

CONNECTIONS

East and North-East Asia Office
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Director's Message

Dr. Kilaparti Ramakrishna



The beginning of 2014 has seen a new biennium for UN and ESCAP's programme of work. With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) coming to an end in 2015, this is an exciting time to witness the formation of post-2015 development agenda that includes the transition from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Regional Commissions will serve as a key force in the global efforts to develop these SDGs.

At the same time, ESCAP's leadership also sees a transition in February 2014. Our new Executive Secretary Dr Shamshad Akhtar officially took office in Bangkok as the 10th Under-Secretary-General to head ESCAP. Taking sustainable and inclusive growth

and poverty eradication as focus in order to "unlock the real potential of the region," she highlighted the need to deepen national economic transformations and backing them by strong governance and finance. Pointing to the diversity in Asia-Pacific region, she said there cannot be a "one size fits all solution" for its development. She also pointed out the importance of "knowledge-sharing, innovation, science and technology transfer, as well as strengthening of capacities to implement the emerging development agenda" for Asia Pacific countries.

Dr Akhtar previously served in Asian Development Bank as Special Senior Advisor to the President, World Bank as Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, and as Governor of the Central Bank of Pakistan and as Governor of the IMF. Within the UN, she served as the Secretary-General's Senior Advisor on Economics and Finance and Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development in DESA and as co-chair of the United Nations Task Team on Post-2015. ENEA Office is looking forward to welcoming Dr Akhtar to the subregion in the near future.

On 19-20 March, 2014, the ENEA Office, in its capacity as the secretariat of NEASPEC, held the first Steering Committee meeting of North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) in Incheon. Ocean life recognizes no national boundaries and its protection falls to all the neighboring countries. To respond to this challenge member countries of NEASPEC launched NEAMPAN during the Senior Officials Meeting in 2013. During our March meeting, Steering Committee members further clarified national approaches to Marine Protected Areas (MPA), strategic direction of the Network, target MPAs, network membership, and organizational and managerial structures. In addition to the Steering Committee members, representatives from other regional MPA network and related programmes have participated to share their experiences. Key outcomes of the meeting can be found in this newsletter under Activities.

During the first quarter of 2014, we have been focusing on finalizing the last biennium's work and jump starting the next biennium. This issue of newsletter is therefore covering the full first quarter of 2014. From next issue onward, we will be returning to our regular bi-monthly newsletter. I hope you continue to support us in our programme of work.



K. Ramakrishna



Enhancing Mongolia's Capacity for Drought and Dzud Monitoring and Early Warning

17 February 2014, Beijing, China



The Asia-Pacific region has the largest number of people affected by droughts compared with any other regions in the world. Asia-Pacific region faces tremendous challenges in drought disaster preparedness, particularly in monitoring and early warning aspects.

In tackling these challenges, ESCAP has operationalized the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, which is a flagship project under ESCAP's Regional Space Applications Programme. The Mechanism is already active in five pilot countries: Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal and Myanmar. It provides space-based data, products and services, and strengthens capacity of member States in addressing gaps in monitoring and early warning of agricultural droughts.

Following the request to ESCAP from Mongolia for regional advisory services for disaster preparedness, ESCAP together with the Mongolian National Remote Sensing Center (NRSC) developed a project to enhance its capacity to monitor and detect drought and dzud.

ESCAP Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD) and our office held the first technical assistance meeting in September 2013 in Ulaanbaatar, with remote sensing/Geographic Information System (GIS) experts from ESCAP secretariat, China, India, Japan

and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) to discuss NRSC's current capacity and the key issues involved in identifying appropriate drought indicators that could be applied to Mongolia's unique climate and landscape.

Organized by IDD and East and North-East Asia Office of ESCAP, staff from NRSC received hands-on training for two months on building databases and finding indices at China's Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth (RADI) from February 2014. A review workshop will be held in September 2014 to assess progress and discuss the second year implementation plan.





Activities

First Session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities

25-26 February 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Over 70 representatives from 15 governments and 15 civil society organizations participated in the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea. During the meeting, participants adopted a five-year road map for the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

The Incheon Strategy is comprised of 10 disability-inclusive development goals such as poverty reduc-

tion and employment enhancement for persons with disabilities, promoting their political participation, access to public transport, physical environment, knowledge and ICT services.

Governments of the Asia-Pacific region adopted the Incheon Strategy to build a better future for persons with disabilities, and to establish an inclusive society where governments and civil society groups working together to ensure that the post-2015 development goals enhance the rights of persons with disabilities.



Workshop on Single Window Implementation in Mongolia

13-14 March 2014, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

ESCAP organized the National Capacity Building Workshop: Implementing Mongolia National Single Window (MNSW) in cooperation with Mongolia National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and UN Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) to inform government officials and interested agencies about the benefits of Single Window implementation.

The Workshop brought together close to 50 experts, government officials and stakeholders to discuss and share national experiences, key challenges and success cases of Single Window system. Case studies in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Senegal were presented during the meeting.

The participants were eager to move forward with implementing Mongolia's single window system, which

has been discussed since 2006. As a result of the workshop, the participants highlighted the need to revisit and update the Single Window Master plan. ESCAP stands ready to assist in this review process.

A key bottleneck in implementing the single window has been securing necessary funding. As such, participants recommended the Steering Committee to expedite the resource mobilization and also to search for a variety of options including private sector investment and loans and grants from development partners.

In conjunction with implementing the national single window, participants also stressed the need to consider the regional cross-border single window connectivity in connection to ESCAP Resolution 68/3.



Activities

First Steering Committee Meeting of North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network

19-20 March 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

During the 18th Senior Officials Meeting in 2013, NEASPEC launched the North-East Asia Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) to fill the gap of existing programmes and projects related to marine ecosystems in the subregion, with geographic coverage of all five countries of NEASPEC, except Mongolia that is a landlocked country.

ENEA Office, serving as the secretariat of both NEASPEC and NEAMPAN, coordinated the first Steering Committee meeting of NEAMPAN to further discuss national approaches to Marine Protected Areas (MPA), strategic direction of the Network, target MPAs, network membership, and organizational and managerial structures. In addition to the Steering Committee members, representatives from other regional MPA network and related programmes participated to exchange their experiences.



Key outcomes of the meeting include (a) nomination of specific target MPAs by respective governments in accordance with network's thematic areas and national priorities, (b) inclusive memberships for diverse stakeholders, (c) streamlined process for activity review and approval by the SC; and (d) creation of Advisory Committee consisting of individual experts and international organizations for technical advice on activities.

Trilateral Expert Meeting on Disaster Loss Data and DRR Technology Sharing

26-28 March 2014, Jeju, Republic of Korea

As a follow-up to the Trilateral Joint Declaration on Disaster Management Cooperation among China, Japan and Korea in October 2013, the Jeju Trilateral Expert Meeting was convened by ESCAP, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Korea to boost regional cooperation in the key areas of technology, information management and training programmes in disaster risk reduction.

This Meeting reviewed the preliminary results of case studies, data acquisition, and further recommendations for harmonizing disaster data among Northeast Asia. Participants drafted work plan for exploring better compatibility of information on hazard profiles, disaster losses and disaster recovery.

It also came up with strategic plans for harmonizing disaster data and data acquisition among North-east Asia countries and extending to the Asia and the Pacific countries later. Among attendees are high and mid-level government officials and researchers from the three countries, other stakeholders from UN agencies, and regional institutions. A number of high level experts, scholars and policy-makers from Asia and Europe made presentations and served as panelists relating to the main and sub themes of the meeting.

Regional Consultation on Strengthening Income Support for Vulnerable Groups

26-27 March, Incheon, Republic of Korea

During the recent multiple crises, social protection has emerged as a key instrument for building the resilience of vulnerable populations against shocks, as well as for reducing poverty. Among the various social protection schemes, income support schemes have received particular attention in many ESCAP member countries as a means of providing direct economic support and protection to vulnerable groups, such as the poor, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The Regional Consultation, attended by government officials and representatives from the regional development banks, including the Asian Development Bank, academia and other research institutions, as well as the senior officials of the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) and the National Pension Research Institute, was held with the focus on income support schemes and old-age pensions in the region and other selected countries in the ESCAP region.

