

Japan Environment Quarterly

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of the Environment

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Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED)

Japan's Ministry of the Environment held the first substantive meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) on 12 and 13 January 2002 in Bangkok, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Committee for Asia-Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Environment Programme and the Thai Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment. Thirteen members of APFED participated in the meeting, including former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, and the ex-Environment Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi. Opening speeches were presented by Thai Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment Mr. Sontaya Kunplome, Mr. Hak-Su Kim, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, and Mr. Nirmal Andrews, Regional Director and Representative of UNEP/ROAP (Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific).

By 2004, APFED was established at an annual meeting of environment ministers of the region (ECO ASIA) in October last year, and aims to present an equitable and sustainable development model that is suitable for the Asia-Pacific region. The January meeting of APFED discussed in particular the contents of recommendations that will be presented to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Johannesburg Summit) to be held in August this year. Particular topics included freshwater resources and renewable energy, as well as



Group photo from the 1st substantive meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) (January 12-13, 2002)



Mr. Hiroshi Ohki, a member of Japan's House of Representatives, was appointed as Minister of the Environment on 8 February 2002. Mr. Ohki previously served as Minister of State, Director-General of the Environment Agency, from September 1997 to July 1998, and played a leading role as chairman of the Third Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Kyoto in 1997. Mr. Ohki was elected to the House of Representatives in 2000, and has also been elected to the House of Councillors three times since 1980.

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(cont'd pg.2, APFED)



Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi, Minister of the Environment of Japan, and Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, ex-Prime Minister of APFED

trade and financing as they relate to sustainable development. The participants confirmed that from the viewpoint of preventing conflicts over water, the field of vision must be extended

comprehensively up-and-downstream, and that South-South cooperation (i.e., between developing countries) is important for the spread of environmentally-friendly technologies. A view was ex-

pressed that besides presenting recommendations on each of the four themes, recommendations on overarching issues should also be made. In this context, an opinion was raised that governance should be included as a view point connecting these separate themes. Aside from the substantive meeting, multi-stakeholder meetings and expert meetings were held to gather input, and the result of these meetings were presented by their chairpersons to APFED.

It was agreed that the next APFED meeting will be held on 4 and 5 May in Jakarta, to discuss the contents of the APFED message to the Johannesburg Summit, which are to be drafted based on the Bangkok meeting. 🌐

The First Joint Environmental Training—China, Korea and Japan

From 27 November to 4 December 2001, the National Environmental Training Institute in Japan held the First Joint Environmental Training for administrative officials, as an initiative of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meetings of China, Korea and Japan. The ministers of these three countries have identified “the raising of consciousness of environmental community” as one priority area for projects under TEMM, which led to the idea of holding joint environmental trainings.

The three countries decided to work on sharing of information and awareness about current environmental conditions, issues and response strategies in each country, in order to better deal with their common environmental concerns. The trainings are particularly intended for

administrative officials who are in charge for environmental matters—in the central or local governments of each country. Institutes responsible for the trainings include the Center for Environmental Education and Communication of SEPA/ 国家環境保護總局宣傳教育中心 (China), the National Environmental Training Institute (Japan), and the Education Division of the Environmental Training Department of NIER/ 国立環境研究院環境研修部教育課 (Korea).

Four particular elements were selected for these trainings:

1. To view the own country's state of the environment from the perspective different from their daily job;
2. To understand the conditions of the environmental issues in neighboring countries;

3. To recognize the common issues among the three countries, and prepare measures towards their solutions; and
4. To deepen friendship among the three country's trainees.

The November training in Japan included field trips to Hakone and Kawasaki, and a meeting with the Environment Minister, Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi. Ten personnel from Japan (five from central and five from local governments), and five each from China and Korea participated. Key topics this time included the situation of the three countries' environmental administrative structure, current state and issues on the freshwater contamination, and issues that all three countries are facing together. Korea will host the next training, to be held in 2002. 🌐

Japan Prepares for Johannesburg Summit

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, also known as the Johannesburg Summit, will be held from 26 August to 4 September this year in Johannesburg, South Africa. Leaders from all over the world will meet and discuss how humanity can realize sustainable development. This summit presents an opportunity to show fresh political resolve to cope with this issue. Japan is actively promoting measures both at home and internationally in order to make the summit a success.

The United Nations started major preparations for the summit in 2001. A high-level regional meeting in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 27 to 29 November 2001. Four hundred participants from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, international organizations and non-governmental organizations attended this meeting and adopted the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific. The Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit was held at the United Nations headquarters in New York, from 28 January to 8 February. The meeting produced a Chairman's Paper outlining key topics that should be discussed at the Summit and proposed actions that the international community should take.

At these preparatory meetings, the Japanese delegation stressed the importance of integrating environmental protection with development. The delegation presented the following as key issues for sustainable development:

- (i) the expansion of economic activities that harmonize with nature,



Mr. Toru Okutani, Parliamentary Secretary of the Environment, at the 2nd Session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

- (ii) the utilization of scientific knowledge and technologies,
- (iii) measures for mega-city management,
- (iv) assistance to developing countries,
- (v) environmental education,
- (vi) sustainable management of natural resources,
- (vii) social issues (such as managing fresh-water resources, guaranteeing food security, dealing with infectious diseases, and preventing disasters),
- (viii) measures taken under global environmental agreements,
- (ix) strengthened measures in regions and sub-regions (to deal with cross-border issues), and
- (x) strengthened collaboration with enterprises and NGOs.

The Japanese proposal was reflected in the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific and in the Chairman's Papers, and contributed by focusing discussions on concrete action plans. Based on these outcomes, government-level negotiations on upcoming summit consensus documents are to be discussed during the third Session

of the Preparatory Committee meeting to be held in March, and the fourth in May.

Japan's Ministry of the Environment established its own central office for Japanese Johannesburg Summit preparation on 24 January this year. During its first meeting, the then Environment Minister Ms. Yoriko Kawaguchi, stated that while Japan is preparing for the summit, people should keep in mind that others around the world count on Japanese contributions to the solutions of environmental problems. This office will coordinate discussions, in cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies, about what approaches Japan should emphasize at the Summit, and about environmental priorities and measures for achieving sustainable development.

The Ministry has set up a Japanese language website (<http://eco.goo.ne.jp/wssd>) to provide comprehensive information on the Summit, in collaboration with the Global Environmental Information Center and Kankyo-goo, an environmental Internet portal site. 🌐

Roundtable on Chemicals and the Environment

Japan's Minister of the Environment recently launched the Roundtable on Chemicals and the Environment, with the participation of the representatives of the public, industries and the government, to share information on reducing environmental risks from chemicals, and to promote mutual understanding. It was based on the report of the Wa-no-kuni Conference for a Harmonious and Sustainable Society in the 21st Century, which was an initiative of the Prime Minister.

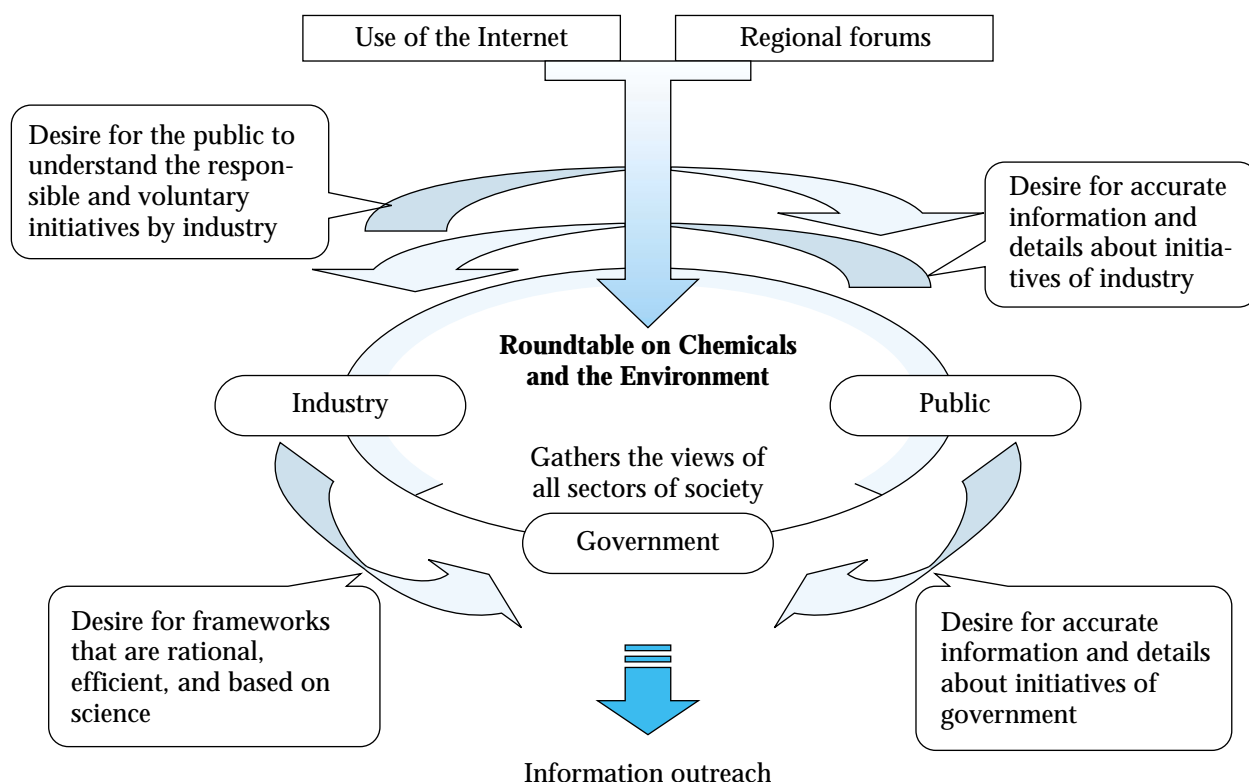
To begin with, the first meeting

on 3 December 2001, a second meeting, and a Kanto regional forum have already been held. A website has also been set up for the Roundtable, to provide information and invite public opinion on chemicals and the environment.

Although chemicals benefit our lives and are indispensable to maintain and improve our quality of life, they also potentially have negative effects on human health and ecosystems via the environment, during use in a many aspects of daily life, as well as in

each stage of business activities, from production to disposal. Today the Japanese public has a heightened sense of concern about these environmental risks from chemicals.

In order for society to be safe and secure from environment pollution caused by chemicals, it is essential to share information among the public, industries and the government, and if possible, to take rational actions to reduce environmental risks based on a common awareness of the issues. 🌐



OECD Environmental Performance Review: Japan

The OECD Environment Policy Committee's Working Party on Environmental Performance recently released its Conclusions and Recommendations based on its review of the initiatives of Japan's environmental administration.

The OECD environmental performance reviews are peer reviews of the state of initiatives on environmental policies by member countries. The previous review of Japan was done nine years ago. For the latest review a mission visited Japan in May last year to conduct a number of hearings. The Working Party met from 9 to 11 January 2002 at the Paris headquarters of the OECD to carry out the final discussion on the review of the environmental initiatives of the Japanese government and to approve the Conclusions and Recommendations (12 pages). They were released following the review in January and are now available publicly. The main report, to be released after April, is around 170 pages long.

The focus of this review was on Japan's progress in environmental policies since the last review in 1993, in terms of governmental administration relating to air and water, waste, and climate change, etc. In particular the main sections of the review were as follows:

1. Environmental management (increasing the efficiency of its

environmental policies, in terms of air and water, waste, nature and biodiversity)

2. Towards sustainable development (integration of environmental concerns into economic and social decisions, and dealing with chemicals)
3. International environmental cooperation (reinforcing international environmental cooperation, and addressing climate change and other international commitments)


The report generally gives Japan positive reviews and recognizes that Japan made progress during the 1990s in environmental administration. It points out broadly that more effort is needed to use economic instruments and carry out cost-benefit analysis, and at the same time raises specific points about air, water, waste, nature and chemicals, and about global warming countermeasures, etc.

