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Research and systematic observation

Information provided by regional and international climate change research programmes and organizations on developments in research activities relevant to the needs of the Convention

Submissions from regional and international climate change research programmes and organizations

Addendum

1. In addition to the two submissions contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2008/MISC.8, one further submission has been received.
2. In accordance with the procedure for miscellaneous documents, the submission is attached and reproduced* in the language in which it was received and without formal editing.

* This submission has been electronically imported in order to make it available on electronic systems, including the World Wide Web. The secretariat has made every effort to ensure the correct reproduction of the text as submitted.

SUBMISSION FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC NETWORK FOR GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH

**28th Session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and
Technological Advice (SBSTA 28)
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Paper submitted by the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) for the SBSTA/GC programmes and networks "Informal Dialogue" to be held Thursday 5th June, 2008.

Formally established in 1996, the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) is an inter-governmental network of 21 member countries to foster global change research, including climate change, in the region. One of the APN's key objectives is to support regional cooperation in global change (GC) research on issues particularly relevant to the region. APN has a number of strategies for policy and research through the implementation of its funded activities and the institutional operations of its organs.

APN's unique strength lies in its network of policy-makers and scientists, where the membership of the APN includes one governmental representative (national Focal Point) and one scientist (Scientific Planning Group [SPG] Member) for each member country, with additional support provided by member-country colleagues and experts drawn from the international global change community, such as Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP), Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI), International Council for Science-Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ICSU-ROAP), Global Change SysTem for Analysis, Research, and TraininG (START), etc.

To implement the work of this 12-year old science-policy network effectively, collaborative activities among the APN member countries and/or other organisations working in the area of global environmental change are strongly encouraged. The APN further facilitates supporting collaborative research projects in the region through the organisation of regional meetings highlighting GC research and possible implications for policy-making, and systematically identifying key scientific priorities and emerging scientific issues for the region.

Informal Dialogue

APN is of the view that details of its scientific findings need not be presented in depth. Rather, the compilation of scientific findings in APN's brief, annual publications is seen as a useful tool to disseminate APN's **emerging scientific findings** and achievements to the policy-making community. Aside from informing the scientific and technical audience, the SBSTA informal dialogue is an opportunity to bring to the attention of policy-makers the work being done by the APN, for instance through its implementation of good practices in science.

Research Planning: Themes, Priorities, Gaps and Constraints

The APN has five Key Science Themes based on its 2nd Strategic Plan (2005-2010). These are: *climate; ecosystems, biodiversity and land use; changes in atmospheric, terrestrial and marine domains; use of resources (food, water, energy, materials) and pathways for sustainable development; and crosscutting and science-policy linkages.*

In the last two years, 33% and 42% of the regional collaborative research projects and capacity building/enhancement projects funded by the APN are clearly on climate. Moreover, many other APN-funded projects primarily on other themes are crosscutting in nature and have a significant climate-related component.

With regards to current **research planning activities**, the APN has recently highlighted the need to consider the results of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 4th Assessment Report and the Bali Action Plan when developing relevant themes, and to be continuously aware of the progress of the discussions in IPCC and other relevant meetings.

APN also needs to be more proactive and propose research areas of interest to its member countries, an activity that is undertaken by the APN Scientific Planning Group shortly before the IGM convenes and before the APN launches its annual regional call for research and capacity development proposals.

While it is clear that specific **research priorities** are not going to change or emerge on an annual timescale, the APN aims to identify topics that are "hot" on an annual basis to ensure dynamism and to facilitate its annual calls for proposals for research and capacity building activities. This gives proponents an idea of what the APN is interested in rather than being prescriptive. Setting the context on highlighted topics is to better illustrate the relevance to the global change community, policy-makers and stakeholders. The APN believes that a "roadmap" that identifies **research gaps**, as well as how these gaps may be filled, based on national requirements, also needs to be devised. Discussing national road maps at the sub-regional level is also seen as an important step in regional collaboration and in **identifying priority needs** at the sub-regional level.

Most member countries noted in their 2008 country reports that climate change and forestry are two areas that are currently considered important in the Asia-Pacific region. Other equally important or "hot" themes identified at recent IGM/SPG meetings (2007 and 2008) included climate (particularly adaptation, vulnerability and climate extremes); water, agriculture and food security; capacity building in earth observations (through collaboration with bodies such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems [GEOSS]); education for sustainable development; integrated global change science and society; the integration of human dimensions in GC research; social and physical aspects of mega-cities; bio-fuels; air quality and human health; ecosystem degradation and desertification.

Further focusing on the challenges faced by APN member countries, the priority needs of members in terms of research and institutional capacity were explored and a qualitative analysis indicated the constraints (or **implementation gaps**) faced by members, particularly developing country members, in conducting meaningful research in global environmental change. These included the lack of adequate human resources (experts, scientists) and research tools and/or models; applying research and/or mainstreaming it into policy processes; inadequate research facilities (such as laboratory, equipment, etc.); training on the use of appropriate methods/analysis; data access/availability; finding suitable international collaborators/appropriate experts; and assistance or training in writing research proposals. These gaps can certainly be addressed by the APN through national and international initiatives.