Participants had an enhanced understanding of existing income support policies and programmes in Asia and the Pacific, and identified challenges and gaps in the implementation of these policies and programmes in the region. The meeting agreed upon a way forward on a research agenda on evaluating options for implementing sustainable pension schemes for older persons in the Asian and Pacific region.



Upcoming Events

NEASPEC Tiger & Leopard DNA Analysis

15-16 April 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

This Expert Consultation Meeting will discuss the details of the NEASPEC project on conservation of Amur tigers and leopards and facilitate knowledge and experience exchange among member States on DNA analysis of concerned animals. During the meeting, scientific and technical approaches outlined in the proposal submitted by the Russian Federation and Republic of Korea will be addressed to facilitate dialogue among stakeholder groups, including national experts, international organizations and UN agencies.



First Consultation Meeting on Legal Instrument for Operationalization of AH4 Transport Route

22-23 April 2014 Beijing, China

Assisting member States in formulating and implementing transport facilitation measures and promoting cross-border and transit transport have been an area of effort for ESCAP. The first consultation meeting among China, Mongolia and Russia, organized by ESCAP Transport Division and ENEA Office, aims at discussing the trilateral legal instrument on transit transport by road with the purpose of promoting the development of transit potential of the three countries. By focusing on a particular route with overall direction of Asian Highway route No. 4, the route and key issues for the trilateral legal instrument on transit transport, will be discussed.

NEASPEC's Development of the Technical and Policy Frameworks for Transboundary Air Pollution Assessment and Abatement in North-East Asia

1 May 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

NEASPEC will organize the Expert Group Meeting to facilitate joint scientific assessment and consultations among member States on a potential subregional framework for addressing transboundary air pollution. The EGM will discuss the overall implementation plan for assessing data and technical approaches, developing a modelling methodologies of transboundary air pollution, carrying out a modelling, and formulating the concept of a subregional framework. It will also identify roles of each national implementing bodies and experts in the project implementation.



Regional Dialogue on Technology Facilitation for Sustainable Development

18 May 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

The Regional Dialogue on Technology Facilitation for Sustainable Development is scheduled to be held in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). The East and North East Asia subregion holds member States, which have made rapid strides in development and utilization of technologies for such areas as renewable energy. On the other hand, many member States in the ESCAP region are struggling with low capacity for development and utilization of technologies. In this context, the ESCAP-ENEA Office is organizing a regional dialogue to map out on-going initiatives and existing institutional frameworks for technology transfer in the region. The outcome and recommendation of the meeting will be presented at the APFSD as an input for discussions on the means of implementation.

Global Governance: UN and China

13-14 January 2014, Shanghai, China

Dr Kilaparti Ramakrishna attended the Transformative Global Governance: China and the United Nations conference as the chair of the workshop on "Transforming North-South dialogue in the 21st century: Considering new actors and relations in global economic, social and diplomatic relations." The participants exchanged views on globalization, the importance of UN-China relationship and the role of China. Among the discussion topics were tracking the Clean Energy Agenda to achieve sustainable energy and development, challenges in global governance and reforming the UN and shaping a post-2015 framework. The conference was jointly hosted by the Shanghai United Nations Research Association, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Association of China (UNA-China), the Zhongdao Group as well as Fudan University.

UN Informal Get-together

29 January 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

East and North-East Asia Office of ESCAP organized an informal gathering to reconnect with the United Nations offices in Songdo, Incheon and celebrated the Lunar New Year. Around 50 staff members from the UN and other international organizations joined and discussed further cooperation for the year ahead. Among those present were the Asia and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT-ESCAP), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR), the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. Several offices with new leaders and staff coming on board recently were also introduced to others.