In total the report offers 60 recommendations, including:

- Strengthening and extending the use of economic instruments for environmental policies, and increasing economic analysis,
- Strengthening measures to deal with nitrous oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter,
- Strengthening measures to reduce nutrient flows into enclosed

water bodies, and improving legislation for control of soil contamination,

- Expanding the use of economic instruments for waste management, and enhancing the application of extended producer responsibility
- Strengthening the financial means and human resources for protected areas and promoting re-naturalisation projects
- Taking the necessary steps to systematically carry out strategic environmental assessments
- Reviewing the system of road fuel and motor vehicle taxes and developing them further
- Further extending the scope of regulation on chemical management to include ecosystem conservation
- Looking the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, further developing the national policy framework to combat climate change, with a balanced mix of policy instruments including economic measures such as taxes and charges, and reviewing and further developing environment-related taxes

The Conclusions and Recommendations can be downloaded in PDF format from the following Internet site:
<http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00024000/M00024090.pdf> 

New list for Green Procurement

On 15 February 2002, a cabinet meeting approved a partial revision of the Basic Policy on Promoting Green Purchasing. More than 50 items were added to the list of Specified Items for Procurement for which government bodies (including Independent Administrative Institutions and special legal entities) are expected to consider certain environmental criteria when making purchases.

As JEQ reported previously, the Basic Policy on Promoting Green Purchasing are based on the first clause of Article 6 in the Law on Promoting Green Purchasing,

enacted in 2000, whose objective is to enhance greening of government procurement. By promoting recycling and expanding the market for environmental products and services, it also aims to provide impetus for the greening of Japan's society and economy.

Two years ago, the Basic Policy listed 101 products and service items in 14 categories, including construction materials for public works projects and administrative work. As new items come into the market and more scientific information becomes available, there is a necessity to review the

list. In the revised Basic Policy, some items have been added to articles of daily use such as paper, stationery and office furniture. Other new items include automobiles that run on liquefied petroleum gas and have high fuel efficiency and low emission performance, equipment for Intelligent Transport Systems, futons and beds, kitchen waste disposal devices and cafeteria services (for promoting the recycling of food), and materials such as blast furnace slag used in public works projects. 🌍

Top 100 Aromascapes of Japan

The Ministry of the Environment has selected one hundred places with landscapes that evoke the sense of pleasant aromas. Many places around us remind us of the unique fragrances that are connected with local natural environment, culture and living. The selection was based on the new concept of “aromatic environments,” with the aim of supporting local efforts to conserve and create pleasant aromas, as well as the nature and cultural

elements that are the sources of these aromas. Six hundred entries were submitted from around the country by Internet and other means. A committee for the selection of “aromatic landscapes” reviewed the entries and selected the top hundred winners, in various categories. Natural aromas included the tang of sea air in Miyako (Iwate), the smell of deep grass in Hoei (Niigata), the fragrances of beech and dogtooth violet flowers in Shinjo

(Okayama). Aromas connected with special culture and/or the living of the local people included the aroma of soy sauce of *soka senbei* (rice crackers) in Soka (Saitama), the scent of old books in the booksellers' quarter of Kanda (Tokyo), the aromas of Japanese and Chinese traditional medicines in Toyama (Toyama) and the scent of clay and fire in the ceramics town of Imari (Saga). 🌍

Selection of Important Wetlands

Public expectations for the protection of wetlands have grown stronger in recent years. The 7th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in May 1999 adopted a resolution calling for a doubling of the number of new Ramsar sites under the Convention. Such developments have given momentum in Japan and overseas. In order to protect more of Japan's wetlands, the Ministry of the Environment recently gathered the opinions of hundreds of experts, leading to the selection of 500 sites as important wetlands in Japan, including those that are large wetland habitats, and those that are habitats to endangered species.

