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## **SUMMARY OF REGIONAL MEETING: ASIA AND PACIFIC—BUILDING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL NETWORKS**

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### **GOALS**

The regional meeting will address the following issues:

- The genesis of the network and how it was established.
- What was/is involved in developing and maintaining the network.
- Who is asked to participate and at what levels in the organizations.
- Subjects the network covers.
- Vehicles used for exchange and means of communication used.
- Topics on which exchange is taking place.
- How the network overcomes differences in language and legal or other definitions of terms such as what constitutes a hazardous waste.
- Future directions and changes anticipated for the network.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Conference participants from 16 Asia-Pacific countries met to exchange views on establishment of regional and sub-regional networks in the region.<sup>1</sup> Participants represented governments, NGOs and international organizations.

The main purpose of the meeting was to seek consensus on ways and means of developing Regional and Sub-Regional networks in the Asia-Pacific region, and thereby work toward achievement of a major goal of the Monterey conference. Participants endorsed the conference's objective of operationalizing networking at the national level, by placing compliance and enforcement on the permanent agendas of sub-regional groups. Further to that objective, the meeting considered issues and options for establishment of regional and sub-regional networks in the region.

A preparatory regional workshop had set the stage for the Asia regional meeting at Monterey. The Regional Workshop for Establishing the Asia-Pacific International Network on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (ASPA-INECE), hosted by Dr. Lal Kurukulasuriya of UNEP's Bangkok office, was held in September 1998. Fourteen Asia-Pacific countries were represented at the Bangkok meeting, of which eight were also represented in Monterey.<sup>2</sup> The Monterey Asia-Pacific meeting generally endorsed the recommendations of the Bangkok workshop, which called for establishment of networks at Regional and Sub-Regional levels.<sup>3</sup> Given the size and diversity of countries in the region, the workshop had recommended operationalization of the proposed region-wide Asia-Pacific International Network on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (ASPA-INECE) on a sub-regional basis, drawing on sub-regional environmental organizations, and participants in the Monterey Asia-Pacific meeting endorsed this two-level approach.

## **2 SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES**

Participants in the Monterey Asia-Pacific meeting also endorsed a broad scope of activities for regional and sub-regional networks, which includes:

- strengthening national networking among institutions at national, provincial/state and local levels;
- training and capacity-building mainly at the national level, with sub-regional and regional activities to promote regional exchange of experience and expertise, and exposure to global developments; and
- information gathering, analysis and dissemination on a wide range of compliance and enforcement-related matters, including policies and regulations, institutional arrangements, cleaner production, and using modern tools such as the Internet.

The meeting agreed on several key parameters of the proposed networks:

- The core business of the networks should be national-level compliance and enforcement. While the compliance and enforcement agenda should be broadly defined to include regulatory, legal and technical issues, as well as incentives to promote “voluntary” compliance and public participation, it should not be broadened to the extent that compliance and enforcement networks would compete with other regional and global networks with agendas covering the entire span of environmental issues.
- The critical node at the national level would be the “national focal points,” which would have primary responsibility for strengthening national networks.
- An important initial activity would be setting up Regional and Sub-Regional communications systems, which might require assisting some member country agencies to upgrade their telecommunications capabilities.
- Global INECE should remain active and nurture strong linkages with the regional networks, thereby adding significant value to the regional and sub-regional networks’ activities. Nevertheless, formal hierarchy should be avoided, and sub-regional and national networks should feel free to communicate directly with Global INECE (see organization chart below).

