

APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for the Environment 3.23.94

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✘ Official APEC Documents

APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for the Environment

Vancouver 23 - 25 March 1994

Summary Report

1. A meeting of APEC Ministers responsible for the Environment was convened in Vancouver on 23 - 25 March, 1994. Delegates from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and the United States participated in the Meeting. Members of the APEC Secretariat also attended. A representative of the ASEAN Secretariat and the South Pacific Forum (SPF) were present as observers and Chile was a special guest of the chair. The list of participants appears as Annex One.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Honourable Sheila Copps, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment for Canada.
3. The Ministers conveyed their condolences to the remaining Mexican representative on the death of Luis Donaldo Colosio the previous evening.

Opening Remarks

4. The Chair opened the meeting by referring to the challenge from Economic leaders at Seattle and the invitation from Canada's Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, for APEC Ministers responsible for the Environment to meet in Vancouver, March 23-25, 1994. The Chair referred to the key environment/economy issues facing the region today and took note of the conclusions of the Eminent Persons Group about the inseparable connection between economy, prosperity, and quality of life.

5. The chair asked the meeting to discuss the potential role of APEC in promoting environmental cooperation in the Asia Pacific and how Ministers could green APEC.

Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

6. The provisional agenda was adopted without amendment. The adopted agenda appears as Annex Two.

Vision Statement and Framework of Principles

7. Ministers discussed an Environmental Vision Statement and a Framework of Principles on the integration of environmental and economic considerations in APEC. Within the Vision Statement, Ministers explored the potential for enhancing cooperation on the environment.

8. The Canadian Minister described the potential opportunities in a process which involved multi-sectoral inputs into the policy development process, for example through the appointment of two private sector members per economy, and possibly including a representative of each member from APEC's Economic Committee. Such a body need not meet more than once or twice annually, and should not have a fulltime secretariat. It would report to the annual Ministerial process, although as a practical matter, much of its work would be done in conjunction with the SOM.

9. The Canadian Minister went on to note that a potential first task for such a mechanism was to work with Ministers and senior environment officials to place APEC members' environmental cooperation in a strategic framework based on sustainable development as set out in the draft Vision ~Statement

10. The New Zealand Minister described the Framework of Principles, noting the contribution of Japan and the Philippines. He referred in particular to the principle of internalization. Market mechanisms needed to receive more attention in economies, as they often offered an alternative to the regulatory approach, which could be expensive and ineffective. Ministers reached consensus on the Framework of Principles.

11. Ministers supported the general concept of multi-sectoral input in policy development. While some Ministers were prepared to endorse the idea of establishing an Asia Pacific Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, others expressed reservations about the premature aspect of the proposal and concerns that approval might run counter to the existing consensus to avoid creating

additional APEC institutions. Following discussion, the draft Vision Statement was amended to suggest "possible exploration of an Asia-Pacific Round Table on Environment and the Economy". An additional sentence (from Australia) stated "We encourage the APEC economies to develop their own mechanisms for contacts with the private sector and with major groups in their own economies." Ministers agreed to the revised Vision Statement at the concluding session and directed officials both in environment agencies and through the SOM process, to follow-up and develop the concept of a regional roundtable.

12. Ministers commended the environmental work already under way in APEC in such areas as energy, marine resources, and tourism and encouraged further efforts in these areas. Ministers agreed to call on APEC working groups to develop a strategic approach, based on sustainable development principles, for environment consideration to be fully integrated into the program of each APEC working group and policy committee. Members were of a view that the SOM would be the appropriate mechanism to ensure that follow up in these areas was undertaken.

13. Some Ministers pointed out the merits of APEC Ministers responsible for the Environment meeting again at an unspecified time.

ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES

14. The Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency presented a joint paper with the PRC on the theme of environmental technologies. The United States summary emphasized the importance of stimulating the development and application of innovative production technologies. Pollution prevention is supported by integrating pollution prevention objectives into regulatory actions and enforcement programs. Environmental policy can stimulate innovation by establishing environmental laws and regulations that encourage individual industries to develop new technologies to conserve natural resources and protect public health. These technologies typically provide direct and ancillary economic benefits.

15. The US emphasized the importance of public access to information about emissions produced by industries as well as information about pollution prevention. Finally, training in pollution prevention techniques should be made widely available, including programs that exchange experts and support collaboration. Responding to member's interest in having a means of exchanging information on member's experiences with innovative environmental technologies, the United States indicated it was prepared to undertake the design and possible implementation of an APEC system to access US pollution prevention and pollution applications for industrial, agricultural and municipal uses. The USA would work with the SOM process to implement this and, if successful, could be a model for parallel coordinated efforts by all APEC members.

16. The Administrator of the PRC National Environmental Protection Agency followed with comments stressing the importance of avoiding dependence on obsolete and inefficient technologies when striving for sustainable development. China emphasized the potential for scientific and technological advances to promote advances in public health and in environmental quality. China maintained that environmental technologies are defined as "environmentally sound and economically sustainable technologies" and considers such technology as the commonwealth of all humankind which should be transferred to those in need on a preferential and non-commercial basis. China also encourages cooperative projects that could transfer technologies for clean production, energy

efficiency, and environmental protection. These projects could be supported by seminars and training courses to support the exchange of technology and information.

17. The Parliamentary Vice-Minister from Japan pointed out that increased investment in the development of energy-efficient and environmental technologies had a positive economic impact, and emphasized that public and private sector cooperation is essential in the development and transfer of environmental technologies.

18. The Minister from Korea emphasized the importance of common efforts for further progress in developing and implementing the transfer of environmental technologies, described in Chapter 34 of Agenda 21, at the regional level. He also proposed APEC members to identify the availability of technologies that can be transferred, possibly through some type of information network, as the first step to that end.

19. The Parliamentary Secretary from Australia supported the emphasis on clean production techniques as the key to ensuring ecological sustainability. As well Australia clarified the need to focus environmental regulations on desired outcomes rather than on processes to avoid inhibiting innovation. In many cases, low tech solutions can successfully address the pollution problems in both rural and urban environments. The appropriateness of such solutions can be assessed through exchange of information on clean production techniques and practices. Information exchange and training programs are important components in meeting the goal of sustainable development.

20. The Minister from Indonesia contributed information about his economy's experience in promoting the use of environmentally sound and economically sustainable technologies suitable to tropical climates.

21. Common themes in Ministers' presentations included:

a) recognition of the importance of technology transfer to the achievement of global sustainable development. b) recognition of the positive role played by good regulation in stimulating technological innovations. c) recognition of the importance of active involvement of the private sector, including the role of investment and joint ventures.

d) recognition that clean energy production and energy conservation technologies must be an important elements of environmental technology initiatives.

e) recognition of the value of seminars/conferences on institutional capacity building training and technical information exchange as a key element to improving environmental technology co-operation.

f) recognition of the potential value of establishing means of exchanging information on APEC members' experience with innovative and renovative technologies. SUSTAINABLE CITIES

22. The Minister from Japan opened the presentation on sustainable cities by noting that industrialization and increasing population was placing pressure on water, natural resources, energy

and land, resulting in large quantities of solid waste, water and air pollution, destruction of the natural environment and strain on neighbouring economies. There is an urgent need to change the pattern of urban development with new principles to realize a sustainable city, as set out in the background theme paper prepared for Ministers.

23. The Japanese experience was that cities were not self-sufficient but could be self-sustaining by being more efficient. Priorities were to focus on fundamental elements such as water and energy, make special efforts to protect and promote green areas, and involve individuals and private industry in solving local problems. Plans to develop eco-cities were under way. Policies at the local level such as local Agenda 21's would benefit from wider consultation and sharing of information and expertise. Japan will continue to give full support to the activities of UNEP International Environmental Technology Centre to serve as a clearing house for urban environmental problems.

24. It was important to keep in mind the need for local initiatives in developing familiarity with local needs and practices and should be involved from the outset in decision-making. The concept of decentralization and deregulation should be explored with an eye toward increasing local and private investment in creating a favourable environmental investment climate.

25. Cities represent the most important element in any national or global strategy for sustainability. Current city models in the region must focus on modifying behaviour.

26. The Philippines Secretary recognized the environmental challenges of cities to sustainability. He proposed that guidelines be developed for public investment to clean up the environment and for water pricing policies since these were important to sustainability.

27. The Singapore Minister noted the critical importance of a sustainable city and explained Singapore's approach through the use of proper town planning, adequate infrastructure, legislative standards and the "polluter pays" principle. He elaborated on the need for measures to control the effects of traffic congestion through the proper pricing of road usage. There was considerable interest in the concept of an eco-city, based on shared experiences.

28. The Korean Minister saw a need to develop methodology for ecopolis planning to encourage construction of self-supportive, stabilising and sustainable eco-systems that are consistent with economic growth goals. Korea is researching improved techniques and skills for the urban environment management and has a model city for environmental conservation program. He proposed a working group to formulate APEC principles for development which were needed. This group could develop urban sustainability indicators for monitoring air, water, energy, wastes, etc. There was also a need for coordination and exchange of information among member economies.

