

## **An APFED Appeal to the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific**

### **Introduction**

On the occasion of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, the Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) organised a side event entitled “Multi-stakeholder Forum for an Equitable and Environmentally Sustainable Society - Message from the Asia-Pacific: A New Era for Sustainable Development and a Knowledge Network” in Seoul, Republic of Korea, on March 27, 2005, and made the following appeal:

### **Launch of the final APFED Report**

APFED has hereby launched its Final Report as the product of three years’ collective efforts through extensive interactions among the APFED members, many participating experts and advocates from the region. The Final Report provides *broad guidance to various regional initiatives* aiming at a shift towards truly sustainable development, based on the *comprehensive assessment of key driving forces* taking into account recent socio-economic and environmental changes in the region.

### **Overview of the Asia-Pacific Region**

The Asia-Pacific region is characterised by robust economic growth, the highest population density, and the richest diversity in natural and socio-cultural conditions. Therefore, the sustainable societies that APFED envisages for the future will be diverse, and will take various forms, reflecting the socio-cultural and natural differences found throughout this region. Sustainable societies will be economically dynamic, and yet modest in their use of natural resources. They will be democratic, equitable, and peaceful. To realise sustainable futures of this kind, the societies should be truly participatory, encouraging mutual learning, and promoting innovation, while ensuring local diversities for future generations of the region. Respect for the rich human resources, traditional values, and enormous diversity treasured in the region should be the basis for the design of future sustainable societies. Clear vision, strong political will, and flexible social partnerships will enable the region to move along a truly sustainable path as *the world leader in the 21st Century*.

### **APFED Recommendations**

The recommendations presented in the Final Report suggest broad directions in which the Asia-Pacific region as a whole should move to attain sustainable societies. There are about 100 recommendations in our report, organised into three groups. (I) ***Recommendations for an Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development*** primarily address cross-sectoral issues essential for integration of the environment into decision-making, implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of environmental and natural resource management policies, as the key element of sustainable development. (II) ***Recommendations for Empowerment of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships*** address measures to promote synergistic participation of the three major stakeholders: civil society, private business, and the public sector. (III) ***Sectoral Recommendations*** facilitate application of the sustainability principles in the five major sectors selected, namely freshwater, marine and coastal environment, energy and clean air, land use management, and chemicals.

### **Implementation of APFED recommendations**

The APFED Action Platform is put forward to initiate the first step to turn the recommendations into reality. The APFED Action Platform consists of three broad mechanisms: 1) Multi-stakeholder Interactive Channels, 2) the Sustainable Development Knowledge Initiative, and 3) Innovation Showcases for Sustainable Development. As the Action Platform mainly aims to play a catalytic role in sharing knowledge and experiences for sustainable development with key stakeholders in the region, creation of ***a network amongst research institutes*** in the Asia-Pacific region will hold the key to its effective implementation.

### **Inputs into MCED**

A number of the APFED recommendations are related to the main theme of MCED, “Achieving Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth”. Among the recommendations on finance issues, for instance, the ***Regional Environmental Fund for Asia and the Pacific (REFAP)*** is proposed as a new regional mechanism to effectively promote collaborative actions against trans-boundary environmental issues in the region. Also the promotion of ***Eco-Currencies*** is encouraged to effectively stimulate local financing without any external funding. Other APFED recommendations provide concrete steps towards a market-based approach to environmental conservation, trade and technology development. Specific examples in this regard include the ***Fair Trade Initiatives*** to promote self-sustaining local economies

that can simultaneously deal with equity and environmental issues. To facilitate more proactive action by the private sector, the *Voluntary Environment Agreement Initiative* is highly recommended, together with *Promotion of Eco-industry*, and the establishment of a regional scheme for *Asia-Pacific Green Labelling*. “Major Sectoral Recommendations” are also featured as integrated approaches to environmental as well as economic concerns. Considering the critical importance of energy issues for the region in terms of improving social and economic conditions as well as addressing climate change concerns, creation of the *Level Playing Field for Renewables* is recommended to promote fair market conditions for renewable energy sources. *Promotion of green chemistry* also implies the application of market based instruments, in addition to supporting research & development, for attaining sustainable development.

It should be noted that these recommendations are not intended to be applied to specific countries. Rather, they assume broad policy directions which many countries in this region may find useful, recognising the diverse geographical features and rich cultures of this region. We, the APFED members, would be more than happy if the recommendations contained in the Final Report can make constructive contributions to discussions at MCED, by complementing existing and new initiatives undertaken by countries in Asia and the Pacific.

### **Conclusion**

Humankind should live in harmony with the Earth that we share with plants and other animals. Our hope for such a world is always high, and innovative efforts to realise that are very much called for. APFED will continue to function as an important forum where knowledge and ideas essential for promoting truly sustainable development in Asia-Pacific are actively discussed and exchanged. Since APFED is an open and participatory process, it would like to take every possible opportunity *to seek further collaboration with all stakeholders*, such as governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and international organisations, to promote follow-up actions to its recommendations. APFED is committed to acting as a mechanism to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnership, and to facilitate innovative initiatives in the region. Taking the opportunity of MCED2005, we, the APFED members, hereby appeal to all interested stakeholders to work together with us for the promotion of a sustainable Asia-Pacific.