



**TASK FORCE MEETING TO UPDATE THE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS  
OF THE REGIONAL FORUM ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN  
SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES**

**MEETING REPORT**

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Convened by:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR), GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

Secretariat:

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC,  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA, AND  
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME  
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC OFFICE

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# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 Background of the Task Force Meeting</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 Objectives of the Meeting</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. PROCEEDINGS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1 DAY 1 - Opening Session</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1.1 Discussion on the Governance Mechanisms of the Regional Forum .....	5
2.1.2 Review of the Governance Mechanisms .....	7
2.1.5 Awards Mechanism on Sharing of Best Practice and Regional Forum Advocacy Plan.....	17
2.1.6 Closing and Reception Dinner.....	18
<b>2.2 DAY 2 - Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas and Resource Generation Strategies</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.2.1 Recapitulation .....	18
2.2.2 Panel Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas.....	18
2.2.4 Breakout Session on the SDGs Thematic Areas.....	21
<b>2.3 DAY 3 - Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas and Resource Generation Strategies</b> .....	<b>21</b>
2.3.1 Recapitulation .....	21
2.3.2 Plenary Presentation and Discussion on Emerging Policy Issues .....	21
2.3.3 Presentation of the SDG Thematic Area Project Proposals .....	25
2.3.4 Plenary Discussion (Second Session) on the Recommendations on the Review of the Governance Mechanism .....	27
2.3.5 Other Matters .....	32
a. Overview on the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 3) Resolution .....	32
2.3.6 Synthesis of the Task Force Meeting .....	32
2.3.7 Closing Session.....	34
<b>3. ANNEXES</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.1 List of Participants</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.2 Recommendations on the Review of Governance Mechanisms of the Task Force</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3 SDG TWGs Working Groups</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.4 SDG Project Proposals</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.5 Draft UNEA Resolution</b> .....	<b>35</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Task Force Meeting

The Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment (henceforth referred to in this document as the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum) was held in the Philippines on 6–8 October 2016. During this three-day Forum, which was chaired by the Government of the Philippines, three events were held, namely: Scientific Dialogue on Environment and Health at the Centre of Sustainable Development (6 October), the Ninth High-Level Officials Meeting (7 October) and the Ministerial Meeting (8 October).

The purpose of the Forum is to serve as a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences, and discussion on how to implement integrated environmental health strategies through inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral collaboration at the country and regional levels.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Forum brought together the ministers and key officials from the ministries of health and ministries of environment from 36 countries of the WHO Western Pacific Region, Southeast Asian Region and UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office. It was the largest regional forum since the first Forum in 2007. Until the meeting in October 2016, it was called the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries and involved 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States plus four (China, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea). The expansion of the participating countries in the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum was to meet the growing interest of countries in the two WHO Regions in the Regional Forum as it brings benefits and synergies of collaboration between the two ministries to address common environmental health issues, within countries and across countries in the Region.

One of the important outcomes endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum is the Manila Declaration on Health and Environment and the implementation plans of the Forum for 2017–2019. An agreement was also reached to establish a Task Force to review and make recommendations on (a) the formal title for the Forum considering there has been an expansion in countries joining the Regional Forum, and (b) the charter or the Framework for Cooperation of the Forum and (c) membership and governance, including a new structure for the Forum. The Task Force will also discuss the operationalization of the Implementation Plan 2017–2019 to address health and environment issues in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This Task Force comprises officials from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment of (1) Cambodia, (2) Indonesia, (3) Kiribati, (4) Malaysia, (5) Palau, (6) Philippines (Chair of the Regional Forum 2017–2019), (7) Republic of Korea, (8) Thailand, (9) Tuvalu and (10) Vanuatu, which volunteered during the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum.

On 13–15 September 2017, the first Task Force Meeting to Update Governance Mechanisms of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment was held in Manila. This meeting was hosted by the Government of the Philippines, which is the Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum from 2017 to 2019.

Representatives from eight of the 10 volunteer countries attended the meeting, including two from the WHO South-East Asia Region (Indonesia and Thailand) and six from the WHO Western Pacific Region (Cambodia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Palau, Philippines, and Republic of Korea). Aside from country representatives, participants also included chairs of the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) for Air Quality (Thailand), Health Impact Assessment (Thailand) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

(Philippines); observers; resource speakers; and representatives from the Philippine Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), bringing the total number of participants to 67.

The list of participants is attached in **Annex 3.1**.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Meeting**

The objectives of the meeting were:

1. To review and update governance mechanisms particularly on the:
  - a. Title of the forum, given the expanded membership
  - b. Charter of the Framework for Cooperation
  - c. Membership and structural arrangements/mechanisms of the Forum
2. To recommend to the Chair further action points/next steps to carry out the work of the Forum based on the updated governance mechanisms; and
3. To discuss the Implementation Plan 2017–2019 and make further recommendations on key milestones, timelines and accountability.

## **2. PROCEEDINGS**

### **2.1 DAY 1 –Opening Session**

#### **Remarks from the Regional Forum Chair and Secretary of Health of the Philippines**

Dr Gerardo V. Bayugo, Undersecretary of Health, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretary of Health, Dr Paulyn Jean B. Rosell-Ubial, and delivered the message of the Secretary. Secretary Rosell-Ubial recalled that the planned activities of the Task Force were discussed by the DOH, DENR, WHO and UNEP during the Strategic Planning Workshop in April in Manila. She underlined the growing concern and interest regarding health and environment as reflected by the unprecedented participation of countries across Asia and the Pacific that attended the Forum last year. Although this means a great opportunity to pool capacities together, it also entails resources to generate meaningful and inclusive results. Therefore, she emphasized that the implementation of concrete activities along the targets of the Manila Declaration, including the resource mobilization strategies, will be the key tasks of the Philippines as Chair. Specifically, the development and implementation of grassroots-level project models will be pursued to highlight the interface of health and environment on the ground. She hoped that the results of the Meeting will be acceptable and responsive to the needs of the members and stakeholders. Despite the challenging role of the Philippines to make a difference for the Forum, she is optimistic and confident that we can achieve the objectives in the next three years given the proactive support and participation of the volunteer countries and the Secretariat.

## **Remarks from the Regional Forum Co-Chair and Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines**

Atty. Jonas R. Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs, welcomed the participants on behalf of DENR Secretary, Roy A. Cimatu, and also delivered the message of the Secretary. The Secretary expressed that the Philippine Government through the DOH and DENR is honoured to host the Meeting to affirm the joint willingness and intention to take steps and share the responsibility of protecting our environment and the health of the people in the Region. He recalled that during the Regional Forum last year, the ministers called on governments, the international development community and other stakeholders to advance efforts and make strides in achieving tangible progress in environmental health within the SDG framework. Priorities were also lined up and emerging environment and health policy issues were identified that require regional action and cooperation. In order to achieve these targets, he stressed the need to build on previous and present experiences and efforts to carry out the tasks ahead. Citing the results of the Strategic Planning Workshop last April, the immediate next step is putting into action the plans to review and generate substantial recommendations on the governance mechanisms of the Forum and to make concrete steps to operationalize the action plan under the leadership of the Philippines. He then underlined the intent of the Philippines in making a difference on the ground by launching the grassroots-level initiatives to develop model projects that focus on the interface of environment and health during the World Environmental Health Day celebration on 26 September.

### **2.1.1 Discussion on the Governance Mechanisms of the Regional Forum**

The Meeting was officially called to order by Philippine DOH Undersecretary Gerardo V. Bayugo as chair and presiding officer, jointly with Philippine DENR Undersecretary Jonas R. Leones as co-chair. Following their opening remarks, representatives from volunteer countries and participants were introduced and acknowledged.

The Chair then went on to outline the overall objectives of the meeting as well as the programme flow of the three-day meeting.

To set the context of the Meeting and related sessions, three presentations were made showing the highlights and action points of important events leading to this Meeting. These are the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment on 6–8 October 2016, Strategic Planning Workshop on 26–28 April 2017, and the Sixth Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Health for Europe on 13–15 June 2017.

### **Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment, 6–8 October 2016, Manila, Philippines**

In this session, a presentation was given by Dr Bayugo. The main points from the presentation are summarized as follows:

1. Dr Bayugo provided a brief background on the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum which had as its theme, “Environment and Health at the Centre of Sustainable Development”. The Forum aimed to (a) discuss emerging environmental issues affecting health in the Region, including transboundary concerns; (b) seek ideas and inputs on how the Regional Forum can serve as a practical platform for cross-sector collaboration on SDGs; (c) finalize the 2017–2019 Work Plan; (d) agree on the expansion of the membership of the Regional Forum; and (e) agree on the Manila Declaration for endorsement of Ministers, which will provide updated policy directions for the Regional Forum.

2. The Forum was attended by Health and Environment Ministers and High-Level Officials from 36 countries, observers, TWG chairs, and representatives from Philippine DOH and DENR. The key activities of the 4th Regional Forum were the Fourth Ministerial Meeting, Ninth High-Level Officials Meeting, and the Scientific Dialogue on Environment and Health.
3. The following key outcomes of the Forum are as follows: (a) endorsement of the report of the Ninth High-Level Officials Meeting on the expanded membership of the Forum; (b) the establishment of the Task Force to review the Regional Forum and the Framework for Cooperation of the Regional Forum; (c) completion of the Synthesis Report of Environmental Health Country Profiles; (d) endorsement of the Implementation Plan of the Regional Forum (2017–2019); and (e) endorsement of the Manila Declaration on Health and Environment.
4. The key recommendations of the Forum to Member States and the Secretariat are the following: (a) encourage Member States to implement the recommendations proposed in the Manila Declaration on Health and Environment and Implementation Plan of the Regional Forum (2017–2019); (b) for the Secretariat to finalize the Implementation Plan of the Regional Forum (2017–2019); (c) assist the Government of the Philippines as Chair of the Regional Forum in finalizing the Manila Declaration on Health and Environment; and (d) prepare for the meeting of the Task Force to review the Regional Forum and its Framework for Cooperation by the end of the second quarter of 2017.
5. Undersecretary Bayugo also presented the salient provisions of the Manila Declaration that underscore the key thematic focus of the Forum for the next three years, which is within the framework of the SDGs, as well as emerging policy issues.

#### **Strategic Planning Workshop, 26–28 April 2017, Manila, Philippines**

Ms Maylene M. Beltran, Director, Bureau of International Health Cooperation (BIHC), Philippine Department of Health, presented the results of the Strategic Planning Workshop. The main points of the session are as follows:

6. The objectives of the Workshop were to develop (a) a Plan for reviewing the current Framework for Cooperation, (b) the Work Plan of the Regional Forum (2017–2019), (c) a Resource Mobilization Strategy, and (d) the Philippine Implementation Plan (2017–2019).
7. It was attended by 46 participants from the WHO Western Pacific Region, WHO South-East Asia Region, UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office, Ministry of Health Thailand and Philippine DENR and DOH. The key outcomes of the Workshop were the formulation of the Regional Forum Work/Action Plan and the Philippine Implementation Plan.