29. Hong Kong's Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands noted the importance of integrated planning, the importance of feasibility studies for development projects that incorporated environmental impact assessments, and cited this value of involving the private sector broadly in delivering approved environment projects.

30. The conclusion of the session was that conservation of the environment was fundamental to the well-being of cities and that growing populations underscored the importance for APEC members to

work together cooperatively. One interesting opportunity was eco-cities which deserved further exploration in APEC. It was also agreed that integrated planning was an important aspect of future APEC cooperation.

POLICY TOOLS

31. The Minister from New Zealand introduced the economic instruments section of the paper by suggesting that Ministers might wish to discuss: whether revenues derived from environmental charges should be earmarked for addressing environmental concerns; what should be the basis for allocating property rights in a tradeable permits market, and; given the potential advantages of economic instruments, why are they used so sparingly. The Minister noted New Zealand's experience with tradeable quotas for CFCs and tradeable fishing permits.

32. The Administrator from Chinese Taipei spoke on the environmental standards section of the Policy Tools paper. He noted recent progress by the International Standards Organization (ISO) to develop international environmental standards and emphasized that regional differences should be considered in developing new standards. The Administrator suggested that discussion might focus on the implications of the ISO work program and the potential for cooperation among APEC economies in advancing that work. The Administrator also spoke on his economy's experiences with green labelling, private sector self-regulating measures and laboratory certification programs.

33. The Deputy Minister from Thailand emphasised that APEC economies should recognise that developed and developing countries may need to deal differently with economic instruments and standards. For example, in the case of developing countries, the use of economic instruments may not be suitable, environmental standards will need to be adapted, monitoring systems are often not in place, and least-cost considerations represent only one of several factors in dealing with environmental concerns. This view was supported by Ministers of APEC economies. 34. Several Ministers from APEC economies spoke of their own experiences with these policy tools.

a) The Minister from Japan noted that environmental regulations and standards have provided impetus for its environmental technology industry. While Japan has no experience with eco-taxes, charges on SO_x emissions have resulted in significant reductions in designated areas. The Minister suggested that timber prices should reflect some form of environmental charge. b) The Minister from Singapore noted his economy's experience with applying charges to the transportation sector and the use of tradeable rights for reducing CFC emissions.

c) The Parliamentary Secretary from Australian pointed out that governments had to set the right example in using policy tools, citing the experience of one Australian State which had raised revenue through an "environmental levy" to improve water and sewage infrastructure. However, public scepticism was generated when the water and sewage authorities had then paid a dividend equal to the proceeds from the levy into consolidated revenue.

d) The Administrator from the USA noted that the experience with taxes, "polluter-pays" principle, the Super Fund, etc., illustrated there are a variety of policy tools, not a single solution which must be tailored to the existing economic situation. The ultimate goal of

economic measures is to internalize the true costs to the economy of environmental degradation. e) The Under-Secretary from the Philippines cited the country's experience with an energy levy.

f) The Minister from Korea identified the use of several instruments in the Korean economy including effluent charges, deposit-refund schemes, and volume-based charges for domestic waste disposal.

35. Several Ministers stressed that the use of economic instruments and standards should not create unfair competition and trade distortions, and that standards do not need to be mandatory. However, the private sector should be involved in creating new standards to encourage their compliance. Several Ministers encouraged an enhanced exchange of information and further cooperation among APEC economies.

36. Several Ministers stressed the diversity of APEC economies and advised against advocating or imposing uniform policy tools and standards for different members. They stressed the importance of consultation and taking account of local conditions.

37. The Secretary from the Philippines suggested that Ministers task the SOM to integrate environmental concerns in its economic analysis, particularly with regard to economic instruments and standards, in their recommendations leading to the Sixth Ministerial.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION / INFORMATION

37. The Indonesian Minister described the Indonesian success in using environmental education to lay the groundwork for the effective implementation of government programs, citing the switch to integrated post management as an example. Environmental education vehicles used in Indonesia have included community and opinion leaders, the media, and school curricula.

38. The Korean Minister introduced his economy's environmental education programs which have been implemented at various levels since the early 1980's, in school education, social education and through the mass media. He described the environmental education model program, in which forty schools will have participated between its implementation in 1985 and the end of 1994.

39. The Korean Minister proposed to pursue the exchange of individuals responsible for environmental education and to have seminars on environmental education for the Asia-Pacific region. He further mentioned the merits of a national environmental information network, and a centralized environmental information network for the Asia Pacific region, publishing reports on the state of the environment in the region, as well as the logical next step, a regional on-line information system.

40. The Australian Parliamentary Secretary noted that APEC members, having joined in the consensus adopting Agenda 21, were committed to developing community education, awareness and training programs as tools to achieve and underpin sustainable development. She proposed that

APEC support education and information programs which focus on achieving sustainable development through business management, industrial technology and economic development, without duplicating existing activities. APEC's Human Resources Development (HRD) Working Group was already working toward this goal and would be meeting in Sydney on March 28 to discuss its environmental education activities. Australia would ensure that the Sydney meeting was aware of the Vancouver discussions on environmental education.

41. The Administrator of the Peoples Republic of China related relevant Chinese experience, including environmental education in school curricula and environment related faculties and post-graduate degrees in universities campaign in school curricula, and environment-related facilities and post-graduate degrees in universities. The hope was expressed that developed economies could contribute more to environmental education efforts in APEC.

42. The Minister from Japan expressed the view that environmental education starts at home and in the community. Two vehicles cited were Japan's eco-labelling programs, in place since 1989, and mass media. She indicated that Japan would be willing to provide environmental education experts to f)ther APF.(~. ecnnmie~

43. The Singapore Minister agreed with the Indonesian Minister on the need to "sell" environmental policies to the public through education and information. This would be facilitated by cohesiveness within the society. He stressed that economic instruments could not succeed without public acceptance. He also described Singapore's environmental education programme, in particular its use of the Clean and Green Week to harness business and public participation in environmental protection.

44. The U.S. Administrator stated that the US takes environmental education seriously, and cited three components. Environmental education by example -- governments have to set the right example by their actions. Environmental education by participation -- it is important to share information so the public is informed, for example through mechanisms such as the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), which makes public information on the toxic releases of over 3,000 companies. Environmental education by advocacy - it is important to involve non-governmental organizations and international institutions in the decision- making process.

CONCLUSION

45. Ministers concluded their discussions by unanimously adopting the Vision Statement and Framework of Principles. Ministers agreed that these documents along with the meeting report should be conveyed to the next SOM and to the annual Ministerial meeting, so as to follow up on those aspects of the discussions during the preceding two days where consensus existed. It was noted officials were to pursue the strategy mentioned in the vision statement and opportunities should be sought to continue the dialogue from Vancouver through discussions in other fora, such as the possibility of an APEC caucus in the CSD or at meetings of the UNEP governing council.

46. The participants in the meeting expressed their thanks to the host of the meeting for the preparations and meeting arrangements.

SUMMARY

47. The Chair recalled her opening remarks that the challenge for the Vancouver meeting was to set in motion the work of making APEC a forum for cooperation not only on economic issues but also on environmental issues. In her view a good start had been made on that work. She referred to the Leaders' recognition in Seattle that, with the extraordinary growth rates of APEC members, it is vital for members to address environmental issues so as to safeguard the well-being of our people, both economic and otherwise, in the long term.

48. The Chair noted that the Asia-Pacific region currently enjoys the highest economic growth rate in the world and that economic prosperity would be secure in the long term if it is based on sound environmental practices. While noting that this is true in economies which depend heavily on international trade, all members would benefit from integrating economic and environmental considerations at every level.

50. The Chair noted that all members need to shift to new technologies that reduce environmental impact, and to enhance environmental expertise. APEC members must establish their priorities, determine which solutions they will adopt, and learn how to prevent environmental problems, rather than paying to clean up pollution.

51. The Chair expressed satisfaction that the meeting had adopted an APEC Environmental Vision Statement, expressing the common commitment to sound economic and environmental policies, and a Framework of Principles for integrating economic and environment in APEC. She recalled the key points of the Vision Statement and noted that the Framework of Principles provides parameters and markers to guide progress in pursuing this vision. These provide a firm foundation on which to build still greater co-operation in future.

52. The Chair also noted that not all work should be done by governments alone. Ways should be sought to build dialogue, understanding and cooperation in broader circles, and in particular, to bring the private sector and other major groups into the policy development process.

53. The Chair indicated that all members should encourage their colleagues to embrace the conclusions of the Vancouver meeting at the Sixth Annual APEC Ministerial meeting in November. It was also observed that governments have the responsibility for taking the lead on action, with APEC doing this in the Asia-Pacific region. It was noted that however diverse they may be, all APEC members share the goal of improving the quality of life of their citizens. This goal could be better attained through members' co-operation on economic and environmental issues.

54. The Minister of State from Japan noted that all APEC Environment Ministers would be invited to the forthcoming meeting of Eco-Asia in Japan in June.

55. The Chair congratulated all participants in the meeting and expressed her view that the dialogue established and the consensus that was reached would help members strengthen their cooperation in working for the economic and environmental wellbeing of the entire Asia-Pacific region.

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