Visit from UN Students Association

20 February 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

The interest of United Nations Students Associations (UNSA) towards ESCAP brought 25 undergraduate students and a professor from the universities in Seoul and Busan to ESCAP-ENEA in Incheon. Our staff presented them an overview of the UN and ESCAP-ENEA and our work in sustainable development in the subregion, and answered their questions about sustainable development and working for the UN.



Talk with Director, Environment & Development Division, ESCAP

25 February 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea



Director of Environment and Development Division of ESCAP, Rae Kwon Chung visited our office in Incheon. He briefly explained how the idea of "green growth" has evolved over time as "green economy," which was one of the two main themes of Rio+20 Conference. He addressed the necessity of integration in government sectors, governance structures and institutional mechanisms in order to achieve a universal understanding of sustainable development and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Mr Chung also mentioned that the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) to be held in May 2014, as an opportunity to review the 19 focus areas resulting from the Opening Working Group deliberation in the United Nations. He also asserted the long term benefits of green regulations despite their short term unpopularity and mentioned the need to come up with a new economic model.

Other News

Talk with UN Resident Coordinator of DPR Korea

28 February 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea



ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office had a unique opportunity to receive a visit by Gulam Isaczai, UN Resident Coordinator of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) during his mission to the Republic of Korea. His briefing was attended by ESCAP-ENEA staff as well as members of other UN offices. Mr Isaczai shared with UN colleagues about UN's humanitarian assistance and development cooperation work in DPRK. And he looks forward to close collaboration in the next Strategic Framework with involvement of non-resident UN offices including ESCAP.

International Workshop on Strengthening the International Cooperation Framework and Science-Policy Interface to

Promote Air Pollution Control in East Asia

6-8 March 2014, Yokohama, Japan

Dr Ramakrishna attended the International Workshop on Strengthening the International Cooperation Framework and Science-Policy Interface to Promote Air Pollution Control in East Asia in Yokohama. Experts discussed for better cooperation on transboundary air pollution and exchanged national views. During the talk, the need to develop the East Asian Epistemic Community and building the science-policy interface was addressed as well.

Talk with Prof Lee-Jay Cho, NEAEF

17 March 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Having a life time engagement and experience in East Asia, Prof Lee-Jay Cho, who holds the highest civilian awards by Japanese and Korean governments and also is the founder and current Chairman of the North-east Asia Economic Forum (NEAEF), stressed the importance of cooperation in the region during his informal speech on multilateral cooperation in our office. He mentioned cross-border concerns and economic integration as a pedestal of peace, harmony and growth. Prof Cho's suggestion about the region was thinking the regional and global context on the way of a "horizontal cooperation," where each unit and each community in the region are fair players on an equal level.

Preparatory Meeting on Education and Sustainable Development

11 March 2014, Incheon, Republic of Korea

A planning meeting for Incheon Conference on Education and Sustainable Development was designed to be an occasion to meet with potential partners in sustainable development education, determine their interest in contributing to the organization of the conference and its outcomes, and undertake a structured conference proposal. Convened by the University of Utah and the ENEA Office, it brought together academics from universities in the region, as well as representatives from international organizations such as Global Green Growth Institute, Green Climate Fund, United Nations Office for Sustainable Development and UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding.



Asia-Pacific Association for International Education

17-20 March 2014, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dr Ramakrishna delivered a message on behalf of the Secretary-General during the Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) Conference on 18 March in Seoul. APAIE is an annual forum where educators, policymakers and experts around the world gather to discuss the new developments and changes in international higher education. With the theme of "Enhancing Cross-border Education Cooperation with Universities in Asia-Pacific: From Past to Present and the Future," SG's message stressed one of his initiatives, the Global Education First Initiative that seeks to put every child in school, improve the quality of education, and foster global citizenship.

The Economist Conference on Ageing

20-21 March 2014, Singapore

Director Ramakrishna spoke at the Health Care in Asia 2014 Conference organized by the Economist Magazine in Singapore. He was part of the panel on the topic of "Treating an Ageing Population" and talked about the challenges of providing health care for the ageing population in Asia-Pacific, and the existing UN guidelines for policy makers, called "Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing."