



World Health Organization

Regional Forum on Environment and Health



United Nations Environment Programme

HL4/0

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**High-Level Officials' Meeting
on Environment and Health
in Southeast and East Asian Countries
24-25 March 2009, Beijing China**

MEETING REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Fourth High-Level Officials' Meeting on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries was held in Beijing, China on 24-25 March 2009. The meeting is the fourth of the series; the first was held in Manila, Philippines, in November 2004, and the second and third in Bangkok, Thailand, in December 2005 and August 2007, respectively. The third meeting was held back-to-back with the First Ministerial Regional Forum.
2. As part of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health, the Fourth High-Level Officials' Meeting was participated in by senior officials, both from environment and health agencies of the 14 countries in South-east and East Asia, representatives of regional and international partner agencies, and other observers. The Chairs and Co-Chairs of the regional Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) also participated in the meeting.
3. Thailand and the Republic of Korea served as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the meeting, respectively. On behalf of Thailand Dr Supat Wangwongwatana, Director-General, Pollution Control Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment facilitated the meeting as the Chair. On behalf of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Jong Keuk Oh, Director-General, Environmental Health Bureau, Ministry of Environment and Dr. Lee Duk-Hyuong, Director-General for Disease Policy, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs served as the Vice-Chair. The opening ceremony was facilitated by a moderator.
4. The meeting was conducted with the following objectives:
 - 1) to provide updates by the countries on the progress in national actions since the Third High-Level Officials Meeting, particularly in the development and implementation of their National Environmental Health Action Plans (NEHAPs) or equivalent plans;
 - 2) to review the progress of the respective Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) in the implementation of their workplans; and
 - 3) to discuss the preparation for the Second Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health to be held in 2010 in the Republic of Korea, as agreed during the First Ministerial Regional Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, in August 2007
5. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1 [HL4/1/3].

II. Opening Ceremony

6. The opening of the meeting was addressed by Dr. Chen Xiaohong, Vice Minister, Ministry of Health, China, Mr. Wu Xiaoqing, Vice Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection, China, Dr. Young-Woo Park, Regional Director, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and Dr. Linda

Milan, Director, Building Healthy Communities and Populations and Acting Director, Programme Management, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific.

7. Dr. Chen Xiaohong, Vice Minister, Ministry of Health, China opened the meeting. and welcomed all participants to the meeting. He expressed sincere appreciation to WHO and UNEP for their support for the Regional Forum on Environment and Health, particularly in promoting and enhancing inter-sectoral and inter-country collaboration in environment and health in the region. He mentioned the Regional Forum could provide innovative thinking in developing China's environmental health activities. He recognized the importance of this Regional Forum in significantly contributing to sustainable growth by addressing national and regional priority issues on environmental health. He shared the Chinese outlook to promote a sustainable society and achieve health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in China.
8. Mr. Wu Xiaoqing, Vice Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection, China welcomed and extended warmth greetings to the participants. He stated that the Chinese sustainable consumption and production would depend on the quality of air, water and land in rural and urban areas. He reported the current status and past trend of the quality of air, water and land in China where improvement in environmental indicators had been observed. He said that environmental and health impact assessments, particularly assessments on specific major pollutants would require the cooperation in strengthening research on environmental health issues. He sincerely hoped to enhance inter-sectoral and inter-country cooperation in the continued improvement of environment and health in the region.
9. Dr. Young-Woo Park, Regional Director, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, thanked the Government and the people of China for their hospitality in welcoming the member countries and partners to Beijing. He stated the status of the rapid urbanization, industrialization and population growth, deteriorating environment and rapidly declining natural resources. He underlined that the formulation and implementation of policies on environment and health require effective communication and joint action by the environment and health agencies. At the national level, there is a need to promote the environment ministry – health ministry nexus. He reiterated the need to promote cooperation among the environment and health agencies for effectively addressing the health issues related to environment degradation. He cited the UNEP activities, particularly the Governing Council's landmark decision to launch negotiations on an international mercury treaty to eliminate world-wide emissions and discharges of mercury, among others. He suggested that TWGs should prepare policy briefs based on the findings of their activities and submit them to the Second Ministerial Regional Forum which would be held in the Republic of Korea in 2010, as they would help the policy makers to decide on the next step. He further thanked and expressed the contribution of the environment and health ministries of all the participating countries to the development of the Charter and establishment of the unique network.
10. Dr. Linda Milan, Acting Director, Programme Management, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific gave the opening remarks on behalf of WHO. She expressed and extended a warm welcome to the participants. She mentioned the history and importance of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health and recognized the features of the Regional Forum that enabled the environment and health ministries and other stakeholders to work together at

regional and national levels in addressing environmental health issues. Implementation of NEHAPs was cited as an example of inter-sectoral collaboration. She stated that a main challenge was to harness available resources to implement TWG workplans effectively, and there was a need to show performance, attract donors and engage other stakeholders, such as the media.

