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REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

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**Development of the Cooperation Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in
Transboundary Areas in North East Asia**

Note by the secretariat

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I. OVERVIEW AND OUTCOME OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. The NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy adopted by the 12th Senior Officials Meeting identified six flagship species which are critically endangered and unique in the North-East Asian subregion and highlighted specific subregional conservation approaches to the protection of the species. The Strategy called upon the NEASPEC member States to work towards the implementation of proposed subregional and national actions in the Strategy.

2. In accordance with the Strategy, a follow-up project entitled “Establishing Coordination Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia” was developed and approved by the 14th SOM. The project has been implemented from mid 2010 for two years with the budget of US\$198,170, which consists of US\$48,170 from the Core Fund and US\$150,000 from the Government of the Russian Federation.

3. The project focuses on three major transboundary areas in North-East Asia, i.e., the Lower Tumen River Basin, Dauria International Protected Area (DIPA) and Khanka-Xingkai Lake International Nature Reserve (KLINR). Particularly, the project aims to develop a framework for transboundary cooperation mechanism in the Lower Tumen River basin encompassing parts of China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. The Basin is home to both the Amur Tiger (the Siberian Tiger) and Amur Leopard (Far Eastern Leopard or Siberian Leopard), and part of either breeding grounds or migration corridors of White-napped Crane and Hooded Crane which are four flagship species identified by the NEASPEC Nature Conservation Strategy.

4. The secretariat in collaboration with the State Forestry Administration of China held an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia on 2-4 November 2010 in Hunchun, China, as the inception meeting of the project. The EGM reviewed existing bi/multilateral cooperation on nature conservation in transboundary areas in North-East Asia and discussed potential mechanisms for strengthening transboundary cooperation for nature conservation in the Lower Tumen River area. During the EGM, the Russian participants suggested specific pilot projects for further strengthening the cooperation mechanisms in Durian area and Khanka-Xingkai Lake and the Chinese participants provided recommendations for the protection of Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard, highlighting the need for priority action plans for supporting the existing transboundary protection agreement between Jilin Province in China and Primorski Krai in the Russian Federation. The meeting report is attached hereto as Annex II.

5. The secretariat has facilitated both a Chinese national consultant, Professor Zhang Minghai, Northeast Forestry University, and the Russian implementing agency, the Center for International Project, to conduct a comprehensive review on environmental, socioeconomic and institutional conditions and experience in selected protected areas. In particular, the comprehensive review will highlight the linkage between institutional changes of protected areas in China and the Russian Federation and its implication for

NEASPEC to forge a transboundary mechanism in the Tumen River area. Based on the review, the secretariat plans to develop a publication to share experience, knowledge and best practices as well as promote transnational interaction and cooperation at multiple levels. The outline of the publication is attached as the Annex I.

II. LINKAGE BETWEEN NEASPEC NATURE CONSERVATION PROJECT WITH THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PROCESSES

i. Potential Linkage with the National Process

6. In September 2010, the Chinese State Council approved in principle the “China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2011-2030” which defines the objectives, guiding principles, strategic measures for the work on biodiversity conservation in China in the coming 20 years. In particular, the NBSAP identified the hilly plain region of Northeast China as one of priority areas of inland terrestrial biodiversity conservation, which covers entire area of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces. It also specified that the conservation priorities in those areas will focus on the establishment of biodiversity corridors between cross-boarder nature reserves to protect big catamounts such as the Amur tiger and Amur leopard.

7. The NBSAP proposed a demonstration project on the establishment and management of transboundary protected areas. This proposed project intends to (1) undertake surveys and study tours on transboundary wild animal resources and habitats; (2) study and propose methods for establishing and managing transboundary protected areas; (3) explore and establish management and monitoring systems of transboundary protection; and (4) undertake pilot demonstration projects.

8. Since NEASPEC’s nature conservation project bears great similarities in objectives, components and approaches with the aforesaid demonstration project, NEASPEC seeks to synergize these two projects. The secretariat is trying to tailor the nature conservation project to meet the need of the China NBSAP.

9. In 2008, the Russian Government issued a decree on the creation of a federal-level Leopardovy Wildlife Refuge in Primorsky Krai by merging federal Barsoviy Wildlife Refuge (established in 1979) and regional Borisovo Plateau Wildlife Refuge (established in 1996) into one protected area which covers 169,429 ha, encompassing Khasansky, Ussuriysky and Nadezhdensky districts of the Primorsky krai. Prior to the decree, the two protection areas had been managed by different state agencies, which sometimes led to confusion and inefficiency. Furthermore, its neighboring protected area, Kedrovaya Pad Nature Reserve, will be also managed by the same entity, Ministry of Natural Resource. This transfer of jurisdiction to a single authority is expected to improve management capacity of the protected area, ensure concordant leopard and tiger conservation, and enhance international coordination with its neighboring protected areas in China.

ii. Potential Linkage with the Regional Process

10. The secretariat of the Great Tumen Initiative (GTI) will convene a capacity building programme in late 2011 for the North-East Asian local governments to enhance the capacity of local authorities on regional cooperation. The programme will be jointly implemented by the GTI secretariat, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Ministry of Commerce of China. The training programme which will have approximately 40 local government officials from GTI member States aims to improve North-East Asian local governments' capacity for managing multilateral cooperation activities.

11. The NEASPEC secretariat discussed with the GTI Secretariat on the inclusion of the theme of transboundary cooperation for nature conservation into the GTI capacity training programme. GTI expressed a great interest in incorporating ongoing projects in the environmental sector including NEASPEC transboundary nature conservation project. A detailed plan of the programme will be shared with NEASPEC and the modalities and measures for the possible cooperation will be discussed afterwards. Through this collaboration with GTI, a strong knowledge sharing network and implementation partnership between NEASPEC and local stakeholders could be established, which will benefit NEASPEC nature conservation project through strengthening the local political support for transboundary cooperation on nature conservation.

12. The 5th Sub-Committee Meeting of Transboundary Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Protection of China and the Russian Federation was held on 5-6 May 2011 in Xi'an, China. The sub-committee is under supervision of the Environmental Cooperation Committee of China-Russia Prime Ministers' regular meeting, which was established in 2006 in order to improve the bilateral cooperation on environmental issues. The mechanism of regular meetings between the two countries' premiers was launched in 1996 as agreed by Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Russian President Boris Yelstin. During the 5th sub-committee meeting, the two countries exchanged information of annual progress in work on transboundary nature conservation, resulting in a work plan for constructing a nature conservation network between China and the Russian Federation in the Heilongjiang/ Amur River area. This work plan was reviewed and approved by the 6th Environmental Cooperation Committee Meeting on 2 June 2011 in Harbin, China. This committee meeting also recognized the efficient cooperation and outcomes achieved under the framework of "Agreement on the Chinese-Russian-Mongolian Dauria International Nature Conservation" and therefore agreed to establish an expert group to study the common measures for protecting the Amur tiger in Changbai Mountain and Wangda Mountain in the Chinese-Russian border areas. This progress in bilateral cooperation mechanism could benefit NEASPEC Nature Conservation Project for it increased the inter-governmental communication and interaction with respect of transboundary nature conservation between China and the Russian Federation.

13. In addition to the bilateral cooperation between China and the Russian Federation, Republic of Korea also strives to rehabilitate Amur tiger species within the country through tiger breeding programmes respectively with the Russian Federation and China. In 1994 and 2005, China donated two pairs of Amur tigers to the Forest Service of Republic of Korea. In 2011, China has agreed to donate another pair of Amur tigers to Republic of Korea according to the bilateral agreement signed by the State Forestry Administration of China and the Forest Service of Republic of Korea. Moreover, in accordance with discussions at the 5th annual meeting of the Joint Committee on Environmental Cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the Russia Federation held in October 2009 in Moscow, the Russian Government donated a pair of tigers to the Republic of Korea in May 2011. Drawing to these exchanges and based on the need to further increase conservation efforts, NEASPEC might wish to identify opportunities to further encourage the Republic of Korea to contribute to protecting Amur tigers in the subregion.

iii. Potential Linkage with the Global Process

14. The NEASPEC project has a potential to link itself with the Global Tiger Initiative (GTI). GTI aims to ally itself with thirteen tiger range countries, international organizations, private sectors and civil society to prevent the extinction of tigers. The International Forum on Tiger Conservation (also known as the “Tiger Summit”) which was hosted by the Russian Government with support of the World Bank and Global Environmental Facility was held in St. Petersburg on 23 November 2010. Thirteen government leaders, including Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, attended this summit and signed the St. Petersburg Declaration affirming their commitment to save wild tigers from extinction. This was the first high-level global meeting with an agenda focused on saving endangered tiger species. The meeting endorsed a Global Tiger Recovery Program that includes urgent and comprehensive national and international actions to double the number of tigers across their respective country ranges by 2020. The secretariat would like to explore a connection between transboundary conservation mechanisms in the Lower Tumen River and the Global Tiger Recovery Program. The connection may further strengthen the bi/multilateral cooperation for nature conservation in transboundary protected areas in the subregion.

15. The secretariat has sought to link the NEASPEC initiative with the global process under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The secretariat had opportunities to brief the approaches and activities of the project to the two CBD meetings, i.e. Regional Workshop for East, South and Southeast Asia on Updating National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans held on 9-16 May 2011 in Xi’an, China and the 3rd Expert Meeting for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development on 18-20 May 2011 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The secretariat explored opportunities for possible collaboration with CBD under the Target 11 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which was adopted by the 10th

Conference of Parties to CBD in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. Target 11 calls upon the protection of areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services through well connected systems of protected areas, which could be expanded beyond national borders.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

16. The meeting may wish to provide further guidance on the development and implementation of activities in support of the transboundary protection agreement between Jilin Province of China and Primorski Krai of the Russian Federation.

17. The meeting may wish to provide guidance on linking the NEASPEC project with relevant national, bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

18. The meeting may wish to seek further commitments of member States to cooperate on nature conservation in transboundary areas.

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Annex I. (OUTLINE) A Comprehensive Review on Environmental, Socioeconomic and Institutional Conditions and Experience in Bi/Multilateral Cooperation on Nature Conservation in Major Transboundary Nature Reserves and Projected Areas in North-East Asia

NEASPEC Secretariat

This document is prepared as an outline for a publication of a comprehensive review on environmental, socioeconomic and institutional conditions and experience in bi/multilateral cooperation on nature conservation in major transboundary nature reserves and projected areas in North-East Asia. This outline was made based on the draft paper prepared by the Russian partner institute and the Chinese consultant.

1. Background and Introduction of Targeted Protected Areas

Objective: the background and introduction section aims to present the basic information of the protected areas in the Russian-Chinese border areas. This section will briefly discuss the national framework of protected areas in the Russian Federation and afterwards draw attention to the specially protected nature area (SPAs). The development status, management system and institutional framework for SPAs in the Russian Federation will be elaborated. The discussion of Chinese protected areas adjacent to the neighboring Russian protected areas will particularly focus on the Lower Tumen River area. The Hunchun Nature Reserve in, Jilin Province of China will be underlined as a key protected area in the Lower Tumen River area.

- Introduction to the national framework of protected areas in the Russian Federation
 - The current status of specially protected natural areas (SPAs) in the Russian Federation (RF)
 - Existing management systems of SPAs in the RF
 - The institutional framework of SPAs at the central and local level in the RF (the State Natural Reserves, National Parks and Zakazniks)
- Introduction to the framework of protected areas in China with a focus on the Lower Tumen River area
 - The current status of protected areas in the Lower Tumen River area in China, underlining the importance of its geographic location and biological resources

2. Key features of flagship species and their habitats in selected protected areas in the Russian Federation and China

Objective: the second section intends to introduce key flagship species in the targeted protected areas and provide an overall picture of the nature conservation of these flagship species in the subregion. The biological values of these flagship species and importance of protecting them will be emphasized in this section. This section will also review the current status of protection work for these flagship species as well as the methodology and essential measures for undertaking protection activities in the transboundary areas.

- Survey of project species in the Russian Federation, including the Amur tiger, Amur leopard, White-napped Crane, and Hooded Crane
 - Range
 - Habitats
 - Population and distribution
 - Protection status
- Brief information of flagship species in the Lower Tumen River basin in China, focusing on the Amur tiger and Amur leopard
 - Range
 - Habitats
 - Population and distribution
 - Protection status

3. Overview of Socioeconomic, Environmental and Institutional Conditions of Selected Protected Areas

Objective: this section will review local-specific conditions of the targeted protected areas across the Russian-Chinese border especially those located in the Tumen River area (Primorsky Krai and Zabaikalsky Krai in the Russian Federation; Jilin Province and Heilongjiang Province in China). Socioeconomic, environmental and institutional conditions of these targeted protected areas will be respectively evaluated for the purpose of better understanding the local impacts on nature conservation in transboundary areas. The comprehensive review will also try to identify challenges and opportunities for improving management of these protected areas.

- Review conditions of selected protected areas in the Russian Federation
 - Overview of socioeconomic of Primorsky Krai and Zabaikalsky Krai in the Russian Federation
 - Overview of local-specific conditions of Daursky Reserve, Khankaisky Reserve and Leopoldovy Refuge (Barsoviy and Borisovo Plateau refuge)

- State Natural Biosphere Reserve “Daursky”
 - State Natural Biosphere Reserve “Khankaisky”
 - Zakaznik of the Federal Significance “Leopardovy”
 - State Biological Zakaznik of the Federal Significance “Barsoviy”
 - State Natural Biological (Zoological) Zakaznik of the Regional Significance “Borisovo Plateau”
- Review conditions of selected protected areas in China
 - Socioeconomic evaluation of the Tumen River area
 - Status of the Amur tiger and Amur leopard in the Lower Tumen River area in China, focusing on population, distribution and protection measure
 - The establishment of protection area and international cooperation on nature conservation of the Amur tiger and Amur leopard in the Lower Tumen River area (Hunchun Nature Reserve)
- Felids Conservation Biology: field survey and spatial data analysis
 - Potential habitats, including bio-diversity, potential food richness, composition, structure and changes, etc
 - Felids appearance recording
 - Prey population dynamics, including population size, distribution field, biomass or primary productivity
 - Home range requirements survey
 - Dispersal capacity
 - Survival requirements for population persistence analysis
 - Vegetation preferences
 - Population size needed for persistence of the felids
 - (a) Felids appearance data
 - (b) Habitat and classification
 - (c) DEM, Land and forestry use information
 - (d) Road, water, and Residential information
 - Analysis and integration of data and information: based on the results of the survey, field surveys and satellite image analyses will be combined in the ArcGIS platform and statistical software. These images and data will be utilized to develop the felid habitat database in the region downstream

Tumen river area and evaluate felids and prey habitat suitability in this area, using effective models developed by scientists.

4. Bi/Multilateral Cooperation on Nature Conservation in Transboundary Protected Areas in North-East Asia

Objective: This section will review the existing bi/multilateral cooperation mechanisms for nature conservation in transboundary areas in North-East Asia, i.e., Dauria International Protected Area and Khanka-Xingkai Lake International Nature Reserve. This section will draw lessons from them and identify opportunities for further strengthening international cooperation in these areas as well as discuss development of new cooperation mechanisms in the Tumen River area.

- Overview and analysis of bi/multilateral cooperation mechanism for protecting flagship species and ecosystem in the Daursky Reserve and Khankaisky Reserve
- Multi-/bilateral cooperation between Leopoldovy Refuge (Barsoviy and Borisovo Plateau refuge) and its neighboring protected areas in China and DPRK
- Review of international cooperation experiences and key international projects in the Tumen River area in China

5. Recommendations for Strengthening Bi/Multilateral Cooperation for Nature Conservation in North-East Asia

Objective: This section is expected to make some concrete recommendations for establishing an effective cooperation mechanism for nature conservation in transboundary area in the subregion, based on the previous discussions in section 4. This section will discuss the national, subregional and global process of biodiversity conservation and their impacts on bi/multilateral cooperation for nature conservation in transboundary areas in North-East Asia, focusing on Amur tiger and Amur leopard protection in the Tumen River area. In addition, the recent changes of institutional arrangement of protected areas will be particularly underlined in this section.

