nepal. UNEP is also supporting Nepal as response to request to develop a project idea note on Ecosystem-Based Adaptation for climate-resilient development in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

23. UNEP will continue to support countries to integrate Ecosystem Based Adaptation as an approach to address adverse impacts of climate change as well as expanding work to cover more ecosystem types and ecosystem services. It also aims for synthesizing knowledge and learning including application of methodology and tools and contribution to adaptation knowledge for advancing Ecosystem Based Adaptation. In addition, to accelerate the access of LDCs to Climate Technology Centre and Networks (CTCN) assistance, a special support program is planned to be implemented in 14 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

G. Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

24. In response to the UNEA-1 Resolution to reinforce efforts to halt biodiversity loss and combat desertification, drought and land degradation, including through the implementation of existing environmental agreements, and to ensure that ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide their services, UNEP, through the Sub-Global Assessment (SGA) Network, continues to provide capacity building and technical support to countries in the Asia Pacific region in undertaking policy-relevant national ecosystem assessments, mainstreaming findings into decision-making processes, and contributing effectively to the future work of IPBES.

25. In response to this, UNEP, under the SGA Network and with support from various regional partners such as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), organized a capacity building workshop on undertaking ecosystem assessments in the context of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in the Asia-Pacific region was held in China on 9-12 November 2014. The workshop provided an introduction to IPBES, its functions and programme of work, and built capacity of regional assessment practitioners on undertaking ecosystem assessments in the context of IPBES.

H. Chemicals and Waste

26. UNEP's work on minimizing the impact of harmful substances and hazardous waste chemicals and waste in Asia Pacific focuses on: Building capacities for management

of harmful substances and hazardous waste, strengthening policy and control systems to combat illegal trafficking, supporting the phase out of ozone depleting substances, and supporting implementation of MEAs related to chemicals and wastes.

27. UNEP is providing support for signing, ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention including the development of national level roadmaps. Three subregional and one regional workshop were organized since UNEA-1. Nineteen Asia Pacific countries have signed the Minamata Convention and most of the countries are progressing well on the ratification process. Recently, a workshop for Asian countries was convened in New Delhi, India. A regional preparatory meeting related to Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions held in March 2015 helped to identify regional priorities and develop regional positions ahead of the triple COPs in May 2015.

28. UNEP will continue to support the Asia Pacific countries on sound management of chemicals and wastes, particularly on building capacities, strengthening policy and control systems, supporting the phase out of ozone depleting substances, and supporting implementation of MEAs.

I. Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics

29. UNEA Resolution 1/6 called for a worldwide study on marine plastic debris and marine microplastics that will be presented at the next UNEA in 2016 and for UNEP to provide support to countries in the development of regional and national plans on marine litter. In response to this, UNEP with other partners has been assisting countries in the region to strengthen evidence-based research, raising awareness, building national capacity, and providing advisory services through integrated, full life cycle, ecosystem management and resource efficiency actions.

30. The UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) provided support, through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, for a waste minimization demonstration project in Samoa to demonstrate best practice measures for effective waste management and minimisation of marine debris.

31. The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, including SACEP/SAS, COBSEA and SPREP, has been providing mechanisms for implementation of the Resolution targeting countries in Asia Pacific including Fiji, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

32. The Special Monitoring & Coastal Environmental Assessment Regional Activity Centre (CEARAC) of Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) facilitates implementation of the NOWPAP Marine Litter Regional Action Plan (RAP-MALI). Activities in 2014 including the NOWPAP International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) in Boryeong, Republic of Korea on 25-26 September 2014 and a marine litter workshop featuring management efforts by central and local governments and best practices in dealing with sea-based marine litter and international cooperation.

33. UNEP will continue assisting countries in the region to strengthen evidence-based research, raising awareness, building national capacity, and providing advisory services through integrated, full life cycle, ecosystem management and resource efficiency actions. This may entail enhanced attention to coastal and marine spatial planning to reduce vulnerability to sea level rise and erosion, as well as particular focus on

management and restoration of critical habitats with high ecosystem service value including coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds.

J. Promoting Air Quality

34. As a response to the UNEA-1 resolution, which calls on governments to “formulate action plans and establish and implement nationally-determined “ambient air quality standards” and “to establish emissions standards for their significant sources of air pollution,” UNEP launched the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership (APCAP) with the support of the Government of Japan in July 2014. APCAP aims to bring together existing initiatives to promote scaled up action to combat air pollution. APCAP consists of three main pillars: a Joint Forum on atmospheric environmental issues, a Science Panel comprising eminent scientists and a Regional Assessment report. Consultations on the Joint Forum and Science Panel were organized in November 2014 and March 2015 respectively. The first Joint Forum is due to take place in October 2015, along with meetings of relevant regional initiatives such as the EANET. In addition, UNEP supported national level activities through technical support and regional level training programmes, including supporting the Beijing Municipal Authority and the provision of a training for the SAARC countries (December 2014).

35. UNEP will continue to strengthen institutional measures to control and prevent air pollution through development of a Joint Forum on atmospheric environmental issues. The first meeting of the Joint Forum will be held in November 2015. UNEP will also conduct an assessment of air pollution issues with an aim of translating science to policy and the assessment is expected to be completed in 2016. At the sub-regional level, UNEP will support the operation of sub-regional air pollution networks such as the East Asia Network on Acid Deposition (EANET). At the national level, UNEP will provide technical and policy support for control and prevention of air pollution through training and knowledge sharing partnerships.

III. Asia-Pacific Issues and Priorities for UNEA-2 and UNEP’s Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-21

36. The Asia-Pacific region contains some of the largest and richest economies, as well as some of the smallest and poorest. It is home to three-fifths of the world’s population and half of its urban population, which has increased fivefold since 1950. The region has experienced a rapid transition from predominantly rural and agricultural economies to urban-based manufacturing and service-oriented activities. It is projected to become host to 21 of 37 world’s megacities by 2024, and it is estimated that some 120,000 people migrate from rural areas to cities every day.

37. The speed of economic growth in the region’s developing countries has surpassed global growth rates for several years. Increasing production and consumption of particularly a growing urban and middle-class population, and the unsustainable use and destruction of natural capital pose a considerable risk to long-term economic growth and the human well-being of especially the most vulnerable segment of society. Evidence of this can be found in many areas as detailed in the Environment Outlook and Environment and Health discussion documents prepared for the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.

38. While the challenges are daunting, there are many success stories and perhaps the greatest opportunity is that the public and private sectors are increasingly aware that the limits to growth have been reached, as the impacts of unsustainable resource use have become more visible and affected society as a whole. Decision makers recognize that closing the region's development gaps, lifting millions of people out of poverty and achieving development goals is not dependent on economic growth alone. A healthy environment is a prerequisite for socio-economic development.

39. Below are the Priority Issues identified for discussion and consideration by the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities in Asia Pacific. Underpinning the achievement of all the priorities is the need to improve scientific knowledge and understating of emerging environmental issues and environmental performance at all levels and to put in place the legal and institutional mechanisms necessary.

A. Priority Issue 1: Enhance resilience

40. Asia Pacific is highly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change and associated risks as well as prone to natural disasters. The region is the world's most natural disaster-prone area. Of the world's reported natural disasters between 2004 and 2013, 41.2 percent, occurred in this region. Many areas in the region are highly vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events: all Small Island Developing States, including the Pacific Island countries, countries with low lying coastal areas, large cities located in coastal regions, and mega deltas in regions with large floodplains. Protecting communities from adverse effects of climate change across the region requires several measures to ensure the safety of populations, security of livelihood assets, including ecosystems and their services. It also requires building resilience of key economic sectors and infrastructure, such as flood protection, irrigation and drainage, erosion protection and beach nourishment, as well as promotion of alternative livelihoods and market development for new products. Building resilience to climate change and extreme weather events in the region and vulnerable communities needs to be seen within the frame of countries' overall development paths. Ecosystem protection and revitalization could be a high priority area for action. Implementation of Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA) measures, particularly for coastal ecosystems, would help build the resilience of coastal communities.

41. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could therefore be to support countries to enhance their resilience and strengthen the capacity of countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, to reduce, prepare for, and respond to conflicts and disasters.

B. Priority Issue 2: Decarbonize the economy

42. Asia Pacific is currently on a carbon-intensive development pathway. Many countries still have low per-capita emissions but the Asia Pacific region accounted for over half of all global GHG emissions in 2010, thus contributing significantly to the annual rise of GHG concentrations.. Growing demand for food and agro-energy crops and the conversion of the natural forests and peat lands has significantly contributed to making Asia a major emitter of greenhouse gases. Stabilizing per-capita emissions of greenhouse gases at significantly lower levels than currently seen in the OECD countries would bring multiple potential benefits, including energy security, air quality (due to limited use of fossil fuels), and green jobs (due to the labour needed for constructing climate-smart building and infrastructure, and to install renewable energy). Such transformations are fully possible but require determined government intervention, mainly in two areas:

efficient use of energy and a shift to renewable energy sources. Energy demand management is the most important area for decarbonisation. There is a large potential for energy efficiency, in many cases at low or even negative cost. Building low-carbon societies, powered primarily by renewable energy, also offers opportunities to strengthen resilience. Countries that are still at relatively early stages of development have the opportunity to build up their infrastructure and to shape their systems of production and consumption to fit with the characteristics of renewable energy sources.

43. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could be therefore to support countries and promote pathways for decarbonizing economies.

C. Priority Issue 3: Decouple economic growth from resource use and pollution

44. Asia Pacific is rich in natural resources, but this wealth is rapidly decreasing. The region consumes 53 percent of the world's materials, and the rate of material use is growing at 6 percent per year, indicating much growth to come. Resource efficiency in the region lags behind the rest of the world. This is partly due to the large population in Asia and to the fact that the region produces large volumes of goods that are exported and consumed in foreign markets. Nevertheless, the current growth model is highly resource intensive, and this massive mobilisation of materials contributes to a range of serious environmental problems, including greenhouse gas emissions, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functions, and pollution. Curbing the region's demand for materials requires major changes in systems of production and consumption. Such changes – a shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) – would ensure environmental objectives such as decoupling of resource use from economic prosperity, and address pollution issues. But a transition to SCP would also help to address many of the social priorities of Asia Pacific countries: poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, equity, thriving small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), energy security, etc. There is no single policy intervention that can bring about a shift to SCP; well-designed mixes of policy tools tailored to the resource use patterns in individual sectors and national circumstances are needed. The conventional way of approaching SCP – mainly relying on eco-labels and consumer information – has been found to have limited potential and needs to be supported by complementary interventions including green tax reforms that shift taxes from income to resource consumption and pollution, promotion of less materialistic lifestyles focused more on wellbeing, and education. Such a transition also involves protecting traditional practices, such as community-based forest management, product repair and reuse, and social economies, such as trade by barter. Regulations that allow and facilitate such activities would contribute to wellbeing and livelihoods while also reducing environmental impacts.

45. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could therefore be to promote a development approach that transforms quantitative and qualitative aspects of the economy and enables behavioural change, leading to decoupling growth from environmental impact and contributing to poverty reduction.

D. Priority Issue 4: Value and secure sustainable provision of ecosystem services

46. Current development patterns are harming the region's rich natural heritage, as well as its great diversity in ecosystems and habitats. In 2014, the region recorded the world's highest number of threatened species. In addition, extensive coastal development and unsustainable exploitation of marine resources have resulted in the disappearance of over 40 percent of coral reefs and mangroves over the last 40 years, resulting in declining fish stocks. Reports of water crises are becoming regular features in

countries where supply is expected to fall to 50 percent of demand by 2030. Natural ecosystems perform various functions that are of great value for society. Such functions include for example regulating hydrological flows and purifying water, protecting human settlements against natural disasters, bolstering climate change by storing carbon, and providing food. The integrity of natural ecosystems is of particular importance for indigenous groups and many rural communities in Asia Pacific, where households often depend on services and materials directly from nature for their livelihoods. Protecting ecosystems is therefore of key importance also for poverty alleviation. Many of the services provided by nature are currently taken for granted and their value to society is insufficiently recognized in decisions by businesses and governments. As a result, many ecosystems of vital importance to local communities and of great value for society in general are gradually being degraded or lost. Protected areas, such as national parks, exist in most countries in the region. It is also possible to strengthen such incentives, for example by paying communities for the ecosystem services provided by the land they are managing – Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). Promotion of eco-tourism can also provide incomes for communities and strengthen incentives for sustainable management.

47. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could therefore be to strengthen the capacity of countries to maintain biodiversity and sustainable provision of ecosystem services, while ensuring the fair access to natural resources and improved human well-being.

E. Priority issue 5: Manage Chemicals and Waste

48. The rapid transition from predominantly rural and agricultural economies to urban-based manufacturing and service-oriented activities and a fast growing middle class is leading to increasing consumption, the production of waste and use of hazardous chemicals. The latter is expected to grow by 46 per cent from 2012 to 2020. This development is having considerable impacts on health from chemicals use, chemicals in food and improper waste management. Growth in e-waste, growth in non-organic waste including hazardous chemicals, insufficient human and technology capacity, no proper prioritization on waste management, policy implementation and law enforcement. There are untapped economic opportunities to minimize waste and to use waste as a raw material for energy production and in industrial processes, while generating new employment opportunities. Increasingly educated people have become aware of the links between pollution and health and/or human well-being so there is the potential to support countries and engage with the private sector to address gaps in funding, human resources, technology and institutional arrangements.

49. Individual and institutional capacity need to be further developed at all levels, which needs to be accompanied by standard setting, targeted regulations and law enforcement being pursued seriously. Strengthening the rule of law, transparency and accountability need to build stronger environmental governance. At the same time, governments and industry leaders need to recognize that resource-efficient and monitoring and control technologies exist. Partnerships among countries in the region and with industrial countries need to foster the wider and faster transfer and deployment of technologies to better manage chemicals and hazardous waste and reduce waste generation with priority given to SIDS and megacities, as well as minimize indoor and outdoor air pollution. These measures need to be accompanied by realistic and implementable actions plans.

50. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could therefore be to promote sound management of chemicals and waste by providing national and regional level support to Member States and stakeholders.

F. Priority Issue 6: Address Air Quality

51. Recent estimates by the World Health Organization placed air pollution as the world's largest single environmental health risk with nearly 7 million deaths annually. Seventy percent of these deaths occur in Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia is ranked worst globally in terms of urban air quality and the associated health problems. Rapid industrial growth and energy use, increasing, in particular urban, populations, low energy efficiency, fossil fuel subsidies, and an increasingly mobile population are leading to more out-door air pollution affecting in particular the health of urban populations. At the same time, millions of poor people suffer from the effects of in-door air pollution due to the use of firewood for cooking and space heating. Weak incentives for switching to more efficient technologies, weak law enforcement and inadequate monitoring of air quality. There is continued high share of coal in the energy mix. Reducing air pollution has recognized multiple benefits for health and human well-being, agricultural productivity, and local and global climate change mitigation. There is a need for increasing political commitment, potential of enabling economic instruments and innovative financing to promote the use of clean technology, energy efficiency, renewable energy and decarbonisation and change in transport to improve air quality.

52. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could be therefore be to promote control and prevention of air pollution to minimize impacts on human health and the environment, and support all countries to meet WHO guidelines for indoor and outdoor air pollution levels.

G. Priority Issue 7: Develop Integrated Approaches to Environment and Health

53. The major environmental challenges such as air pollution, climate change, chemicals and waste management, and ecosystem disruption pose serious risks to human health, especially in the Asia Pacific region. There is an urgent need for integrated approaches at the national and regional levels to address the health challenges related to environment. These approaches should facilitate cooperation and the sharing of information, knowledge and expertise among countries at regional and sub-regional levels; and should promote methodologies to assess the current status of environment and health integration in countries, to identify needs and opportunities for strengthening integration, and to develop strategic and action oriented national environment and health plans as well as systems for sharing information and monitoring progress.

H. Priority Issue 8: Use the Sustainable Development Goals to scale up environmental action

54. Governments will adopt the SDGs in September 2015 and countries need to be ready to start implementing soon after. The SDGs reflect the need to incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental in a coherent, holistic, comprehensive and balanced manner, as well as the need for transformational and integrated approaches highlighting interconnections and linkages across goals and targets. The implementation of the SDGs cannot be achieved without taking into consideration environmental dimensions due to the importance of environmental quality on human health and wellbeing, the importance of ecosystem services and natural capital for socio economic development and the intrinsic values

associated to the environment. Asia Pacific is not a homogeneous region and there are major differences in the capacity of their countries to implement the SDG. Although there is a clear need for common but differentiated responses, there is evidence that building capacity, improved governance, political commitment and mobilizing resources are common requirements for the success and progress of the SDG in the region. There is a need for developing a set of environment /Climate Change national indicators that can be integrated into broader SDG reporting framework and that also reflect national MEA targets/commitments. Mainstreaming SDGs in national planning and improved governance is required to enhance the development of effective mechanisms to promote the implementation, accountability, compliance and the monitoring and evaluation of SDGs. Mobilizing financing and enhancing the use and direction of the flows of funding are a pre-requisite for implementation of the SDGs and a transformative post 2015 development agenda.

55. UNEP's objective in Asia Pacific within the framework of the MTS 2018-21 could therefore be to align environmental governance structures to sustainable development policies and integrate social, environment and economic objectives for coherence in support of the SDGs.

IV. Processes and Mechanisms for Promoting Asia Pacific Priorities in the second United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA-2) in 2016 and the development of the UNEP MTS 2018-21

56. The second session of UNEA (UNEA-2) is scheduled in Nairobi from 23-27 May 2016. Convening on a biennial basis starting in 2014, UNEA is mandated to take strategic decisions and provide political guidance on issues including: setting the global environmental agenda; providing overarching policy guidance; defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges and setting the strategic guidance on the future direction of the United Nations Environment Programme (the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2018–2021 and a Programme of Work & Budget (PoW) for 2018–2019).

57. In the lead up to UNEA-2, are some very important meetings :

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| 30 April 2015 | Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: Analysis of initial consultations providing an interim situational analysis and an early view of priority outcomes that will form the outline of an MTS for 2018-2021 |
| 30 June 2015 | Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: Analysis of the subprogramme approach for the MTS 2018-21 |
| 30 Oct 2015 | Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives: Refined situational analysis including the regional dimensions, a business strategy, and approach to evaluating the MTS and outcome maps. |
| 26-30 Oct 2015 | 3 rd Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) |
| 15-19 Feb 2016 | 2 nd Meeting of the Open-ended CPR (OECPR) |
| 23-27 May 2016 | 2 nd session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) |

58. In its meeting in March 2015, the Subcommittee of the CPR welcomed a more results focused, longer term outcome planning approach by UNEP, aligned to the 2030 target date for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using outcome maps to outline the logical chain of results to move from the current situation to the 2030 goals. Member Countries of Asia Pacific have the opportunity to inform these very important meetings, actively engage in and provide their inputs to UNEP's strategic planning process.

59. In addition, the First Forum Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific in Bangkok provides a timely platform for discussions and consensus-building with regard to defining the priority environmental issues and opportunities in the region. Member Countries can optimize the Forum discussions to identify and recommend potential UNEA-2 resolutions that benefit the Asia Pacific region's needs. The discussions and outcome of the First Forum Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific will also provide inputs and guidance for the development of the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021so as to benefit the support the region needs.