III. Adoption of Agenda (Agenda Item 1)

11. The meeting adopted the proposed Agenda.

IV. Update on the regional level activities since the First Ministerial Meeting and the Third High-Level Officials' Meeting

12. A review of regional level actions since the First Ministerial Meeting and the Third High-Level Officials' Meeting was presented jointly by Mr. Mylvakanam Iyngararasan, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and Dr. Hisashi Ogawa, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. The presentation is given in Annex 2 [HL 4/2/2].
13. Mr. Mylvakanam Iyngararasan briefed the background of Regional Forum including the strategy approach and the establishment of the Forum. Six priority themes were also elaborated as well as objectives, compositions and workplans of the respective themes. He shared some examples and case studies on environmental health. He also provided updates on UNEP activities especially on environmental health.
14. Dr. Hisashi Ogawa, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific briefed the activities of Secretariat to support countries in the region for the development of National Environmental Health Action Plans (NEHAPs). He also presented the results of the meetings and events carried out under the Regional Forum, including the Third Scientific Conference in Jeju, Republic of Korea, and the First and Second Advisory Board Meetings. He provided the information on other major events implemented by WHO during the review period.
15. During the discussion it was suggested that the proceedings of the Scientific Conferences be distributed to the participating countries. It was clarified that brief information on these conferences was already posted on the website, but if countries needed detailed materials, Secretariat would be able to provide it.

V. Review of progress on national actions (NEHAP) since the First Ministerial Meeting and the Third High-Level Officials' Meeting

16. All member countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) reported on the progress or updates made in their countries since the First Ministerial Meeting and the Third High Level Officials' Meeting, with focus on the development and implementation of National Environmental Health Action Plans (NEHAPs) or equivalent plans. Report from member countries included: (1) history of NEHAP development; (2) priority environmental health problems; (3) environmental health disasters; (4) key strategies for NEHAP; (5) national programmes and projects; (6) institutional organization; and (7) recommendations. All the presentations are given in Annex 3 [HL 4/3].
17. The meeting noted the progress made at the national level. Most countries have developed NEHAPs or equivalent plans, but some countries would need to finalize formal endorsement of the plans. Countries

have also made good progress in strengthening coordination between the health and environment sectors.

18. The development and implementation of environmental health action plans at local level were highlighted by some member countries. Member countries also suggested the importance of strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration between the environment and health sectors. Member countries, especially from developing countries, pointed out the need for more capacity building through training, seminars/workshop/meeting, etc. A need for further support or collaboration from regional and international partners (WHO, UNEP, ADB, UNICEF, World Bank-Water and Sanitation, UN-Habitat etc) was highlighted.
19. After the presentations by the countries, the participants discussed two points: (1) Identification of concerns in the development and implementation of NEHAP and (2) Increased partnerships for implementation of environment and health programmes. In addition, it was also underlined to include the environmental impact assessment and health impact assessment in the implementation of NEHAP.

(1) Identification of concerns in the development and implementation of NEHAP

20. The following recommendations were identified during the discussion: (a) link NEHAP with the regional TWGs workplans, (b) specify the timeline of NEHAP implementation, and (c) develop environmental health indicators to guide in monitoring of activities.
21. Member countries requested for technical assistance from UNEP and WHO for development and implementation of NEHAPs. WHO responded that it had country offices in all countries and they could also be approached for assistance.
22. It was suggested that draft NEHAP could be submitted to Secretariat for technical review if needed.

(2) Increased partnerships for implementation of environment and health programmes

23. Secretariat cited the Charter of the Regional Forum as reference for effective implementation of environment and health partnerships. Detailed action plan is essential to attract potential donors. Medical waste management was highlighted as an example of inter-ministerial committee co-operation between environmental and health ministries.
24. It was also mentioned that the key important partner could be from the private sector. NEHAP could include the private sector in its implementation.
25. It was agreed that member countries complete NEHAPs or equivalent plans by the next Ministerial Regional Forum, and present them at the Forum as substantive deliverables in implementing the regional Charter.