#### **Sixth Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Health for Europe, 13–17 June 2017, Ostrava, Czech Republic**

Director Beltran presented highlights from the Philippine DOH team's visit to observe the conduct of the Sixth Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Health for Europe.

8. The Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health was initiated under the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) in 1989 and organized by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, UN Economic Commission for Europe and UNEP.
9. The Meeting was attended by Ministers of Health and Ministers of Environment of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Meeting intended to define the environment and

health priorities (EHP) for 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe and enhance the engagement and commitment of Member States and stakeholders in the EHP.

10. The Meeting seeks to leverage the EHP as a platform for the Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Health 2020 Platform, and adopt and sign a political Declaration, include an action plan for its implementation and an agreement on revised institutional arrangements for the EHP after 2017.
11. Key topics discussed by the Ministers were as follows: (a) sound environmental policies as the most effective public health tool for a sustainable future in Europe; (b) resilient communities in supportive urban environments; (c) maximizing the benefits for people; (d) global relevance and impact of environment and health policies in Europe; and (e) economy of environment, health and well-being. The adoption and signing of the Ostrava Declaration on Environment and Health was the main highlight of the Meeting.
12. The Ostrava Declaration is somewhat similar to the Manila Declaration; both recognize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the platform for implementation and aim to identify priority areas of National Portfolios of Actions along the relevant themes of the SDGs.

### **2.1.2 Review of the Governance Mechanisms**

Dr Rokho Kim, Coordinator, Health and Environment, WHO Western Pacific Region, provided an overview of the session, explaining that the core of the Task Force's terms of reference is to develop a set of recommendations and suggestions for needed revisions or changes in the governance mechanisms of the Regional Forum to aid in deciding on the future direction to improve the Forum. These recommendations will be deliberated by the Task Force members in the next three days and subsequently accepted by the Chair. The Chair will then communicate the recommendations to the Member States at large, and in the next step, they will be fine-tuned and adopted by the Forum. He introduced Mr Terrence Thompson, WHO Consultant, to present a report entitled "Review of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast Asian and East Asian Countries" **Annex 3.2**. A plenary question-and-answer session and discussion followed the presentation.

The main points from the presentation and discussions and initial agreements are summarized as follows:

Mr Thompson gave background information on the need to conduct a review of the governance mechanisms of the Forum and the process that was undertaken to come up with the recommendations. He mentioned that various consultations and discussions were held with the Secretariat and the Government of the Philippines as Chair in the course of coming up with the recommendations. The main points he raised in his proposed recommendations were contained in the following topics: review of the governance and activities of the Regional Forum, the Forum title, membership, governance, and other opportunities for improvements.

#### **1. Review of the Regional Forum**

Mr Thompson stated that the Forum was established in 2007 with 14 member countries—the ASEAN countries plus China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Mongolia—with the vision of safeguarding and enhancing health and environment, thereby promoting development that reduces poverty. He emphasized that vision revolves around the tripartite connection of health and environment and development, and how these three important issues interact with one another. He recalled that between 2004 and 2007, a lot of effort was made by the Secretariat –

by both the WHO regional offices and UNEP regional office – to have regional consultations with the countries and other international development partners at which all of these issues were discussed that eventually led to the Regional Charter for the Forum in 2007. He noted that these exercises of updating and doing mid-course corrections of the Forum are positive and healthy.

There have already been four Ministerial Meetings since 2007, each one issuing their ministerial declaration. As early as 2010, the Forum had already established a Task Force to review governance, institution and partnership issues. That Task Force worked actively and resulted in the adoption of the 2013 Framework for Cooperation, the current governance document of the Forum, which superseded the original Charter.

## **2. Title of the Forum**

Mr. Thompson provided a background on the title or name of the Forum, saying that during the conceptualization phase (2004 to 2007), the working title used by the Secretariat was “Regional Forum on Environment and Health in ASEAN and East Asian Countries”. Initially, it was expected that ASEAN would play an active role; however, this did not turn out to be the case. In the First Ministerial Meeting in 2007 in Bangkok, the ministers and heads of delegations adopted a new title, “Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries”, dropping ASEAN in the name. Just last year, the Fourth Ministerial Meeting agreed and upheld that the title of the Meeting be changed to “Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment”. He stressed, however, that the change applied only to the title of the Meeting, not the title of the Forum. Nonetheless, there was a consensus among all the countries that there is a desire to expand the membership of the Forum, hence, a more inclusive title was adopted.

Ms Eden Ridep Uchel, Ministry of Health, Palau, then supported the suggestion to revise the title of the Forum to use the term “Health and Environment” because this brings into focus the fact that the two sectors are involved and not just environmental health. Dr Kim agreed that from the health point of view, there are many risk factors for health outcomes that include the environment such that “Health and Environment” and “Environment and Health” can be used interchangeably. He also noted that the process was started by the health sector through the two WHO Regional Offices with UNEP support.

Ms Eretii Timeon, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Kiribati, expressed her support to revising the title to include “Asia-Pacific” since they are from the Pacific; they are open to whatever the decision is on the order of “Health and Environment” or “Environment and Health”. Dr Norlen bin Mohamed, Ministry of Health, Malaysia, expressed no objections to the title. Ms Astutie Widyarissantie, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, posed no objection to the change in the title as long as it can describe the objectives of the Forum. She added also that using the term “Asia-Pacific” is more flexible and embodies the spirit of the Regional Forum to opening membership opportunity to other regions and Asian countries.

Dr Bayugo then confirmed with the body to accept the “Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment” as the new title, which will be recommended by the Task Force for adoption by the Forum.

## **3. Forum Goals**

Mr Thompson stated that the goal of the Framework for Cooperation (2013) is to create a platform for national and regional action to enhance and safeguard health and the environment, and to promote sustainable development, with the emphasis on safeguarding health and environment. He noted that the Forum is meant to be a platform but the word is not highlighted, which should be of importance. He said that the list of actions of the Forum pertains only to meetings and that the Forum is failing to monitor and record the Regional



Forum's actions, which in reality consist of much more than meetings. The recommendation is that it becomes a platform for action.

Ms Lesley Onyon, WHO South-East Asian Region, raised a question regarding whether one can automatically include Member States in a Forum that is focused on actions without some discussion. She pointed out that if the purpose is just for dialogue and to share experiences, then there would be no problem, but if the focus is on actions then precision is required. She also supported Mr Thompson's suggestion to make the Forum more action-orientated and cautioned that actions should be more focused on a more limited number of actions that are common targets.

Ms Siriwan Chandanachulaka, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, stressed that the goal and objectives are the core principles of the Regional Forum and should be the basis of the title and mechanism. She expressed concerns about relevancy given that membership has been expanded from 14 to 47 countries. She underscored the fact that while everyone still supports the mechanisms and the Forum, it is necessary to discuss in detail the goals, objectives and implications on funding before further discussing the recommendations moving forward.

The Chair accepted a suggestion made by Ms Astutie to modify the goal to read: Create a platform for national and regional policy and action to enhance and safeguard health and environment towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals."

#### **4. Forum Objectives**

In regards to the objectives of the Forum, Mr Thompson highlighted his reservation with the use of "identify and address", as the term "address" is very vague and does not indicate what it actually means to address. His recommendation would be to change this word to "assess". He observed that the overall goals and objectives of the Forum remain unchanged; however, the Fourth Ministerial Forum through the Manila Declaration effectively shifted the focus from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs; hence, corrections maybe be required when the Framework document is updated.

Ms. Uchel also expressed reservation with the term "address" and instead suggested using "implementation". Therefore, it will now be "to identify and promote to implement priority health and environment issues that require..." Ms. Chandanachulaka likewise agreed with the observation.

The Chair agreed to revise the objectives to read: "Identify and promote to implement priority health and environment issues that require regional action."

#### **5. Membership Expansion**

Mr Thompson stated that the Implementation Plan for 2017–2019 calls for simplified membership procedures, which poses some issues. Firstly, he raised certain questions, such as: what would now be the procedure for application or if the membership procedures still needed; how does a country apply to become a member; and how will the application be evaluated and accepted. The second issue is that there are differences in the alignment of countries within the WHO and the UNEP Regional Offices, in that there are countries common to both WHO, or one WHO Regional Office and UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office, but others that are not. An example is Pakistan, which is covered by UNEP and not covered by the WHO Western Pacific or South-East Asian Regions, but by the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

He then presented their recommendations, which consisted of three options: Option 1: make eligible for membership countries that are (a) common to the WHO South-East Asia Region

and UNEP; or (b) common to the WHO Western Pacific Region and UNEP; Option 2: make eligible for membership any country that is covered by UNEP and either of the two WHO Regions (with an extraordinary approval process); and Option 3: automatic membership for all countries, territories, and areas covered by either of the two Regions or by UNEP.

For the application approval process, the recommendation is for the country to send a letter of intent, signed by the Minister of Environment and Minister of Health, to the Chair of the Regional Forum, who will then, within one month, transmit this information to the existing Member States by means of written communication to the national communication focal points. The focal points will have to reply indicating whether they have an objection or no objection to this new country becoming a member. Within two months, the Chair may approve an application provided there is no objection. The newly admitted country will then immediately participate in all activities of the Forum. He noted, however, that if any country raises an objection to the admission of an eligible country, although that is unlikely, the request for membership shall be tabled for discussion at the next High-Level Officials Meeting. He also noted further that the original 14 members did not go through any process of application.

Ms Uchel expressed agreement with Option 3 since it includes everyone. Ms. Onyon, referring to simplification of the membership process, said that having about 47 members to communicate and deal with does not fit with the criteria for simplification of the procedure. She raised another issue about how to communicate with those additional 33 members, and how they can be automatically included in the organization if they have not been party to it and what they would get out of the process. Mr. Sophal Laska, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, said that since membership is voluntary it is good to give the countries options. Going through the approval process is difficult since it takes time and each country has different processes; therefore, providing a channel or opportunity for them to participate voluntarily would be the best way of expanding cooperation as well as the membership to Pacific countries.

Ms Timeon said they also support the recommendations given the flexibility as mentioned by the representatives from Palau and Cambodia since this will lessen the formality and the constraint of applying as member of the Forum. While they prefer Option 3, she said that they will have to seek approval from the government on their official stance, based on the recommendation of the majority and before they can forward their commitment of support. Dr Mohamed, Ministry of Health, Malaysia, said that with regard to the membership option, he agrees with Option 3, but it is subject to the agreement of the country whether to be a member or not a member.

Meanwhile, Dr Heeil Lee, Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Republic of Korea, raised concerns about the expansion of the membership given the financial issue and the commitment or the willingness of the Member State to volunteer in this Forum, but they are eager to support either Option 2 or Option 3.

For the Philippines, Dr Bayugo explained that the changes really are intended to encompass countries and boundaries in the Region and it is only the process that would be simplified. From earlier discussions as Chair, he recalled that a letter of intent from the interested countries indicating their support for the goals and the objectives of the Forum would suffice for membership and the letter needed to be signed at least by the two ministries. It would then be submitted to the Chair for consideration and action, although the Chair should have the option to consult with the Secretariat and other members if there are issues. It is hoped that this would be more acceptable to Member States as a process that can be adopted.

Ms Chandanachulaka expressed agreement with the Chair that there has to be some kind of condition or they have to indicate whether they are willing to support the Forum and whether both ministries support membership.

Mr Masato Motoki, UNEP Asia Pacific Office, raised concerns regarding including all countries in the Region within UNEP and WHO since there are countries that are only covered by UNEP or WHO, and it may be difficult to get the signature from both ministries.

Dr Kim raised the issue that occurs when some countries have an underdeveloped environmental sector and the health sector is taking over the work of environmental health; in some countries, the health and environment sectors can belong to one ministry. If it is set as a condition that both the health and environment ministries should sign, this may create a problem, especially for countries in the Pacific where they have a small cabinet structure. He then suggested being flexible on this consideration. Dr Bayugo said that if the health and environment belong to one ministry then so be it, since the essence of obtaining that kind of intention is that the health and environment sectors are encouraged to really work together.

Mr Motoki reiterated his observation that if there are countries in which only one ministry would sign then maybe there can be some exception for approval only by the ministry of health or ministry of environment. Dr Kim then expounded on the special case of three countries – Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan – that are members of UNEP but belong to the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region and not the Western Pacific or South-East Asian Regions. In that case, UNEP can only influence the ministry of environment. In the case of Hong Kong (SAR) and Macau (SAR), they are Member States of the WHO Western Pacific Region but are not UNEP Member States; therefore, WHO can influence the ministry of health for this process, but not the ministry of environment. He noted, however, that there is no policy or rule that prevents WHO or UNEP to reach out to the other ministries, so there is no absolute contraindication; he suggested that it may be considered for fine tuning the process during the revision of the Framework.

Dr Bayugo then asked if the body would select the “no restriction” process for membership. Dr Kim explained that Option 3 really implies that there will be a big membership and the process will be automatic membership, meaning the governing body of the WHO South-East Asian Regional Committee Meeting, WHO Western Pacific Regional Committee Meeting and United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) should make some sort of a resolution. He mentioned that this has to be on the agenda of the Regional Committee Meetings to formally accept the Regional Forum as a process they endorse for the membership. At their governing body meeting, if the Secretariat propose it, and all Member States agree, then they will automatically become members. He also raised another issue on the participation of members to Forum activities, which really depends on the political leadership, financial arrangement or other diplomatic issues. He pointed out a potential problem in the case of North Korea that belongs to the WHO South-East Asia Region and Republic of Korea, which belongs to the WHO Western Pacific Region; if one country does not accept the membership of the other then it may complicate the process.

Dr. Bayugo maintained that there may be a need for some basic letter of intent so that whether it is signed by the lead minister or signed by two ministers, the intention is to have environment and health contributing internally and cooperating with other countries in the Region in terms of addressing health and environment. The WHO Western Pacific and South-East Asian Regions and the UNEP member countries – including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran– are allowed to join but not countries in South America or in Europe because they are not in Asia. The WHO South-East Asia Region then clarified that the proposal is that the Regional Committees would encourage their Member States to become members of the Regional Forum but it is up to the countries themselves to sign the letter of intent.

Dr Bayugo went on to sum up the agreement on the membership issue, saying that the general view is to endorse Option 3, which is automatic membership, and it will cover all member countries of the three Regional Committees, but he noted that it is not really eliminating an approval process, but just making it very simple by way of a letter of intent and approval action by the Chair.

Dr Kim then appealed to the body, on behalf of the Secretariat, to help with the challenge of managing communications among the 47 members since it is a huge burden to the Secretariat based on experience, and to make the procedure of the expansion of membership very simple so that the governing body can decide that all the members of UNEP or the two WHO Regions can become members of the Regional Forum. This way, he said, the Secretariat can skip the tedious process of communication and correspondence with countries, which is time-consuming and an additional workload. He added that going through the governing bodies is already very complicated and undergoing scrutiny from the Regional Committees or UNEA is already a strict evaluation process of the membership. This way, he added that misunderstandings will be avoided from other countries particularly having the perception of creating a new parallel body with WHO or UNEP.

Dr Susan Mercado, Consultant, Philippine DOH, asked Dr Kim if the suggestion was for the two Regional Committees and the General Assembly of UNEP to make a resolution for automatic membership, to which Dr Kim confirmed, saying that it will take about two years. He added that if this option is taken, the Forum would have to start becoming active now.

Dr Bayugo noted that endorsement by the Regional Offices encouraging countries to join will be very helpful in reaching out to all countries to become part of the Forum but stressed that it is important to secure the intention of the country to really work along with the principle of the Forum. Ms Onyon WHO South-East Region mentioned that there are some merits of going through the Regional Committee to get funding for support but if it is done through the Chair who accepts the funds, this may create an expectation that the Chair is accepting a funding liability for WHO. Ms Onyon added that if the process comes through the Regional Committee then it is more likely that some provision for funding will be provided.

The Chair summed up the key discussion and, given the mixed reactions and recommendations, although mostly leaning towards Option 3, the discussion was parked since no definite agreement was reached during the session.

## **6. Framework of Cooperation and Guidance Document on Mechanisms**

On the Framework of Cooperation, Mr Thompson stated that there are contradictions between the Framework document and the Guidance document on mechanisms for conducting meetings. Moreover, specific to the Framework, there is a need to update the MDGs to SDGs. Regarding the Scientific Panel, he observed that it was created on paper but was not realized at any point in time, and whether there is still need for its activation should be discussed. It was suggested that the Panel could also come from the TWGs or the Secretariat could mobilize experts. Should it be pursued, the frequency of meeting would be once a year. On the Knowledge Network, it was also noted that although this was mentioned in the Framework, no evidence supports its existence and therefore it may be dropped in the new Framework.

Specific to the revisions to the Forum Framework, Ms Chandanachulaka remarked that if the recommendations to revise the Framework for Cooperation are accepted, then it can be used until 2030 to synchronize with the SDG agenda. Dr Bayugo also reiterated that having adopted the new governance mechanism framework, this will now be the Framework not just until the end of the term of the Philippines but until 2030, which means that the Forum really

adopts and supports the SDGs. Therefore, the Forum statement is that we are one, and we truly support the global goal of the SDGs.

## 7. Frequency of Meetings

Regarding the frequency of meetings, the current timeline is on a three-year cycle. Mr Thompson recommended a five-year cycle considering the funding implications. Accordingly, the High-Level Officials Meeting is recommended to be on a 30-month cycle.

Dr Mohamed said that with regard to the cycle of the activities, he wondered what really triggered the change from three years to five years noting that the longer the cycle, the longer time it takes to make decisions. He also supported the concern for the financial aspect of conducting meetings. Also, in terms of effective communication there are still limitations to getting the communications across to key officials. Mr Thompson said that it was an issue of funding since the Forum does not have a sustainable financial mechanism. He recalled that during the conceptualization phase, the Secretariat was proposing every four years, and then one country suggested two years, so the compromise was three. He added that the five-year cycle is more sustainable.

Dr Bayugo also shared that that one of the models that can be referred to, as far as the environment and health sectors working together, is the European Environment and Health Process where they also conduct Ministerial Meetings every five years. Secondly, in terms of the financial aspect, it will not be so much financially if there is a wider interval between the High-Level Officials Meetings and Ministerial Meetings. Thirdly, this also goes with the cycle of governance. Dr. Lee agreed with the five-year cycle for the Ministerial Meeting, which would be like the Ostrava Conference, with the development and implementation of more specific and systematic activity for five years rather than three years. Ms. Uchelou on the other hand, agreed with either three or four but not five years since it is hard to bring together ministers in one place.

The Chair again summed up the common view on the frequency of meetings, which is now on a five-year cycle, except that for the next Ministerial Meeting, the Philippines will extend its term to another year as transition. For the High-Level Officials Meeting, the proposed 30-month cycle was adopted.

## 8. Structure (Scientific Panel, TWG and Knowledge Network)

**Scientific Panel.** Mr Thompson said that consideration should be given to whether there is need to pursue activation of the Scientific Panel. Scientific expertise maybe mobilized from the TWGs. The Secretariat may also be capable of mobilizing the technical experts from its own staff, WHO Collaborating Centres or consultants to advise on science, technical and engineering issues as and when needed. Dr Bayugo agreed with the option of doing away with the Scientific Panel. Their roles can be provided for by Member States or through the TWGs as part of the Forum governing structure.

Dr Mohamed recalled that the Scientific Panel is there to advise the Secretariat on how they want to run the Regional Forum and supposed to meet with the Secretariat every year. Therefore, he said that it is the Secretariat that makes use of this Panel and would have to determine if they are still needed. Dr Bayugo said that if the Panel only serves the Secretariat's purpose, then the question is whether the Forum will still have to maintain it within the structure. Ms Onyon remarked that the Secretariat may need a looser arrangement whereby it can take scientific advice from whoever is appropriate.

Dr. Kim said that the Forum structures –Scientific Panel, Knowledge Network and TWGs– were not really producing any tangible outcomes or outputs in the past few years, and maybe

could be discontinued. However, the main reason for their inactivity is the lack of resources and lack of commitment. He then proposed that it is better to keep it and find some innovative solution to make it functioning.

Dr Mercado also supported the suggestion that the Secretariat would have to discuss what they really want in terms of a Scientific Panel. The original thinking was it was going to be like a technical advisory group to the Forum, but there was no consensus on how to select the experts. Dr Bayugo then echoed the recommendation to request the Secretariat to discuss this and whatever consensus is arrived at – as far as where to attach the expert panel – to be presented to the group at an appropriate time.

**Thematic Working Group (TWG).** Mr Thompson recalled that under the latest Framework of Cooperation, the TWGs were made voluntary without any administrative and formal bindings to the Chair or the Secretariat and only become active upon the availability of funding. He noted that at the rate TWGs are working, they only become active if funding becomes available. Citing Secretariat reports, a key challenge of the TWGs is funding and mobilizing resources to carry out capacity-building activities and coordination. He also raised the issue that practically anyone may become members of the TWG without any oversight from the Forum. Moreover, although the Framework set the objective of the TWG, which is to contribute to the Forum, these functions are vague and not defined.

He then stated their recommendations as follows: the establishment and operation of TWGs should be governed by the Regional Forum. Governmental members should be nominated by respective ministries. Nongovernmental members of all types (private, academe, media, etc.) should be subject to approval by the Regional Forum. Relatedly, on the frequency of TWG meetings, he referred to the Guidance Documents that mention the conduct of meeting as once in three years. But given that the Ministerial Meetings will be on a five-year cycle, the meetings should occur twice in five years, otherwise the TWG is not considered active.

On TWG membership, Ms Chandanachulaka raised the question of whether there will be different membership, since in the present setup, the TWG on Air Quality, for instance, with Thailand as Chair, is represented by the Pollution Control Department, but the Co-Chair from Republic of Korea is from academe (Seoul National University).

Dr Mohamed stressed that an important aspect of the work for the Regional Forum is actually the work of a scientific platform – which is TWG and the Scientific Panel– and these two aspects need to be strengthened, maybe in terms of the activity and frequency of meetings.

Mr. Bonifacio Magtibay, Technical Officer, WHO Philippine Country Office, sought clarification on whether there is a need to discuss the number of TWGs and if it is amenable for the body to modify them based on the needs of the SDGs as indicated in the Manila Declaration. He asked whether there is a need to rearrange, create new ones, or combine them to support the SDG focus of the Forum. Dr Kim stressed that the Framework only mentions TWGs generically, so the arrangement of TWGs is actually not covered in the Framework. Hence, the Secretariat and Member States can rearrange them anytime to be aligned with the SDG priorities. He also underlined the fact that only a few of the existing TWGs are functioning while others are not very active or almost dormant. Another key aspect that needs to be addressed is the TWG connection with the governing body.

The Chair then echoed the consensus, if there is no objection, that the TWGs will be maintained but revisited. Ms Onyon completely agreed with the Chair and re-emphasized the point of having the TWG outputs be very clear so the expectation of what the TWGs are working on can be much clearer. This will facilitate resource mobilization since it is now easier to identify the output that TWGs will generate. The WHO Western Pacific Region

representatives agreed with the recommendation and suggested that the TWG term should also follow the term of the Chair.

Dr Kessinee Unapumnuk, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, queried about a term of membership for TWGs, relating that at present, membership is open to all interested parties and it has been working. She wanted to clarify whether an application for TWG membership would have to wait another five years to get approved. She added that if the membership process of the Forum is simplified, the process for TWGs should also be simplified. The WHO Western Pacific Region representatives clarified that the Regional Forum's approval could mean just the Secretariat so that approval could take only weeks or months.

As raised by Mr Thompson, a possible conflict of interest was brought up by the Chair in regards to the membership of TWGs being open to practically everyone; in that case, the rules governing TWGs need to be more stringent. Another suggestion was for the Chair of the Regional Forum to approve membership to TWGs, which representatives from Palau agreed with.

Dr Bayugo proposed that for government institutions, there might be no restrictions. He also asked if there are restrictions in the number of members. Mr Magtibay said that in his understanding, there are no limitations as long as both the health and environment ministries are represented. For nongovernment members, he proposed that they have to be approved by the Chair with due diligence and clearance from the Secretariat because the Secretariat has the capacity to check whether there are conflicts of interest for those who are planning to be members.

WHO Western Pacific Region representatives also supported that view, saying that the area of environmental health is full of issues and there might be cases of hijacking, thus, the Chair of the Forum has the authority to manage the initiative with the Secretariat having a supporting role for the Chair. This process should also include existing TWG members.

**Knowledge Network.** Mr Thompson reported that the knowledge network has not really been organized or ever existed. Dr Mercado also related that the idea of the Knowledge Network was to have an informal and loose mechanism for countries that is not as rigid as the TWGs to share information. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to implement it.

## **9. Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair, and Hosting of Meetings**

It was noted that the process of determining/selecting the Chair and Vice-Chair outlined in the Framework and Guidance Documents is unclear. The following options were recommended: Option 1: at the close of any Ministerial Regional Forum, "any member country may volunteer" to host the next Ministerial Regional Forum and, if accepted by the Forum, that country automatically becomes Chair of the Forum until the close of the next Ministerial Regional Forum. Any member country may "volunteer to serve as Vice-Chair" of the Regional Forum and, if accepted by the Forum, would be Vice-Chair until the close of the next Ministerial Regional Forum. In this option, the Vice-Chair would not automatically ascend to the position of Chair and would not be required to host any meeting; Option 2: develop rules for an orderly nomination and election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum. Member States may have the right to decline nomination for either position.

On the matter of hosting of meetings, Ms Elenida Basug, Philippine DENR Environmental Management Bureau, put forth a suggestion giving countries a timeline to prepare for hosting. The body might like to consider hosting of meetings by alphabetical order –the ASEAN way –which is hosting by alphabetical sequence of the names of the countries without prejudice for the Regional Offices to be sought. Some financial assistance for country hosting may be needed.

Dr Bayugo summarized the three options on the selection of Chair/Vice-Chair and hosting: voluntary, by nomination, and the alphabetical sequence of hosting. He also reiterated the option to decline the hosting. WHO South-East Asia Region representatives said that the alphabetical rotation has merits because it gives more certainty and allows time for planning for the host country and the Secretariat as well.

Ms. Chandanachulaka then related their experience of hosting the high-level meeting in Bangkok during the Chairship of Malaysia. She also proposed a variation wherein smaller countries can group together and can discuss among themselves on who will host.

Dr. Kim raised concerns with logistical and geographical factors, especially in Pacific countries where there are flight limitations. A compromise, he suggested, was for Member States to volunteer to be included in a pool of potential chairing or hosting countries that is then set up in alphabetical order, or they can select among themselves who will chair next. Mr. Motoki commented that maybe the suggestion could be considered as a final option in the event that no country is willing to volunteer so as not to limit other countries that are really committed and willing to host.

Ms Basug echoed the suggestion of asking for volunteer countries first to be part of the pool and then discussing among themselves the hosting of upcoming meetings or even consider alphabetical sequence if needed. Dr Bayugo also noted that the suggestion will not go against the Forum Framework that states that hosting is on voluntary basis and, in the meantime, the Chair welcomes volunteers to host the next meeting.

Finally, Ms. Chandanachulaka suggested that the next hosting will happen in 2020 before starting the new cycle from 2021 to 2025. This means that the Philippine will extend for another year from 2019 to 2020. Dr Bayugo then accepted the proposal to extend the Philippine Chairship for one more year as a transition period.

**10. Communication Guidelines.** Mr Thompson pointed out that in the present communication guidelines, it is explicitly applicable only to the 14 founding members. However, given the membership expansion, it will not apply to the new members and should be revised accordingly. The guidelines likewise require a national communication focal point per country, which means only one; however, in reality, there should be two, the other being from the environment ministry.

**11. Opportunities for Improvement.** Another important item that was included in revisiting the Forum mechanisms was to identify opportunities for improvement. One key aspect that was recommended is mobilizing resources to intensify action.

**The Forum should also link to Secretariat governing bodies.** Mr Thompson explained that the Regional Forum plays a very important role as a Forum for evidence-based policy discussions that may inform national and regional policy-making processes. Yet, decisions taken in the Forum do not bind members to implementation. The recommendation is to facilitate the establishment of formal linkages between the Regional Ministerial Forum Meetings and the UNEA. This should also apply to Regional Ministerial Forum Meetings and the Regional Committee Meetings of the WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions. Policy issues that are raised at the Regional Forum should be raised and discussed at the Regional Committee Meetings, or in the case of UNEP in the UNEA, where binding resolutions can be passed that would call for implementation of measures.

**Intensify collaboration with regional bodies.** Mr. Thompson recommended that Member States should take action to establish formal linkages between the Regional Forum and key regional bodies such as ASEAN, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Pacific Community.



**Conduct periodic independent reviews.** Mr Thompson also recommended that the Forum, through the Secretariat, commission an independent external review, including midway or end-of-term reviews. He again reiterated his positive view of the Forum’s quality of looking at itself introspectively by reviewing its governance structure and mechanisms regularly.

The discussion was set aside for further discussion. The Chair then thanked Mr Thompson for guiding the Task Force through the review process and coming up with recommendations for consideration of the Task Force, which will prepare a draft of recommendations for the approval of the Chair and Forum members.

### **2.1.5 Awards Mechanism on Sharing of Best Practice and Regional Forum Advocacy Plan**

Dr Susan Mercado presented the proposed concept of the two key aspects of the Regional Implementation Plan and the Regional Action Plan, namely, the Awards Mechanism on Sharing of Best Practices and the Regional Forum Advocacy Plan.

The summary of presentation on the Awards Mechanism is as follows:

1. The Awards Mechanism for Best Practices of the Manila Declaration will be called the “Sampaguita Awards”.
2. The following activities and timelines will have to be set and undertaken: designation of Awards Committee; development of criteria for best practices by the Secretariat for approval by the Awards Committee; call for applications by the Secretariat in October 2017; submission of applications by July 2018; selection of best practices by October – November 2018; and awarding at the 2019 Regional Forum.
3. An important determination by the Task Force and Forum will be on how many members will comprise the Awards Committee and how members will be determined –whether by nomination, volunteering or rotation.
4. The proposed criteria for selection of the best practices was also recommended as follows: Innovation (new, fresh, creative); Feasibility (practical and does not require inordinate funding); Scale-up potential (can be replicated); Sustainable (can continue); and Relevant (addresses an urgent problem that many are struggling with).
5. To facilitate application, the Chair will send out communication to Member States through the Secretariat, postings on the webpages of the WHO/UNEP and other modes of public announcements.
6. In terms of mechanics, nominated best practises can be submitted/nominated by governments, civil society partners, communities or research institutions, and documentation will be contained in a maximum of 10 pages with photo or video documentation (if available).
7. In terms of the selection process, the Awards Committee will be given copies of all applications, and individual committee members will later score the documents. The Secretariat will facilitate initial screening, subject to approval of the Awards Committee, as well as the informal validation of application. The decision on the final awardees maybe done via videoconference.
8. Once selection has been made, five best practices will be awarded and further documented into case studies.
9. Finally, the WHO/UNEP could provide seed funding for country-to-country study tours so that Member States can learn from the good practices.

A summary of the presentation on Communication Advocacy is as follows:

1. Dr Mercado presented the proposed concept on the Regional Forum Communication Advocacy, which in general is anchored on two key themes – health and climate change as the regional campaign theme.

