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## **CONFERENCE PURPOSE AND GOALS**

The Fourth International Conference on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, April 22-26, 1996. The Conference built on the work of the first three International Conferences. Each Conference has, in turn expanded its sponsorship, participation, and scope to reach an ever-broadening audience and to develop more extensive and useful materials and frameworks for exchange.

### **Promote the Importance of and Underscore the Driving Forces Behind Effective Environmental Compliance and Enforcement**

These Conferences respond to the urgency of addressing environmental concerns both domestically and on a global scale and to the increasing recognition by government and nongovernment officials of the critical role that environmental compliance and enforcement plays in ensuring an effective response. Growing interest in environmental compliance and enforcement stems from a desire to ensure that environmental requirements lead to real improvements in environmental quality. Environmental enforcement - broadly defined as the range of actions governments and others may take to encourage and compel compliance with environmental requirements - is critical to achieving environmental objectives.

Effective domestic environmental compliance and enforcement programs are an important factor in global efforts to reduce international trade barriers and enhance economic development in a manner that does not create unfair competition or pressure to diminish environmental quality and stewardship of valuable natural resources. Effective enforcement also can provide an element of fairness to the regulatory process, instill credibility to government institutions, and prevent short-term economic competition among regions and between facilities that might undermine longer-term economic and environmental goals for a sustainable future.

### **Foster Institutional Capacity to Enhance Existing and Develop New Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Programs**

The Fourth International Conference on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement focused on building the institutional capacity for enhancing existing and developing new domestic environmental compliance and enforcement programs. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, produced an international agenda, Agenda 21, which firmly states that effective environmental compliance and enforcement programs are a key element of environmental management and which recognizes the need to build institutional capacity for effective enforcement in each nation's environmental program. The Fourth International Conference on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement was designed to help all nations achieve the objectives of this international agenda.

The Conference program provided the potential and opportunity for nations to establish consensus around priorities for capacity building within and across regions of the world and facilitate access to international support. It also included topics and workshops to meet the needs of those just beginning to develop programs and those with existing programs seeking to improve them.

### **Serve All Stakeholders Influencing the Design of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Programs**

The target audience for the Conferences is enforcement officials and policy-makers both within and outside government who are in a position to influence the design or enhancement of environmental compliance and enforcement programs. Within government the Conference sought representation from national, regional, and local governmental units responsible for both the legal

and technical aspects of environmental compliance and enforcement at the mid- to senior-management levels. It also involved selected nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and industry representatives.

### **Encourage Ongoing International Exchange and Regional Networking**

The Conference program encourages follow-up beyond the Conference itself in several ways. The program highlighted international as well as regional resources and networking designed to help nations address common challenges and priorities and offer potential models for nations within all regions to support each other in these efforts. The program sought to establish consensus around an international agenda for capacity building that will help to guide limited resources to greatest advantage. The program included opportunities for nations within different regions of the globe to explore how they can build on existing collaborative international arrangements to provide accelerated progress and cooperation in environmental compliance and enforcement. Conference participants were drawn from all regions, with a special emphasis on Asia and the Pacific to take advantage of the Conference's location and the opportunities it presents to promote greater international exchange and regional networking among countries in Asia and the Pacific.

### **Foster Exchange of Expertise and Learning Through Active Participation**

The Conferences are structured to provide ample opportunity for participants to form professional networks and to learn through active participation. In addition to open discussion during plenary sessions and workshops of fewer than 25 participants on the second, third, and fourth days, there were regional meetings and informal opportunities for exchange around exhibits and related Conference events.