FUTURE VISION
FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

1. SCENARIOS

This section introduces four visions for the future of the Asia-Pacific region in the next 30 years, to show alternative paths to development and environment. The four visions are taken from the scenario analysis conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the Global Environment Outlook 3 (GEO-3)[80].

Scenario analysis is a powerful tool to assist policy making and consensus building. It helps policy makers get a clearer picture of what tomorrow might bring in terms of human well-being, environmental security, and the impact of their decision making. Scenario approaches are increasingly used in environmental policy studies. Examples of scenario analysis include the reports by the Global Scenarios Group such as the Great Transition, the Special Report on Emissions Scenarios by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Water Vision by the World Water Forum, the scenarios of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, and GEO-3. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), launched in 2001, has set up a scenario working group and is constructing new scenarios that will draw on previous scenarios but focus on ecological surprises and cross-scale ecological feedbacks[81]. This section draws on GEO-3 since one of its distinguishing features is the emphasis on regional context and implications for each region.

The GEO-3 scenarios consist of four scenarios similar to those developed by the Global Scenario Group. The four scenarios are Market First, Policy First, Security First, and Sustainability First:

➢ *The Market First* scenario envisages a world in which market-driven developments converge on values and expectations that prevail in industrialised countries;
➢ In *the Policy First* world, strong actions are undertaken by governments in an attempt to reach specific social and environmental goals;
➢ *The Security First* scenario assumes a world of great disparities, where inequality and conflict prevail, brought about by increasing socio-economic and environmental stresses;
➢ *The Sustainability First* pictures a world in which a new development paradigm emerges in response to the challenge of sustainability, supported by new, more equitable values and institutions.
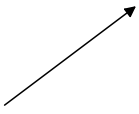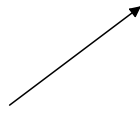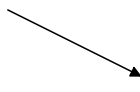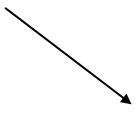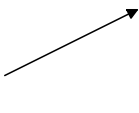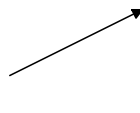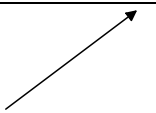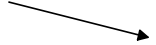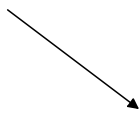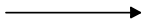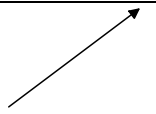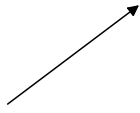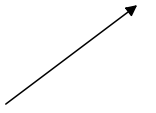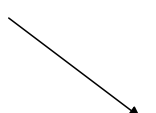
Table 6 illustrates the driving forces of the four scenarios, which shows rough sketches of each driving force over time[82].

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[80] UNEP, 2002. Global Environment Outlook 3. Earthscan Publications Ltd, London
[81] The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2003. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment. Island Press. Washington, D.C.
[82] This chart is taken from the work of Global Scenario Group, not from GEO-3. However, as mentioned earlier, those scenarios correspond to each other.

Table 6: Socio-Economic Driving Forces of Scenarios

Scenario	Population	Economy	Equity	Technology	Conflict	Environment
Market First	↗	↗	↘	→	→	↘
Policy First	↗	↗	→	↗	↘	→
Security First	↗	↗	↘	→	↗	⌣
Sustainability First	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘	↗

Source: Raskin et al., 2002[83]

Market First

Values: Most of the world adopts the values and expectations prevailing in today's industrialised countries. Dominant values are the wealth of nations, the optimal play of market forces, and further globalisation and liberalisation.

Key Actors: Business is one of the key actors, arguing for clear and economically efficient rules and regulations, and pointing to the value of voluntary standards and programmes.

Policies: Virtually all national governments advance a package of policy adjustments, including modernisation of financial systems and investment in education to create a workforce that is competitive in the emerging global market. Privatisation spreads and policies are more reliant on market-based approaches. Systems of governance and longer term planning will be poorly developed. Actions to address social and environmental issues are mainly taken at local level. In the area of global policies, global negotiations are affected by a fairly narrow approach with protection of national interests rather than shared or common resources being the major concern.

Economic Development: The shift to a liberalised, market-oriented society becomes almost universal. Market openness and global competition are promoted by new technologies, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and multinational corporations and their products. In the Asia-Pacific region, globalisation accelerates as many countries recover from the economic downturn of the late 1990s and from the decade-long recession in Japan. Continued economic reforms in China and India, the two most

[83] Raskin, Paul, Tariz Banuri, Gilberto Gollopin, Pable Gutman, Al Hammmond, Robert Kates, and Rob Swart, 2002. Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead. Stockholm. Stockholm Environment Institute, Stockholm.

populous nations in the world, add to global market-oriented growth.

Technology: Rapid technological advances continue, driven by profit motives. Over time the progress may slow down as government-funded basic research is given less priority. Advances are made on new technologies including ICTs, lower emission vehicles such as hybrid vehicles and fuel-celled vehicles, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. The Asia-Pacific region will play a key role in advancement of technology.

Equity and Conflict: Poverty persists and inequality keeps growing. Improvements in ICTs help draw attention to the differences in the standard of living, and often cause great frustration among the less well off. Falling environmental quality and severe pressures on natural resources raise again the prospects of economic uncertainty and conflict.

Environment: Advances in some environmental arenas emerge as by-products of efforts to improve economic development. Cuts in subsidies to agriculture and opening of trade in agricultural products modify the environmental impacts of agriculture. Advances in technology and structural changes in economics resulting in improvements in efficiency produce environmental benefits. Examples of such advances include cleaner vehicles, tele-commuting, micro-power developments, improvements in irrigation techniques, and advancements in biotechnology. At the same time, these development trends create new environmental concerns or intensify existing ones, such as biodiversity loss, water stress and the frequent breakdown of basic services. Environmental qualities continue to fall and pressures on natural resources remain severe, raising again the spectre of economic uncertainty and conflict.

Policy First

Values: In the face of social crises such as terrorist attacks, societies call for policy reform to come to terms with economic, social and environmental concerns that many see as the root of these conflicts.

Key Actors: Governments play a key role and take decisive initiatives in an attempt to reach specific social and environmental goals. Governing institutions are strengthened at the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels. Nations cooperate with one another and with global institutions on global environmental issues, economic issues, technology development and transfer, and migration, security, and sharing common resources from the oceans. The private sector also plays a key role. Business groups try to enhance the positive role of industries in policy making. NGOs continue to build partnerships between themselves and with business groups and government organisations.

Policies: The major focuses of the policies are social and environmental concerns. To solve those issues, governments set very specific targets to be achieved. In the Asia-Pacific region, deforestation, social inequity, poverty, urbanisation, sustainable use of freshwater resources and regional air pollution are emphasised as the principal policy reform agenda.

Environmental and social costs and gains are factored into policy measures, regulatory frameworks and planning processes. These are reinforced by fiscal levers or incentives such as carbon taxes and tax breaks. International 'soft law' treaties and binding instruments affecting environment and development are integrated into unified blueprints and their status in law is upgraded. Those policy measures take effect but they are not always popular, have often been expensive, and are attacked by the conservative side of politics.

Economic Development: The growth of the economy is significant but relatively muted compared to Market First, since the momentum for economic development is balanced by the coordinated pro-environment and anti-poverty drive.

Technology: Technology advances, especially in the areas of ICTs, biotechnology and energy use. Funds are mainly provided by government subsidies raised from pollution taxes and other charges. Technology development and transfer is part of the agenda of global cooperation. Greater caution on the part of governments and society may slow down technological development in some areas, but it also prevents serious side effects of inadequately assessed technological development.

Equity and Conflict: Equity is improved in some areas including reducing extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, improving gender equity, reducing infant and child mortality and improving reproductive health. Increased funding for development alleviates conflicts within and between nations. However, potential conflicts of interest arise in achieving the desired goals. For example, it is difficult to meet increasing demands for food from populations that are growing in both size and affluence, without impairing biological diversity or soil fertility.

Environment: In the areas of water stress, air pollution, land degradation, deforestation and marine over-fishing, significant but costly advances have been made. The technology-dependent environmental targets such as material use efficiency have also proven to be achievable. However, considerable risks remain as growing (although stabilising) populations and improving lifestyles continue to intensify demands for water, food, forest resources and space. Changes in climate have contributed to these concerns. Although emissions of greenhouse gases per unit of economic activities have fallen worldwide and especially in the wealthier regions, more rapid economic development and population growth in developing countries have resulted in globally higher emissions, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Security First

Values: In the Security First world, two views prevail. One is market principles (laissez-faire), reflecting competing concerns, such as recurring fiscal crises and downturns in national economies, cycles of terrorist activity and retaliation, and continuation of armed conflict in several parts of the world. The second is self-protection, reflecting fear of the waves of protest and reaction caused by unfolding socio-economic and environmental stresses.

Key Actors: Large and non-state entities, including multinational corporations and crime syndicates, increase their influence on the political agenda. Government suffers from increasing internal corruption. NGOs and other groups in civil society play minor roles but are not effective in influencing long-term development patterns. Institutions at the international and national levels are weakened. Thus, societies go through sequential breakdowns and regroupings, and governance among the 'haves' is assumed to become more centralised and autocratic but effective.

Policies: Environmental and social problems receive less attention and fewer resources because governments are more focused on protecting economic interests of national and corporate enterprises to which they are increasingly tied. The belief spreads that free markets alone can come up with flexible enough checks and balances to deal with issues of social justice and global environmental care.

Economic Development: In many parts of the Asia-Pacific region, economic downturns similar to the crash that occurred in the late 1990s periodically resurface and impact upon a large number of countries. In poorer countries, economies increasingly come under the control of multinational corporations (MNCs). Not only the poor, but also traditional livelihoods and communities are eroded as global markets penetrate peripheral regions, seeking cheap labour and control of resources. In parts of Asia and the Pacific, biological resources are commercially exploited with little compensation for the traditional resource managers or the majority of the people in these regions. Thus, resource exploitation and environmental deterioration aggravates national economies.

Technology: Technology advances continue but mainly in the wealthier regions. Progress slows down as public funds are increasingly being used for security provision.

Equity and Conflict: As economic, social, and environmental conditions worsen in many places, the growth in the excluded population takes place in informal settlements in the cities. Many of the poor try to migrate to rich countries and rising numbers of them resort to illegal entry. Wealthier groups focus on self-protection and create impenetrable walls akin to the present day "gated communities." Within the walls, life proceeds with some semblance of "order." Outside the walls, people are excluded from security and economic benefits.

Between the two worlds, resources and waste cross the border in a distorted manner. Waste produced within the wall is transported to the outside and puts pressure on unprotected natural systems. Products from outside the wall including illegal drugs and products derived from rare species are imported inside, and money and

military supplies are exported in return.

Environment: Environmental deterioration is widespread in both wealthy and poorer regions. Exploding urbanisation poses burdens on already overextended infrastructure, leading to more problems with air pollution and lack of access to clean water and sanitation. A gradual rise in sea level, punctuated by severe storms, makes the impacts of climate change increasingly apparent. In the poorer parts of the Asia-Pacific region, the loss of life is significant and the financial losses from disasters seriously damage economies. Even in the wealthier parts of the region, where there are no dramatic losses of life, the financial losses from property damage are staggering.

Sustainability First

Values: In response to the social, economic and environmental concerns affecting many regions of the world, people begin to embrace the idea of a "new sustainability paradigm" that promises to transcend conventional values and lifestyles. More affluent people and groups begin to seek the values of simplicity, cooperation and community, instead of consumerism, competition, and individualism. Positive attitudes for peacemaking processes, creating the foundation for greater understanding and cooperation, are more apparent. hrough communication across the regions, rediscovery of an environmental idealism to forge a global community is fuelled.

What lies behind the change in the paradigm is a willingness to reflect upon the positive and negative aspects of individual actions and legacies as well as those of other cultures. More and more people recognise the emptiness of the prevailing market-oriented paradigm. Discussions are held about the spread of globalisation, and history is re-examined. Asia's cultural tradition of self-sufficiency and the middle-way is promoted as the basis of an alternative lifestyle.

Key Actors: A feature of this scenario is the variety of the key actors and their interactions. The key actors include government, industry, NGOs, academics, and small groups of interested citizens. A multitude of dialogues on the need for action take place among the actors, through internet communication and international events. The dialogues are successful due to increasing participation, the emphasis on presenting the positive aspects of a social transformation rather than the negative consequences, and support by the media.

Transformations of organisations into more effective ones are observed at the international and regional levels. Governments often find themselves trying to keep up with what is happening in other sectors and at other levels. On the other hand, governments realise that laissez-faire policies do nothing to correct flaws in market practices and they continue to have a pivotal regulatory role.

Policies: Changes are seen in policy-making processes. Policy becomes more firmly grounded in scientific research. The goal of policy becomes to support the efforts of individuals and groups to pursue sustainable development. The importance of existing multilateral agreements starts to be reappraised. Numerous policy shifts are driven by demand for more participation, transparency and accountability on all sides. They include expansion of micro-credit and a shift in the nature of taxes and subsidies towards promoting more sustainable habits of resource use. Problems are looked at from a broader perspective, with a view to recognising limits and identifying solutions.

Economic Development: Perceptions of development are fundamentally shifted. The whole notion of economic development becomes subsumed within the broader concept of human development. Data to track development are measured, analysed and presented in a more disaggregated manner, revealing discrepancies between genders and social groups, or urban and rural areas.

Technology: Advances in technology are driven by the changing preferences of both consumers and producers. Valuable support is provided by small and large businesses, in partnership with NGOs, in technology transfer and the whole life cycle of projects and products. Developments in ICTs act as a natural medium for a new consciousness, providing a sense of immediacy, connectivity, and unity to a diverse and pluralistic movement. New technologies play an instrumental role in achieving social goals, such as improving energy and water use efficiency, desalination, and medical technologies and treatment.

Equity and Conflict: Societies enjoy more equity and less conflict. Incomes per capita converge since wealthier persons shift their emphasis away from market-oriented production and consumption. Cooperation in solving social and environmental issues prompts moves to address the tensions at the root of many ongoing conflicts.

Environment: Lifestyle changes in the Sustainability First societies will mitigate the environmental pressures expected to occur in the Market First and Security First scenarios. Quantitative estimates show that Sustainability First is expected to mitigate environmental damage better than other scenarios in many cases. Expected adverse impacts in the year 2032 are the least among all scenarios in areas such as population living in areas with severe water stress, land area impacted by infrastructure expansion, and municipal sold waste generation. Figure 21 shows the percentage of the population living in areas with severe water stress in the Asia-Pacific region. Only in the Sustainability case will the percentage increase be avoided in the region.

Figure 21: Percentage of Population Living in Areas with Severe Water Stress in Asia and the Pacific
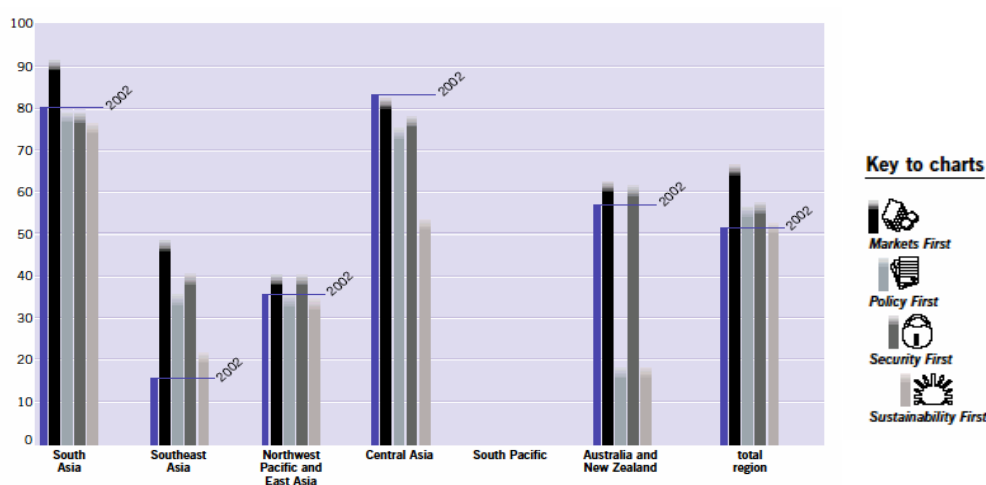
Source: UNEP, 2002. GEO 3

However, Sustainability First is not always the most effective scenario in reducing environmental burdens. The environmental burden in Sustainability First may exceed that in Policy First for some indicators, especially emissions of energy-related air pollutants and carbon dioxide in Asia. One reason might be that the policy measures introduced to achieve the target under Policy First, such as regulations on emission and economic activities, and government-funded advanced technologies, work more powerfully to reduce the emissions than the softer policies developed under the Sustainability First paradigm.

2. APFED FUTURE VISION FOR ASIA-PACIFIC

Likely Path to Sustainable Societies
The four scenarios outlined above merely present hypothetical futures. The real future is likely to be a mixture of elements contained in each scenario. This is true not only at regional and subregional levels, but also at national and local levels. The future is not independent of the current situation and the momentum of key driving forces such as population and the economy is likely to be maintained for some time. Thus, even if a conscious scenario such as Sustainability First could be adopted now, elements of other scenarios would remain dominant over many years. Nevertheless, the four scenarios inform us of the broad directions this region (as a whole, or each nation, or community) should move towards to ensure a truly sustainable future.

Given current developments in the region, the Market First Scenario is considered most plausible, at least in the short run. Certainly, the region needs continued economic growth to deal with poverty and the growing population. However, market forces tend to destroy traditional social structures, resulting in increasing

inequity, and promoting unsustainable lifestyles that result in environmental deterioration. Environmental resources are already overstretched in the region, as indicated above. Poverty remains serious despite economic growth recorded over many years. Population will continue to increase in developing countries. The cultural changes, environmental stresses, poverty, and population increases inevitably make this scenario unsustainable in the long run.

The Policy Reform Scenario provides an improved future. Under this scenario, a balance will be sought between economic, social and environmental concerns. More and more countries in the region are moving towards the storylines assumed under this scenario. The scenario assumes measures such as carbon taxes, and strengthened global and regional treaties to strike a balance between development and the environment. However, measures assumed in this scenario to ensure environmental sustainability are likely to pale in the face of strong economic expansion and continued population growth. Although small gains could be achieved in various parts of the region, the overall trend of unsustainable production and consumption is likely to prevail under this scenario.

The Security First Scenario is obviously a catastrophic future. However, such possibilities exist and could materialise if resources continue to be allocated in an unfair fashion. Disparities in income between North and South, urban and rural, or rich and poor, could cause social unrest. Sustained social unrest may necessitate stringent security measures, which will make introduction of sensible policies almost impossible. This will invariably lead to serious environmental deterioration and further social inequity.

Only the Sustainability First Scenario provides, in the views of APFED members, long-term solutions to the enormous challenges confronting this region. Although it entails a paradigm shift in the way we collectively look at the economy, society and the environment, it draws from Asia's rich cultural heritage. Quality of life, not economic income, will be the prime concern for all. Basic human rights are respected, democracies are fully embraced, and human activities are conducted fully within the carrying capacity of the Earth. Many decision makers in the region may see this scenario as very distant and unrealistic, given the number of people living at a subsistence level. More open-minded discussions should take place in every corner of the region to understand what really needs to be done for long-term sustainability.

Unless security quickly deteriorates, the region will continue to move along the lines assumed under the Market Scenario in the short run. Gradually more measures contained in the Policy Reform Scenario could be introduced particularly in several proactive countries. As poverty could intensify as population grows, the ongoing economic expansion of the region, as the world's main production centre (mainly through intensive foreign direct investment), is a welcome prospect, given the built-in safety system is established to minimise pollution. Gradually this pattern of economic expansion should spread to other parts of the region, and increase the overall economic standards of the entire region. Past developments in Japan, Republic of Korea, and Taiwan Province of China, and more recent developments in Southeast Asian countries and the coastal provinces of China indicate that further economic expansion will continue to depend on exports to the West, at least in the medium term. Creating enabling policy environments that expand access to markets in developed countries could thus contribute significantly to developing countries' growth. There will also be a massive increase in consumption across the region, as average disposable incomes grow. This raises the possibility of more self-reliant economic growth, and the role played by trade within the region will be more important than in the past. To maximise the potential of intra-regional trade, the Asia-Pacific region should move ahead with trade facilitation measures and policies such as conclusion of FTAs, between countries in the region that will help build dynamic economies and at the same time are environmentally and socially sound societies.

Eventually a time will come when a paradigm shift towards full sustainability becomes inescapable. The future challenges for the region are formidable. Developing countries, in particular, have no time to lose and no resources to waste before realising a modest but sustainable future. Leapfrogging of technologies is happening in a few sectors, but leapfrogging with policies for sustainable development is equally urgent. Simply following the traditional pattern of economic development set by the West, characterised by mass production and mass consumption, will not lead to sustainable development. This region must employ a new development paradigm by fully integrating social and environmental concerns. A constructive process should be initiated to conceive innovative policies suitable to this region, subregions, nations, and communities, bearing in mind the relative strengths and weaknesses.

Vision of Sustainable Societies in Asia and the Pacific
The results of the scenario analysis, or "lessons from the future", illustrate that Sustainability First is the only scenario that provides adequate long-term solutions. To provoke broad and open-minded discussion on innovative policies enabling the shift to the path to building sustainable societies, APFED proposes the following Vision of Sustainable Societies in Asia and the Pacific. APFED believes that the Vision should be linked with specific goals and time-bound milestones, and that political will across the entire region should concentrate on achieving these goals, to ultimately realise the Vision.

In the interim, the MDGs are recognised political commitments, agreed upon by world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, which set forth an ambitious agenda for achieving a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Eight goals have been set (with 18 targets and 48 indicators), most for 2015, using 1990 as a benchmark. The goals can be summarised as those of halving poverty, universal completion of primary school, gender equality in education, reducing child mortality by two thirds, reducing maternal mortality by three quarters, halting the spread of pandemic diseases, halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. These goals were reconfirmed at WSSD in Johannesburg in 2002 and are included in JPOI.

Box 11: Millennium Development Goals

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
   Target for 2015: Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger.
   More than a billion people still live on less than US$1 a day: sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and parts of Europe and Central Asia are falling short of the poverty target.

2. **Achieve universal primary education**
   Target for 2015: Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.
   As many as 113 million children do not attend school, but the target is within reach. India, for example, should have 95% of its children in school by 2005.

3. **Promote gender equality and empower women**
   Targets for 2005 and 2015: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.
   Two-thirds of illiterates are women, and the rate of employment among women is two-thirds that of men. The proportion of seats in parliaments held by women is increasing, reaching about one third in Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa.

4. **Reduce child mortality**
   Target for 2015: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five
   Every year nearly 11 million young children die before their fifth birthday, mainly from preventable illnesses, but that number is down from 15 million in 1980.

5. **Improve maternal health**
   Target for 2015: Reduce by three-quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth.
   In the developing world, the risk of dying in childbirth is one in 48, but virtually all countries now have safe motherhood programmes.

6. **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
   Target for 2015: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
   Forty million people are living with HIV, including five million newly infected in 2001. Countries like Brazil, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda have shown that the spread of HIV can be stemmed.

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7. **Ensure environmental sustainability**
   Targets:
   ➢ *Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources*
   ➢ *By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water*
   ➢ *By 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers*

   More than one billion people lack access to safe drinking water and more than two billion lack sanitation. During the 1990s, however, nearly one billion people gained access to safe water and the same number to sanitation.

8. **Develop a global partnership for development**
   Targets:
   ➢ *Develop further an open trading and financial system that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally*
   ➢ *Address the least developed countries' special needs, and the special needs of landlocked and small island developing states*
   ➢ *Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems*
   ➢ *Develop decent and productive work for youth*
   ➢ *In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries*
   ➢ *In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies*

Although the economies of Asia and the Pacific are growing faster than those of any other region, and its strong economic growth has lowered poverty rates faster than anywhere else in the world, achieving the MDGs remains a significant challenge for the region. A recent study shows that the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 59 per 1,000 in 1990 to 44 in 2001 in developing countries in East Asia and the Pacific, but even at this rate of progress the region will fall short of achieving a two-thirds reduction by 2015. Those countries also lag in infrastructure to serve basic needs. At present only 76% of the population in East Asia and the Pacific receives water from an improved source, 46% have access to improved sanitation facilities, and less than a quarter of its roads are paved.

To move towards sustainable societies in the region, APFED sees attainment of the MDGs as a prerequisite, while noting that extended efforts are required to achieve the region's sustainable development in the longer term. Even beyond 2015, the target year for the MDGs, the fundamental values highlighted in the Millennium Development Declaration, i.e., freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility, should be maintained. Based on this global orientation, the following vision could be drawn up for a sustainable society in Asia and the Pacific.

➢ **Peace:** The basis for sustainable development is peace and stability throughout the world. Physical conflict destroys the social, economic and environmental foundations upon which sustainable societies may be constructed. In its ultimate vision, Asia and the Pacific should be free from the scourge of war and terrorism, whether within or between states. Significant demilitarisation, if achieved, will release the huge amounts spent on military budgets and enable sustainable development investments throughout the region.

➢ **Social cohesion:** Asia and the Pacific should establish democratic and efficient governance systems at regional, national and local levels, to fully address social cohesion and alleviate social conflict and confrontation by sensitively managing religious and ethnic differences, disputes over resources, and inequities among different social groups that may constitute root causes for violent conflicts. Integration of all social groups and individuals in decision-making processes, and elimination of all forms of discrimination based upon race, colour and religion are essential.

➢ **Empowerment of all the stakeholders:** Capacities of all the stakeholders, including central and local governments, the private sector, NGOs and other civil society organisations, communities, and scientific and academic bodies should be sufficiently enhanced so that they can collectively or individually address

any serious threats related to sustainable development, drawing upon their own strengths and functions.

➢ **Sustainable economic growth:** With its diversity as an asset, Asia and the Pacific should maintain dynamism to achieve modest but steady economic growth, thereby freeing everyone from poverty, and supporting their basic needs. As the growth should be sustainable and environmentally benign, decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation is promoted by:

- Achieving a less materialised society, and service and knowledge-based economy: the entire society and the market should shift their focus of production and consumption patterns to knowledge-based and locally-added values rather than material-intensive products based on mass exploitation of non-renewable resources;

- A shift to renewable energy: in view of the rapidly growing concern about global warming, serious air pollution, the need for energy supply diversification, and long-term energy security, the priority of energy sources should be shifted from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass, geothermal and micro-hydro, and in the longer term hydrogen and fuel cells, to the extent supported by the technological potentials of different renewable energy sources;

- Establishing a "sufficiency economy": the "sufficiency economy" is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct and way of life for the entire populace. A paradigm shift is needed to decouple quality of life from mass consumption. It applies to the society's pattern of consumption, and its twin, production, and beyond that to individual, family and community choices to avoid any form of economic growth that is harmful to the environment.

➢ **Global Leadership:** With their experience of successfully achieving sustainable development on a regional basis, countries in Asia and the Pacific should be able to take a lead in global dialogue in shaping the sustainable future for the entire globe.

Guiding Principles for Designing Innovative Policies

To initiate the shift along the sustainable development path toward the long-term vision, innovative policies should be articulated for the region. However, with the recognition that achieving sustainability is not just a technical problem, but also based on people's mentality, such policies would be most effectively designed around ethical principles such as those advocated by the Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society for the 21st Century. The Earth Charter was developed as a response to the call made by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. The Earth Charter Initiative was launched in 1994, and finalised in March 2000 through full participation of thousands of individuals and hundreds of organisations from all regions of the world. The Earth Charter has four principles: (i) respect the Earth and life in all its diversity, (ii) care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love, (iii) build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful, and (iv) secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

These global principles are extremely useful in guiding regional policy actions to achieve the goals and visions for the region. For example, the principles that lead to strengthening of democratic institutions at all levels of decision making are essential in enhancing social cohesion as a longer-term objective. Policy actions that promote participation of civil society and individuals in decision-making, as well as transparency and accountability of governance systems, are guided by the principles. Empowerment of each group and individual through education should be a basic requirement.

Recognising that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has intrinsic value regardless of its worth to human beings, innovative policies should be introduced to enhance ecological integrity. While development strategies should be integrated with environmental conservation and concerns about social cohesion, the Earth Charter principles also imply that human activities should not exceed the regenerative capacity of natural systems, and no serious threat should be imposed, for example, by introducing non-native

organisms into the environment. This reflects closely the principles of the ecosystem approach which places the environment at the centre of all human activities, biological, economic or social. It is noteworthy that the principles are fully compatible with emerging trends in recent policy redirections such as (i) integration of environmental consideration with economic development planning and (ii) revision of current production and consumption patterns prevalent in developed countries into those based more upon quality of life rather than quantity of goods and services. More specifically, the latter policy trend emphasises (i) that producers should be innovative in creating economic benefits from less material-intensive resources, and (ii) that consumers should become less personally possessive with respect to material goods, and more appreciative of the functions that those goods provide.

Above all, the region must share and advance the legacy of Stockholm (1972), the World Charter of Nature adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1982, and the Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) summits—all in support of meeting the MDGs. The prioritisation of capacity-building and implementation of national environmental laws and policies and multilateral environmental agreements has to be a regional initiative. Finally, the region needs to consider a regional treaty on sustainable development, on the pattern of ASEAN and Africa, to provide an over-arching vision for inter-regional and intra-regional commitment and collaboration. The IUCN Draft Covenant on Environment and Development could provide a check list for the content of such a regional treaty.

Regional Perspectives

The above principles must be applied flexibly to different parts of the world according to local conditions. The Asia-Pacific region has its own unique features and must chart its own course. It is and will continue to be the most populous region in the world. Traditional social structures and strong family values are still maintained. Unique local cultures coupled with diverse religions and lifestyles are some of the main attractions of the region. Indeed, the core question is how these essential features could become central to sustainable development in a globalising world, in accordance with the principles described above.

The region has been settled by humans for at least 40,000 years. Over that period, myriad differences have arisen in response to the environmental challenges faced, from the alpine regions of the Himalayas to the coral atolls of the Pacific Islands. Some of these differences became rules embodied in formal religions (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shinto, etc.), while others remained as folk-lore or indigenous knowledge. In each of these social traditions there are common elements, such as respect for nature, modest lifestyles, and caring for our neighbours. Many of them are linked to traditional knowledge that promotes self-reliance (e.g., Gandhi-ism in India, "*mottainai*" in Japan, King Bhumipol's sufficiency economy or middle way in Thailand) and values which appreciate quality over quantity, durability over obsolescence, natural over artificial, organic over chemical, service over machines, etc. Such traditional values have been steadily eroded by Western capitalist, market-first views based on mass production and consumption, supported by and constantly promoted by advertising. These elements, combined with modern technology, can become the moral renaissance that will underpin the paradigm shift towards sustainability in the region. The vision and challenge then becomes the creation of an Asia-Pacific economy that trades with the rest of the world by promoting this renaissance of traditional values.

Respecting the rich diversity of the region is essential in promoting truly sustainable societies particularly at the community level. Strong family ties, communal spirit and the self-help mentality rooted in many communities in the region, if put in a proper context, could contribute to developing new lifestyles fully compatible with sustainable societies. Indeed, the key to success is to promote a process by which local communities empower themselves by fully embracing their intrinsic values. A broad policy environment that enables bottom-up initiatives in all corners of the region will be a necessity. It may seem paradoxical, but as the globalisation of economies and other social conditions progresses across the world, it becomes even more important to build local communities that make the best use of their natural and cultural heritage.

The great diversity observed in the region also results naturally in different focuses of sustainable policies in each country. These differences, if combined appropriately, will contribute to enriching lifestyles in the region, and open new avenues to sustainable economic growth.

The region's large population is often viewed as a serious challenge to constructing sustainable societies in the future. Certainly more economic growth is needed for the huge and still increasing population to survive,

although the region has already been strained by the limits of its environmental carrying capacity. At the same time, measures to control population growth at levels in line with the carrying capacity of the region's environment are necessary. However, throughout the past several decades, the labour-intensive industry development strategy supported by the large population has been one of the main driving engines for the remarkable development in a number of countries in the region. And this fact suggests the possibility that the Asia-Pacific region will also become the future growth engine of the world with its huge population as an asset. It is, after all, the talent and ingenuity of people that will enable sustainable societies in the future. If properly trained and motivated, the huge population of the region could be turned into an agent of change, and the source for promoting sustainable development.

In the 21st century, diversity, rich human resources and other assets treasured in the region could enable it to become the global leader in pursuing truly sustainable societies. A sustainable Asia-Pacific is indeed a prerequisite for global sustainability. Challenges facing the region remain as dominant as ever, but challenges could be turned into opportunities if the strengths of this region are fully capitalised upon. This region has the largest human capital, diversified religions, rich cultures, close-knit societies, and wisdom handed down over many generations. What need to be added to these existing assets are clear vision, strong political will and flexible social partnerships to move along a truly sustainable path, as the world leader for the 21st century.