2. A critical first step to proceed with the Communication Advocacy initiative is to form a technical working group in charge of implementation. The Secretariat will have to facilitate the process on how to convene this group and whether this will be done via nomination, application or rotation.
3. For corporate communications, the following media will be put up, including the Regional Forum Website, producing brochures and maintaining social media presence, and promoting issues related to climate change, air quality, water and sanitation, hazardous chemical wastes and pollutants, and sustainable urban cities.
4. Promotional materials in the form of posters containing quotes from the Manila Declaration and appealing pictures with climate and SDG themes as key messages can be produced for this purpose.
5. For 2017–2019, “Climate and Health” is the suggested thematic regional campaign for the Forum due to its relevance and the need to raise awareness on actions, and its relevance to air quality, food, water, urban shelter and healthy islands. The campaign will also be cascaded down to the national levels where climate and health champions from each country will be identified. The identified advocates/champions maybe convened in 2018 to further the campaign.
6. Finally, as a way forward, these components will have to be decided on and implemented once finalized: Production of fact sheets this 2017, setting of websites within the year, meeting on Social Media with Country Champions next year, campaign on awareness of solutions (national, local) by 2018, coming up with Information kit for Ministers also by 2018; and tapping Resources/Funding

In the open forum, Dr Kim shared that the new leadership of WHO has prioritized climate and environmental health, which opens up opportunities for funding and scaling-up and support for the project.

### **2.1.6 Closing and Reception Dinner**

Dr Bayugo provided a quick summary of what transpired during the day before adjourning the meeting until the following day. The DOH later hosted a Welcome Reception led by Dr Rosell-Ubial.

## **2.2DAY 2 –Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas and Resource Generation Strategies**

### **2.2.1 Recapitulation**

Dr. Kim gave a recap of the discussion that took place on Day 1.

### **2.2.2Panel Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas**

This session on funding opportunities for SDGs Thematic Areas was facilitated by Dr Bayugo. The panel members were from the DENR –Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Service (FASPS), WHO Fiji Country Office, UNEP and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

- **Risk Resiliency and Sustainability Program: Proposed Framework for the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster Risk Reduction**
  1. Mr Edwin Domingo, Director, DENR-FASPS, underscored the available funding windows and opportunities for programmes or projects on health and environment, in the context of a funding framework for climate change adaptation and resiliency.

2. He explained that following the enactment of policy reforms on climate change, the scope of the Philippine government's climate change response has been further defined across agencies and at the national and local levels. National government agencies (NGAs) have to some extent integrated climate adaptation measures into sectoral plans and programmes, including agriculture, natural resources, and rural and urban infrastructure. At the local level, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are also aimed to be integrated into local development plans and land use plans guided by the Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM)-Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) planning guidelines.
3. He zoomed in on the government's framework programme to assist in strengthening the resiliency of natural ecosystems and the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities to short- and long-term risks using a landscape management approach in select major and principal river basins to attain cleaner, safer and healthier environment.
4. To be able to realize these targets, he enumerated the sources of funding by government. Primarily, for local sources, he mentioned the General Appropriations Act and the People's Survival Fund with the Finance Department as fund manager, while for foreign funding sources, he described the Green Climate Fund (GCF) with DENR as national designated authority, Global Environment Facility (GEF) – DENR as national focal point, the Climate Investment Fund (DENR), Climate Adaptation Fund (Department of Finance) and Vulnerable 20 Fund (Department of Finance) as well as a host of other local and international funding agencies.
5. He also provided detailed guidance on the GCF funding mechanism, and walked through the critical points of successfully accessing the funds. In particular, he stressed that the key to being awarded the funds is to come up with good proposals, and he noted that this is a weak point for many agencies or entities. Aside from lack of orientation on the process, developing proposals worthy of funding is the gap, dismissing the perception that there are no available funds for programmes in the Philippines or even in the Region.
6. Finally, he encouraged the group to get to know the process well as they are all available online and tap the right people to develop proposals to get the most out of the abundant funding opportunities.

- **Global Climate Financial Mechanisms for Climate Change and Health**

7. Mr Kim introduced Mr David Angelson, WPRO/DPS/PSC Consultant who discussed the funding mechanisms for climate change and health with particular reference to the Pacific island countries (PICs). Mr Angelson presented some funding patterns and data on climate change and health funding assistance from various global and bilateral funding agencies.
8. He reported that only 3% of past and current adaptation funding has targeted health, and only 1% of global climate finance has been allocated to the health sector. Other challenges are: incomplete health data in many PICs; electronic health records (EHRs) have not been widely introduced; health information systems (HIS) are not well developed and have not been integrated into early warning systems (EWS); technical capacity to develop evidence-based disease and health outcomes surveillance is hamstrung by lack of reliable data and the complexity of the science on climate change and health; and key health infrastructure to cope with climate impacts is currently insufficient or lacking in most PICs.
9. He mentioned that to be able to leverage climate finance for health, the health sector should tap the global climate finance architecture, particularly: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) funding mechanism, which is more relevant in terms of climate and change and health initiatives in the Pacific. These mechanisms include the Joint Implementation to stimulate investment in emission reduction projects, and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) that allows a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries. There is also the Adaptation Fund that finances concrete adaptation projects and programmes in

developing country Parties to the Protocol that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

10. He then provided particular details on the GCF process, highlighting its components, portfolios and mechanisms, including the project development or preparation facility.

- **GEF Portfolio in UN Environment Asia and the Pacific**

11. Mr Motoki provided a background on the GEF and GCF Portfolio of the UN Environment in Asia and the Pacific. The GEF, with 183 member countries, provides grants for major environment projects. For its current funding timeline, the bulk of the GEF budget is intended for biodiversity, climate change, chemicals and wastes and international waters.
12. He mentioned that the next funding phase, the GEF 7 programme, has not been finalized yet, but proposals on the environment and health project are welcomed, especially after the GEF strategic programs are known and finalized.
13. He also introduced the GCF that finances actions on adaptation and mitigation through 54 accredited agencies. He related that the UNEP has been an accredited Entity and Delivery Partner since 2015 and was accredited for projects up to 50 million US dollars, with one full funding proposal approved in 2016.
14. He also said that UNEP is providing support through prospecting ideas and partnership, concept development, project detailed design, and project implementation and coordination.

- **ADB and Health and Environment**

15. Dr. Eduardo Banzon, Principal Health Officer, ADB, presented ADB's funding mechanism on health and environment. He initially highlighted ADB's goal of "an Asia and the Pacific free of poverty" through its key agenda: inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth and regional integration.
16. He underlined the ADB's goal of extending funding or financing for knowledge. This is in the form of sovereign and non-sovereign loans and technical assistance grants.
17. He also shared the available facilities related to health and environment: funding linked with sovereign/non-sovereign projects with a focus on the high-level technology fund and urban climate change resilience trust fund, while general stand-alone funding involved the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, PRC Poverty Fund, and Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund. There is also the stand-alone funding with focus on the environment, particularly the Climate Change Fund, which is geared towards clean energy, sustainable transport and low-carbon urban development or the (low carbon health systems) and climate change adaptation through climate resilience of infrastructure (health infrastructure).
18. He also reported that they have the Asian Development Fund (ADF) – Health Security grants (earmarks) approved in 2016 where 52 million US dollars were allocated but more is being sought. They are currently supporting country-level health security interventions that were incorporated as part of a number of projects currently being developed in Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and the Pacific islands.

The open forum discussions are summarized as follows:

19. Dr. Susan Pineda-Mercado, DOH inquired if it is possible for GCF to provide funds for inter-country or sub-regional projects under the Forum. Mr. Angelson said that it is possible for regional projects to be funded but this may add some complexity in the application process since the project preparation facility is at the country level. Dir. Domingo also shared the view that it is doable although complicated and added that it

can be done through regional organizations or accredited entities like UNDP or UNIDO to put the proposals together.

20. The Chair raised a general question to the panellist about any available mechanism that can sustain the operations of the Forum or that can support the Forum, to which Mr Domingo replied that there are fiduciary issues when it comes to the Forum, hence there is a need to establish a legal personality.
21. Ms. Uchel related that there is a lack of data that can be shared with the funding entities. Mr. Domingo responded that proxy data can be used. The bigger challenge, he said, is how to identify specific links between the environment and health sectors. Ms. Onyon added that there are actually packets of data to mine and explore such as the relationship between communicable diseases and the environment, which is WHO, data; there are also sources of environment data from SDGs. It is important to collectively map them out and improve data, which could be part of the work of the Forum. Mr Motoki also shared that they have made initiatives already and that there is a platform to obtain data on health and environment like the air quality in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Mongolia. Dr Bayugo mentioned the environmental health country profiles, which can be something to start from.
22. Ms. Onyon noted that countries have to be mindful in the preparation or pipeline phase and ensure that while work on developing proposals, work (political effort) is also done to get to different pipelines. Dr. Banzon said that ADB has a mechanism and SDG is a priority. He pointed out that a weakness is that the Forum does not have dedicated people to write down proposals, although data are there and it is just a matter of finding them or have somebody to look for the data. He also shared that to be able to move the projects forward and to tap funds, there is a need to engage or delegate staff from ministries that can contribute staff time. He also mentioned hiring expert consultants on a one-year contract to develop proposals.
23. Dr Kim then shared their experience in the Pacific on a successful project proposal wherein an instrumental factor was having an expert who has a track record to develop proposals. A challenge, he said, is how to involve other countries. He suggested that the Philippines may be able to provide support. We are moving in that direction; a proposal was made to the Chair to prepare projects in that direction with the Forum framework.

#### **2.2.4 Breakout Session on the SDGs Thematic Areas**

The participants were divided into five groups comprising a mix of all participating countries, the Secretariat and representatives from the Philippine DOH and DENR. Each group corresponds to the five key thematic areas on health and environment relevant to the SDGs, namely: Climate Change, Air Quality, Water and Sanitation, Hazardous Chemicals and Pollutants, and Sustainable Urban Cities. The name of each group and its members are listed in **Annex 3.3**

### **2.3 DAY 3 – Discussion on SDGs Thematic Areas and Resource Generation Strategies**

#### **2.3.1 Recapitulation**

Mr. Bonifacio Magtibay gave a recap of the discussions that took place Day 2.

#### **2.3.2 Plenary Presentation and Discussion on Emerging Policy Issues**

In this session, key emerging policy issues as stated in the Manila Declaration were presented and discussed by concerned resource persons.

The summary of the presentations and discussions are as follows:

- **Transboundary air pollution, including short-lived climate pollutants**

1. Ms Onyon presented a thought starter on transboundary air pollution. She recalled that this issue was raised at the Eighth and Ninth Meetings of High-Level Officials and was included in the Manila Declaration as an emerging policy priority to be addressed by the Regional Forum. She underlined transboundary pollution as a public health burden in Asia.
2. Transboundary pollution originates in one country but is able to cause damage in another country's environment by crossing borders through pathways like water or air. Pollution can be transported across hundreds and even thousands of kilometres. At least three SDGs and their indicators are linked to air pollution. WHO is the custodian of air pollution-related SDGs.
3. As part of the interventions, at the regional level, the TWG on Air Quality was convened to strengthen cooperation at the national and regional levels. International cooperation is also necessary owing to the fact that many air pollutants are global, no one country can solve the problem alone, and there are a number of different models or types of international cooperation mechanisms, prominently the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of 1987. This, however, is legally binding to only 51 Parties and its current focus is on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She also stressed the need for effective cooperation on technical issues, governance, accountability and trade/economic incentives.
4. She then cited some UNEP-related frameworks and cooperation mechanisms across Asia and observed that most are voluntary and duplicative, particularly on the following aspects: information sharing; networking role; effectiveness of penalties and its implementation (no "teeth," particularly no penalties or poorly enforced penalties); difficulty in amending or expanding current agreements; only a few take a comprehensive "atmospheric management" perspective; and impact achieved is unclear.
5. There are opportunities, however, such as linking climate and air pollution; linking the hitherto separate regions of Asia and South Asia with the North-East and South-East; strengthening national actions, including under climate frameworks like the Paris Agreement, to ensure co-benefits to air pollution mitigation; and strengthening national scientific communities and science-policy interface.
6. Finally, as next steps, she recommended for the complete analysis of existing agreements, referring the issue to the TWG for Air Quality for advice on scope for collective action by Forum Members (Air Quality Index, Public Health Advisory) and the timelines.

- **Illegal transboundary shipment and dumping of waste**

7. Mr Motoki presented an overview on the status of illegal transboundary shipment and dumping of wastes in the Region and the interventions being undertaken.
8. He explained that with the economic and population growth in Asia and other parts of the world, the amount of waste generation is increasing worldwide and is expected to double by 2050. Unfortunately, waste generation in Asia is faster than in the other

regions. To get rid of these wastes, illegal shipments across borders has become one of the popular options, in particular from developed countries to developing countries.

9. He also pointed out the rampant global waste smuggling route and the weak border control measures in ports in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Major waste shipments include the export of tires, end-of-life vehicles and car parts, and e-waste by road and sea.
10. He noted that the key driver for illegal waste shipments to destination countries is the profit generated from payments for handling and disposal. Illegal wastes may include toxic and hazardous wastes, including medical or heavy metals.
11. He highlighted what the UN has been doing, such as establishment of the Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Waste (REN) that aims to combat illegal trade; improving capacities of frontline enforcement officers; and promoting cooperation at national and regional levels, working with 25 participating countries in Asia and the Pacific. Some of its key activities include the ASIAN Environmental Enforcement Awards, production of enforcement tools (such as a handbook), information sharing (website, newsletter) and conduct of survey on illegal trade.

- **Destruction of coral reefs and marine pollution, in consideration of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea**

12. Mr Motoki also presented a situation and the status of addressing the destruction of coral reefs and marine pollution.
13. He stated that UNEP's key action includes addressing plastic waste and marine litter and sustaining healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, citing the dramatic increase of plastic produced in 2014 at 311 million tonnes from only 15 million tonnes produced in 1964, and is expected to double again in 20 years, and to almost quadruple by 2050.
14. The various efforts and actions of UNEP was also shared including reduction of land-based sources, particularly reducing inflow of solid waste into marine areas; global and regional cooperation; Outreach–Initiate Clean Seas Campaign to raise awareness; and science by way of conducting scientific assessments on plastic marine litter.
15. As part of cross-cutting themes, UNEP initiated the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, International Coral Reef Initiative and Global Campaign on Marine Litter.
16. He also related the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, a multi-sectoral partnership of 108 countries on nutrient, marine litter and wastewater adopted since 1996, which conducts a review every 5 years.

- **Anti-Microbial Resistance**

17. Dr. Socorro Escalante, Coordinator, Essential Medicines and Health Technologies, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, presented on global updates and regional strategies for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the Western Pacific Region, ongoing initiatives, and next steps.
18. She underscored the relevance of AMR by showing its global economic impact, which could lead to 10 million deaths every year by 2050, reduction of 2–3.5% in gross domestic product (GDP) and costing the world up to 100 trillion US dollars.

Besides its economic impact in the Region, AMR causes approximately 350 000 additional deaths per year, with the majority of deaths largely driven by resistant *E. coli* and *N. gonorrhoea*. The economic cost of AMR in the Region is expected to increase from 105 billion US dollars in 2016 to 146 billion in 2025 and may reach 1.25 trillion in the next decade.

19. She also emphasized AMR as a development agenda given its multidimensional implication on the SDGs, particular its impact on the poor, threat on animal food production, effect on health systems, and water contamination. She highlighted the need for local, national and global actions, and to coordinate strategies to contain AMR involving human health, animal health, agriculture, food safety, food production, environmental protection sectors, education and trade.
20. As WHO's response to tackle AMR, a Global Action Plan was developed and endorsed by the World Health Assembly, and also enjoining countries to develop their national plans along these priority areas: improve awareness and understanding of AMR; strengthen knowledge through surveillance and research; reduce the incidence of infection; optimize the use of antimicrobial medicines; and ensure sustainable investment in countering AMR. In WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, at least 20 Member States have so far completed or formulated their action plans, while a few others are still about to develop one. She also acknowledged that the Regional Forum is one step in putting forward AMR to governments.
21. Finally, she summed up the key points to address AMR: AMR remains high on the political agenda in the Western Pacific Region; countries are committed to taking action to finalize and implement national action plans; a multi-stakeholder approach is increasingly recognized as necessary for sustaining actions against AMR; gaps and challenges exist; and WHO, with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), will continue to support countries.

- **Environment and Health Impact Assessment**

22. Ms. Panita Charoensuk, Thailand, Chair, TWG on Health Impact Assessment, presented an overview of the Environment and Health Impact Assessment by providing a report on the status of the work of the TWG on Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
23. She shared the progress of the TWG in terms of membership, structures and the activities that have been undertaken since 2010, and initiatives supported by development agencies like the ADB.
24. She likewise presented the work plan of the TWG for 2017 to 2019 with the vision of strengthening the role of health in achieving SDGs.
25. Finally, she underlined the challenges and solutions for the TWG as follows: HIA capacity and experience of staff at all levels are still limited. For this, she mentioned that exchange and learning experience from other countries and promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration be pursued. In terms of the lack of funding for HIA activities, there is a need to mobilize financial resources from government agencies and international organizations such as the ADB, World Bank and WHO.

The following is the summary of the open forum discussion:

26. For AMR, a question was raised about whether there are regulations pertaining to water residue and pharma waste. Dr Escalante said that work is already being done in



Viet Nam but not on the global scale. In the Philippines, she said that the problem is there are no existing guidelines on handling expired pharma drugs.

27. For HIA, Ms. Timeon expressed their intent for membership; while they cannot attend physically they can contribute via network or communication.

28. Cambodia queried whether there are monitoring mechanisms for electronic waste coming from donations. Ms. Onyon mentioned that there is an ongoing discussion on end of life electronic equipment in relation to the Basel Convention.

### **2.3.3 Presentation of the SDG Thematic Area Project Proposals**

In this session, outputs were presented on the Day 2 Breakout Workshop to develop intercountry project proposals, which are anchored on the SDGs. The summary of the presentations and subsequent discussions are as follows:

- Air Quality Group
  1. Under the Air Quality TWG, the following common problems were identified involving indoor and outdoor air pollution: cooking and heating system (indoor) and transboundary, transportation, open-burning, multisource/stationary sources (outdoor). Along these problems are key issues, including the limitation of air quality data, insufficient air quality – health data–related, air quality index system, capacity of conducting HIA of air quality and public awareness (air quality risk communication warning system).
  2. The group will pursue the project on HIA as a planning tool for quantifying air quality impact on health. The project titled “Capacity Building for Conducting Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of Air Quality” aims to: build capacity in conducting HIA of air quality among Member States; enable baseline data and progress overtime in the context of SDG 3.9 goal to support decision-making; provide recommendation for policy development; and raise public awareness.
  3. To move the project forward, the following are the next steps: training of trainers at the regional level; propose for cooperation between TWG AQ and TWG HIA to be included in the work plan; tapping resources: financial + human resources (HR) aspect–request for technical assistance from WHO or resource organizations (by individual country); mobilization of resources; and formation of HIA-AQ expert groups at the national and regional levels.
- Climate Change Group
  1. The Climate Change TWG decided to propose a project that addresses water-borne diseases related to climate change. Specifically, they proposed building climate-resilient health systems in the Asia-Pacific Region as a priority project with the aim of reducing burden of vector-/waterborne diseases related to climate change; strengthening health system preparedness to cope with and respond to extreme weather events and other disasters related to climate change; and strengthening resilience of indigenous communities and health-relevant ecosystem components through traditional knowledge and innovative technologies.
  2. They have identified as next steps the following: technical assistance and capacity building on proposal development and project implementation; stakeholders consultation; engagement with development partners (WHO/UNEP) and donors/funding agencies; and provision of government counterpart funding/resources.

- Water and Sanitation Group
  3. The group brainstormed on the following topics and issues: access to sustainable water and sanitation services for households and health-care facilities; sustainable management of water resources; proper and efficient wastewater disposal; and database in monitoring, treatment, country capacity and utilization/efficiency of use. They then decided to pursue an initiative on the project called Better WASH for Better Life, which aims to: develop and promote simple water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) technology for unserved areas; develop systems for WASH collaboration with partners (public-private partnerships); and create awareness on WASH among populations.
  4. Steps they have indicated for moving on include the following: identify a sponsor; hire a consultant to develop the proposal; pilot Study and implementation.
- Hazardous Wastes and Pollutants Group
  5. The group was unified to work on hospital waste, with their project proposal on “Sound Management of Hazardous Waste from Health Care” that aims to establish and update hospital information on data on health-care waste; develop a management plan for health-care waste, build capacity for health-care waste management and establish pilot activity at selected hospitals.
  6. Their immediate next steps include: updating of data and information on health-care waste, enhance capacity of the healthcare; enhance capacity of the health-care workers and law enforcement officers, and improve health-care waste management.
- Sustainable Urban Cities Group
  7. The group decided to work on health and sustainable cities, specifically, on “Ensuring Health Food, Water, Air and Settings for Sustainable Cities in Asia-Pacific” to increase the number of cities in the Asia-Pacific Region with clean air, improved foods and water security and health settings.
  8. As next steps, they line up the following: Member States to enact a national policy on health and environment; Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment to advocate for enactment of national policies on health and environment; build capacity of Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health officials and local officials to implement national health and environment policy through support of resources (funding, technical assistance, etc.) from the Secretariat, donor agencies, etc.; increase advocacy through utilization of community groups with resources and communication technologies; and improve inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

The project proposals are attached as **Annex 3.4**.

