

## **Asian Pacific Countries Gathered to Solve Crime against the Environment**

**Chiang Mai, 16 Oct. 2009:** During 12-15 October 2009, around 90 customs officers, environment officers from 24 Asia Pacific countries together with experts from international organizations and NGOs gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand to analyze environmental crime trends and explore further cooperation to address illegal trade in ozone depleting substance (ODS), harmful chemicals and hazardous wastes.

Many Asian Pacific countries have been suffered from waste dumping tricked from developed countries, faced the challenges in control of harmful chemicals like pesticides, and in illegal trade in ODS. Porous borders facilitate much of this illicit activity. Environmental crime laws usually have low penalties and are not well known among enforcement officers. Fighting environmental crimes is a clear responsibility of national governments and international organizations in their pursuit towards human security.

The Sida (Swedish International Development Agency) funded Multilateral Environmental Agreements Regional Enforcement Network (MEA-REN) project which networked customs authorities and environmental agencies in the region to enable the participating countries gaining better control over their import and export of harmful chemicals and wastes.

The MEA-REN workshop in Chiang Mai, 12-15 October 2009 analyzed the smuggling trends in harmful chemicals and wastes and shared the best practice in fighting against the crime. The participants further discussed how to improve communication channels for informal information exchange and the progress of the development common tools for data management and collaboration. Informal Prior Consent on Import and Export of ODS (iPIC), application of communication tool, ENVIRONET and desk study of movements of chemicals and wastes have been highlighted in the meeting.

The workshop agreed that awareness raising campaign developed by the Basel Convention, Rotterdam Convention and Stockholm Convention Secretariats could be brought into the regional and national levels through the Basel Convention Regional Centers, Parties and UNEP and FAO regional offices. Countries agreed to further organize border dialogues to address environmental crime. The cooperation between EU and Asian countries were highlighted and the two ends would further cooperate in return of seized shipments. Countries also acknowledged that World Customs Organization (WCO) considered environmental crime as the top priority on their agenda. During the event, WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), Basel Convention Regional Centres (BCRCs), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Japan Ministry of Environment and Netherlands' Ministry of Environmental, Basel Convention Secretariat, Interpol, World Customs Organization, United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) were invited to update the participants on their global and regional strategies and approaches. The workshop also evaluated the MEA-REN project and discussed future steps to concretize the cooperation. All networking countries agreed that MEA-REN offered opportunities for representatives from different sectors and MEA enforcement agencies to come up with a roadmap for better coordination and that MEA-REN facilitated better inter-agency cooperation at the national and regional level. Finally, the countries expressed their strong wishes to continue this networking project.

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### **MEA-REN Project**

The MEA- REN project aims at initiating an integrated regional cooperation between countries in North East, South and South East Asia that will enable the participating countries to gain better control over their import and export of chemicals (ODS, POPs, chemical waste) by promoting further regional co-operation for the control of trans-boundary movement of those chemicals. The project will establish improved communication channels for informal information exchange and develop common tools for data management and collaboration, through extending the existing ODS enforcement networks by integrating control of trans-boundary movements on chemicals covered by the Montreal Protocol, and the Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel Conventions.

**For more information please visit:** [www.mea-ren.org](http://www.mea-ren.org)

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

UNEP is the United Nations system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action.

#### **Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer**

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is an international treaty designated to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of a number of substances believed to be responsible for ozone depletion. The treaty was opened for signature on September 16, 1987 and entered into force on January 1, 1989. Since then, it has undergone five revisions, in 1990 (London), 1992 (Copenhagen), 1995 (Vienna), 1997 (Montreal), and 1999 (Beijing). Due to its widespread adoption and implementation it has been hailed as an example of exceptional international cooperation, "Perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date..."

### **About UNEP's OzonAction**

The Montreal Protocol is at an advanced stage of implementation. Developing countries now operate under a "compliance phase" which requires them to achieve and sustain compliance with specific obligations, promote a greater sense of country ownership and implement the agreed Executive Committee framework for strategic planning.

As an Implementing Agency of the Protocol's Multilateral Fund, UNEP responded to this new compliance context by changing its mode of operation and structure to better assist developing countries with the implementation of the treaty. UNEP's OzonAction Programme established a Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP) that moved from a project management approach to directly assisting countries with specific compliance challenges. The CAP is delivered through specialized staff located in four of UNEP's Regional Offices and in the Paris office of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE).

Consistent with the above approach **the CAP team in the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP)** has developed to be the centre for policy advice, compliance guidance and conduct training to refrigeration technicians, customs officers and other relevant stakeholders on compliance issues, promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation and promote high-level awareness by utilizing UNEP's staff.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** UNEP OzonAction Programme: [www.unep.fr/ozonaction](http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction)