1 Introduction

Southeast Asia, as referred here, embraces the 10 countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Although the environments are diverse, a large part of the subregion lies within the tropics. Rapid economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s has made Southeast Asia the most populous and developed part of the tropics in the world (Brookfield, 1993) with megacities and intensively used agricultural land. With high rates of production and consumption, cities in the area are responsible for environmental degradation in terms of air pollution, inland water pollution and coastal pollution (Tai-Chee, 1999). What uninhabited and unlogged rain forest remains has been seriously damaged by commercial logging with insufficient oversight, plantation agriculture, fuelwood extraction and a lack of land security for upland dwellers (AESAN, 1997).

Deforestation causes massive soil erosion, increased sedimentation of lakes, reservoirs and irrigation systems, reduced recharge to groundwater, loss of biodiversity, flooding and the destruction of agricultural lands and coastal areas. In the 1990s, smoke haze arising from land and forest fires has spread across national borders to become a common threat to the subregion. Marine biodiversity is also endangered by over-fishing as well as land-based/marine-based pollution. Such environmental damage poses a region-wide threat, not just a local or national threat.

Southeast Asia has a longer history of subregional environmental cooperation than other subregions in Asia and the Pacific. This has a great deal to do with its geopolitical picture. In the 1960s, the subregion was divided by ideological conflict and war. These political disturbances gave impetus to five non-communist countries\(^1\) to join forces in friendship and cooperation on security and peace. ASEAN was thus established in 1967. Its primary concern was security rather than economic cooperation. In order to enhance regional stability, it has promoted active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields. In addition to cooperation on political security and economic issues, ASEAN emphasized "functional cooperation" between member states, including on science and technology, culture and information, social development, drugs and narcotics control, civil service, and the environment (ASEAN Secretariat, 1995).

Cooperation on the environment began in 1977 with the 1st ASEAN Environmental Program (ASEP). Since then, several programs, plans, declarations and resolutions have been adopted and implemented. The organizational structure for the cooperation has developed gradually.

That is not to say that the collective activities have always been implemented effectively and

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\(^1\)Those include: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
sufficiently. In fact, implementation of the plans and programs has often run into serious financial
difficulties, and a large number of projects that failed to attract external funding have simply not
been implemented. The overall effectiveness of the entire plan has been thus limited. An
assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of subregional environmental cooperation in
Southeast Asia is called for.

This paper is such an assessment, describing not only the cooperative plans and programs
themselves but also the actors, processes and institutions involved. It addresses the following
questions: By whom and how has environmental cooperation been addressed, identified and
promoted? How do actors interact? How have basic subregional cooperative mechanisms been
developed? How do the mechanisms respond to environmental issues?

2 Overview

The conclusion of the ASEAN Environmental Programme (ASEP) in 1977 marked the start of
ASEAN subregional cooperation. Since then, a number of declarations, resolutions and an
agreement have been adopted, and several action plans and programs have been developed and
implemented. Table 3.1 shows major events and collective initiatives on the environment, together
with major action plans and programs.

ASEAN Environmental Programme (ASEP) I: 1978-1982

The ASEP I marks the beginning of ASEAN environmental cooperation. The UNEP (United
Nations Environment Programme) Regional Advisory visited all five ASEAN countries in 1977 in
order to consult with each government, and developed a draft program containing a list of
recommended areas of collaboration. The nature and scope of ASEP I was comprehensive. The
program identified six priority areas and listed a number of projects and activities. The priority
areas cover marine environment; environmental management, including environmental impact
assessment; nature conservation and terrestrial ecosystems; industry and the environment;
environmental education and training; and environmental information.

In 1978, the draft program was submitted to the 1st Meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group on
the Environment (AEGE), where experts from all five ASEAN countries met. Participants at the
meeting selected priority areas and began some activities, such as developing and testing new
methodologies in environmental impact assessment, building an inventory of endangered species,
and conducting surveys of the urban air/water quality monitoring capabilities of national
governments.

Under ASEP I, emphasis was placed on identifying activities which would benefit the ASEAN
subregion and its member states. A series of technical meetings and workshops were held during
this period with the participation of expert from member countries, international organizations and
NGOs such as UNEP, ESCAP, FAO, IUCN, and WWF.

UNEP took marine environment initiatives to develop the East Asian Sea Programme. It
provided direct financial support FAO, UNESCO, WHO, IMCO, ESCAP and other UN agencies to
undertake studies on various aspects of the marine environment. Based on the studies, UNEP
prepared a draft action plan. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural
Resources (IUCN) and UNEP drafted a nature conservation action plan and formally adopted it at
the 4th AEGE meeting in 1981. The 6th AEGE also adopted an action plan on environmental
education and training drafted by UNESCO/UNEP in 1983.

With regard to institutional arrangements, the AEGE meeting was held annually, acting as a decision-making body. In 1980, the AEGE became a sub-committee of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST).

Each country was required in turn (by alphabetical order) to serve as interim coordinator in implementing the program.

The 1st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME) was held in 1981. Participants at the AMME published the Manila Declaration on the ASEAN Environment, which approved ASEP and recommended its further endorsement. Thereafter, the AMME has been held every three years.

**Table 3.1** Chronological table of major ASEAN initiatives on environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Events/Declarations</th>
<th>Action Plans/Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1981  | Manila Declaration  
Jakarta Consensus on Tropical Forestry |  |
| 1984  | ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves  
Bangkok Declaration  
Joint Communiqué | ASEP II (1983-87) |
| 1985  | Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources |  |
| 1987  | Jakarta Resolution on Sustainable Development  
3rd AMME | ASEP III (1988-92) |
| 1990  | Kuala Lumpur Accord on the Environment and Development  
ASEAN Common Stand on UNCED  
4th AMME |  |
| 1992  | Singapore Resolution on Environment and Development  
5th AMME | ASPEN (1994-98) |
| 1994  | Bandar Seri Begawan Resolution on Environment and Development  
6th AMME | ACTPT (1995-)  
RHAP (1997-)  
ASPEN II (1999-2004) |
| 1997  | Jakarta Declaration on Environment and Development  
7th AMME  
1st Ministerial Meeting on Haze (AMMH) |  |
| 1998  | 2nd AMMH |  |
| 1999  | 3rd AMMH |  |
| 2000  | 8th AMME |  |

Source: Author
ASEP II: 1983-1987

ASEP II was approved at the 7th AEGE meeting in 1984. In addition to the five original countries of ASEAN, a new member, Brunei Darussalam also joined the 7th AEGE and agreed to

<Table 3.2> Major activities under ASEP I and II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority areas</th>
<th>Major activities/achievements under ASEP I</th>
<th>Major activities/projects planned for ASEP II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental management including</td>
<td>Succeeded in confirming the interest and willingness of ASEAN countries in employing EIA as a management tool.</td>
<td>- Development of environmental planning methodologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environmental impact assessment (EIA)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Demonstration projects on environmentally sound development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Development of EIA guidelines and its application in industrial projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Development of a regional network of institutions related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Development and promotion of a regional network of selected protected areas of significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Promotion of scientific and systematic training program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implementation of a regional instrument in regulating international trade in endangered species of flora and fauna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and environment</td>
<td>Recognizing that the urban environmental quality management of Singapore could serve as a model for other countries, promoted sharing of its experience</td>
<td>- Technology Transfer in organo-industrial pollution control (funded by UNDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Upgrading ASEAN capability in air pollution control and monitoring (with financial/technical support of EEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparation of policy guidelines on transportation, collection treatment and disposal of hazardous substances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and training</td>
<td>An Action Plan prepared by UNESCO and adopted by AEGE in 1983</td>
<td>Promoting environmental education through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Development of curriculum materials for formal/non-formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Training on pollution control/wastewater control/hazardous waste treatment/nature conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental information &amp;</td>
<td>- Developed country profiles on environmental situation</td>
<td>- Training workshops for journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environmental data</td>
<td>- Publication of ASEAN newsletter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Promotion of World Environment Day (WED)</td>
<td>- Training workshops for NGOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- ASEAN newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Regional Collaboration on WED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Environmental information and data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine environment</td>
<td>An East Asian Sea (EAS) Action Plan prepared by UNEP and reviewed by AEGE in 1980</td>
<td>The 6th AEGE Standing Committee in 1981 decided that the EAS Action Plan should be considered as a UNEP Program. Thereafter, AEGE has only monitored the progress of the Program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
consider participating in the various activities of the ASEP II.

ASEP II was developed through the continual implementation and reviewing of ASEP I. Recognizing a general increase in the awareness of environmental issues in ASEAN countries, member states considered that ASEP I succeeded in fostering an exemplary spirit of environmental cooperation among ASEAN countries. ASEP II was designed to be more action-oriented, emphasizing demonstration projects.

Table 3.2 shows the major activities and achievements under ASEP I and the major activities planned during ASEP II.

Although the nature of ASEP I was comprehensive, the implementation of the program had been ad hoc depending mostly on the contribution of UNEP as the only major external financial source. The result was that ASEP I failed to take a systematic approach. Recognizing the constraints, contact with potential donor sources was promoted under ASEP II. To this end, ASEAN itself has established various formal dialogues bilaterally and multilaterally. It was thus envisaged that the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST), an parent committee of AEGE, was to share the responsibility of AEGE in acquiring additional external financial resources to implement parts of ASEAP II (Koh, 1997).

ASEP III: 1988-1992

ASEP III was prepared by the AEGE with the assistance of the UNEP-ROAP and the Bureau of Science and Technology of the ASEAN secretariat. The program was circulated to all six ASEAN member countries, endorsed by the 10th AEGE meeting, and adopted by the 3rd AMME held in 1987.

ASEP III set the goals, objectives, programs and activities for ASEAN environmental cooperation from 1988 to 1992. The program was developed through continual implementation and reviewing of ASEP I and II. In addition to the six priority areas selected for ASEP I and II, the area of urban environment was added to the list since ASEAN countries recognized multifarious environmental problems in the urban centers of ASEAN -- problems which are not necessarily related to industry but associated with rapidly growing populations and inadequate urban management.

Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources: signed in 1985

The Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources is the only environmental treaty of ASEAN.

Since the early stages of ASEAN environmental cooperation, ASEAN countries have attached importance to nature conservation at regional levels with particular emphasis on tropical forestry and issued a few declarations and communiqués. Those include the Jakarta Consensus on ASEAN Tropical Forestry published at the 3rd Meeting of ASEAN Economic Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry, and the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves adopted at the 2nd AMME held in 1984.

Convinced that an essential means to achieve concerted action on nature conservation was the conclusion and implementation of an agreement, ASEP II organizers listed agreement preparation as one of the major activities. The Joint Communiqué of the 2nd AMME also endorsed the preparations.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources was reached in 1985. The objective of the agreement is individual and joint action for the conservation and management
of living resources and other natural elements on which member states of the ASEAN depend.

Being fully aware of the inter-relationship between nature conservation and socio-economic development, the agreement requires each participating country to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to be coordinated within the framework of a conservation strategy for the region.

The agreement was concluded and signed by foreign ministers of all six ASEAN countries in 1985. Of the six ASEAN member states at the time, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand ratified it in 1986, while Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore have not. So, the agreement has not entered into force.

**ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Environment (ASPEN): 1994-1998**

After the conclusion and implementation of a series of ASEPs, it was recognized that a new ASEAN action plan should be developed taking into account new developments following the outcome of UNCED held in 1992.

A new ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Environment was subsequently prepared with the support of UNEP and ESCAP and in consultation with all member countries. Agreed upon in 1994, the plan consisted of 10 main strategic points and 27 supporting actions. The plan will be discussed in more detail in the latter part of this paper.

**ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Transboundary Pollution (ACPTP): 1995-**

The issue of transboundary pollution was first highlighted at the 4th AMME and was identified as among the major environmental concerns of ASEAN by leaders attending the 1992 ASEAN Summit in Singapore.

At the Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment held in 1994, the ministers also discussed the problems and agreed that ASEAN should actively collaborate to build up the expertise and capacity of member countries to address the problems and minimize their impact. The result was the conclusion and adoption of an ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Transboundary Pollution at AMME in 1995.

The plan consists of three program areas -- transboundary atmospheric pollution, transboundary ship-borne pollution and transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. The plan elaborates the objectives, strategies, activities and institutional arrangements in each program area and lists potential sources of technical expertise and financial assistance that are available or can be mobilized to assist the plan’s implementation.

The plan also outlines the steps required for its implementation and for evaluation of progress.

**Regional Haze Action Plan (RHAP): 1997**

In 1991, 1994 and 1997, smoke haze from land and forest fires spread across national boundaries. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore were particularly hurt by the haze. The Philippines and Thailand were affected to a lesser degree. The severity and extent of the smoke haze pollution were unprecedented, causing economic loss and health damage to millions of people across the region.

In light of the latest haze disaster, participants at the AMME agreed on the Regional Haze Action Plan. They had previously agreed on an ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Transboundary Pollution, which included transboundary atmospheric pollution as one of the three-transboundary pollution problems to be dealt with. The plan sets out cooperative measures needed among ASEAN
member countries to address the problem of smoke haze in the region arising from land and forest fires.

Hanoi Plan of Action: 1998

In parallel with the above initiatives, the Hanoi Plan of Action, the first in a series of comprehensive long-term visions adopted at the ASEAN Summit in 1998, identified 15 activities for environmental protection and sustainable development to be undertaken, with emphasis on transboundary haze control. Box 3.1 shows a list of the activities.

<Box 3.1> Activities to Protect the Environment and Promote Sustainable Development

VI. PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Fully implement the ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Transboundary Pollution with particular emphasis on the Regional Haze Action Plan by the year 2001.
6.2 Strengthen the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre with emphasis on the ability to monitor forest and land fires and provide early warning on transboundary haze by the year 2001.
6.3 Establish the ASEAN Regional Research and Training Centre for Land and Forest Fire Management by the year 2004.
6.4 Strengthen the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation by establishing networks of relevant institutions and implement collaborative training and research activities by the year 2001.
6.5 Promote regional coordination for the protection of the ASEAN Heritage Parks and Reserves.
6.6 Develop a framework and improve regional coordination for the integrated protection and management of coastal zones by the year 2001.
6.7 Strengthen institutional and legal capacities to implement Agenda 21 and other international environmental agreements by the year 2001.
6.8 Harmonise the environmental databases of Member Countries by the year 2001.
6.9 Implement an ASEAN regional water conservation programme by the year 2001.
6.10 Establish a regional centre or network for the promotion of environmentally sound technologies by the year 2004.
6.11 Formulate and adopt an ASEAN Protocol on access to genetic resources by the year 2004.
6.13 Implement the Framework to Achieve Long-Term Environmental Goals for Ambient Air and River Water Qualities for ASEAN Countries.
6.14 Enhance regional efforts in addressing climatic change.
6.15 Enhance public information and education in awareness of and participation in environmental and sustainable development issues.


3 The Case of ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action (1994-98)

The 1990s have witnessed further enhanced ASEAN environmental cooperation. After a series of ASEAN Environmental Programmes (ASEPs), ASEAN countries recognized that the programs provided a solid basis for further cooperation. They figured the most significant contribution of the programs was "the maturing of the environmental agencies in the respective
ASEAN countries” (ASEAN Secretariat, 1994). It was recognized, however, that the implementation and effectiveness of the programs were influenced by “inadequacy of financing to support the activities,” "institutional deficiencies,” and "inadequate follow-up mechanisms.” So, ASEAN countries came to realize the need to strengthen the cooperative mechanism.

On the other hand, ASEAN and its member countries needed to take ASEAN in a new direction, to address the environmental implications of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and to establish ASEAN's position in an international forum such as the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Taking all the above into consideration, the ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action (ASPEN) was created in 1994.

The plan, together with the Regional Haze Action Plan (RHAP), took a leading part in ASEAN environmental cooperation in the 1990s. It is believed that careful observation of the ASPEN will deepen understanding of ASEAN environmental cooperation mechanisms.

3.1 Brief history and Objectives

History

It was at the 4th AMME in 1990 that a new stage of the enhanced environmental cooperation began. The major decisions of the AMME were to:

1) Upgrade the status of the ASEAN Expert Group to the level of ASEAN Senior Officials on the environment
2) Adopt the Kuala Lumpur Accord on Environment and Development
3) Adopt Common ASEAN Stand on major global environmental issues².

The establishment of ASOEN (see below) signifies the importance that ASEAN attaches to environmental concerns and the region's interest to play a greater role in mitigating global environmental problems. That is, ASOEN is to contribute to strengthening ASEAN cooperation on the exchange of information, technology, resources and manpower in dealing with international environmental concerns. ASOEN was also mandated to help ensure the integration of environmental dimensions in the decisions of other ASEAN Committees.

Another step was taken with the recommendation to formulate an ASEAN strategy and action plan for improving and strengthening cooperation, as emphasized in the Kuala Lumpur Accord. Participants at the following AMME in 1992 also called for strategies to strengthen cooperation and responses to new agenda such as AFTA and global issues.

The leaders at ASOEN in 1993 decided to prepare a new ASEAN Action Plan and entrusted the task to the ASEAN Secretariat. With support provided by UNEP and ESCAP and in consultation with all the member countries, the Aspen was drafted. The Plan was endorsed at the 6th ASOEN, and adopted at the 6th AMME in 1994.

Objectives

The ASPEN has the following five objectives:

a) to respond to specific recommendations of Agenda 21 requiring priority action in ASEAN;
b) to introduce policy measures and promote institutional development that encourage the integration of environmental factors in all developmental processes both at the national and

² The Common Stand was developed for the purpose of preparing for ASEAN's participation at future ministerial meetings such as the UNCED in 1992.
regional levels;
c) to establish long term goals on environmental quality and work towards harmonized environmental quality standards for the ASEAN region;
d) to harmonize policy directions and enhance operational and technical cooperation on environmental matters, and undertake joint actions to address common environmental problems; and
e) to study the implications of AFTA on the environment and take steps to integrate sound trade policies with sound environmental policies.

3.2 An institutional (organizational) structure

When the Expert Group (AEGE) was elevated to become the Senior Officials (ASOEN) in 1989, the basic institutional structure for ASEAN environmental cooperation began taking the shape it has today (the structure is shown in Figure 3.1). The main actors are the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on the Environment (ASOEN) and its subsidiary bodies (Working Groups), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME), and the ASEAN Secretariat.

![Figure 3.1 Organizational Structure of ASEAN Environmental Cooperation](image)

Source: Koh (1997)

**ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME)**

The AMME is attended by ministers in charge of the environment from all ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. Since its inauguration in 1981, AMME has been held at least once every three years. Host AMME countries rotate.

The major functions and responsibilities of AMME are to promote ASEAN environmental cooperation and to ensure the implementation of the environmental decisions made by the heads of government. Decisions and policy recommendations made by AMME are released to the public as a declaration, resolution or accord.


In between the normal three-year intervals for the AMME, informal meetings of ASEAN environment ministers have been held almost every year since 1994. With the enlargement of
ASEAN, senior officials of new member countries began attending the meeting. After "ASEAN 10," the long-cherished goal of ASEAN since its establishment was realized by Cambodia's accession in 1999. Environment ministers from all 10 countries attended the informal AMME for the first time in 2000.

At informal AMMEs, ministers exchange views on a wide range of regional and international issues. The results are released to the public as joint statements.

**ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN)**

Senior environmental officials from all ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat participate in ASOEN. The presidency of the ASOEN rotates. The ASOEN has met once a year since 1990, and generally meets just prior to AMME’s meetings, which take place once every three years.

ASOEN has the following functions and responsibilities:

a) to recommend policy guidelines and, in general, provide “catalytic impetus” towards the implementation of the principles of sustainable development to ASEAN Governments and relevant ASEAN committees;

b) to facilitate the incorporation of environmental considerations into the programmes and activities of ASEAN committees;

c) to monitor the state of ASEAN’s natural resources and the quality of the ASEAN environment;

d) to promote ASEAN cooperation on regional environmental matters, focusing upon ASEAN’s common seas and resources, land resources and land-based pollution, tropical forest, air quality, urban and rural pollution; and maintenance of genetic diversity;

e) to promote ASEAN cooperation in international fora through a common stand for the purpose of promoting the transfer of clean technology and solving common global environmental problems, in cooperation with other government agencies, the private/business sectors, professional associations, NGOs, and other organizations; and

f) to assist in obtaining financial support for ASEAN activities from within and outside ASEAN.

As a matter of procedure, the reports of the ASOEN meetings are taken by the ASEAN Standing Committee, which in turn sends them on to the Ministerial Meeting of the Foreign Ministers.

At the 4th ASOEN in 1993, agreement was reached on the need for developing the Strategic Plan of Action, and the task was entrusted to the ASEAN Secretariat.

Participants endorsed the plan at the 5th ASOEN in 1994. ASOEN Meetings have since then reviewed the activities in the plan and have provided guidance in the development of future programs/projects. The ASOEN participants have considered the working group reports on the progress of the activities/projects under the Strategic Action Plan, and have provided operational policy guidance on the various environmental programs being pursued.

**ASOEN Subsidiary Bodies (Working Groups)**

In order to implement the Strategic Plan of Action, six working groups were established under the auspices of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment. The groups meet annually. Each group is chaired by an ASEAN country. The areas and chairmanship of each Working Group are as follows:
a) Working Group on Nature Conservation (chaired by the Philippines)
b) Working Group on ASEAN Seas and Marine Environment (chaired by Indonesia)
c) Working Group on Transboundary Pollution (chaired by Thailand)
d) Working Group on Environmental Management (chaired by Vietnam)
e) Working Group on Environmental Economics (chaired by Malaysia)
f) Working Group on Environmental Information Public Awareness and Education (chaired by Brunei)

ASEAN Secretariat

Issues relating to environmental cooperation in ASEAN fall under the purview of the Environment Unit of the Functional Cooperation Bureau of the ASEAN Secretariat. The services provided by ASEAN Secretariat include: attending each meeting related to environmental cooperation (such as AMMEs, ASOEN meetings and working groups) as resource specialist and rapporteur, and assisting each environmental cooperation-related organization with input into the planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the various cooperative projects on environment undertaken (Sunchindah, 1998).

3.3 Activities

Modality of cooperation

The modality of cooperation for the plan varies in practice from policy dialogue, technical cooperation to project-based activities.

ASEAN environmental cooperation involves several channels through which authorities meet regularly, including summit level, foreign minister level, environment minister level, senior official level, and expert level.

A structured relationship among the channels has been established.

Practical implementation of the activities/projects under the action plan is coordinated by each expert group. The activities include environmental monitoring and technical cooperation such as expert meetings and training workshops/seminars for information exchange and technology transfer.

Those projects normally involve no direct environmental improvement but assist capacity building for national environmental management.

Selection of the priority areas

The Aspen identified 10 strategic points and 27 supporting actions (see box 3.2).

<Box 3.2> Strategic Thrusts and Actions

Strategy 1: Support the development of a regional framework for integrating environment and development concerns in the decision-making process.

1.1 Continue support in the documentation of regional EIA experiences leading towards the harmonization of procedures;
1.2 Initiate activities that will make use of natural resource and environmental accounting studies and approaches; and
1.3 Establish procedures that would initiate the integration of environmental concerns in the various ASEAN programmes activities.
Strategy 2: Promote government-private sector interactions that lead towards the development of policies that mutually support the thrust of each sector.

2.1 Initiate studies on development of environmental and trade policies which are supported to the principles of sustainable development;

2.2 Establish mechanisms that encourage government and private sectors to adopt appropriate environmental standards backed up by sufficient economic incentives; and

2.3 Set up government-private sector information linkages/networks to include information on technology, expertise and facilities for environmental management.

Strategy 3: Strengthen the knowledge and information data base on environmental matters.

3.1 Pursue the establishment of basic environmental quality standards leading to the setting up of harmonized quality standards in the region;

3.2 Identify centers of excellence for environmental R&D and eventually build them as focal points of environmental networks; and

3.3 Establish a mechanism for the preparation of periodic reports on the state of the region's environment.

Strategy 4: Strengthen institutional and legal capacities to implement international agreements on environment.

4.1 Undertake a comparative study on the institutional structure and legislation structure and legislation on environmental management;

4.2 Establish capacities to support regional efforts to implement international agreements and participate effectively in the negotiation of new or revised agreements; and

4.3 Enhance collaboration with international bodies overseeing the implementation of international agreements and cooperation.

Strategy 5: Establish a regional framework on biological diversity conservation and sustainable utilization of its components.

5.1 Promote the development of a framework for the protection and conservation of heritage areas and endangered species; and

5.2 Strengthen capacities for R&D to enhance biodiversity conservation in the region.

Strategy 6: Promote the protection and management of coastal zones and marine resources.

6.1 Improve regional marine and coastal environmental coordination; and

6.2 Develop a framework for the integrated management of regional coastal zones.

Strategy 7: Promote environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes, and control of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

7.1 Establish a regional guidelines for assessing highly pollutive industries and safe handling of potentially harmful chemicals entering the ASEAN region; and

7.2 Strengthen the information network on the transboundary movement of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste.

Strategy 8: Develop a system for the promotion of environmentally sound technologies.

8.1 Establish linkages with existing clearing houses on environmentally sound technologies;

8.2 Establish mechanisms that identify end users of R&D results and encourage the participation of private sector;
8.3 Strengthen linkage and coordination with other ASEAN committees such as COST doing related R&D work on the environment; and
8.4 Support the promotion of indigenous technology or technologies that have been adapted to regional needs.

Strategy 9: Promote regional activities that strengthen the role of major groups in sustainable development.
9.1 Support the publication of regional environmental magazine and newsletters;
9.2 Strengthen regional information network and promote exchange of expertise on environmental education programmes; and
9.3 Develop strategic programmes of action that will strengthen the role and participation of major groups on environmental management and decision making.

Strategy 10: Strengthen the coordinative mechanism for the implementation and management of regional environment programmes.
10.1 Establish an operational system at the ASEAN Secretariat that could plan, monitor and facilitate the implementation of environmental projects; and
10.2 Source and match funding requirements for proposed projects.

Source: ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action (1994)

Implementation (monitoring and assessment) of projects

Implementation of the activities/projects, unfortunately, has been unsatisfactory. Of projects begun during the Aspen period from 1994 to 1998, seven projects have been completed, eight are on-going today, and twenty-four projects are pending. Box 3.3 shows the list of on-going projects.

Major actors involved in the implementation processes include: national governmental agencies of the member states, international organizations such as UNEP, ESCAP and UNDP, and donor agencies such as Australia, USA and EU. It seems participation from local government and civil society has been limited.

<Box 3.3> On-going Projects under the ASPEN

1. Management Plan for ASEAN Heritage Parks and Reserves
2. Management of Transfrontier Parks and Protected Areas in the ASEAN Region
3. Establishment of ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation
4. Regional Technical Assistance (RETA): Strengthening the capacity of ASEAN to prevent and mitigate transboundary atmospheric pollution
5. ASEAN Cooperation on the Management and Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes within the ASEAN Region
6. Booklet on ASEAN Achievements and Future Directions in Pollution Control
7. AAECP (ASEAN/Australia Economic Cooperation Programme) Phase III : Waste Water Treatment Technology Transfer and Cleaner Production Demonstration Project
8. ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan

Source: ASEAN web-site <http://www.aseansec.org/>

3.4 Finance

Recognizing that insufficient funds to support the various ASEAN environmental programs and plans has consistently afflicted the progress of ASEAN environmental cooperation, the
strategic plan of action suggests exploring both internal and external funding to diminish financial uncertainty.

There has been little progress in that regard, however.

ASEAN has mostly relied on external financial support for implementing its environmental activities/projects. Those funds have been provided mostly on a project-by-project basis.

Much of such funding comes from international organizations such as UNEP, UNDP, UNEGGEF, ADB and the World Bank according to the donor's preference. UNEP has funded many workshops, seminars study tours and training programs. UNDP supported projects on transboundary pollution problems and environmental education.

Australia, Canada, the USA and New Zealand have provided financial support to ASEAN on bilateral bases. Australian assistance was provided to projects related to environmental management and marine environment, while the U.S. focused on funding projects on environmental management. New Zealand has assisted projects pertaining to transboundary pollution.

The result was that a number of project proposals that require external funding have not been carried out.

Some implemented and completed projects with external funds have also fallen short of the initial goals. One big reason is that percentages of funds by external donors against the total contribution to the programs/projects have been low.

For instance, Australia accounts for 5%; USA, 9%; and UNDP, 12%. Thus, ASEAN expects the donor agencies to raise the contribution percentage, whereas some of them have also expressed the need for ASEAN countries to increase their own contribution to collaborative projects through cost-sharing or co-financing schemes.

3.5 Relevancy with National Policies

Taking into consideration that many of the projects implemented under the plan involve cooperation on information exchange and training workshops/seminars, it is believed that the projects are helpful to improve technical, legal and institutional capacities for better environmental management at national levels.

Non-binding plans rather than enforceable treaties and agreements has meant that the environmental policies rarely interfere in the domestic affairs of ASEAN member countries.

3.6 Overall Performance Review and Future Direction

The beginning of the 1990s witnessed several signs of enhanced environmental cooperation within ASEAN. The institutional structure for the cooperation has been elaborated, and a comprehensive and strategic action plan was developed.

The implementation and effectiveness of the plan was, however, rather a disappointment. Criticism concerning "inadequacy of financing to support the activities," and "inadequate follow-up mechanisms" have long been conceded, but the new action plan was unable to bridge the gap.

The biggest challenge would be to find a way to secure the funding necessary for implementation of the plans. It should also be pointed out that the ongoing action plans are perhaps too ambitiously designed to achieve intended results.

ASEAN needs to focus more sharply on priority areas by reducing the number of project proposals that require external funding.
It seems that ASEAN has recognized the criticism and is changing course. The ASOEN decided to restructure its working groups from six to three in 1999 after the Aspen period ended. The three restructured groups include:

a). Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (chaired by Philippines)
b). Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (chaired by Thailand)
c). Working Group on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (chaired by Malaysia)

Apart from the inadequacy of ASEAN environmental cooperation mechanisms, it should be pointed out that the political and economic situations of the region have prevented enhanced environmental cooperation.

The 1990s were a challenging decade for ASEAN in terms of financial crisis and political instability in several member countries. Such challenges may have diverted government and popular attention away from environmental protection and sustainable development.

Despite the impact of the recent economic crisis on the natural resources and environmental conditions, ASEAN environment ministers discussed the importance of maintaining a commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development.

The ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on the Environment for 1999-2004 was thus developed and adopted at the 5th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME). The plan consists of the key activities to be implemented by ASOEN and its subsidiary bodies over the next 5 years. Priority areas identified for the plan include: transboundary haze; coastal and marine; nature conservation and biodiversity; and multilateral environmental agreements.

Recognizing the need for external support in fulfilling their goals, the ministers noted that "ASEAN has forged co-operative arrangements with several UN agencies including UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, ESCAP and CSD. The meeting agreed on the need to intensify such collaboration with the UN agencies and extend collaboration with other regional and other inter-governmental organizations as well as other donors in the future."

The collaborative programs include the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the East Asian Seas (EAS), both of which are new initiatives that the ASEAN member countries identified as important to pursue (ASEAN, 2000).

Preliminary Conclusion

An examination of the ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action clarified that ASEAN environmental cooperative mechanisms are characterized by well-established institutional arrangements and systematically organized plans/programs as well as by poor implementation and follow-up processes.