A summary of the open forum discussion are as follows:

9. Under the Climate Change Group, there was a suggestion to also include the impacts of climate change and other aspects of health systems like infrastructure, prevention, treatment, and policies relevant to health, and overall resilience but countries can include these in developing the project further. The criteria for selecting countries to be part of the project were also raised. On the timeline, the group said that this will be completed in two years but the scope may need to be narrowed down. As for the health systems, WHO has an existing detailed framework and guidelines.

10. For sustainable cities, there was an observation that solid waste was not indicated, although this can be included in the country-level implementation. There was also a suggestion to ensure climate considerations in the policy.
11. On air quality, several suggestions for enhancement were floated, including having a common Air Quality Index (AQI) for the Regional Forum and the health effects from air quality.
12. For hazardous wastes, it was suggested to add health-care waste management service provider as one of the stakeholders and to include policy aspect to aid implementation.
13. On WASH, a general observation is how it is different from what is being done already on WASH and how it would be an improvement from the existing programs. There was also a suggestion to consider looking at the quality of services and not just the access/coverage or the supply and further need to enhance the project to also focus on the end-user. There was also a suggestion to reinforce the current initiative in the context of the SDG and to highlight access to safe and sustainable water supply.

#### **2.3.4 Plenary Discussion (Second Session) on the Recommendations on the Review of the Governance Mechanism**

In this session, the formal discussion on the recommendations of the Review of the Governance Mechanism continued, with Mr. Thompson presenting the pending issues for discussion and resolution by the Task Force. The summary of the discussions are as follows:

- **Expanded Membership and Approval Process**

1. Mr. Thompson recalled that participants prefer the “all-inclusive” option, which means that all the countries that are covered by any of the three Regional Offices can be members. The Task Force has to decide whether all countries automatically become members or all countries are eligible to request membership by way of written request as entry to membership.
2. Dr. Mercado proposed to replace the word “automatically” and just state that all countries are “encouraged” to become members and then the Secretariat will take up the issue of membership at the next Regional Committee Meeting. Mr. Kim agreed.
3. Ms. Basug stressed that from earlier discussions, there is a need for actual expression of willingness in the form of a letter encouraging the members within the geographical area to become members and that there should be explicit indication of interest through a written letter and it has to be pro forma to be very easy and very facilitative.
4. Dr. Mercado cited, as an example of how this can be achieved, that during the next Regional Committee Meetings of WHO and UNEP, there could be a template where participants just need to sign to express their intention to become members of the Regional Forum. This would not be a difficult process and they could sign during or before the Regional Committee Meeting. She further stated that if a written document is needed, the Secretariat would consult with the members before the Regional Committee meeting, telling them that this is coming up and maybe showing them what the letter would look like. However, it would just be a very simple template and members would be given about a year between now and next year.
5. Ms. Onyon supported the suggestion saying that it is something they want to see in their Region, where they would have some consultations with Member States to let them

know what the Forum is all about and solicit their interest. Formally, she added that they would help with the formal consideration at the Regional Committee and then it could be on block membership.

6. Dr. Kim proposed to pursue automatic membership and without additional process but this should be done within the processes of the governing bodies of WHO and UNEP and the preliminary communication and information activities by the Secretariat informing Member States about the Forum and the process leading towards full membership. He expounded further that to avoid problems such as creating new organizational structures or arrangements and to ensure that the Forum processes are within the legal framework of the WHO and UNEP, the membership process should be duly approved by the Regional Committees and UNEP and Member States duly informed about the intent and activities of the Regional Forum and what it means to be a member. This way would facilitate the process of formal approval during the Regional Committee Meeting or Assembly since the members are already informed and resolved about the membership.
7. Mr. Thompson raised a remote scenario wherein the Ministry of Health signs up at the Regional Committee Meeting but the Ministry of Environment will not at the UNEA, to which Dr. Kim said that this is highly unlikely and the preliminary communication would address this.
8. Ms. Chandanachulaka said to consider what is intended to be accomplished after 2018 or 2019, saying that the High-Level Officials Meeting in 2018 will be an appropriate venue to communicate this regardless of whether there are 14 or 47 Member States as long as there can be some small steps taken.
9. Ms. Timeon expressed preference for having a letter of intent from countries, citing their case in which official communications comes through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they serve as advocates at the Cabinet level.
10. Ms. Beltran then moved to put this issue to a vote and discuss further the pros and cons later. The body carried the motion to vote between the two options: Option 1 is that countries are encouraged to be a member of the Forum and there would be a letter of interest or intent to participate in the Forum, while Option 2 is they are automatic members of the forum. By raising of hands, majority of the participating countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines) voted in favor of Option 1.
11. Dr. Kim then sought guidance from the Task Force and the Chair on the timelines since these issues will be placed on the agenda of the WHO Regional Committees and UNEA. Ms. Onyon meanwhile clarified her earlier suggestion that there is a need to go through the governing body because of the resource implications. Countries that are already committed can start sending in their letter of intent.
12. Ms. Beltran said that there is already a draft template of the letter for sending out to countries. She also stated that while waiting for the next governing bodies meeting, template can be sent out but this will have to be shared first with the secretariat. Dr. Kim suggested setting the overall timeline by June or earlier, such as April, next year to be part of the agenda of the September and October WHO meetings. Ms. Beltran proposed to have it earlier, by the end of the year.
13. A clarification was also raised on when the official membership would be extended. Dr. Kim replied that this is possible upon completing the two conditions: one is for each Member State to have sent a letter of intent to become a member to the Chair country; second, the Secretariat will have to evaluate the application. He added that as soon as

these two conditions are fulfilled, these will be part of the agenda in the meetings of the governing bodies.

- **On the Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair and Hosting of Meetings**

14. On the hosting of meetings, Mr. Thompson recalled that the participants agreed that :(a) the Chair is to establish a roster of countries willing to Chair or Vice Chair; (b) the Chair country will host Ministerial Meetings and High-Level Officials Meeting linked to the Ministerial Meeting. He raised the question of who will host the High-Level Officials Meeting not linked to the Ministerial Meeting and what to do if and when the roster is ever exhausted.
15. Ms.Chandanachulaka said that it is the responsibility of the Chair to host the Ministerial Meeting and the subsequent meeting but the next Ministerial Meeting will be for the next Chair. On the roster of volunteers to Chair, she explained that among the countries in the roster, they can ask another country to host any meeting instead of themselves. For instance, if the Philippines thinks there are some Member States that are willing to host the High-Level meeting, they can arrange and host it on behalf of the Philippines.
16. On the selection of Chair and Vice-Chair, there was a clarification on the mode of electing or identifying the next Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr Thompson mentioned that there is a contradiction in the current governance framework since it says the Vice-Chair automatically ascends to Chair but the guidance document on conduct of meetings says a different thing.
17. Director Mario Baquilod, director of the Philippine Disease Prevention and Control Bureau and session Chair related that in the present setup, the Philippines is the Chair but there is no Vice-Chair and the country made the internal arrangement that the DOH is the Chair and the Environment Department is the Co-chair. Mr Thompson again pointed out the initial suggestion that the current Chair will establish a roster of countries willing to be Chair and Vice-chair. He added that there might be two rosters, one roster of countries willing to be Chair and another roster of countries willing to be Vice-chair, and then it should go alphabetically. Ms. Uchel agreed on this proposal, saying further that there must be an option for the next country to decline due to considerable circumstances, in which case, they decide to host the next round. She proposed to have this included in the provisions of the revised Framework.
18. On the next Chair and Vice-Chair, it was pointed out that the Task Force is not in the position to identify the next set of Chair and Vice-Chair, and would have to wait for the next High-Level Officials Meeting. Moreover, it was also agreed that the Philippines will extend its term as Chair until 2020 in transition for the new cycle of Chairship.

- **Scientific Panel**

19. It was initially discussed that the purpose of the Scientific Panel is to advise the Secretariat but it is uncertain whether there is a need for a Panel per se as a standing body since expert advice could be sourced from TWGs, WHO Collaborating Centres, geographically dispersed office (GDO) and external experts. Ultimately, it is the Secretariat that will decide on this.
20. Mr. Bonifacio Magtibay pointed out that it was not clear on why this Scientific Panel did not function as desired and floated the idea of doing something to organize it by allowing each country to nominate their experts, who can constitute the Scientific Panel to provide scientific advice to the Secretariat.

21. Ms. Basug then also proposed to have a roster of experts that can come and form part of a directory of experts and, as needed, they can be called on to help. Ms. Chandanalunaka stressed that the Regional Forum needs an evidence-based position or decisions that would emanate from either the Scientific Panel or any group when dealing with the policy-makers.

- **Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)**

22. On the TWGs, a longer discussion was dedicated to clarify issues surrounding this matter. Mr. Thompson stressed the earlier agreement of the body that the TWGs should be governed by the Regional Forum. Taking off from the discussion in Day 1, he again floated the issue of whether some TWGs will be discontinued, merged, changed or new TWGs created. He also touched on the timelines or terms of TWGs, who can be a member of a TWG and what the restrictions on funding are. Finally, he requested that the body decide on the TWGs' terms of reference.

As guiding principles, he noted the following for consideration: TWGs should have a five-year fixed term if the body agrees to a five-year Chairship cycle; align the TWG priorities with the Manila Declaration; and consider intersection of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment interests.

On the terms of reference (TOR), the 2007 Charter and the 2013 Framework provide a different and vague TOR for the TWGs. In the Charter, the functions cover knowledge management, coordination advocacy, resource mobilization and progress reporting, while the 2013 Framework mainly says "to address specific priority issues and areas" and they "may" have a role in the development and implementation of plans. He pointed out that a very important role for TWGs is to develop policy briefs for the High-Level Officials Meetings and the Ministerial Meetings, and that TWGs should make policy recommendations to be endorsed at those meetings. He said that this should be decided on once and for all. He also expressed discomfort in using the term "thematic" for the TWGs.

On membership to the TWG, he proposed to have two types of TWG membership: full members (policy-making function) and associate members (advisory function); these should be institutions instead of individuals. Full members should come from governments while associate members are from universities, nongovernmental research institutes, NGOs, media and commercial enterprises (consultants, equipment suppliers, etc.). Government agencies should be composed of health and environment authorities but other government sectors are also welcomed and encouraged. If there is no health authority or no environment authority involved, this may be a cause for concern (but not a deal-breaker). If neither health nor any environment authority is involved, then the TWG should be discontinued. The points for decision are the following: whether the TWG Chairs will issue invitations, or if membership is to be requested and if there is a need for the TWG members to endorse the prospective member, and then seek approval from Regional Forum Chair. The Forum Chair should also consult the Secretariat for due diligence in determining conflicts of interests.

