8HLOM/R

## Report of Eighth High Level Officials' Meeting of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries

The Eighth High-level Officials' Meeting of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries took place by video conference on 21 June 2016. The meeting was chaired by Dr Daud bin Abdul Rahim, Malaysia.

Present were representatives of ministries of environment and ministries of health from: (1) Brunei Darussalam; (2) Cambodia; (3) China; (4) Indonesia; (5) Malaysia; (6) Myanmar; (7) Philippines; (8) Republic of Korea; (9) Singapore; (10) Thailand and (11) Viet Nam. Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia joined by teleconference link. The Government of Japan sent its regrets. The secretariat was represented by UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia and WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. A list of delegates and secretariat is contained in annex 1.

### 1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting was opened at 14:00 (Kuala Lumpur time). In his welcome remarks, the Chair drew attention to the fact that the High Level Officials were meeting for the first time through videoconferencing and referred to it as a milestone of the Regional Forum. He thanked the member countries for their commitment to making the videoconferencing possible and said that any members unable to participate would be given the opportunity to comment on issues in writing within the week that followed. Member States completed a round of introductions followed by introductions from representatives of the secretariat.

### 2. Adoption of agenda

The proposed meeting agenda was adopted with the inclusion under agenda item 8 of the concept document from Singapore, "Environmental Health Challenges of Transboundary Haze Pollution in Southeast Asia." The adopted agenda is contained in annex 2.

3. Adoption of the record of the Extraordinary meeting of High-Level Officials
The record of the Extraordinary meeting of the High Level Officials of the Regional
Forum, held 20-21 August 2014, in Bangkok, Thailand, was adopted. Viet Nam drew
attention to the work on Environmental Health Country Profiles (EHCP) and
Environmental Health Data Sheets (EHDS), and it was noted that this matter would be
covered in the next agenda item.

## 4. Updates on Regional Forum activities based on the Regional Forum workplan (2014–2016)

The secretariat introduced the agreed workplan of the Regional Forum; updates on the work of the Regional Forum; and the operation of the Knowledge Network, including Thematic Working Groups. Good progress was reported on the preparation of EHCP and EHDS - all except three member countries had completed these documents. Six of seven TWGs had reported activities over the intersessional period; however challenges remained in relation to their operation and generating concrete outputs as well as the effective working of the Knowledge Network. The secretariat foreshadowed the intent to consult with TWG Chairs and other interested parties to develop recommendations for the Ninth High Level Officials Meeting on ways to further enhance the Knowledge Network. The Republic of Korea noted the upcoming meeting of the TWG on Air Quality (23–24 June 2016) and the Secretariat noted a meeting of the TWG on Health Impact Assessment (15–16 September 2016).

### 5. Operation of the Scientific Panel

The meeting noted the information provided on the operation of the Scientific Panel that advises the secretariat. The secretariat advised that opportunities for a meeting of the Scientific Panel were under consideration.

6. Discussion on expansion of membership of the Regional Forum, including partners The Chair recalled that the Kuala Lumpur Declaration adopted in 2013 agreed to "Invite" other countries in the region to join the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries for the common benefit of all and for the sake of learning from and assisting each other in creating a better environment to promote health for all". While the secretariat was yet to receive any formal application for participation from a new non-member country, it was currently considering ways of facilitating additional countries to participate in the Fourth Regional Ministerial Forum. It noted that approaches had been made by a number of interested countries in the interessional period. Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Mongolia and Viet Nam supported the expansion in principle; however, some concerns were expressed over the logistical and operational challenges that the expansion may bring. It was suggested that any additional countries wishing to participate in the Fourth Ministerial Regional Forum do so at their own cost or seek to other possible funding sources. Indonesia requested that the sustainability of an enlarged Regional Forum be carefully considered, in order not to jeopardize the existing activities. Thailand drew attention to the agreed mechanisms for admitting new members and partners. In conclusion, there was no objection by member countries attending the videoconference on the expansion of the Regional Forum to include other countries of WHO-WPR, WHO-SEAR and UNEP-ROAP regions, taking note of the major concern regarding financial, logistical and administrative challenges in handling this expansion.

#### 7. Update on preparations for the Fourth Ministerial Regional Forum

The representative of the secretariat reported that the Fourth Ministerial Regional Forum would be convened in Manila, Philippines on 6–8 October 2016 and drew attention to the draft concept note for the event that had been circulated to Members. The proposed theme of "Environment and health at the centre of sustainable development" was noted. The representative of the Philippines Dr Vicente Belizarion, Undersecretary of the Department of Health, gave an update on preparations being jointly led by the Department of Health and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the financial support for the Ninth High Level Officials and Fourth Ministerial Meeting. Budget for the Forum has been secured in the amount of about USD 150,000 to cover the Ninth HLOM and the Fourth Ministerial Meeting. An event organizer would be hired to assist the government in facilitating administrative matters, such as hotel accommodation of Ministers and senior officials of 14 member countries, meals, supplies, and security measures. The Philippines was not however, able to anticipate the conduct of the Scientific Conference and the additional countries that may be interested to participate in that event. Since the Philippines had no matching funds to cover these adjustments, they requested that any gaps in funding local costs be supported by the secretariat or any development partners. Invitation letters for the 14 member countries had been drafted and were planned to be dispatched by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July. Thailand requested that health-related SDG goal and global resolutions on health and environment be addressed in the concept note for the Regional Forum. The Republic of Korea and Malaysia requested that working documents be distributed at least two weeks ahead of the meeting. The Republic of Korea also asked that an opportunity for the work of TWGs to be adequately discussed. The secretariat agreed to continue to develop the concept and work

closely with the Government of the Philippines on arrangements including aiming to finalize all working documents before the end of August 2016.

## 8. Other matters arising

Singapore spoke further on its document on Environmental Health Challenges of Transboundary Haze Pollution in Southeast Asia and requested that this item be included in the agenda to be addressed by Ministers at the Fourth Regional Forum. Attention was drawn to the need for a clearer understanding of the issue and associated health impacts and concrete actions, particularly given its transboundary nature. Indonesia requested that other transboundary issues, namely hazardous waste, and transboundary pollution also be adequately covered in the agenda of the Ministerial Forum. Thailand expressed its support for both the proposals of Singapore and Indonesia regarding the issues of transboundary haze, pollution and hazardous wastes. Viet Nam thanked the Government of the Philippines for its excellent preparatory work on the Fourth Ministerial Regional Forum and updated the meeting on progress with its National Health and Environment Action Plan and the introduction of health impact assessment requirements. The secretariat noted that the Fifth Regional Ministerial Forum was planned for 2019 and invited members to consider expressing an interest in hosting this meeting at the Fourth Regional Forum in October 2016.

## 9. Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all those present for their contributions and closed the meeting at 15:45 (Kuala Lumpur time).

Annex 1

## **List of Participants**

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Mr Budiman - Staff of Directorate of Environmental Health  Mrs Santie - Staff of Directorate for Climate Change Adaptation of Ministry of Environment and Forestry  Mrs Wida - Staff of Directorate for Climate Change Adaptation of Ministry of Environment and Forestry  5. Japan  Sent apologies	Mr Imran Agus Nurali - Director of Environmental Health MOH  Mr Sonny Warouw - Head of Sub- Directorate for Safety Waste and Pollution MOH	
Sent apologies		
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Annex 2

### **Adopted Agenda**

**21 June 2016 (Tuesday) Time: 14:00–15:30 (Kuala Lumpur time)** Date: Working Document number and title 1 Opening of the meeting 2 Adoption of agenda 8HLOM/WD/2a: Proposed Agenda 8HLOM/WD/2b: Draft Annotated Agenda 3 Adoption of the record of the Extraordinary *8HLOM/WD/3: Draft report for the* meeting of High-Level Officials Extraordinary Meeting of High-Level Officials Proposed Workplan of 4 **Updates on Regional Forum activities based** *8HLOM/WD/4a*: the Regional Forum on the Regional Forum workplan (2014-(August 2014-2016) 2016) (For information only) *8HLOM/WD/4b:* Regional Forum updates 8HLOM/WD/4c: *Updates on operation* of the Knowledge Network including Thematic Working Groups **Operation of the Scientific Panel** Scientific Panel 5 *8HLOM/WD/5:* (For information only) meetings Discussion on expansion of membership of Expansion of Regional 6 *8HLOM/WD/6:* the Regional Forum, including partners Forum membership Update on preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Regional 7 *8HLOM/WD/7:* Concept Note for the **Forum Ministerial Meeting** programme of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum on Environment and Health 8 8HLOM/WD/8 Other matters arising Concept Note on the Environmental Health Challenges of Transboundary Haze Pollution in Southeast Asia 9 **Closing of the meeting**