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Seoul, the Republic of Korea

**REVIEW OF NATIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES IN  
PREPARATION OF THE**

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

**Summary of Global and Regional Processes in Preparation of the UN Conference on  
Sustainable Development**

*Note by the Secretariat*

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## I. OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

1. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) will be held at the highest possible level in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 14-16 May 2012. This important event will mark two decades of efforts taken by the international community on achieving sustainable development globally since the commitments enshrined in Agenda 21 were adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. To underscore the succession linkage between these two important events, UNCSD became unofficially dubbed as Rio+20 Conference.

2. It is important to note that the implementation of Agenda 21 action plan was also evaluated during other follow-up events. As such UN General Assembly during its special session in 1997 appraised the actions taken nationally and internationally after five years since UNCED and reached a common opinion that the progress was uneven globally. In addition to that, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002 in Johannesburg can be seen as an intermediate event between UNCED and UNCSD. The Summit adopted the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) where member States affirmed their commitment to full implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21 and linked this action plan to achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, WSSD played an important role in strengthening social pillar of sustainable development.

3. The discussions of the UNCSD will be focused around two main themes: 1) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and 2) the institutional framework for sustainable development. In this regard, it is important to reflect the leading role that the Asia-Pacific region (and its North-East Asian subregion) has played to date in the development of the green growth<sup>1</sup> concept, which is seen as a path for achieving a green economy. Examples of such leadership are manifested in the adoption of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth (SINGG) and the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific for 2006-2010 in the course of the fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED 2005) and recent adoption of the Green Bridge initiative and the Regional Implementation Plan for 2011-2015 during the sixth MCED held in Astana in 2010.

4. In a similar manner, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its work on the first theme of the UNCSD demonstrates that the greening of economies is not generally an impediment to growth but rather a new engine of growth; that it is a net generator of decent jobs, and that it is also a vital strategy for the elimination of persistent

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<sup>1</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) defines green growth as a growth that “emphasizes environmentally sustainable economic progress to foster low-carbon, socially inclusive development” (see <http://www.greengrowth.org>)

poverty. A recent report prepared under UNEP's Green Economy Initiative seeks to motivate policy makers to create the enabling conditions for increased investments in a transition to a green economy.<sup>2</sup>

5. With regard to the second theme of the UNCSD - institutional framework for sustainable development - it is important to underline that this concept covers a wide spectrum of formal and less formal bodies, organizations, networks and arrangements that are involved in policymaking or implementation activities. The institutional framework must be considered at the local, national, regional and international levels and the effectiveness of different bodies on their respective levels and coherence of actions among them hold the key to the success of actions of international community towards achieving sustainable development. Recent decades witnessed a dramatic growth in bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements as well as multiplication of different agencies working on sustainable development. However, not always the numbers are transformed to quality and more voices are heard globally now for a necessity for reforming the international institutional structure for addressing the issues of sustainable development<sup>3</sup>. The separation of responsibility for the three pillars of sustainable development in governance arrangements at all levels, is a major weakness that has constrained prospects for achieving sustainable development. Discussions on this theme in various forums have called for enhancing the integration of the three pillars at all levels of governance, including in the UN system.

## II. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PREPARATORY PROCESSES

6. The preparatory process for the UNCSD started in 2010 and since then a number of preparatory meetings have been held under the umbrella of UN DESA, UN Regional Commissions as well as different stakeholders and expert groups. Table 1 below depicts the main remaining global meetings to be held in preparation of the Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> See "Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication" report by UNEP available at [http://www.unep.org/GreenEconomy/Portals/93/documents/Full\\_GER\\_screen.pdf](http://www.unep.org/GreenEconomy/Portals/93/documents/Full_GER_screen.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Please see the report of the Secretary-General on the Objective and themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development available at <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/content/documents/N1070657.pdf>

**Table 1: Major intergovernmental meeting at the global level**

<b>Dates and venue</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Expected contributions</b>
3 Oct – 23 Dec 2011 New York	Second Committee of the 66 <sup>th</sup> GA	Second Committee is expected to adopt the report of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> PrepCom (held 7-8 May 2011) and its decisions. It is also expected to adopt a resolution on implementation of Agenda 21 and JPOI and also on UNCSD.
15-16 Dec 2011 New York	2 <sup>nd</sup> Intersessional Meeting of the UNCSD	The Bureau will set the organization of work to advance various aspects of the preparatory process
26-27 Mar 2012 New York	3 <sup>rd</sup> Intersessional Meeting of the UNCSD	The Bureau will set the organization of work to advance various aspects of the preparatory process
28-30 May 2012 Rio de Janeiro	3 <sup>rd</sup> PrepCom of UNCSD	Negotiations on the outcome document and several parallel activities.
4-6 June 2012 Rio de Janeiro	UNCSD	

7. The Second Preparatory Committee of UNCSD during its meeting on 7-8 March 2011 in New York decided to set **1 November 2011** as the deadline for member States and other stakeholders to provide their inputs and contributions in writing for inclusion in a compilation document to serve as basis for the preparation of zero draft of the outcome document of the UNCSD.

8. The same deadline applies to the submission of inputs from UN agencies as was announced during the meeting of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA) held on 6 July 2011. During this meeting the Principals of the Executive Committee expressed their general view that the outcome document of the UNCSD should reflect an appropriate balance and level of integration between the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic and social development and environmental sustainability. In particular, the social pillar, including job creation and decent work and social inclusion, needs a special emphasis.

9. Thus, with only few months left before the finalization of the collection of inputs from various stakeholders to the Conference, the international community is intensifying its efforts in producing an impact and hearing different voices during this important event.

In this regard, a vital milestone for the Asia-Pacific region will be the convening of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, on 19-20 October 2011 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. It is expected that RPM will finalize an Asia Pacific statement on sustainable development as an input to UNCSD and consider reports on i) status of implementation of Agenda 21 and JPOI in Asia and the Pacific region, ii) green economy in the context of sustainable development, and iii) institutional framework for sustainable development.

### **III. ROLES OF NEASPEC IN THE RIO+20 PROCESSES**

10. First of all, it should be recalled that the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) was established in 1993 by member States of the subregion as a follow-up to the UNCED. Thus, NEASPEC is an evident example of the subregional institutional framework for addressing the issues of sustainable development. In this regard, the creation of NEASPEC as a concrete initiative of North-East Asian subregion for sustainable development was officially reported to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21 held in June 1997.

11. Also, it would be useful to recall that the subregional consultation on WSSD held during the 7<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting of NEASPEC (SOM-7) in July 2001 in Beijing was an important part of the subregional input to the regional preparatory process for WSSD.

12. In this regard, SOM-16 is invited to discuss the national and subregional activities and processes in preparation of the UNCSD in three modes: i) provide review of the national preparatory process for Rio+20; ii) reflect on national policies and subregional activities related to both themes of Rio+20; and iii) formulate subregional inputs for the regional preparatory process.

### **IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

13. The Meeting may wish to formulate main subregional messages regarding UNCSD to be submitted to the attention of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting as a coordinated voice of the subregion. These messages may identify subregion-specific perspectives on each theme of the UNCSD and desired outcomes for the Rio +20 process taking into account the discussions at the Preparatory meetings held to date.

14. The Meeting may wish to decide on the process and modality for the development of subregional activities related to the themes of Rio+20.

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