

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GREEN INDUSTRY IN ASIA: Managing the Transition to Resource-efficient and Low Carbon Industries

Background Note

The Asia and Pacific region has been the fastest growing region in the world. This rapid growth, based on export-oriented industrialization, has lifted millions of people out of poverty. But it has also boosted demand for energy and raw materials, contributing to price increases in world markets (although currently prices are falling, most analysts expect them to move upwards again when the global economy recovers). At the same time, this increased demand has led to both natural resource depletion as well as environmental degradation.

Price increases will certainly impact negatively on production and make it more difficult for industries in the region to compete in world markets. The degradation of the environment is exacting a heavy toll on human health and straining the region's health care systems. It is also straining the absorption limits of the region's ecosystems. In turn, these factors are putting at risk the rapid economic growth that the region has experienced over the past two decades. In particular, strong demand for fossil fuels has become a major driver in climate change.

The coming decades will no doubt witness increased pressures on countries in the region to shift to resource-efficient and low-carbon production patterns as part of global efforts to slow down the pace of climate change and other environmental degradation. Countries and regions that successfully manage this transition will be better placed to exploit the opportunities created by the shift towards a low-carbon world economy.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are jointly organizing an International Conference on Green Industry in Asia, which will focus on how industries in the region can effectively manage the transition to resource efficient and low carbon industry, and in the process sustain rapid economic growth and trade competitiveness. The Conference will discuss: (i) the policies and strategies that would enable countries in the region to successfully manage this transition; (ii) the regulatory and institutional framework as well as the support services that would be required by industry to shift to more sustainable patterns of production; and (iii) the new business opportunities that the shift to a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy would create and how countries in the region could benefit from such opportunities.

The Conference will be organized in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and will be hosted by the Government of the Philippines in Manila from 9 to 11 September 2009.

The Conference will have two main segments -- a high-level official (ministerial) segment on Day 1 and technical sessions on Days 2 and 3. An important outcome of the high-level (ministerial) segment will be the adoption of a ministerial declaration and plan of action on improving resource efficiency in Asia and a process

to periodically review and assess progress in implementing the action plan. The technical sessions will provide a forum for substantive discussions on: policies and strategies to integrate sustainability into the industrial development process; best practices in optimizing energy, water and raw material use in the production process, i.e., cleaner production; and the development of new value and supply chains around industry-related environmental goods and services. The tentative programme of the Conference is attached in Annex 1. An exhibition on green industry will also be organized in conjunction with the Conference.

Ministers of Industry/Environment/Energy and an accompanying senior official from each country in the region will be invited to the Conference. In addition, the Conference will bring together industrialists, representatives from industrial chambers and associations, academic and research institutions, international/regional organizations, the ASEAN Secretariat as well as media representatives, from the region and from selected countries outside the region, to exchange views and experiences on how best to achieve the transition to resource efficient and low carbon industry. In all, it is expected that about 600 participants will participate.

To kick-start the preparations for the Conference, the Government of the Philippines convened a working group meeting in Manila on 25-26 November 2008, to discuss the scope, objectives, inputs, outputs, and tentative programme of the Conference, as well as the roles and responsibilities of all the partners.

A Preparatory Meeting hosted by UNESCAP at its headquarters will be held in Bangkok to discuss and confirm the programme of the Conference, outlines of the conference papers, list of speakers and the roles and responsibilities of each partner. A draft Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan will also be presented by the Government of the Philippines for discussion. About 30-40 participants are expected to attend the Bangkok meeting from governments, private sector, expert institutions and members of the organizing team.

Exhibition space will also be made available in the Conference premises to allow Asian and non-Asian companies to exhibit their industry-related environmental products and services.

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