

ISO 14,000 in Asia-Pacific 9.10.97

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YOUTH, BUSINESS AND APEC

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In an attempt to bring transparency to an otherwise exclusive history of APEC meetings, Canada brought new players to this year's forum. Youth, business leaders and local authorities addressed Environment Ministers at the APEC Environment Ministerial June 9 - 11 in Toronto. The new participants presented the Environment Ministers with a variety of proposals, some vague and lacking time tables or realistic mechanisms for implementation, and some constructive with vision toward progress.

The youth, who held energetic pre-conference Internet forums, failed to move past general ideas such as youth networking and conference framework concerns. Of the 18 APEC member economies, the young voices of Canada, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia were most prominent. Among the most substantive topics of discussion were the needs to share information on environmental sustainability, promote sustainable business investment, and support community based action and education. However, lacking a process of pre-meeting education and ongoing engagement with APEC, many of the young people had little understanding of how APEC could promote such goals.

Young people are still developing their role in APEC. At this initial stage, the most progress will be made if youth focus attention on issues unique to the region that cannot be better addressed elsewhere. For example, youth from Thailand and Canada submitted a proposal to encourage

regional business investment in sustainable practices. The proposal will be carried forward only if youth and others generate interest and demand beyond the momentum of the Ministerial.

Business leaders and local authorities identified their major environmental concerns through a series of workshops focusing on air pollution, water and wastewater systems, solid and hazardous waste management, cleaner production, public-private partnerships, privatization of environmental services, regulatory frameworks and financing for sustainable cities. From these workshops, delegates made six concrete and attainable suggestions for implementation which included the involvement of local authorities in policy development for sustainable development; working with local authorities to develop a series of performance indicators, benchmarks and targets to guide and direct actions on sustainable cities; exploring an APEC Clean Transportation Initiative; instructing governments to give preferential treatment to financing water and wastewater infrastructure projects; encouraging partnerships for sustainable cities and requesting Finance Ministers to address long-term sustainable city financing issues.

Of these recommendations to Environment Ministers, those with the greatest potential impact are those which include local authorities, build on performance indicators to standardize environmental data and press Finance Ministers to support the sustainable city agenda. These recommendations will be given to the Leaders' Summit in November. If the Leaders accept proposals from the Environment Ministers to institutionalize the Senior Environment Officials meetings, the business leader/ local authority agenda may find a forum for supporting implementation.

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