Regional Collaboration

Noting SBSTA26's emphasis on the need for **regional endeavours** in research and capacity building **collaboratively designed** by decision-makers and scientists of the sub-region, the APN is embarking on a new initiative which is entirely in line with that recommendation to enhance discussions at the sub-regional level, through the establishment of sub-regional committees of its scientific and government members. The APN Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Committee (SEA-SRC) has taken the lead in this effort and will convene for the 3rd time in August 2008 to discuss sub-regional research priorities in global change. The SEA-SRC has noted that peatlands, for example, is a "hot" and relevant topic in Southeast Asia.

With the successful dialogue at the sub-regional level in SEA, strong support was received from the countries of South Asia (SA) to form a similar Sub-Regional Committee to discuss priorities in the SA sub-region. It is expected that a first meeting will take place between SA-SRC in the coming months. Regional experts drawn from the GC community will be invited to attend the sub-regional meetings to enhance collaboration. Initial expected outputs include the submission of research proposals to the APN that are regionally relevant and that would comprise collaboration among scientists and national governments. It is via this route that APN is attempting to bridge the communication gap between the science and

policy communities and to promote the formulation of research activities that are highly relevant in the region.

Science-Policy Interactions

APN considers the issue of linking science to policy as a two-way process: While scientists are required to think about it when submitting proposals to the APN, it is also crucial to approach policy and decision-makers for their contribution to bridge the gap between science and policy. Indeed, the significance of science-policy interactions is mirrored in APN's Calls for Proposals in that one of the major criteria for selection requires the proponent(s) to clearly define the policy-relevance of their proposed activities and indicate how the results could be used in decision-making processes.

There are significant developments in many APN member countries in terms of increased recognition shown by the governments. While almost all APN member countries now have mechanisms in place for science-policy linkages, it is recognised that most members continue to face difficulty in mainstreaming the results of scientific research into policy processes. In addressing this, APN is placing higher weight criteria on mainstreaming the results of proposed scientific research into policy processes. APN is considering a number of other approaches when implementing its science-policy activities, including:

- expanding more substantive APN activity related to and supportive of policy-making, such as science-policy fora and symposia;
- utilising opportunities for discussions with policy-makers and policy-analysts at occasions of international fora as much as possible;
- arranging briefings with key policy-makers; and
- disseminating information on best practices adopted by member countries to establish effective science-policy interactions.

Capacity Development

The APN's CAPaBLE Programme, which has funded over 40 projects in the five years since its establishment, is a marked example of its capacity building endeavours. In addition to embarking on local, national and regional capacity building endeavours, this programme is also **enhancing the capacity of existing researchers in developing countries**, in response to the impacts of global and climate change; of which some results have been fed into the IPCC 4th Assessment Report.

In further promoting research capacity building activities, particularly in developing countries, there is a need to coordinate country participation, particularly in identifying specific objectives and targets that would be useful to aid researchers in writing regionally relevant research proposals. It has been suggested that the APN develop a list of global/climate change-related institutions in the region to facilitate its activities. Members also believe that closer linkages between the developing/developed countries could be better exploited to transfer technology and provide expertise.

Through APN's support, governments such as Nepal and Pakistan are paying more attention to the impacts of climate change, and raising awareness of climate change outside the scientific community is seen as a high priority in many APN member countries. Non-Annex I countries have also benefited through the APN's collaborative support for the UNFCCC workshop on the preparation of national communications, which was held in Manila in April 2004 and which the APN also participated together with its sister network, the IAI. In addressing some of the constraints faced by member countries to conduct research, a proposals-writing workshop is scheduled for late September and is being targeted particularly at early-career scientists who have never submitted a proposal to the APN before.

Communications

Communication is vital to the successful networking of the APN and in sharing the outcomes of its regional collaborative research in global change. Recently, the need for a **long-term**

communication strategy for the APN's government Focal Points and SPG Members for national considerations and for raising the visibility of the APN in their countries was highlighted. The APN expects to work closely with member countries and with the global change programmes, particularly the ESSP, to develop a forward-thinking and dynamic communication strategy. Local language brochures are also considered key to successful communications and are having a very positive impact in member countries where they are being developed and used. Brief, one-page project bulletins are being developed in the vernacular language(s) of member countries that include recent activities of the APN as well as country-specific success stories. The Media is also recognised by the APN as a powerful tool for communications and strategies on how to attract the media's attention to the APN and its activities needs to be devised.

Finally, given the recent high profile of global environmental change through the IPCC, who was awarded the Nobel peace prize, and the release of its 4th Assessment Report, there is no better time than the present to call to attention the work of the APN. Like the industrial revolution-induced anthropogenic impacts of climate change, public interest in global change issues has irrevocably been instigated.
