

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network (Expert Segment)

15-16 October 2003, Weihai, China

Opening Statement

Mr. Ravi Sawheny
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Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Second Meeting of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network, in the beautiful City of Weihai. At the outset, I would like to thank the Mayor and City of Weihai, Shandong Province, People's Republic of China for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

This meeting, as you are aware, has two segments, an expert and a mayors' segment. This expert segment will review the various ongoing activities and projects under the Kitakyushu Initiative Network and provide guidance on them. It would also deliberate on potential activities, which could contribute to furthering the objectives of the Network and guide on the future course of action. The recommendations and conclusions of the expert group segment will be submitted to the Mayors' segment for consideration and adoption.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware, the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment was adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific – 2000 (MCED 2000) held in Kitakyushu, Japan in 2000. The Conference recommended the establishment of this Network to enhance the capacities of cities in the Asia and Pacific region to cope with the critical environmental problems of resource loss and pollution control. The Conference requested UNESCAP secretariat to report on the progress made in that regard to the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific – 2005.

As a follow-up to the outcome of the Ministerial Conference 2000, the Kitakyushu Network formally inaugurated at the First Network Meeting in Kitakyushu, Japan in November 2001. The Network with the original membership of 20 cities has now expanded to encompass 54 cities covering 17 countries of the region. The fundamental mandate of the Initiative is to achieve measurable improvement in the urban environment of cities in Asia and the Pacific through local initiatives.

Considerable progress has been made in achieving the objectives of the Network since its inception. The Network has initiated and implemented a number of pilot projects, supported intercity cooperation activities, instituted training programmes and organised thematic seminars on critical urban environmental management issues, documented and analysed successful practices and made substantial progress towards the development of indicators for testing the effectiveness of its activities. A website has also been established for dissemination of information. These activities will be elaborated further during the course of this meeting.

Pilot activities have encompassed and addressed a wide variety of urban environmental issues ranging from waste water treatment through public-private partnerships, as in Weihai, China; optimising urban waste management through community participation and awareness building, as in Nonthaburi, Thailand, and Dhaka, Bangladesh; encouraging industrial relocation and introducing cleaner production and better management techniques, as in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam; and addressing urban transport problems, as in Puerto Princessa, Philippines. Some of these projects, like the one in Nonthaburi, have not only achieved but exceeded their stated targets.

In addition to pilot projects, four thematic seminars have been conducted, within the last two years to comprehend the critical issues facing urban environment, assist local governments in capacity

building and to provide a forum for exchange of information and experiences on local environmental and sustainable development practices. The topics for the seminars, ranged from solid waste management to urban pollution control and air quality management through industrial relocation to public-private partnerships for urban environmental management.

Another important activity of the Network related to the development of indicators for urban environmental improvement in implementing the Kitakyushu Initiative. Quantitative indicators thus developed serve as a measure of the effectiveness of policies as well as prove crucial to promoting effective stakeholder participation in the decision-making and implementation processes.

It is noteworthy that in the course of planning and implementing network activities, UNESCAP has received collaboration from a number of organisations, in particular the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), which as functioned as the main arm of the Secretariat of the Network. In addition to IGES cooperation has also been extended by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC); the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), cities of Kitakyushu, Ube, and Minamata in Japan, the Kitakyushu International Techno-cooperative Association (KITA), Japan; Overseas Environmental Cooperation Centre (OECC), Japan; the Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy – State Environmental Protection Administration of China and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), Philippines.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

While I have highlighted our significant achievements over the last two years, I wish also to emphasise that we should continue to pursue these activities vigorously as well as explore new areas of work. It has been proposed to extend pilot project activities to address other critical urban environmental issues such a urban air quality management, community based river clean-up activities, use of information and communication technology in urban environmental management, energy and water resources conservation etc. In this context, your advice and suggestions will be crucial as we enter a new phase of consolidation of Network activities. I am sure that with your wealth of experience and expertise this meeting will reach conclusions and recommendations that will greatly advance the process of developing the future work programme of the Kitakyushu Initiative.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the Government of Japan for the generous financial support extended to the Kitakyushu Initiative activities. In this regard, I would especially like to thank the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. I would also like to thank the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, the City of Kitakyushu and the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) of the People's Republic of China for their continued support to the Kitakyushu Initiative. Last but not the least, we are indeed deeply grateful to the Mayor and City of Weihai, Shandong Province, People's Republic of China for hosting this event.

I wish you every success in your deliberations and look forward to your recommendations.

Thank you for your attention.