Process

From 1999 to 2000 a working group, chaired by Prof. Tatsuichi Tsujii of Hokusei Gakuen University, carried out a study for the selection of key wetlands. Specialists from a range of fields relating to wetlands took part in the working group. It discussed criteria for selection from a national perspective in terms of wetlands that are important for protection of biological diversity, while also taking into account the

criteria for listing of wetland sites under Ramsar Criteria. Meanwhile, working group members also solicited input from many other experts around the country.

Results

Neighboring wetlands that share similar flora and fauna were counted as one wetland. After the evaluation process, the working group produced the list of 500 sites that are considered to be the most important wetlands. Many are located within protected areas such as in national parks, whereas among the marine wetlands identified, such as tidal flats and seaweed beds, almost none have been designated by local governments for protection. This entire process has highlighted concerns that some wetlands that have been affected by human intervention, including paddy fields and waterways, are undergoing qualitative changes due to development projects and the modernization of agriculture, and that some of them require protection as rare habitats.

Judgment of the importance of some seaweed beds and sea grass populations was based on their

extent and uniqueness, but the study revealed that the available knowledge about these ecosystems and the organisms that live in them is still inadequate. Thus, more research is needed in this area.

Utilization

The list of important wetlands will serve as basic information for wetland protection policies, and will be considered when designating protected areas in the future. As well, this information will be used to encourage the proponents of development projects in and near important wetlands to give greater consideration to conservation. Although this list was developed at the level of the national government, it will be also important in the future for local governments to select important wetlands in their jurisdictions, and to conduct local initiatives to protect them.

The Ministry of the Environment is using this selection of important wetlands as an opportunity to improve efforts for their protection. It is hoped that it will lead to new initiatives nationally. 🌍



Wetlands—Where Water Meets Life (Photo by Tsuneo Hayashida)




Wetlands—Where Water Meets Life (Photo by Eiichi Kurasawa)

Lake Biwa Declaration 2001

The 9th International Conference on the Conservation and Management of Lakes was held on the shores of Lake Biwa in Otsu City (Shiga Prefecture, Japan) from 11 to 16 November 2001, with 3,650 participants from 75 countries and regions. Since the first conference was held in 1984 in Otsu, eight conferences have been held for scientists, politicians and concerned citizens to gather and discuss various environmental problems relating to lakes.

At the most recent conference, three keynote speakers addressed current issues, followed by a session in which Lake Biwa and the Yodo River system were introduced. Five separate sessions were then held, under the themes of 'cultural and industrial evolution,' 'New Development of Environmental Education,' 'drinking water and pollution,' 'littoral Zone and its ecosystems and human lifestyles,' and 'circulating water.' Participants concurred that despite the proposals made in the Lake Biwa Declaration (1984) and Kasumigaura Declaration (1995), the environmental condition of lakes has continued to deteriorate and the harmonious relationship between humans and lakes has been disrupted. With the conviction that now is the time to take effective action to restore lake environments to sustainable conditions, they adopted the Lake Biwa Declaration on the final day. It calls for the following actions:

1. Build and strengthen partnerships among individuals and organizations within the lake community.
2. Disclose and share information, promote environmental education, and build a capacity of people.
3. Promote scientific research and monitoring.
4. Promote integrated water resource management of lake and river basin systems.
5. Promote international cooperation and establish a global lake alliance.
6. Explore new and innovative financial arrangements.

For more information please visit the International Lake Environment Committee at www.ilec.or.jp. For a copy of the declaration please visit <http://www.pref.shiga.jp/biwako/koai/shintyaku/sengene.pdf> 

EVENTS

2002

April

- 7-26 3rd meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Hague, Netherlands)
- 12-14 2002 G8 Environment Ministers Meeting (Banff, Canada)
- 20-21 4th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan, and Korea (Seoul, Korea)

May

- 4-5 2nd Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) (Jakarta, Indonesia)

May

- 27-7 June 4th Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Bali, Indonesia)

August

- 26-4 Sep Johannesburg Summit —the World Summit on Sustainable Development— (Johannesburg, South Africa)

October

- 23-1 Nov 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (New Delhi, India)

For more information about events and articles in JEQ please contact the Global Environment Bureau.

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