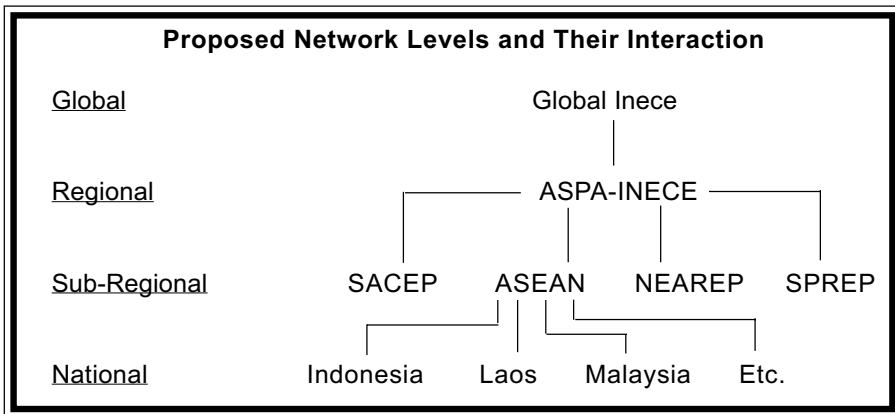
## **3 STRUCTURING THE REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL NETWORKS**

The meeting was also in broad agreement on the delineation of sub-regional networks by country. Sub-regional networks discussed during the meeting included, but should not be limited to:

- the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), which co-sponsored the preparatory meeting in Bangkok;
- the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) member nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, with Myanmar as an observer);

- the countries of Northeast Asia, which have recently formed a Northeast Asia Regional Environment Program (NEAREP) under UNEP auspices (check this), (including but not limited to Mongolia, People's Republic of China, and South Korea); and
- the Pacific Island countries (including but not limited to Fiji, Papua New Guinea and other participants in the ADB- and UNEP-assisted South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP)).

In the case of SACEP, compliance and enforcement is already on the sub-regional agenda; in the case of the others, it would be a new activity.



The participants discussed several other important issues related to establishment and start-up activities, but did not reach full agreement. Regarding eligibility for participation in the network, the question was whether NGOs should have the same status as governments, and whether industry should be included in network activities. Several speakers noted that designating NGOs as full participants would pose significant confidentiality issues for government members, and might force the latter to participate less fully in network information-sharing activities. A majority of Conference participants agreed that, the core participants should be government agencies, with encouragement of NGO participation, at the discretion of governments. However, there was also a minority view that NGOs should be full participants with the same status as government agencies. Views on whether industries and industry associations should be invited to participate in network activities appeared to be roughly evenly divided between those supporting and those opposing a role for industry.

Regarding the status of the sub-regional networks whether formal or informal some speakers argued that formal status, with full government participation, would provide greater visibility and ensure more serious commitment, while others called for an informal status initially, in order to avoid delays in start-up activities.

#### 4 PRIORITIES

Regarding priorities among types of compliance and enforcement issues, some participants urged that national and intranational issues be given top priority, while others argued that transboundary issues and enforcement of international conventions should be given equal attention.

Regarding allocation of limited financial support among the proposed Regional and Sub-Regional networks, there were also differing perspectives, with some calling for concentration of initial effort at the Sub-Regional level, while others argued for a higher initial level of effort at the regional level, to be followed by the Sub-Regions.

#### 5 NEXT STEPS

At the regional level, UNEP proposed to create a Steering Committee, comprised of the sub-regional networks, NGOs and donors; to establish a Secretariat based in UNEP's Bangkok office, with one full-time professional and one administrative staff (subject to availability of funding); to convene a planning workshop within the next three months; and, again subject to funding, to convene a regional conference including the new Sub-Regional networks within the next 12 months.

At the Sub-Regional level, similar activities, including establishment of a Steering Committee and an initial planning workshop, were proposed, but funding remained to be identified.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Participants in the Asia-Pacific meeting at Monterey represented Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, People's Republic of China, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.
2. Participants in the preparatory Asia-Pacific meeting in Bangkok represented 14 Asia-Pacific countries including Bangladesh, Brunei, Fiji, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam; plus the Netherlands. Of the 14 Asia-Pacific countries that met in Bangkok, eight were present in Monterey.
3. See Report of the Regional Workshop for Establishing the Asia-Pacific International Network on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (ASP-INECE), 21-23 September 1998, Bangkok.