

NEACAP First Policy Dialogue: presenting the preliminary findings from the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report

23 September 2024, Incheon, Republic of Korea (Hybrid)

Summary Report

Introduction

The Northeast Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP) convened its First Policy Dialogue on 23 September 2024 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, with both in-person and virtual participation. The event marked a key milestone in fostering subregional collaboration to address air pollution challenges. Policymakers, experts, and stakeholders from China, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation attended the dialogue (see Annex 1. List of participants).

Objectives

The dialogue aimed to present and discuss the preliminary findings of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report. The report examined the progress, challenges, and emerging trends in air quality management of four countries: China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea over the past decade. It also explored potential strategies for strengthening future cooperation and policy actions (see Annex 2. Concept Note).

Opening Remarks

The dialogue began with an opening statement highlighting the progress of work under NEACAP since its inception in 2018 under the Northeast Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC). NEACAP has been instrumental in promoting subregional air quality management. The Policy Analysis Report serves as a comprehensive review of the progress made by NEACAP member States and will be refined based on the feedback provided during the dialogue.

Report Overview

The Policy Analysis Report focused on reviewing air quality management achievements, emerging environmental challenges, and future directions. Key successes included significant reductions in PM_{2.5} levels, particularly in China, Japan, and Republic of Korea, driven by stricter

regulations and advances in renewable energy and electric vehicles. However, challenges such as rising ozone pollution, persistent VOC and ammonia emissions from agriculture, and the complexity of urban ozone control were noted. Emerging issues like the integration of air quality and climate policies, as well as climate-related impacts, were highlighted as important concerns. Recommendations include the need for continued technical collaboration at local, national, and regional levels, prioritizing urban pollution, and fostering city-to-city cooperation in each country. Integrated policies addressing air quality, climate change, and socioeconomic development could provide co-benefits and promote long-term sustainability. Additionally, enhancing scientific research and collaborative platforms would help in mitigating policy barriers, while a joint data-sharing platform could streamline monitoring and reporting of emissions, supporting regional efforts across North-East Asia.

Key Discussions and Feedback

Valuable feedback and comments were received from stakeholders (including member States through the NEASPEC National Focal Points, members of NEACAP Science and Policy Committee (SPC) and representatives of Technical Centers (TC)) following the circulation of the draft report on 3 July 2024. To facilitate structured discussions, these comments were categorized into three main areas: (1) technical comments, focusing on inaccuracies in national data representation and methodology; (2) clarification comments, pointing out the need for clearer justifications for conclusions and recommendations; and (3) structural and policy-related comments, suggesting shifts in focus, addressing political sensitivities, and utilizing the report's annex to streamline the report's structure. In-depth discussions were held especially on points which needed further clarity, as in the following areas.

Technical Comments:

- **Challenges of Ozone Pollution:** Concerns were raised regarding the complexity of managing ozone pollution. Suggestions were made to refine the ozone data, including explanations of differences in monitoring methods and variations in indicators across different countries.

- **Health Impacts:** It was suggested that the health impacts section be expanded to cover the topic on changes over time and the benefits of policies on different health indicators, such as the global burden of disease and risk functions.
- **Agricultural Emissions Data:** A box clarifying the role of methane was proposed to differentiate its impact on background ozone from its limited role in peak ozone formation. There was also a request to add information more visibly in the recommendations on growing concerns about methane, ozone, ammonia, and nitrogen.
- **Data on new energy vehicle ownership:** A request was made to verify the data and ensure consistency across different sets.
- **Climate Action (SDG 13) Information (Table 6):** A clarification was requested on the evaluation of countries' progress listed in Table 6. It was suggested to check the original data and decide whether to retain the table.

Clarification, Structural, and Policy Relevant Comments:

- **National air quality monitoring networks:** Concerns were raised about sensitive issues related to the maps. Some participants suggested using a table (instead of a map) to validate information on the countries included in the maps.
- **Urban air pollution:** A clarification was requested on the impact of regional pollution on cities with a suggestion to shift focus from transboundary pollution to city-to-city cooperation. Emphasis was placed on secondary pollution generated within regions of the same country.
- **Success of member States:** Participants emphasized the importance of reflecting the specific achievements and experiences of each member state. They suggested adding successful cases of metropolitan areas for Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul.
- **Synergies between air pollution and climate policies-Future Integration of Policies:** The dialogue called for better integration of air quality management with climate change mitigation, given the co-benefits for health and environmental sustainability.
- **Joint data and information sharing and common data formats:** Comments were made on the difficulty of creating a unified data-sharing platform. It was suggested to consider the mandates of existing cooperation mechanisms within NEACAP and EANET when proposing data-sharing initiatives.

Next Steps

Participants contributed valuable insights, which will be reflected in the final report. The joint consideration of the Policy Analysis Report through the First Policy Dialogue strengthened the role of the report to serve as a strong foundation for future regional cooperation.

The Policy Analysis Report will be further refined based on feedback from the dialogue and will be presented at the Twenty-seventh Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-27) of NEASPEC. With the envisaged guidance from SOM-27 on the next steps related to the report, the dialogue concluded with the commitment to hold a second policy dialogue, with a focus on discussing future regional collaboration and disseminating the key messages of the report to a wider audience.

Annex 1. List of Participants

North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP)

1st Policy Dialogue

23 September 2024

Incheon, Republic of Korea (Hybrid)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

GOVERNMENT

CHINA

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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REPORT PROJECT TEAM

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**ESCAP East and North-East Asia
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SECRETARIAT

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Intern

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Intern

Concept Note

NEACAP 1st Policy Dialogue: presenting the preliminary findings from the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report

23 September 2024, Incheon, Republic of Korea (Hybrid)

Background

Established in 2018 as the flagship programme under the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP) is committed to addressing air pollution challenges in North-East Asia.

As outlined in the [NEACAP Terms of Reference \(TOR\)](#), the core programmes of NEACAP include: (i) sharing relevant information and data, (ii) coordinating with relevant mechanisms and synthesizing their results in accordance with NEACAP activities, and (iii) proposing potential technical and policy measures to tackle air pollution.

The TOR specifies that these core programmes are supported by (a) regular and ad-hoc meetings; (b) annual or biannual subregional review reports; (c) seminars, workshops, and training sessions; and (d) research projects. To elaborate and operationalize these core programmes, a series of consultations and discussions was conducted, and consequently, the NEACAP Work Plan 2021-2025 was adopted with an indicative list of activities on “Policy and Technology Cooperation”, which is a priority area for the five-year plan. The list of activities includes organizing policy dialogues for exchanging information and policy experience, as well as conducting policy analysis in support of these policy dialogues.

NEACAP Policy Analysis Report

The report examines the progress and challenges in managing air pollution in North-East Asia in the past decade, focusing on China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea. By documenting these successes, the report supports the process of strengthening policy exchange and collaboration between countries of North-East Asia. Beyond reviewing policy progress, it discusses existing and emerging challenges in each country, underscores the importance of continued regional cooperation, and proposes a roadmap for future initiatives to ensure cleaner air and a healthier environment for the people of North-East Asia.

Facilitated by the NEASPEC Secretariat in line with the agreed work plan under NEACAP, the policy analysis report was developed by an author’s group comprising of a lead consultant and nominated national experts. Mr. Zbigniew Klimont (Pollution Management Research Group Leader, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)) developed the report,

supported by NEASPEC Secretariat, based on inputs received from the national experts nominated by NEASPEC member States.

NEACAP Policy Dialogue

The NEACAP First Policy Dialogue aims to: (i) present the preliminary findings of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report to policymakers and stakeholders from member States; (ii) seek substantial insights and comments from participants to enhance the Report for submission to the 27th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-27) of NEASPEC, as advised during SOM-26¹.

Participants

During the Fifth Meeting of the Science and Policy Committee (SPC) of NEACAP, the Committee highlighted the importance of engaging policymakers from member States in the process of developing the report and policy dialogues.² To this end, the envisaged participants of the policy dialogue include:

- Officials from relevant government units involved in air pollution management and policies
- NEASPEC National Focal Points
- NEACAP SPC members and Technical Center (TC) representatives
- Report Authors' Group

Session Discussions and Format

The sessions are of two parts. The **Overview Session (A and B)** will set the context to the deep-dive sessions by presenting a comprehensive overview of the report.

The **Deep-Dive Sessions (C, D and E)** will focus on the three main elements of the report: data analysis; policy analysis and policy recommendations. Guiding questions are provided to steer the discussions. Participants from each member country will be requested to provide their insights.

- **C. Discussions on Report's Data Analysis:** Each member country will be requested to provide interventions, as guided by the session questions. Participants working on environmental science and data analysis (e.g., SPC members, TC representatives) are envisaged to engage during the discussions.
- **D. Discussions on Report's Policy Analysis:** Each member country will be requested to provide interventions, as guided by the session questions. Participants working on policies (e.g., NEASPEC NFPs, officials from government units involved in air pollution management and policies) are envisaged to engage during the discussions.

¹ SOM-26 report (<https://neaspec.org/content/neaspec-26th-senior-officials-meeting>).

² SPC-5 report (<https://neaspec.org/content/fifth-meeting-science-and-policy-committee-north-east-asia-clean-air-partnership>).

- **E. Discussions on Report’s Recommendations:** Each member country will be requested to provide interventions, as guided by the session questions.

Programme [23rd September]

Time	Agenda	Led by
10:00-10:10	Opening Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome remarks 	
Overview (Facilitator: NEASPEC Secretariat)		
10:10-10:20	A. Overview of the Joint Research Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief introduction to the joint research project including its goals, methodology, and the collaborative efforts involved. 	NEASPEC Secretariat
10:20-11:20	B. Overview of the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive overview of the report including (1) Report outline and structure, (2) Key findings and messages, and (3) Recommendations to set the stage for detailed discussions. 	Mr. Zbigniew Klimont (IIASA) and national experts
11:20-12:00	Q&A Guiding questions on the overview of the Report <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the NEACAP Policy Analysis Report effectively address the overall structure and key elements to support the conclusions and recommendations? 2. Does each section of the report adequately cover the essential aspects of air pollution in each country and across North-East Asia? 3. Are there any resources, documents, plans, or research missing from the report that should be included? 	
12:00-13:00	<i>Lunch break</i>	
Deep-dive Sessions (Facilitator: Mr. Zbigniew Klimont)		
13:00-14:00	C. Discussions on Report’s Data Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback collection: Gather detailed feedback on the data collection and methodologies, analytical approaches, and scientific rigor of the report - Discussion points: consistency of data sources, data accuracy, reliability, and applicability to policymaking. 	Participants working on environmental science and data analysis (e.g., SPC members, TC representatives) will provide their feedback on the discussion points (with guiding questions).
	Guiding questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively do the figures, tables, maps, and accompanying texts in the report present country-specific data and situations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the visual elements clear, accurate, and consistent in representing the air pollution data for each country? Do they provide sufficient context and explanation to ensure understanding without potential misinterpretations? 	

Time	Agenda	Led by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How reliable, consistent, and accurate are the data sources used in the report across all countries? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any potential biases or limitations in the data that should be addressed? • What improvements could be made to enhance the country-specific information in the report? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there additional data points, indicators, or analyses that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of each country's air pollution situation? 	
14:00-15:00	<p>D. Discussions on Report's Policy Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback collection: Solicit insights on the policy analysis including completeness, relevance, effectiveness, and fitness to address future challenges. - Discussion points: policy implementation challenges, success cases and lessons learned, addressing emerging environmental challenges <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the report effectively highlight successful policy implementation in each country and address emerging challenges that each country is encountering? • Are there notable best practices from countries which are not mentioned in the report? • Are there any issues or concerns regarding the examples presented in the report? • What gaps, if any, exist in the report's policy analysis, and how can they be addressed? 	<p>Participants working on policies (e.g., NEASPEC NFPs, officials from government units involved in air pollution management and policies) will provide their feedback on the discussion points (with guiding questions).</p>
15:00-15:30	<i>Tea and coffee break</i>	
15:30-16:30	<p>E. Discussions on Report's Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback collection: Assess the practicality and potential impact of the recommendations provided in the report. - Discussion points on (1) prioritization of recommendations, (2) potential barriers, and (3) strategies for effective implementation. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the conclusions and recommendations provide an effective summary of the report? • How can the recommendations guide proposals for NEACAP activities in 2025? How can the recommendations guide the development of the NEACAP Work Plan for 2026-2030? • Are the recommendations and proposed actions for both national and (sub) regional levels practical and feasible for implementation? 	<p>All participants, with a focus on national level recommendation or regional cooperation perspectives.</p>
16:30-17:00	F. Wrap-up	NEASPEC Secretariat

Time	Agenda	Led by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="430 226 1024 340">- Recap main points from the feedback sessions, highlight consensus areas, and outline next steps for report finalization	