



FIRST FORUM OF MINISTERS AND ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITIES OF ASIA PACIFIC: 19-20 MAY 2015

The First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific took place from 19-20 May 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand, and was attended by over 180 participants, including 137 high-level representatives of delegations from 33 countries.

The meeting included sessions on: the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and environmental sustainability in Asia Pacific; the environment outlook for Asia Pacific; and environment-health linkages. Delegates identified challenges for the region, such as air pollution and its health impacts, the need for sound chemicals and waste management, including transboundary approaches, and promotion of the green and blue economy. In a final session, delegates put forward recommendations for consideration at the next session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-2), the UN's highest decision-making body on environmental affairs. Delegates also provided input to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021.

Many other meetings and side events took place during and around the First Forum. On 19 May, UNEP organized a lunch event on 'Asia Pacific and Climate Change' and a ministerial handover of a publication, *Indicators for a Resource-Efficient and Green Asia and the Pacific*. At the close of the meeting on 20 May, the inaugural Asia Environmental Enforcement Award ceremony took place, organized by UNEP and Freeland.

On Wednesday afternoon after the close of the First Forum, two events took place: an Asia-Pacific Roundtable on Environmental Rule of Law in Support to the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and a UNEP-Pacific Roundtable on Regional Cooperation. This report includes a summary of the Roundtable on Rule of Law.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The organization of the First Forum is a response to a decision of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20), which convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. Paragraph 88(g) of the Rio+20 Outcome, *The Future We Want*, called for strengthening UNEP's regional presence in order to assist countries, upon request, in the implementation of their national environmental policies.



First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific opens in Bangkok, Thailand

The strengthening of UNEP's regional presence takes place in the context of overall strengthening of UNEP, based on outcomes of Rio+20 and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) that same year.

UNEA-1: The first UNEA was held at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 23-27 June 2014, with more than 1,200 participants. The overarching theme of UNEA-1 was 'Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including sustainable consumption and production.' Delegates adopted one decision and 17 resolutions on, *inter alia*: strengthening UNEP's role in promoting air quality; the science-policy interface (SPI); ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA); implementation of Principle 10 of the

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Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; illegal trade in wildlife; chemicals and waste; and marine debris and microplastics. Many delegates called for continued efforts to strengthen UNEP to support implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The First Forum replaces the Subregional Environmental Policy Dialogue organized by UNEP since 2003.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

SESSION 1: OPENING

WELCOME: Kaveh Zahedi, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), welcomed ministers and senior officials to the First Forum on Tuesday, 19 May.

Oyun Sanjaasuren, President of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Chair of the Forum, said the Forum is a chance to: review how decisions from UNEA-1 have been put into action; identify regional inputs to UNEA-2 in May 2016;

provide input and guidance on the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021; and build consensus on environmental management of sustainable development.

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, encouraged the deepening of regional perspectives in the work of UNEP and the UN family, saying that Asia-Pacific's collective and strategic voice is less audible than it deserves and needs to be.

He then conveyed a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, that each country in the Asia Pacific exists on the frontlines of climate change, and that the region is showing action and commitment to low-carbon growth. Citing the upcoming Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the UN summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, and the Paris Climate Change Conference, Ban encouraged Forum participants to build a common environmental agenda.

Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), said the First Forum, the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and UNESCAP's 71st Session aim to emphasize sustainability issues as permeating every aspect of regional policy-making. She noted that equity is intertwined with both growth and natural resources, and is the focus of a UNESCAP study to be launched at APFSD. Akhtar stressed that the region can be a leader in creating a more inclusive, economically prosperous, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable future.

Dapong Ratanasuwana, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, drew attention to the expected formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community in 2016, and "the urgent and pressing need" to sustainably manage the region's natural resource base. He assured delegates of the military

government's ongoing international cooperation efforts, mentioning Thailand's strengthening of law enforcement to suppress smuggling of African ivory, and development of a national waste management road map. Stating that partnerships enable all to build a common environmental agenda, he declared the First Forum open.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS: Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, discussed 'Investing in the Pacific's Nature-Based Economies.' He highlighted Pacific island countries' closing of large marine areas to commercial fishing activity, including the Phoenix Islands, based on the principle that sacrifices made today will benefit the future. On creating a sustainable financial system that promotes investment in sustainable development, he drew comparisons with the "sense of preservation" that



Anote Tong, President of Kiribati

is ingrained in traditional practices relating to the sustainable harvesting of natural resources, calling for innovative ways of reinventing the financial system. He questioned whether insurance companies would consider a country such as Kiribati an acceptable client for

climate risk insurance, and expressed "a great and deep moral obligation to our homeland, our identity, our culture" as the nation faces climate-induced sea-level rise.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: In his address on the topic of 'Opportunities for a Green Economy in Asia Pacific,' Steiner urged delegates to not only address end-of-pipe problems that require "cleaning up after others," but to also embrace the challenge of designing future environmental strategies. He gave examples of the high cost of environmental degradation and disasters, such as sea-level rise and air pollution, and the possibility of effective action for "planetary repair" as shown in the case of the Montreal Protocol, and in the greatly increased investment in renewable energy technologies. He called for an end to the myth that economic progress must come at the expense of the environment, noting UNEP's ongoing inquiry into the design of sustainable financial systems, including banking, finance and securities, which seeks ways for financial markets to become co-investors in greening the planet.

SESSION 2: POST-2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, SDGS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ASIA PACIFIC

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: On the topic of 'Transformation for SDG Implementation in Asia Pacific,' Akhtar provided an update on the state of discussions on the sustainable development agenda, financing for development, and follow-up and review. She highlighted the need for governments to institutionalize effective processes to set national priorities, in the current context of difficult policy trade-offs and resource constraints. She said UNESCAP will coordinate a regional framework for follow-up and review, backed by support for better development. She added that the UN

regional commissions were set up to “fertilize” cross-sectoral dimensions, and called for ministries to advocate beyond their traditional areas, and work in concert to implement all SDGs.

MINISTERIAL PANEL: Steiner chaired the panel and introduced its members.

Faamoetuloa Ulaitino Faale Tumaalii, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa, said the SDGs will be a global platform based on which regional targets can be set. Once the SDGs are finalized, he said, they will need to be mapped against the priorities articulated in the SAMOA



Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP

Pathway agreed at the September 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Faamoetuloa called for assistance to: adopt a green economy approach and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in the Pacific context;

align institutional arrangements for SDG implementation; and make national and sub-national planning officials aware of the SDGs.

Abdullahi Majeed, Minister of State for Environment and Energy, Maldives, noted the impacts of climate change on fisheries and tourism, which represent the backbone of the Maldives’ economy. He called for earmarking a portion of aid commitments specifically for SIDS, and for the post-2015 development agenda to include support for developing countries’ adaptation to climate change, stating that the current financial resources to address climate change pale in comparison to what is needed. He stressed the importance of: education for sustainable development; ensuring water security; and understanding poverty-environment linkages and the drivers of environmental degradation.

Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), called for helping entrepreneurs understand that investing in social inclusion and environmental goods will lead to profits and benefit the next generation. He noted that business enterprises to the value of US\$45 trillion have adopted social and environmental responsibility measures, and that UNCTAD has worked with countries on national “green exports” such as traditional medicines and eco-tourism. He said a collective regional approach to setting social and environmental standards will help developing countries promote responsible behavior by foreign investors.

DISCUSSION: Delegates highlighted the need for resources to integrate the SDGs into national development plans and stated that Asia-Pacific countries should be able to select the SDG indicators most relevant to their circumstances. They suggested that ecosystem management could help restore sustainable livelihoods following the earthquakes in Nepal. Participants also highlighted national initiatives, including Japan’s review of domestic policies in relation to the SDGs, China’s “ecological civilization,” the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint, and Indonesia’s constitutionally protected right

to a clean environment. Japan proposed that the First Forum recommend a resolution on a waste management goal, for adoption by UNEA in 2016.

SESSION 3: ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK FOR ASIA PACIFIC

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Bindu Lohani, Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Asian Development Bank (ADB), addressed the theme ‘Outlook for Asia Pacific: Opportunities and Challenges Ahead.’ He highlighted the inequality that has come with economic growth, and described energy, food



Bindu Lohani, Vice President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

and water security challenges faced by countries. He noted opportunities to invest in infrastructure to keep pace with the growth in megacities and second-tier cities in the region. He said that while the post-2015 agenda, SDGs and climate negotiations will likely enable the ADB to scale up its work, countries have a limited ability to absorb funds, and therefore not only capacity building but also institution building will be needed. He called for strengthening countries’ regulatory capacity, especially their enforcement ability.

MINISTERIAL PANEL: Ramon J.P. Paje, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, said population coupled with extreme poverty is disastrous, causing a cycle of resource exploitation, degradation, and lowered productivity of natural resources, which in turn engenders more poverty. He said the Philippines’ national greening programme is implemented as a poverty reduction and food security programme, rather than an environment programme.

Mona Ioane, Associate Minister, Ministry of Environment, Cook Islands, said his country needs help collecting, analyzing and reporting on environmental data, and that no Pacific country has a systematic approach to this. He suggested agreeing on environmental indicators and mainstreaming the indicators into the work of national statistics offices. In this regard, he highlighted the potential role of a Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) database.

DISCUSSION: Delegates noted: environmental challenges inherent to SIDS, particularly water storage issues and coastal erosion; the economic challenge of ensuring development beyond an oil-based economy; preparations to align national statistics reporting systems with post-2015 indicators; and energy, water, food security and waste management as essential for citizens’ well-being.

New Zealand observed that commitment to collaboration tends to erode over time, and that institutional integration and alignment are therefore needed, in addition to policy integration. Delegates requested technical and financial assistance to transform their power sectors and build skills in

the management of coastal zones, energy and water resources. They further discussed: the principles of moderation, prudence and respect for the environment; the importance of sharing information and experiences; enforcement of environmental law; and the scientific assessment of global environmental status.

Delegations highlighted national initiatives including: Bhutan's Gross National Happiness policy, in which the environment is one of four pillars; the biannual national assessment of sustainability in the Republic of Korea; the constitutional obligation of sustainable development in Bangladesh; Nauru's energy efficiency road map; and Afghanistan's success in working with the Minister of Religious Affairs to raise public awareness of environmental issues.

The Economic Cooperation Organization noted international debate over means of implementation for adaptation to climate change, and emphasized that fossil fuel subsidies must be addressed.

MINISTERIAL HANDOVER OF UNEP PUBLICATION

Steiner introduced a UNEP publication, *Indicators for a Resource-Efficient and Green Asia and the Pacific*, and delegates viewed a video summary of the report findings. He said there is great diversity in the efficiency of resource use around the region, noting International Monetary Fund (IMF) figures that fossil fuel subsidies will cost the world US\$5.3 trillion in 2015. He said that despite "common wisdom" that Asian manufacturing for consumption by the rest of the world accounts for the region's high resource use, UNEP's analysis shows that most of the region's materials use is related to domestic consumption.

SESSION 4: ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH LINKAGES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President and Head of Department of Environment, Islamic Republic of Iran, explained that contaminants in air, water, soil and food are reshaping and suppressing human immune systems, resulting in a higher incidence of health problems, including allergies, childhood asthma and auto-immune diseases such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. She noted the human health impacts of chemicals in the environment, and the indiscriminate use of antibiotics. She called for long-term policy making to address quality-of-life issues, including scientific planning, efficient oversight mechanisms, and raising awareness of the health-environment nexus.

MINISTERIAL PANEL: Bob Baldwin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Australia, urged fellow authorities to empower individuals with information and tools. He recounted the Clean Up Australia campaign that began in 1990 as an example of successful direct action taken by individuals, who donated over 28 million volunteer hours to remove 300,000 tons of rubbish from sites around Australia.



Bob Baldwin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Australia

Sabo Ojano, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, recommended developing a road map to address the health impacts of environmental problems.

Samuel Manetoali, Minister for Environment, Climate Change,

Disaster Management and Meteorology, Solomon Islands, said degradation of ecosystems compromises communities' ability to lead healthy and traditional lifestyles. He cited, for example: non-communicable diseases (NCDs) caused by changing diets and lifestyles; the disruption of island ecosystems by invasive alien species; waste management challenges, particularly with oil, asbestos and electronic waste; and the lack of regional environmental indicators.

Jeong Yeon-Man, Vice Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea, said air pollution, climate change, chemicals and wastes all affect human health, and that 24% of diseases in the Asia-Pacific region are associated with environmental issues. He said industrial neighborhoods in his country have suffered from more skin problems, asthma and allergic reactions than other communities. Jeong recommended integrated approaches involving not only environment ministries, but also the energy, industry, agriculture, transportation and education sectors. Noting that the environment-health nexus is a cross-border issue, he called for institutional mechanisms to support coordination, including with the private sector.

DISCUSSION: Delegates requested international assistance for better collaboration between the health and environment sectors. They mentioned: Thailand's national road map on solid and hazardous waste management; Mongolia's distribution of energy-efficient sources to households to reduce air pollution; Lao PDR's efforts to harmonize health impact assessments with environmental impact assessments (EIAs); China's cataloguing of health risks; and Singapore's Transboundary Haze Pollution Act, which has extra-territorial reach. Delegates identified needs for: electronic waste (e-waste) management at the regional level; scientific evidence to improve environmental accounting by revealing the true cost of inaction; scientific planning that includes sectoral, regional and local cooperation; cooperation with the business and finance community; and sharing knowledge on environment-health linkages.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said that health and environment ministries are common allies. She noted how environmental factors can affect health, including: air pollution impacts on the poor; the need for safe water and sanitation to enable effective maternal and child health care at primary care facilities; fecal contamination of vegetables caused by irrigation using untreated municipal wastewater; increased ownership of motor vehicles contributing to stress, noise and sedentary lifestyles; and the effects of global warming on the breeding cycle of mosquitoes, and the corresponding incidence of dengue



Jeong Yeon-Man, Vice Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea,

fever. She called for strategies that “go beyond reaction” to innovate, adapt and mitigate environmental effects on health, to create safer living and working environments.

Commenting on the discussion, Steiner noted the need for electronic product design guidelines to ensure that e-waste can be recycled, and the success of regional action in East Africa in setting standards for leaded fuel.

CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

On Wednesday morning, Sanjaasuren welcomed participants to the second day of the Forum, and invited two civil society representatives to share messages from the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development.

Haeseung Chung, representing the UNEP TUNZA North East Asia Youth Environment Network and the UNEP Asia Pacific Major Groups and Stakeholders, said the First Forum is long overdue, as the annual regional civil society meetings do not facilitate interaction with Member States. He conveyed recommendations from over 100 Asia-Pacific civil society representatives on strengthening civil society engagement, including by promoting direct participation based on established UNEP practices, and supporting civil society’s efforts to self-organize their contributions to the Forum. He called for an inclusive, transparent, action-oriented and forward-looking Forum.

Emeline Siale Ilolahia, representing the Civil Society Forum of Tonga and Pacific civil society organizations, said linkages between environmental and human wellbeing are paid “lip service” but not translated into development programmes. She said that poverty, powerlessness and lack of access to resources underlie the daily challenges facing communities. She called for reform of unjust laws and policies, and to reflect gender equality and human rights in regional and international agreements. She said the Forum’s deliberations should be linked to the APFSD to ensure synergy between the two mechanisms.

SESSION 5: UNEA

Introducing this session, Sanjaasuren invited delegates’ views on how a regional forum of environment agencies should evolve, and introduced the panel speakers.

Zahedi outlined UNEP’s work to implement the decisions of UNEA-1, referring delegates to the background paper on *Implementation of resolutions of the UNEA of UNEP and Future Priorities for Asia Pacific*. He highlighted UNEP’s support for countries in the region in the areas of: national SDG data assessments and briefings; capacity building for customs officials in combating environmental crime; demonstration schemes showcasing ecosystem-based approaches; signature of the Minamata Convention by 19 countries; establishment of the Regional Environmental Information Network to address data

and information challenges; completion of a road map for the 10YFP on SCP implementation; launch of the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership (APCAP); and establishment of the Acid Deposition Network (EANET) Secretariat at the UNEP regional office. He outlined the preparations of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP leading up to UNEA-2, and invited delegates to identify priorities for discussion and consideration at UNEA-2.

Ebtekar prioritized urbanization and cooperation with local government on quality-of-life issues, saying that sustainable development should be the main agenda of councils, given their management role all over the world. She also mentioned:



Malek Hossein Givzad, Ambassador/Chair, Group of the Asian and Pacific States, Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran

climate resilience measures, including mitigation of dust storms to reduce health impacts; and capacity building for integrating the green economy concept into macro-economic policies, including those promoted by the IMF and World Bank. Ebtekar called for promoting

peace, dialogue and understanding of diversity in the region, observing that security challenges prevent people from working together on environment issues.

Tiarite George Kwong, Minister of Environment, Lands & Agricultural Development, Kiribati, called for prioritizing: climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR); integrated oceans management; addressing pollution and waste management; and sustainable sea transport, noting that the largest share of Pacific islands’ consumption of fossil fuels is for shipping, and suggesting that alternative and hybrid ship designs could be considered. He welcomed increased cooperation between UNEP and the SPREP, following the opening of the UNEP subregional office on the SPREP campus in September 2014. He also invited UNEP’s support on adaptation to climate change, implementation of the SDGs, and reporting.

Malek Hossein Givzad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iran to UNEP and Chair, Asian and Pacific Group Nairobi chapter, urged continued recognition of poverty eradication as the overarching objective of sustainable development, along with equality and safeguarding resources for future generations. He also highlighted the significance of the Rio Principles, and called for promoting the 10YFP as a means for implementing sustainable development. Givzad said UNEA-2 should provide political and strategic guidance to UNEP on implementing the post-2015 development agenda and on tackling challenges posed by the adoption of a new legally binding agreement on climate change.

DISCUSSION: Delegates then provided their expectations of UNEA, the priorities to be addressed at UNEA-2, proposed resolutions, and input to UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021.



Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President and Head of Department of Environment, Islamic Republic of Iran



A view of the conference room

They suggested that UNEA-2 prioritize: climate change and the related loss of water supply from glaciers; chemicals and waste management, including electronic waste; water quality; illegal trade in wildlife; air pollution; microplastics in the marine environment; SCP; sustainable land management; and capacity development.

The Republic of Korea highlighted UNEP-Live as a platform for sharing data, information and knowledge on environment issues and trends, and said its operational plans should be included in UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021.

China said UNEA-2 should focus on the environmental agenda in the post-2015 development agenda, and discuss implementation at the national, regional and global levels. Thailand said UNEA-2 should provide strategic and political guidance on setting the global environmental agenda, and define responses to emerging environmental challenges.

Many delegates favored holding the regional forum every two years, alternating with the timing of UNEA.

Delegates also called for: building capacity for monitoring the state of the environment; supporting waste management, including "3R" approaches; ensuring education on sustainable development as the basis for promoting green lifestyles; and addressing air pollution, including transboundary haze.

Indonesia urged all concerned to combat ecosystem degradation, noting that illegal trade in fauna and flora, not including fisheries and timber, is estimated at US\$2.5 billion in East Asia and the Pacific, and that international cooperation is needed to establish a tracking system from origin, transit and destination countries. He also called on countries in the region to ratify the Ban Amendment of the Basel Convention on transboundary waste.

The South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) proposed working on cleaner fuels, and addressing the impacts of pollutants on coastal and marine resources.

SPREP supported the statements of Pacific island countries regarding resilience and adaptation, and called the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, a world first in its focus on EBA as a key response to a changing climate. Noting the region has some of the largest marine protected areas (MPAs) in the world, he offered to work with countries on effective MPA management.

The Women's Major Group called for "urgent systemic repair" to address inequalities, and proposed that a specific work area and resolution be adopted at UNEA-2 to address the nexus between gender equality, women's human rights and the environment.

The meeting adjourned briefly while a Chair's Summary was prepared for delegates' review. On reconvening, Sanjaasuren invited comments on the summary, which she said would be communicated to the APFSD, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), UNEA and its preparatory processes and across the UN system.

Responding to the Summary, delegations removed language on an "agreement" to hold the Forum every two years, noting that the document is not a negotiated outcome. They also suggested: stronger reflection of the circumstances and challenges facing the Pacific marine environment; and setting up a drafting committee to prepare a resolution for UNEA.

Zahedi said the Forum had shown the need to bring together all countries in the region, and that while the region is massive and the differences among countries are many, they also share many commonalities.

Steiner said addressing environmental challenges requires integration – not only across the three dimensions of sustainable development, but also transboundary and global integration. He said the UNEA provides the best opportunity to feed the region's environmental and sustainable development issues into the HLPF, UNGA, and UN Security Council and gain global acknowledgement. Steiner added that the Rio+20 decision to establish UNEA had been no accident, but an invitation to put environment at the center of national and international cooperation.

Sanjaasuren said this is a "critical time, a critical generation" and noted the responsibility for those in the environmental field to be part of the solution. She declared the Forum closed at 1.05 pm.

CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE FIRST FORUM OF MINISTERS AND ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITIES OF ASIA PACIFIC

The summary provides an overview of discussions at the First Forum and reflects regional priorities and recommendations to promote environmental sustainability for

the post-2015 development agenda in Asia and the Pacific, also noting priority issues for UNEA-2 and the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021.

Issues and priorities identified for consideration include recommendations to:

- Address climate change and enhance resilience, particularly in cities and for key economic sectors and infrastructure;
- Decouple economic growth from resource use and pollution, focusing on SCP approaches that enable behavioral change, and through the further development of green and blue economy pathways;
- Maintain biodiversity and sustainable provision of ecosystem services, including through strengthening the capacity of countries in the valuation and management of marine and terrestrial ecosystems and ecosystem services, as well as monitoring illegal wildlife trade;
- Manage chemicals and wastes, including addressing e-waste and transboundary management approaches;
- Develop integrated approaches to environment and health, especially to address air quality and support all countries to meet WHO guidelines for indoor and outdoor air and water pollution;
- Use the SDGs to scale up environmental action, with preparation for adoption of the SDGs, implementation and reporting; and
- Strengthen science-policy linkages, including through the continuing work of UNEP on the Global Environment Outlook and the UNEP Live platform.

The summary conclusion notes the recommendation to hold the Forum every other year (in the year that UNEA does not convene) and to adjust the timing to better fit with the UNEA preparatory process.

ASIA PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE ON ENVIRONMENTAL RULE OF LAW IN SUPPORT TO THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

OPENING: On Wednesday afternoon, Zahedi introduced the Chair, Arifin Zakaria, Chief Justice of Malaysia.

Arifin opened the roundtable. He noted that the region's growing population and booming economics have put a greater strain on environmental resources, which has far-reaching economic and social consequences, particularly through creating inequalities. He noted that proposed SDG 16, to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build

effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels," recognizes that rule of law and access to justice are critical for achieving sustainable development, and that sound institutions enable societies to respond to environmental pressures while respecting human rights.

Steiner noted high interest among chief justices and public prosecutors as the environment has become an increasingly contested domain, and said litigious environmental groups in some countries, including the US, have advanced the evolution of environmental rule of law. He said that to deny environmental justice is to deny fundamental rights, for example, failure to limit carbon emissions may threaten the existence of countries such as Kiribati, due to sea-level rise as a result of global warming.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Akhtar said the SDGs will hinge on strengthening the rule of law and institutional frameworks for sound environmental stewardship. To optimize the development of environmental rule of law, she said that international equity considerations, transboundary responsibility, public participation and good governance are needed. She highlighted the principles of precaution, polluter pays, and prevention, as well as the need to provide the right market signals. She noted challenges for the Asia-Pacific region such as: lack of quality in economic growth, resulting in increased carbon emission; urbanization; over-consumption; and population pressure, noting that the attendant environmental impacts are not confined within a country's borders. She mentioned the work of the Mekong River Commission, ASEAN and the Convention on Migratory Species as steps in the direction of tackling the issues, adding that awareness raising is critical.

SESSION 1: Simon Tay, Singapore National University, and Chair of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, provided a survey of environmental rule of law in the region, noting that Asia-Pacific ranks well, compared to other regions, on foundational rule of law. He provided examples of environmental rule of law mechanisms in the region, including the Philippines' Continuing Mandamas writ, and Singapore's Transboundary Haze Pollution Act 2014. He said the time is coming for reporting and verification systems, and bringing systems together on cross-border and global issues.

Lal Kurukulasuriya, Director, Centre for Environmental Research, Training and Information, said the judiciary gives substance and life to statutes by interpreting them through national values and imperatives. He said that, in this role,



L-R: David Sheppard, SPREP; Siaosi Ofa Ki Vahafolau Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change & Communication (MEI/DECC), Tonga; Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP; and Kaveh Zahedi, UNEP Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific

judges in the region have decreed that: the Ganges River could no longer be polluted; a phosphate extraction project in Sri Lanka could not continue without an EIA; and the “right to life” could apply to protecting the environment and people who depend on it, in India and Bangladesh.

Panel Discussion on Challenges and Breakthroughs – Views from the Judiciary: Surendra Kumar Sinha, Chief Justice of Bangladesh, said environmental law helps ensure the wellbeing both of future generations and those who depend immediately on natural resources. He noted international environmental law’s origins in the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm, Sweden, and said that 20



Swatanter Kumar, Chairperson of National Green Tribunal, India

years later the UNGA adopted a resolution stating that all individuals are entitled to live in an environmental adequate for their health and wellbeing.

Tshering Wangchuk, Chief Justice of Bhutan,

said traditional reverence for rivers, trees, mountains and rocks complements environmental conservation efforts in his country. He said Bhutan’s constitution mandates 60% forest cover, and that the earth is not “the monopoly of human beings.”

Swatanter Kumar, Chairperson, National Green Tribunal (NGT), India, said the NGT is the only one of its kind in the world, and highlighted recent judgments requiring restoration of water channels and compensation of buyers in a contested building project, and against “rathole mining” activities using children under 18. He said environmental rule of law must be universal, practical, ensure enforcement, and provide liberal and inexpensive access to justice, and that environmental jurisprudence must break geographic boundaries. He noted the Tribunal’s stakeholder consultation process in cases such as deforestation and river restoration.

Slakate Wattanapan, Presiding Justice, Supreme Court of Thailand, described mentoring and capacity building activities among the judiciary in the region. He said Thailand’s legislation is not clear and systematic enough, with over 20 laws on land and forests, for example. He suggested that it may be time to introduce an environmental court in Thailand, and that this is being discussed at the National Reform Assembly.

SESSION 2: Swatanter Kumar moderated the session.

Panel Discussion on Challenges and Breakthroughs - Views from Other Main Stakeholders: Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown, Deputy Speaker and Member of Parliament, Cook Islands, described environmental governance as a matter of survival. In the case of islands, she said that: transboundary environmental crimes can be particularly damaging, since their ecosystems have developed in isolation; the gains from designating an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) can be undermined by difficulty in governing ocean resources; and international governance and rule of law on the high seas are needed with regard to deep sea mining.



Kathryn Lappin, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Mohammad Reza Tabesh, Member of Parliament and Head of Environment Unit for Parliament, Islamic Republic of Iran, called for promoting a culture of safety for the environment. He cited efforts to optimize consumption of resources and energy management,

and called for EIAs for industrial construction, service and infrastructure.

Vajira Narampanawa, Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, said Sri Lanka’s constitution empowers the judiciary and prioritizes rule of law, but cited enforcement challenges, due to insecurity and lack of resources. He welcomed UNEP’s proposed regional stocktaking of existing legislation to support SDG implementation.

Kathryn Lappin, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), said that preferential trade agreements erode environmental principles, citing examples of large investors that have sued governments attempting to comply with international agreements that raised environmental standards.

Sulma Warne, Deputy Director, Freeland, described the drivers of demand for endangered animal products, including growing affluence and new transport pathways. He proposed approaches to tackling the problem, including working with banks to freeze criminals’ assets, establishing conservation funds, and harmonizing the relevant laws across the region.

Wanhua Yang, Regional Legal Officer, UNEP, discussed combating the illegal trade in chemicals and wastes, mentioning the work of the Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Wastes (REN). She highlighted opportunities to strengthen legislation and enforcement capacity, enhance interagency and regional cooperation, and raise awareness of the issue.

CONCLUSION: Wangchuk, acting as Chair after Kumar’s departure, said the discussion had highlighted the challenges for small economies that are highly dependent on ecological resources, and that green strategies must be implemented “with passion” and protected by the rule of law. Summarizing, he said, any law, policy, plan or strategy without proper implementation is merely good advice.

Arifin concluded that UNEP should consider an institutional arrangement to collate environment-related judgments and other relevant legal materials from countries, and post these to an Asia Pacific Environmental Rule of Law website, thus contributing to implementation of the SDGs and benefiting judges and other legal stakeholders. He closed the roundtable at 6:43 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Third Meeting of the HLPF: The third meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which will take place under the auspices of ECOSOC, will focus on the theme, “Strengthening

integration, implementation and review – the HLPF after 2015.” **dates:** 26 June - 8 July 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1838>

Third International Conference on Financing for Development: The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will be held at the highest possible political level, including Heads of State or Government, relevant ministers—ministers for finance, foreign affairs and development cooperation—and other special representatives. The Conference is expected to result both in an intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome and summaries of the plenary meetings and other deliberations of the Conference, to be included in the report of the Conference. **dates:** 13-16 July 2015 **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **contact:** UN Financing for Development Office **phone:** +1-212-963-4598 **email:** ffdoffice@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/ffd3>

Sixth Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific: This Forum is organized by the UN Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD). It will take place on the theme, “3R as an Economic Industry – Next Generation 3R Solutions for a Resource Efficient Society and Sustainable Tourism Development in Asia and the Pacific.” **dates:** 16-19 August 2015 **location:** Male, Maldives **contact:** UNCRD **www:** <http://www.uncrd.or.jp/index.php?page=view&nr=905&type=13&menu=198>

UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda: The Summit is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including: a declaration; a set of Sustainable Development Goals, targets, and indicators; their means of implementation and a new Global Partnership for Development; and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. **dates:** 25-27 September 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit>

Second International Conference on Environment, Religion and Culture: This Conference is being organized by UNEP in cooperation with the Government of Iran, following up on the First International Conference in 2005. UNEP, UNESCO and other international organisations have been invited to collaborate. **date:** January 2016 **location:** Tehran, Iran

Second Meeting of the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR): This meeting is organized in preparation for UNEA-2. **date:** 15-19 February

GLOSSARY

10YFP	10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
EBA	Ecosystem-based adaptation
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
MPA	Marine protected area
NGT	National Green Tribunal
ODS	Ozone-depleting substances
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing States
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization



Group photo of the winners for the Asia Environment Enforcement Award