In order to deal with the deficiencies, ASEAN needs to secure funding necessary for the implementation of the plans, to focus more sharply on priority areas of actions, and to enhance the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat.

More fundamentally, some argue that modes of ASEAN cooperation -- in other words, the "spirit of ASEAN" or "ASEAN way" -- are inappropriate for dealing with environmental challenges (Hamzah, 2000/ Tay, 2000). The "ASEAN way" emphasizes "the norm of non-interference in other states' affairs, preferred consensus and non-binding plans to treaties and legalistic rules, and relied on national institutions and actions, rather than creating a strong central bureaucracy."(Tay, 2000).
The norm of the "ASEAN way" may have enabled all 10 subregional states to come together, but it doesn’t mean it is right for improving environmental cooperation. This was particularly the case for controlling transboundary atmospheric pollution/ transboundary haze.

This trend, however, is likely to change. Since the problem of haze has become increasingly serious in recent years, the Regional Haze Action Plan (RHAP) was adopted at the AMME in 1997.

In order to assure smooth operation and to promote the RHAP, a Haze Coordination and Support Unit (CSU) was established within the ASEAN Secretariat (the organizational structure is shown in Figure 3.2). Funding for the implementation of these programs is provided largely by the ADB through its Regional Technical Assistance program. Financial and technical support is also provided by UNEP, GEF, Canada, Austria, the United States and the EU. Implementation of the plan is seen as more satisfactory today, especially in terms of monitoring.

ASEAN is currently working toward a transboundary haze control agreement. If concluded, it will be the first such international agreement on transboundary atmospheric pollution in Asia and the Pacific.

### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAECP</td>
<td>ASEAN/Australia Economic Cooperation Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>AANEA</td>
<td>Atmosphere Action Network East Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACPTP</td>
<td>ASEAN Cooperation Plan on Transboundary Pollution</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEFE</td>
<td>ASEAN Experts Group on the Environment</td>
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<td>AFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALGAS</td>
<td>Asian Least-Cost Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (on Foreign Affairs)</td>
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<td>AMME</td>
<td>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment</td>
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<td>AMMH</td>
<td>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Haze</td>
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<tr>
<td>APCEL</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Center for Environmental Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>APN</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research</td>
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<td>ASC</td>
<td>ASEAN Standing Committee</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ASEP</td>
<td>ASEAN Environmental Programme</td>
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<td>ASOEN</td>
<td>ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment</td>
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<td>ASPEN</td>
<td>ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBSS</td>
<td>Council of the Baltic Sea States</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Commission of the European Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>carbon monoxide</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO$_2$</td>
<td>carbon dioxide</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMECON</td>
<td>Council for Mutual Economic Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>COST</td>
<td>Committee on Science and Technology of ASEAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMCs</td>
<td>developing member countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EANET</td>
<td>Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP-AP</td>
<td>Environment Assessment Programme for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>EAS</td>
<td>East Asian Seas Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECO-ASIA</td>
<td>Environment Congress for Asia and Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMEP-LRTAP</td>
<td>Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-Range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>GEF</td>
<td>Global Environment Facility</td>
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<td>GMS</td>
<td>Greater Mekong Sub-region</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPA</td>
<td>Hanoi Plan of Action of ASEAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTTF</td>
<td>Haze Technical Task Force of ASEAN</td>
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IGES Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IMCO International Maritime Organization
IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
LRTAP Long-Ranged Transboundary Air Pollution
LTPP Long-term perspective project (for ECO-ASIA)
KOICA Korean International Cooperation Agency
MRC Mekong River Commission
NAPEP North Asia-Pacific Environment Partnership
NEAC Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation
NEANPEF Northeast Asia and North Pacific Environmental Forum (now, renamed NAPEP)
NEASPEC North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation
NGOs Non governmental organizations
NO\textsubscript{x} nitrogen oxide
NOWPAP Northwest Pacific Action Plan
ODA Official Development Aid
OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RETA Regional Technical Assistance
RHAP Regional Haze Action Plan of ASEAN
ROK Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SACEP South Asia Co-operative Environment Programmes
SAP Strategic Action Programme (for TRADP)
SO\textsubscript{2} sulfur dioxide
SOM Meeting of Senior Officials (for the NEASPEC)
SPREP South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TA Technical Assistance
TEMM Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (ROK, China, and Japan)
TRADP Tumen River Area Development Programme
UNCSD United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNCED United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UN/ECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UN/ESCAP United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNEP/ROAP United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WED World Environment Day
WHO World Health Organization
WWF World Wide Fund for Nature
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