- Review national, subregional and global processes for biodiversity conservation in the subregion
- Identify opportunities for improving the existing mechanisms and develop new mechanisms for bi/multilateral cooperation for nature conservation in transboundary area in North-East Asia
- Identify concrete joint activities and action plans for strengthening international cooperation for nature conservation in transboundary area in North-East Asia

Annex II. Summary of the Expert Group Meeting on Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia held on 2-4 November 2010 in Hunchun, China

1. There are over one hundred protected areas along international borders among North-East Asian countries, of which one-tenth are categorized as strictly protected areas or national nature reserves. In particular, about two dozen protected areas adjoin neighboring protected areas across international borders. This situation requires transboundary cooperation, ranging from simple communication to full coordination of action among governments, authorities of protected areas, local communities, and conservation groups.

2. Since the mid 1990s, North-East Asian countries have gradually strengthened bi/multilateral cooperation on nature conservation in transboundary areas and established, for example, an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism for the Dauria Protected Area (DPA) between China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation as well as an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism for the Khanka-Xingkai Lake Nature Reserve (KLNR) between China and the Russian Federation. Furthermore, local governments and authorities of protected areas in the Amur-Heilong River Basin have increased the level of formal and informal cooperation among neighboring partners. However, problems of nature conservation in transboundary areas are yet to be effectively addressed in North-East Asia.

3. Concerning the significance of transboundary cooperation on nature conservation, the member countries of North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) have decided to undertake a joint project on the *“Development of Cooperation Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas”*. The geographical scope of the project includes three major transboundary areas, i.e., the Lower Tumen River basin, Dauria region and the Khanka-Xingkai Lake region. In particular, the project aims to develop a framework for transboundary cooperation mechanisms in the Lower Tumen River basin encompassing parts of China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Russian Federation in order to protect flagship species in North-East Asia, with particular focus on the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard.

4. The **Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia** was jointly organized by NEASPEC and the Department of Wildlife Conservation and Nature Reserve Management, State Forestry Administration of China, as the inception meeting of the project on the Development of Cooperation Mechanisms for Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia. The EGM was held on 2-4 November 2010 in Hunchun, China. The meeting was attended by over 60 experts and officials including 38 participants nominated by governments of China, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation and over 20 participants from local institutions, NGOs and international organizations.

5. The meeting focused on:
- reviewing approaches and practices in existing transboundary protected areas in North-East Asia, highlighting the establishment of transboundary protected areas and the creation of ecological corridors
 - reviewing existing bi/multilateral cooperation in transboundary areas in North-East Asia, highlighting intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms on the Dauria Protected Area and Khanka-Xingkai Lake Nature Reserve
 - reviewing national and international plans and activities for the conservation of flagship species in the Lower Tumen River Area
 - discussing achievements and challenges of transboundary cooperation in North-East Asia
 - discussing potential mechanisms for transboundary cooperation in the Lower Tumen River Area
 - organizing internal country consultation meetings and discussing the country proposals

6. **Nature Conservation in Transboundary Areas: approaches and practices:** The meeting reviewed approaches and practices of nature conservation within transboundary areas in China, Mongolia, Russian Federation and the Korean Peninsula. *The establishment of transboundary protected areas* has been recognized as a critical step of nature conservation. Protected areas in Mongolia are categorized into: Strict Nature Reserves (48%), National Parks/Managed Reserve (43%), and Natural Monuments (9%) while in the Russian Federation they are categorized as National Parks (1%), State Wildlife Preserves (17%), Natural Monuments (65%), and Therapeutic Areas (9%). Since the 1990s, *the creation of an ecological network* has been recognized as another important approach of preservation and management of an ecosystem in transboundary areas. The study of ecological networks in North-East Asia showed the important role of the ecological network in the protection flagship species and habitats. The study suggested the adoption of appropriate measures and operations to promote sustainable development in the potential ecological networks of North-East Asia.

7. **Bi/Multilateral Cooperation in Transboundary Areas in North-East Asia:** Representatives from China and the Russia Federation reviewed their protection work and the intergovernmental cooperation in the *Dauria region*. They emphasized that the establishment of a joint commission played a key role in implementing conservation programs in the Dauria region. From 1994 to 2010, the Joint Commission held five meetings, organized more than 15 working group meetings, and launched more than 90 joint research investigation, monitoring and education programs. From 2000 to 2007, the range of joint monitoring has already been expanded to the eastern part of the Daurian Steppe

and the total protected area increased up to 300,000 square meters. In 2007, the Russian management body of the Dauria Protected Area started to conduct conservation studies on the Amur Watershed and the Chinese management body joined this protection activity later in the same year. In 2010, the Russians decided to establish a transboundary ecosystem monitoring network. In particular, more than 100 monitoring sites in the Russian Federation, China and Mongolia will be included in the network over the next few years. Up to now, 60 monitoring sites have already been developed on the Russian side. The network will also include the International Ecological-Ornithological Station - three or more national ecological-ornithological stations for joint study, monitoring and conservation of ecosystems and birds in Dauria. The national stations will operate in accordance with joint international plan and methods.

The protection work in the *Khanka-Xingkai Lake region* was also discussed as a good example of transboundary cooperation of nature conservation in North-East Asia. Since the Governments of China and the Russian Federation signed an agreement on strengthening intergovernmental cooperation between the Xingkai Lake Nature Reserve of China and the Khanka Lake Nature Reserve of the Russian Federation in 1996, more than 15 meetings have been organized among government agencies, law enforcement agencies, scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations. In 2003, the Chinese and Russian local governments, the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) and nature reserve administrations discussed the creation of a Chinese-Russian co-commission for KLNR. In the same year, a working group meeting for promoting activities of KLNR was held in Mishan, China. In 2005, a Chinese-Russian Workshop on Joint Scientific Research of migratory birds was launched in China, with the aim to promote wetland protection in the reserve. In spite of all this rapid progress, the first co-commission meeting of KLNR was not held until 2009. According to the 2009-2010 cooperation plan made in the first co-commission meeting, the workshop for ornithologists of KLNR was held in the Russian Federation in 2010. Representatives argued that the lack of a Chinese-Russian long-term mechanism is a significant barrier to conservation cooperation in the reserve. They also advocated strengthening the transboundary cooperation mechanism to effectively develop joint protection activities and improve the management capacity for international cooperation.

8. **National and International Plans and Activities for the Conservation of Flagship Species in the Lower Tumen River Area:** This session focused on the protection of three flagship species: the Amur Tiger, Amur Leopard, and crane species in the Lower Tumen River Basin. *Amur Tiger* inhabits the eastern parts of Northeast China, the Russian Far East and the northern part of DPR Korea. Historically most Amur Tigers lived in northeast China while the population in the Russian Far Eastern faced extinction between 1940 -1960. Currently, the Russian Far East area contains 430-500 tigers while an optimistic estimation of the tiger population in China is only around 20, which means that migration of tigers from the Russian Federation will be essential for the recovery of the Amur Tiger in China. In order to facilitate tiger migration, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) identified the

eastern Wandashan Mountain range as a key Amur Tiger protected area and suggested creating an ecological corridor between the eastern Wandashan Mountains and tiger habitats in the Russian Federation via the Strelnikov Range. WCS also proposed *seven transboundary steps* to facilitate the recovery of the Amur Tiger in protected areas, including developing land use plans and increasing prey density as the *first two steps*. The former aims to ban transportation infrastructure in tiger habitats and the later focuses on strengthening law enforcement and improving anti-poaching activities. The *third and fourth steps* are the removal of border fencing between China and the Russia Federation and monitoring of prey and tiger numbers. *The fifth step* focuses on illegal trading of tiger products and *the sixth step* asks for a mechanism for exchange of information at the regional level. Based on these sixth steps above, *the seventh step* of establishing a transboundary cooperation mechanism on nature conservation could be achieved. Since three separated protected areas, *i.e.*, Borisovskoye Plato refuge, Barsovy refuge and Kedrovay Pad reserve started to merge as one entity last year, it has become easier to develop a transboundary protected area along the Chinese and Russian border.

Chinese Amur Tiger experts estimated that there are 10-14 tigers remaining in Heilongjiang Province and 8-10 tigers remaining in Jilin Province. So far sixteen nature reserves for the Amur Tiger, at state or provincial levels, have been established in China. Examples are the Hunchun Tiger Nature Reserve, Changbai Mountain Natural Reserve in Jilin Province; the Niaoqingshan Natural Reserve and Phoenix Mountain Natural Reserve in Heilongjiang Province. The total protected area for the Amur Tiger is 9886.84 km². In particular, the State Forestry Administration of China (SFA) identified three priority protection areas for the Amur Tiger: the Changbaishan Mountain region, Hunchun-Waingqing-Donging-Suiyang Region, and Wandashan Mountain region. Within these priority protected areas, habitat conservation, capacity building for habitat preservation and monitoring, community development, and international cooperation are the four cores of Amur Tiger protection work proposed by the SFA.

Since *Amur leopard* protection work requires very similar methods to the conservation of the Amur Tiger, experts indicated that activities discussed above are applicable for Amur Leopard protection. The meeting also discussed the protection of the Javan Leopard and Snow Leopard. The presentation introduced the methodology of population monitoring and international cooperation for leopard conservation, highlighting camera trap surveys and radio-tracking surveys. This presentation also showed how to apply the nature conservation strategy of NEASPEC into the conservation work of the Snow leopard. These discussions on the Javan Leopard and Snow Leopard provided valuable information for Amur Leopard protection.

The conservation status of the *White-naped Crane and Hooded Crane* in China was reviewed in this session as well. Due to the migration and wintering nature of cranes, experts emphasized the necessity to develop a crane protection network. The downstream

region of the Tumen River is an important habitat of the White-naped Crane and Hooded Crane in China. This area encompasses dispersed wetlands, such as the Sonbong Wetland Reserve, Sonbong Al Land Reserve, Uam Reserve, Khasan Wetland Reserve and Far East Marine Reserve. Thus experts proposed the establishment of transboundary wetland protected areas to improve protection work on cranes in the Lower Tumen River basin.

9. **Transboundary Cooperation in North-East Asia - Achievements and Challenges:**

The meeting evaluated major *achievements* of Amur Tiger protection in the *Hunchun Nature Reserve*. Since the Hunchun Nature Reserve was upgraded from provincial level to state level, the SFA and the Jilin Province Forestry Administration have already allocated 12 million RMB (around 1.8 million USD) for infrastructure development in the Reserve. The Hunchun Forestry Bureau also contributed 10 million RMB (around 1.5 million USD) to carry out protection activities in the Hunchun Nature Reserve, focusing on developing a monitoring system with the application of Management Information System (MIST), strengthening law enforcement on anti-poaching, creating public education programs and enhancing international cooperation. The Hunchun Nature Bureau plans to develop an anti-poaching patrol team which is composed of local farmers in Hunchun areas. The Bureau is committed to creating connectivity between priority protected areas and establishing ecological corridors connecting to the Russian Federation. It also intends to address conflicts between local citizens and tigers by developing alternative income sources and compensation programs for local communities. It is believed that these actions could secure the survival of up to 8-10 tigers over the next 10 years in the Hunchun area.

Amur Tiger conservation work in *Heilongjiang Province* has progressed over the past decade. Field surveys and monitoring data showed that the estimated number of the Amur Tiger in 2000 was 5.5, which increased to 12 in 2006. According to the 2006-2007 monitoring data, tiger activity information was gathered in the eastern Wandashan Mountain (15), Southern Laoyeling (13), and Northern Laoyeling (5). The activity information indicated the number of tigers stabilized around 10-14 tigers in Heilongjiang Province in 2007.

After reviewing the current national situation, the discussion moved on to the *challenges* of existing conservation work in protected areas. Participants identified the *inadequate level of financial support* as a major challenge. Each year, the Chinese Government and the Russian Government only provide funding for the basic operation of the nature reserves and there is no additional funding for project development in these reserves. The *communication barrier* between protected areas in China and the Russian Federation is identified as another challenge. Participants from the Dauria region and Khanka-Xingkai Lake region pointed out that the language barrier hampers exchange of information and effective communication between protected areas and their respective counter-agencies. In addition, organizing joint conferences and exchange programs between protected areas have been hindered by high visa fees and strict visa requirements. For example, the fee for

applying for a Mongolia visa in China increased to 900 RMB (around 135 USD) recently. The application for a Chinese visa requires complicated paperwork and takes at least half a month to obtain. A *lack of personnel* directly dealing with international cooperation is the third significant challenge to existing mechanisms. Staffs in nature reserves are not able to divert their attention to international cooperation programmes since most of their time is occupied with routine domestic work in the reserves.

10. **Potential Mechanisms for Transboundary Cooperation in the Lower Tumen River Area:** The session began with a discussion on *the geographic scope and what flagship species* should be targeted under the cooperation mechanism. Participants argued that if the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard are only the targeted animals, rather than confining the protected region to the Lower Tumen River basin, the geographic scope should be expanded further northeastward toward tiger habitats in Heilongjiang Province. The Secretariat clarified that the potential mechanism will only focus on two flagship species---the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard. The main reason is that there is greater urgency to ensure the survival of endangered terrestrial animals via transboundary cooperation. Regarding the geographic scope for the protected area, the potential mechanism could be flexible to involve other habitats of the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard outside of the Lower Tumen River Basin. Also, the Secretariat pointed out that the aim of the joint project is to provide complementary support to existing mechanisms rather than duplicating conservation work that has already been implemented in the Lower Tumen River Basin.

Challenges discussed in point 7 are needed to be taken into account when the Secretariat is designing potential mechanisms for transboundary cooperation in the Lower Tumen River basin. The meeting provided specific suggestions on developing a *management mechanism* and a *financial mechanism* to address current challenges of protection work in the Lower Tumen River area. Chinese experts suggested that the essential component of a *management mechanism* is to organize a joint working group, comprising of three members from each country: China, the Russian Federation and DPRK. They also suggested that the three members have different roles; one member should act as the focal point of the state nature conservation administrations, another member should be an officer who has the authority to distribute financial and human resources from provincial administrations, and the final member should be local staff in protected areas, who are responsible to implementing specific projects in the areas. Participants proposed that NEASPEC should fill in the financial “gap” that governments cannot provide for developing conservation programmes and improving inter-government cooperation. However, rather than “filling in” the financial “gap”, the Secretariat would like to develop a *financial mechanism* to “bridge” the “gap”. The financial scope of NEASPEC cannot compete with other international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and Asia Development Bank (ADB), not mention that of governmental agencies. The advantage of NEASPEC is to provide a political platform for international cooperation between member

countries in North-East Asia. Nevertheless, one great potential funding opportunity that NEASPEC could bring is to link together transboundary mechanisms between the Lower Tumen River and the *Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)*. GTI aims to ally itself with thirteen tiger range countries, international organizations, private sectors and civil society to prevent the extinction of tigers. The International Forum on Tiger Conservation (also known as the “Tiger Summit”) which is hosted by the Russian Government with support of the World Bank and Global Environmental Facility will be held in St. Petersburg on November 23, 2010. Thirteen government leaders, including Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Chinese government officials, will attend this summit and sign the St. Petersburg Declaration affirming their commitment to save wild tigers from extinction. This is the first high-level meeting with an agenda focused on saving endangered tiger species. The meeting is expected to endorse a *Global Tiger Recovery Program* that includes urgent and comprehensive national and international actions to double the number of tigers across their respective country ranges by 2020. The Secretariat would like to explore a connection between transboundary conservation mechanisms in the Lower Tumen River and the Global Tiger Recovery Program. The connection could help financial support for transboundary protected areas.

The meeting also discussed *specific plans for developing concrete activities* for the next one to two years under proposed mechanisms. Experts suggested that the Secretariat should incorporate the agreement on joint protection of the Amur Tiger between Jilin Province in China and Primorski Krai in the Russian Federation when identifying priority actions in protected areas. In August 2010, the agreement was signed for improving the exchange of information on tigers in the two provinces, establishing a unified system for controlling and monitoring the animals, carrying out joint inspections in survey areas, and developing a campaign in the Russian-Chinese border against poaching. The agreement has already developed a framework for improving transboundary cooperation between Jilin Province and Primorski Krai, which could act as a platform for NEASPEC to identify urgent actions and launch priority activities for tiger and leopard protection in the greater Hunchun area.

The discussion particularly highlighted the following actions. The *first* action is to appoint focal points in Jilin Province and the Hunchun Nature Reserve Bureau to finalize Chinese members for the joint working group. At the same time, Russian and DPRK counterparties should also appoint their own members. The Secretariat should strive for involving DPRK in the working group. Also, the working group should set up a schedule for periodical meetings in which representatives are able to discuss their needs, share information, and propose joint work plans. *Second*, the Secretariat could create a trust fund for improving communication among China, the Russian Federation and DPRK. Communication programmes such as exchange visits, joint conferences and survey training programs would play key roles in attracting stakeholders’ interests to improve international communication. Since communication programs require minimal funding, NEASPEC

should be able to provide initial funding for the short term. Except financial support, the Secretariat will channel the technology transfer of webcams and telephone communications from Japan to protected areas in the Lower Tumen River Basin. *Third*, the establishment of ecological corridors along the Chinese-Russian border should also be a priority action. Removal of border fencing to create an ecological corridor is a complicated and politically sensitive issue that cannot be accomplished without unified administrative support from different sides. For example, in order to remove the border fence between China and the Russian Federation for tiger migration, approval is required from the SFA, Provincial governments, and border control administrations in China and the Russian Federation. It is extremely difficult for local protected area administrations to go through this bureaucratic process, but the Secretariat could coordinate the approval procedure domestically and internationally.

11. **National Consultations among Chinese and Russian Participants and Country Proposals:** In order to better understand the needs of nature conservation in China and the Russian Federation, the Secretariat simultaneously facilitated internal consultation meetings among Chinese participants and Russian participants, respectively. By means of these meetings, each country will be able to provide its own proposal regarding nature conservation in the Lower Tumen River Area. According to country proposals, the Secretariat could identify the common interests among member countries and thus develop joint actions and plans to further improve international cooperation based on these common interests.

The *Chinese participants* proposed a step-by-step method for acknowledging the geographic scope of tiger and leopard protected areas. The primary scope for Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard protection in the Chinese territory should focus on the Hunchun and Wangqing areas in Jilin Province. The scope could be expanded to the Dongning and Suiyang areas in Heilongjiang Province, if funding is available in the future. The Dongfanghong area in Heilongjiang Province could be the final targeted tiger habitat to be included under conservation mechanisms. In the proposal, the Chinese suggested seven fields for joint actions and plans:

- Coordination of anti-poaching activities
- Joint survey and monitoring
- Strengthening and enforcing conservation polices and measures
- Strengthening management and technical capacity of nature reserve authorities
- Raising public awareness and participation
- Development of ecological corridors between transboundary areas
- Improving protection work in the Jilin-Primorsky transboundary area

The *Russian* proposal identified the geographic scope of the protected area as covering the Tumen River Basin, the Khanka Lake (the lower Amur River basin), and Dauria (the upper Amur River basin). The proposal also suggested that priority species in the protected areas should be the White-naped Cranes, Hooded Cranes, and Black-faced Spoonbills. After clarifying the geographic scope and targeted species of protected areas, the proposal provided recommendations on potential cooperation mechanisms and potential pilot projects in the areas. Since officials from Amur Tiger protected areas in the Russian Federation were not able to attend the meeting, the proposal mainly focused on the Khanka Lake and Dauria areas. For the Khanka Lake, the proposal suggested conducting joint censuses of breeding cranes and other water birds on the Chinese and Russian sides. For the Dauria region, it suggested creating a transboundary Russian-Chinese-Mongolian Ecosystem Monitoring Network (EMN). The proposals also intended to develop joint studies of the population status of the White-naped Cranes and a joint census of migratory cranes and other water birds in both the Khanka Lake and Dauria region. These two country proposals attached hereto as Annex I and II

12. **Conclusion and Recommendation:** This three day meeting provided a platform for in-dept communication among delegations from member countries of NEASPEC. After learning experience based on existing intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms for the Dauria Protected Area and Khanka-Xingkai Nature Reserve, the meeting concentrated on discussions of the protection of the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard. Based on the discussion, participants provided suggestions for addressing difficulties and challenges in future work in the Lower Tumen River Basin. While the Chinese proposal focused on the protection of the Amur Tiger and Amur Leopard, the Russian proposal provided valuable recommendations on biodiversity conservation in the Khanka Lake and Dauria areas, participants from Japan and Republic of Korea suggested providing technical support for the protection work in the Lower Tumen River Basin, and Mongolian participants emphasized the biodiversity conservation in the Dauria area. All this information offered substantive ideas for the Secretariat to further strengthen existing mechanisms and facilitate creating new mechanisms for nature conservation in North-East Asia. The Secretariat made various suggestions in the conclusion session: (a) NEASPEC will act as a platform for intergovernmental cooperation, channeling financial resources and providing political support to protected areas and nature reserves in North-East Asia; (b) The Secretariat will adopt a step-by-step approach which leads to a short-term plan and medium-long term plan for follow-up activities. The short-term plan could concentrate on urgent concrete actions for the next year while the medium/long-term plan intends to create a more solid intergovernmental mechanism for nature conservation; (c) In the short term, the Secretariat will prepare a plan of priority actions to suit the needs for improving the Jilin-Primorsky agreement through establishing a joint expert working group, conducting joint monitoring programs, improving exchange of anti-poaching experience, strengthening multilateral communication and developing a plan for ecological corridors.

The following proposals are attached as submitted by each delegation from China and the Russian Federation.

Annex I: Proposal from Chinese Participants

Potential Mechanisms for Transboundary Cooperation in the Lower Tumen River Area

Topic 1: Coordination of anti-poaching activities

1. development of joint action programs and plans
2. anti-poaching information exchange
3. anti-poaching experiences and effectiveness evaluation
4. exchange and cooperation of anti-poaching between implementers
5. anti-poaching training and capacity building

Topic 2: Joint survey and monitoring

1. uniform methods and standards for survey and monitoring
2. monitoring information exchange and sharing on a regular basis, establish data sharing platform
3. periodical staff trainings
4. cross-boarder joint survey and monitoring
5. research cooperation

Topic 3: Strengthening and enforcement of conservation policies and measures

The establishment of cross-boarder cooperation and coordination mechanism and implementation of conservation organizations, as well as cross-border tiger leopard protection group

Topic 4: Strengthening management and technical capacity of nature reserve authorities

1. periodical visits and experience exchange in protected areas
2. development of a common goal of conservation management

Topic 5: Raising public awareness and participation

1. mutual activities of conservation education and publicity works, such as the Tiger Festival and the Leopard Festival
2. jointly organized the Youth Summer Camp
3. joint publications

Topic 6: development of ecological corridors in transboundary areas

1. joint investigation
2. planning, design and construction
3. monitoring and management

Discussion topic 7: improving further development of the protection work in Jilin-Primorye transboundary areas

Annex II: Proposal from the Russia Participants

Suggestions of Russian Delegation to the Framework or the Transboundary Cooperation in NE Asia

1. Development of the cooperation mechanisms: Tumen River Basin and Khanka Lake (the Low Amur River basin), and Dauria (the Upper Amur River basin): assist in realization existing cooperation and development of new ways and mechanisms of multilateral cooperation; and support pilot cooperation projects in all these three sites.

2. Protection of White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane, and Black -faced Spoonbill as priority species: support joint pilot projects on studying, monitoring and protecting these species.

3. Proposed pilot projects for development of cooperation mechanisms:

3.1. *Khanka Lake* – Joint censuses of breeding cranes and other water birds on Russian and Chinese sites;

3.2. *Dauria* – Creation of the Russian-Chinese-Mongolian transboundary Ecosystem Monitoring Network (EMN). Main tasks of the EMN include:

- Study the impact of the global climate change on biodiversity in Global Transboundary Dauria Eco-region, highlighting endangered species such as White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane and other globally threatened species.
- Monitor and study water bird population and prepare recommendations for enhancing protection of White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane and other globally threatened species.
- Adopt national and international policies for improving sustainable use of nature resources and enhancing biodiversity conservation in order to deal with climate change

The establishment of the EMN was begun by DIPA staffs in 2010. In 2010 more than 60 sites in Russia and Mongolia were studied, monitored and analyzed. EMN mainly targets

key wetlands and grasslands. In 2011 this work will be continuing in Russia and Mongolia and it will be conducted in China as well. The ultimate goal is to include more than 100 representative monitoring sites. In 2010 five kinds of monitoring were conducted as follows:

- 1) Ornithological monitoring;
- 2) Botanical monitoring;
- 3) Monitoring of anthropogenic pressure;
- 4) Ground photo monitoring;
- 5) Satellite images / GIS monitoring;

In 2011 other monitoring activities such as chemical monitoring will be developed.

EMN includes different sites with three levels of intensity of monitoring: primary sites (monitor annually), secondary sites (monitor once during 2-3 years), third-rate sites (monitored ones during 4-6 years), and fourth-rate sites (observe once more than 6 years and occasionally observe).

Background: There are 20 globally threatened species in Dauria. For example, about 23% of world population of White-naped Crane breeds inhabits in Dauria; Dauria is a key gathering site of migratory cranes in North-Eastern Asia. For instance, about 10% of world population of Hooded Crane gathers there during migration. Mid-term climatic cycles about 20 years duration with alternation of period of about 15 dry years and 15 wet years have a great influence on Daurian ecosystems. During 2000-2009, about 98% of wetlands in Dauria became completely dry. It has great negative influence on populations of cranes and other water birds. Anthropogenic pressure also grew dramatically during 2000-2009.

The project realized that joint long-term monitoring and study of biodiversity and ecosystem are very important and effective for international cooperation

3.3 *Khanka and Dauria* – joint study of population status of White-naped Crane is recommended for biodiversity conservation.

Background: Dauria is a key habitat for White-naped Crane – about 23% of world population of White-napped Crane inhabits this area. Population status now is critically challenging because of climate change and strong anthropogenic pressure. Khanka Lake is also an important habitat of White-naped Crane and population status there is stable.

3.4. *Khanka and Dauria* – joint censuses of migratory cranes and other water birds.

Background: Dauria and Khanka – two most important stopover sites of White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane and millions of other species of water birds in North-East Asia.