

**ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT  
FIRST SUBSTANTIVE MEETING  
January 12-13, 2002  
Bangkok, Thailand**

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**Draft Chairperson's Summary of the Expert Meeting**

1. The Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development's (APFED's) first expert meeting was held on January 11, 2002 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was attended by over 50 persons representing a wide range of sectors and viewpoints as well as five members of APFED. Dr. Phaichitr Uathavikul of the Thailand Environment Institute chaired the meeting.
2. The meeting began with an attempt by the chair to draw together tentatively under one overarching theme the three very different topics for the day's discussions, namely freshwater, trade and environment, and renewable energy. The chair proposed the theme of 'good governance' as one under which all three topics fall and one having particular value in addressing, and discussions proceeded with this tentative overarching theme in mind. The meeting then began to consider, in turn, the three major topics of the day. Presentations of major issues were followed by discussions of these issues and suggestions for future courses of action.
3. The first session of the day addressed freshwater issues. Water allocation, water pollution, floods, and insufficient access to water supply were highlighted as regional priorities. Water issues were approached as both managerial issues and governance issues, and political and socio-economic approaches were highlighted as key to improving water management, as opposed to the technical approach that has been used historically. Mobilization of political will was seen as crucial for progress. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), decentralization, strategic planning management of resources, and the identification and revitalization of traditional practices were identified as key tools for effective water management. Promotion of education and raising public awareness among all groups in society were also emphasized as important tools.
4. Three recommendations emerged for topics for APFED to pursue in the area of freshwater issues. The first of these is demand management and the use of water pricing or valuation to create the impetus for a reduction in usage, which is clearly necessary even though pricing is a politically difficult topic to broach. The second issue is conflict resolution over water issues, such as ensuring rights of both upper-river and lower-river users. The third issue is that poverty, especially in relation to urbanization, has resulted in the Asia-Pacific region being the region with the highest percentage of its population without access to safe drinking water or sanitation. The numerous resolutions adopted internationally about the need to reduce these figures are consistently unmatched by actions. APFED should consider a call to action for world leaders to make good on their pronouncements and commitments to date.

5. The session on trade and environment took up trade-related issues that affect the potential for the reduction of poverty, such as capacity building around the region and technology transfer, including how and by whom such policies can be implemented; the potential roles of market measures vs. regulatory measures; consumer preference and consumer behavior; establishing among citizens the connectivity between trade and the environment; the environment as a barrier to trade; synergy building among trade agreements; assessing MNCs' and SMEs' different abilities to adjust to technical and other barriers and MNCs'/SMEs' very different impacts on the environment; partnerships among civil society, government, and business in developing new markets; and funding.

6. Conclusions of the session included the following. It is urgent for both rich and poor countries to pay attention to trade and the environment and to be vigilant about motivations for environmental conditions on trade, as they could be genuine means of enhancing environmental conservation, or "green protectionist" non-tariff barriers. Global balance is essential; sustainable development cannot be for only the rich countries. Trade liberalization cannot be allowed to become a means of greater exploitation. There must be some way of safeguarding weaker entities, whether weaker countries in the trade arena or weaker corporate entities, such as SMEs. APFED should work on finding ways to make trade more conducive to sustainable development and less exploitative, while being reminded that financial requirements are one of the greatest obstacles to environmental management in poor countries.

7. In the renewable energy session, presentations covered such topics as the rationale for introducing renewable energy in the Asia-Pacific region and reasons why renewables haven't taken hold already; potential for the private sector, national ministries, the Clean Development Mechanism, etc. in creating demand; barriers for implementation; cost issues both at point of purchase and during follow-up care; energy pricing policy; decentralization of energy systems; commercial lending and other financing options; role of good governance in addressing both supply and demand sides; the need for multi-stakeholder representation during all stages, including planning stages; and the potential for implementing capital-intensive options in poorer countries.

8. The session ended with the conclusion that renewables should be very much encouraged, and not only in rural locales. Renewables, while representing a cheaper energy option over the long run, still involve significant financial commitments in the early stages. Funding is difficult without microfinancing or other financing options and repair and maintenance issues must also be addressed. Technology is still not competitive on a cost basis. Finally a paradigm shift is necessary to get away from the supply-side management approach that has been used historically. The point was also emphasized that a decentralized energy supply makes good sense from the viewpoint of national security.

9. The persons thanked the chair and the organizers of APFED and called on APFED to incorporate the meeting's output into its deliberations on APFED's message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in August/September 2002.