VI. Presentation from regional and international partners

26. Regional and international partners, including CAI-Asia, Chulalongkorn University, Okayama University, Pacific Basin Consortium, WHO Centre for Health Development in Kobe, Japan, reported (1) their recent activities related to environment and health; (2) future plan on environment and health; and (3) contribution to and expectation from the Regional Forum.

VII. Review of progress on workplans of the Thematic Working Groups

27. The Chair and Co-Chair institutions of TWGs made presentations on the progress in implementing TWG activities. Presentations included: (1) implementation of the workplans in the progress report, (2) challenges of the TWG in implementing the workplans, (3) recommendations for completing ongoing and remaining activities before the next Ministerial Regional Forum. The main highlights of the progress in the implementation of the workplans of TWGs are summarized below:

(1) Discussion specific to the TWGs

Thematic Working Group on Air quality

28. It was proposed to indicate the deadline and responsible organization for the assessment of the impacts of transboundary haze on human health in the workplan.

Thematic Working Group on Water Supply, Hygiene, and Sanitation

29. It was requested that the TWG follow the format provided in terms of presentation and/or reporting particularly in the upcoming Second Ministerial Regional Forum. It was suggested to complete the progress report considering the regional level activities.

Thematic Working Group on Solid and Hazardous Waste

30. Some member countries suggested considering incorporation of additional missing data and information on the draft reports on Health Care Waste and Municipal Waste. It was agreed that the participants review the reports and provide Secretariat with corrections in two weeks time.

Thematic Working Group on Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Substances

31. It was emphasized that all TWG members should actively participate in this TWG. Additionally, it was suggested to include capacity building for risk assessment.

Thematic Working Group on Climate Change, Ozone Depletion and Ecosystem Changes

32. The meeting discussed the ongoing activities related to this TWG and suggested the Chair institution to develop effective cooperation among the TWG members.

Thematic Working Group on Contingency Planning, Preparedness and Response in environmental health emergencies

33. It was suggested to involve the national communication focal points to select participants in the training programmes.

(2) Discussion common to all TWGs

34. It was suggested to further enhance the communication between national communication focal points, TWG members, TWG Chairs and Secretariat. It was agreed to develop communication guidelines.

35. It was agreed to develop a policy brief on each priority area (i.e. TWG). Secretariat will develop a template and consult TWG Chairs and national communication focal points.

36. Both environment and health ministries are encouraged to send participants in the TWG meetings.

37. Further need of resource mobilization for implementing TWG activities was highlighted by some member countries and TWG Chairs. Member countries were encouraged to participate in activities as stipulated in the TWG workplans and assist with the resource mobilization efforts of TWGs.

VIII. Discussion on the Second Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health in South-East and East Asian Countries

38. The Republic of Korea presented the arrangements for hosting the Second Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health. The Fifth High-Level Officials Meeting and the Second Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Health are proposed to be convened from 25 to 26 August 2010 and the Advisory Board Meeting on 27 August 2010 in the Republic of Korea.
39. The following documents will be compiled from each TWG for the Second Ministerial Regional Forum: i) a full report on the implementation of the workplan for 2007-2010, ii) a policy brief, and iii) a workplan for 2010-2013, pending the decision on the regional priorities for 2010-2013.

IX. Closing

40. The Chair thanked the Ministries of Environmental Protection and Health, China, and the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention for hosting the Fourth High-Level Official Meeting on Environment and Health, and WHO and UNEP for the support as Secretariat. He expressed his sincere appreciation to all participants for their active participation in discussions during the meeting.
41. Mr. Mylvakanam Iyngararasan gave remarks on behalf of UNEP. He mentioned that the challenges in bringing the health and environment agencies had been met. He expressed sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Health, China and WHO and UNEP country offices in China for their contribution to the success of the meeting.
42. Dr. Hisashi Ogawa gave remarks on behalf of WHO and stated that the inter-sectoral collaboration between the environment and health sectors had been improved substantially since the First High-Level Officials' Meeting in 2004. He thanked the Local Organizing Committee and the Chinese government for effectively hosting the event and all the participants for their active participation in the meeting.
43. Mr. Wang Xuening, Deputy Director-General, Bureau of Food Safety Coordination and Health Inspection gave remarks on behalf of the Chinese Government. He thanked and congratulated the Chair, Vice-Chair, the Local Organizing Committee and WHO/UNEP Secretariat for the productive and fruitful meeting.
44. The Chair then officially closed the Fourth High-Level Officials Meeting.