

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

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**Chairperson's Summary of the Multi-stakeholder Meeting**

1. The Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development's (APFED's) first multi-stakeholder meeting was held on January 10, 2002 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was attended by 45 representatives of national governments, local governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), women, youth, and other major groups, as well as five members of APFED. Dr. Tongroj Onchan of the Mekong Environment and Resource Institute chaired the meeting, and Dr. Chamniern Paul Vorratnchaiphon of the Thailand Environment Institute acted as moderator.
2. The meeting began with presentations through which participants heard NGO perspectives on sustainable development; the experiences of various countries in developing and utilizing their multi-stakeholder mechanisms for sustainable development, such as national councils for sustainable development (NCSDs); and examinations of specific tools for the promotion of sustainability, most notably the Earth Charter. Viewpoints and visions expressed by various major groups, including local government, women, business, and youth were followed by discussions which both clarified these items and recommended future courses of action.
3. The meeting recognized several achievements made in the Asia and the Pacific region, such as the significant progress made in multi-stakeholder participation; recent organizational and substantive successes by NCSDs and by NGOs; business sector attempts to promulgate alternative definitions of costs; and women's groups active assertion of their roles and their rights. The representatives gathered were also particularly encouraged by commitments shown and accomplishments made by youth in preserving local environments and raising awareness.
4. Notwithstanding the achievements mentioned above are several roadblocks in forging a path towards sustainable development. Such constraints included the problem of corruption in governments and among ODA recipients, unsustainable consumption patterns, inequities caused by globalisation and trade liberalization, difficulties in securing adequate financial support, and setbacks in NCSD functioning due to, among other reasons, tackling of controversial issues, inadequate attendance at meetings, and the limited number of times the councils actually meet.
5. During the discussions in the afternoon, recommendations were made centring on the following means of overcoming existing obstacles to sustainable development:
  - 1) Devolution of power and empowerment of stakeholders, via
    - a) education and awareness-building, such as
      - active education of various stakeholders and groups regarding their rights, roles, and constraints, particularly youth, as future leaders and inheritors of the earth, and

- women, as a group disproportionately affected by unsustainable practices and by globalization;
  - active education and awareness-building among average citizens regarding sustainable development; and
  - awareness-building among stakeholders and groups that “devolution of power” is not a guaranteed result of “institutional decentralization”,
- b) appropriate valuation of decentralized actions and local knowledge, such as by
- active recognition of the value of strategies developed at the local level, which respond more efficiently to specific local needs;
  - recognition of the desirability for sustainable development programs to be unique to each locale;
  - implementation of the principle of subsidiarity;
  - recognition of the urgency of capacity building at the local level;
  - active use and promotion of indigenous techniques and wisdom, including patenting of indigenous methodologies; and
  - instituting domestic or international cooperative funding partnerships which recognize that funding at the local level is crucial to devolution of power,
- c) appropriate representation of stakeholders during decision-making processes, such as by
- active recognition that separate but equal positions on sustainable development can coexist, and that national government views are not superior to the views of other stakeholders;
  - inclusion of appropriate numbers of multi-stakeholders on NCSDs;
  - allowing civil society to select representatives without government oversight or intervention;
  - redefining “good governance” to include “appropriate incorporation of multi-stakeholders” as a necessary precondition; and
  - integrating women’s concerns and perspectives in the legal framework for sustainable development,
- 2) Creation and optimisation of partnerships both within and across borders, such as through
- the fostering of partnerships (a) among subgroups within major groups, (b) among major groups, and (c) between major groups and national governments;
  - institutionalisation of mechanisms for multi-stakeholder participation in sustainable development process where they do not yet exist, for example, through establishment of NCSDs;
  - the fostering of cooperative, not competitive, relationships between various levels of government, and the development of national strategies in conjunction with and/or rooted in local strategies;
  - the establishment of regional conventions, fora, and partnerships as effective means of addressing transborder issues;
  - the introduction of a holistic approach to sustainable development policy formulation, incorporating the views of ministers of environment, finance, and social sectors at an early stage;
  - creation of a regional multi-stakeholder mechanism that may serve as a venue for sharing experiences and good practices, and forging of common agenda and coordinated action to sustainable development, such as a regional network of NCSDs; and

- expansion of donor nations' responsibilities beyond merely allocating funds, to include responsibility (a) to see that their ODA commitments address mutually exclusive projects without funding overlaps, and (b) to see that ODA monies reach their intended recipients without corruption, fraud, or allocation to 'white elephant' projects.

3) Reconceptualization of certain fundamental issues, including

- redefining "progress," "good livelihood," and parameters for their measurement;
- redefining "costs" and establishing alternatives to consumerism;
- redefining the true stakeholders in production and consumption processes while redefining the real costs of production and consumption; and
- rethinking sustainable development concepts in terms of Earth Charter principles, and urging APFED to endorse the Earth Charter to the WSSD for adoption as a global ethical framework for sustainable development.

6. Representatives thanked APFED and called on APFED to incorporate the meeting's output into APFED's message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in August/ September 2002.