On funding for TWGs, he raised the need for restrictions. No funding should be given to tobacco, alcohol or arms industries or industry associations that are channels for the TWGs. Other nongovernmental sources of funds can be accepted, provided that they are approved by TWG members, use of funds is unrestricted, and the RF Chair approves after consultation with the Secretariat.

On TWG categories, he also offered some recommendations on the name and themes: Retitle "Air Quality" to "Air Quality and Health", with focus on urban AQ, indoor AQ, transboundary air pollution and short-lived chemical pollutants; retitle "WASH" to

“Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health”, and to also include agriculture waste; discontinue the TWG on “Solid and Hazardous waste” and shift Solid Waste to the Healthy and Sustainable Cities TWG and Hazardous Waste to the Chemical Safety TWG; retitle “Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Substances” to “Chemical Safety” to include life-cycle management, chemical waste management, the “3R’s” and illegal transboundary waste; retitle “Climate Change, Ozone Depletion and Ecosystems Changes” to “Climate Change and Health”, with focus on health system resilience; and combine the Environmental Health Emergencies TWG with the Climate Change and Health TWG.

23. The body again affirmed the recommendation that the TWGs should be governed by the Regional Forum and not as a loose association.
24. On the revisions of the TWGs, there was a suggestion from the WHO South-East Asia Region that another group could discuss more and identify the working groups, their roles and functions, following the task set in the Implementation Plan of the Manila Declaration that TWGs should be more focused on delivering some outputs.

Ms. Chandanachulaka suggested to settle the roles of the TWGs first before the group can propose the list of working groups, their names, and who wants to be a chair of the various groups.

Dr. Kim noted that many details were not prescribed in the Framework and the Task Force is not obliged to elaborate on the details of the TWG; however, it is beyond the existing Framework to agree on the changes. His proposal is to finalize or postpone the decision on the detailed arrangement of TWGs and their TORs until the next High-Level Officials Meeting, taking into consideration the progress of the regional projects that will be implemented. He again mentioned the underlying constraint of the TWGs, which is resources –both human and financial –and therefore that more time, may be needed for them to be ready.

Ms. Chandanachulaka then proposed to lodge this issue with the Secretariat, both UNEP and WHO, since this also involves the Scientific Panel and for adopted decisions to be conveyed to the High-Level Officials. She added that TWGs that are working can proceed with work plan.

Ms Eden (Palau) expressed apprehension over postponing the discussion on the TWGs and said that the Secretariat and the Chair can take the lead in developing the TORs and tweak the groups and then bring it all to the Task Force to look at and discuss virtually instead of waiting for another.

Dr. Mohamed on the other hand, supported Dr Kim’s suggestion, saying that the funding constraints need to be addressed first, citing an earlier discussion on this concern.

Mr Thompson proposed that it is the Secretariat that would come up with some recommendation later on but the existing working groups could continue as suggested. Dr Mercado also clarified the consensus that the TWGs will continue as is while the Secretariat will take charge of merging and tweaking the TWGs prior to the High-Level Officials Meeting and that everything will follow pending the possibility of funding for the five projects. The WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific then set a timeline by June 2018 to prepare the TORs and arrangements for the TWGs provided there is already progress on the funding issue and which areas of work can be linked with the TWGs to get a more official relationship with the Forum.

- **Frequency of Meetings**

25. Dr Kim related the latest standing proposal of 2020 for the next Ministerial Meeting and then subsequently every five years in 2025 and 2030 to keep with the SDG milestone. He called for a vote to decide on the frequency of meetings, with the option of moving the next Ministerial Meeting from 2019 to 2020 first and then every five years thereafter. With a majority vote, having all members affirming, the agreement was adopted. Members also agreed to have the next High-Level Officials Meeting in 2019, the year before the Ministerial Meeting.
26. As for the general timelines, it would be left to the Government of the Philippines as Chair and the Secretariat to discuss.

### **2.3.5 Other Matters**

#### **a. Overview of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 3) Resolution**

In this session, Mr Motoki presented a general overview of the proposed UNEA Resolution process being prepared by the Philippines as Forum Chair for submission to the UNEA for consideration and adoption. He explained that the resolution will give UN Environment the fundamental reason why we tackle this matter, and many projects will be generated based on the resolution. So far, there are six draft resolutions/announcements that have been submitted, including one from the Philippines. Mr. Motoki also encouraged Member States and participants to the Regional Forum to offer strong support or even comment on the Resolution, which is available on the UNEP website. He added that comments will be accepted by the UNEP Secretariat even after submission of the draft Resolution.

Meanwhile, Dr. Corinthia Naz, DENR, Philippines, presented the draft copy of the Resolution to the UNEP Secretariat. She mentioned that the Philippine DENR has prepared a letter addressed to the UNEA President. UNEA is an assembly of all the Ministers of Environment of the Member States of the United Nations. She added that the draft resolution may also be circulated to each of the countries through the Secretariat of the Regional Forum. It is very important that the draft be submitted to the UNEP Secretariat on or before 22 September 2017 so that this will be included in the UNEA meeting this year. She also noted that former Secretary of the Environment of the Philippines, Secretary Ramon Paje, is the Vice-President of the UNEA for Asia-Pacific and can serve as a champion at the UNEA.

The copy of the draft UNEA Resolution is attached as **Annex 3.5**.

#### **b. Office of the Chair. The Philippines as Chair has established an office for the Regional Forum at the Philippine Blood Center in Quezon City.**

### **2.3.6 Synthesis of the Task Force Meeting**

Ms. Onyon provided an overall synthesis of the three-day Task Force Meeting, highlighting the important discussions, key agreements/action points, tasks and direction of the Forum. The following are the summary of the final agreements:

- a. Title of the Forum – Adopt the new title, “Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment”.



- b. Goal –Revise the goal to read “...is to create a platform for national and regional policy and action to enhance and safeguard health and environment towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”.
- c. Objectives – Revise the objectives to read, “Identify and promote to implement priority health and environment issues that require regional action”.
- d. Membership expansion –Membership is open to all members of the WHO Western Pacific and South-East Asian Regions and UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office and there would be a letter of intent to participate in the Forum duly signed by both the Ministries of Health and Environment of each Member State. WHO and UNEP will encourage Member States through regional bodies to participate in the Forum.
- e. Frequency of meetings – The next Ministerial Meeting will be held in 2020 and the cycle will be every five years thereafter. For the High-Level Officials Meeting, the next meeting will be in 2019 and the subsequent meetings will be twice every five years after 2020.
- f. Structure of the Forum – The Secretariat will review the status of the Scientific Panel with an option to create a roster of advisers from the Member States. For TWGs, these should be governed by the Regional Forum. The TWG members will have five-year terms to synchronize with the Chairship. The Secretariat will prepare a TOR for the TWGs to include whether TWGs will be merged, rearranged or expanded. For TWG membership, the TWG Chairs will accept members subject to due diligence work of the Secretariat to avoid conflicts of interests. The Knowledge Network will be retained pending further discussion.
- g. Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair and hosting – Retain voluntary mechanism of selecting the Forum leadership, where individual countries can volunteer to take on the Chair and Vice-Chairship. In the event that there are multiple volunteers, the recommendation was to establish a roster of countries willing to be Chair or Vice-Chair with the selection arranged alphabetically. The Chair will host the Ministerial Meeting and High-Level Officials Meeting linked to the Ministerial Meeting but can ask other countries from the roster to host other meetings. It was also resolved that the Vice-Chair cannot automatically ascend to Chairship.
- h. Forum Work Plan implementation –Resource mobilization is a key element in implementing the Work Plan. Potential donors identified were the ADB, GEF and GCF. Five projects were agreed to be developed for resource mobilization:
  - HIA as a planning tool for quantifying air quality impact on health
  - Building climate-resilient health systems in the Asia-Pacific Region (focus on vector-borne diseases)
  - Safe management and access to sustainable water and sanitation services for households and health-care facilities
  - Ensuring healthy food, water, air and settings for sustainable cities in the Asia-Pacific Region
  - Sound management of hazardous waste from health care

- i. Transboundary issues –The Secretariat will support actions to resolve transboundary issues (air pollution, dumping of waste) and emerging environmental health concerns (antimicrobial resistance, biodiversity loss, and ecosystems) among and within specific Member States.
  - j. Awards mechanisms –“Sampaguita” Awards will be given to Member States with best practices on health and environment.
  - k. Communication and advocacy –Forum communication and advocacy will be prepared to create visibility for the expanding membership.
1. Other matters:

–UNEA Resolution: The draft UNEA Resolution endorsing the Manila Declaration will be submitted by the Philippines to the UN Environment Assembly by 21 September 2017. Forum participants are encouraged to support its approval at UNEA.

–The Philippines as Chair has established an office for the Regional Forum at the Philippine Blood Center in Quezon City.

### **2.3.7 Closing Session**

Closing remarks were delivered by Ms. Basug, representing Environmental Management Bureau Director Metodio Turbella and DENR Undersecretary Leones.

#### **Remarks from DENR-EMB Director Metodio Turbella**

Director Metodio Turbella expressed his pleasure to be part of this convergence, which is proof that we can work together in coming up with approaches and mechanisms to put our efforts into action all for sustaining and improving the environment and the health of our people and ensure the well-being of present and future generations. He encouraged the participating Member States to remain committed to ensuring access to safely managed water and adequate sanitation both at home and in health-care facilities; prioritize climate change adaptation, preparedness and resilience; and invest in the proper management of chemicals and wastes. He likewise called for support to implement the Work Plan of the Regional Forum as a platform for dialogue on emerging issues. He then thanked and congratulated the officials and representatives from the Asia-Pacific Region for participating in the meeting and their contributions to the Forum.

#### **Remarks from DOH Undersecretary Gerardo V. Bayugo**

Undersecretary Bayugo, on behalf of the Philippine DOH, extended his deepest gratitude to all delegates for taking part in the Task Force Meeting. He said that the meeting was a productive exercise where participants were able to engage in meaningful discussions on the governance mechanisms of the Regional Forum and how projects can be implemented to bring about action in addressing health and environmental issues in the Region. He also stressed that as advocates of health and environment, it is important that we see the importance of collaboration between the health and environment sectors in the implementation of our projects. Finally, as Chair of the Regional Forum, he officially closed and adjourned the Task Force Meeting.

### **3. ANNEXES**

**3.1** List of Participants

**3.2** Recommendations on the Review of Governance Mechanisms of the Task Force

**3.3** SDG TWGs Working Groups

**3.4** SDG Project Proposals

**3.5** Draft UNEA Resolution