

## **Eighth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Malé Declaration**

### **REPORT OF THE SESSION**

#### Introduction

1. The Intergovernmental Meeting (IG) on the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia held its Eighth Session in Thimpu, Bhutan on 13 September 2006.
2. The meeting was attended by the Ministries of Environment (NFP) and National Implementing Agencies (NIA) of the participating countries, members of Monitoring Committee (MoC), South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and an independent facilitator. A representative from Afghanistan attended as observer. A list of the participants is enclosed in Attachment II.
3. His Excellency Mr. Dasho Nado Rinchhen, Deputy Minister, National Environment Commission (NEC) of Bhutan chaired the session. Mr. R. Rajamani, former Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India participated in the session as the regional facilitator.

#### Progress reporting (Agenda item 1)

4. The Secretariat made presentations on the Report of the Progress of Malé Declaration after the Seventh Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting (IG7) which was held in October 2005 in New Delhi, India (Malé Declaration/IG 8/1). The presentation of the Secretariat analyzed the comments from the regional stakeholders cum coordination meeting, gaps in the existing monitoring network and the data report 2005/06.
5. Major discussions included the following points:
  - Data format for reporting the Meteorological data need to be developed.
  - Sampling height of meteorological measurements and air pollution measurements should be standardized at, at least 3 m and at most 8 m.
  - National Implementing Agencies are encouraged to follow the data reporting formats developed for the Malé Declaration.
6. The Session acknowledged the Progress Report as presented (Malé Declaration/IG 8/1)

Review of monitoring network (Agenda item 2)

7. Ms. Karin Sjoberg, member of the monitoring committee, introduced the proposed plan for further development of the monitoring network. It included: (i) updating and integrating the technical and user manuals and other recommendations (Malé Declaration/IG 8/2-1); and (ii) suggested changes for improving data quality in the Malé Declaration Monitoring Network (Malé Declaration/IG 8/2-2). The Session was invited to provide comments on the proposal.
8. Major discussions included the following points:
  - Some participants asked about the nature of the data change when new protocols are applied. It was clarified that the nature of data (for trend analysis) would change only if the site for sampling is changed and the proposed changes to the protocol will not change the nature of the data.
  - Some countries enquired whether the proposed changes are ready for implementation. It was clarified that the proposed changes to the monitoring protocols are only the recommendations by the monitoring committee. It will be implemented only after being agreed upon by the intergovernmental meeting.
  - It may not be feasible for the National Advisory Committee to meet monthly for data verification. A small group of technically competent personnel from the national advisory committee should be established to verify the data before submitting to the Secretariat.
  - NIAs are encouraged to go through the proposed suggestions and send their feedbacks to the Secretariat.
9. The meeting agreed that the technical manual would be revised and the proposed changes for improving the data quality will be implemented, based on the discussions and further comments from NIAs, if any.

Review of institutional arrangement of the Malé Declaration (Agenda item 3)

10. Mr. Rajamani, regional facilitator, introduced the draft “Review of Implementation of Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary effects for South Asia 1998-2006,” which has been prepared by the regional facilitator based on the consultation with the owners of Malé Declaration (governments and stakeholders). The Session was invited to discuss the document.
11. Major discussions included the following points:
  - The program has given more weight on monitoring. Future phases should focus more on the reduction of air pollution.
  - Phase III should be a transitional phase and regional partners should take the coordination role in order to enhance the ownership in the region.
  - Countries should be encouraged to contribute and take ownership of the process.

- Representative from Nepal informed the session that Nepal will host the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Governing Council of South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) in Kathmandu in January 2007.
  - Countries appreciated the generous support by Sida and SEI and requested for continued financial and technical support for the implementation of the Malé Declaration.
  - Countries appreciated the role and coordination of UNEP for implementing the Malé Declaration and asked UNEP to continue as the Secretariat for the Malé Declaration.
  - The proposed technical centers under the Malé Declaration should not be a replication of similar arrangements under SAARC. SAARC centers could be assigned as technical centers for Malé Declaration, as appropriate.
  - Most of the member countries should be represented in different committees and tasks forces of the Malé Declaration.
  - Long-term training programmes should be organized for smaller countries like Maldives.
  - Countries appreciated the proposal to bring in SAARC as a partner.
  - Two additional centers are proposed for the institutional arrangement: (i) Center for air pollution reduction policies and strategies; and (ii) Center for emission inventory, scenarios and atmospheric modeling.
12. The chair, His Excellency Mr. Dasho Nado Rinchhen, concluded the discussions on this agenda item by saying that it is too early for the governments to take full responsibility for the implementation of the Malé Declaration. The Chair urged national governments to increase their support, including financial support, for the implementation of the Malé Declaration, so that gradually the full responsibility for the implementation could be transferred to the countries.
13. The Session endorsed the report Malé Declaration / IG 8/3.

#### Review of Malé Declaration publication(Agenda item 4)

14. Mr. Rajamani, regional facilitator, presented the draft “Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia: Past, Present, and Future,” which has been prepared based on the request of the Sixth Session of Intergovernmental meeting.
15. Participants have been asked to go through the draft and provide their inputs in a month’s time.
16. The Session endorsed, in principle, the Report, and instructed the Secretariat to incorporate the comments from the countries, if any, to the extent possible and publish it.

Review of work programme in 2007 (Agenda item 5)

17. The draft Work Programme in 2007 for Malé Declaration (Malé Declaration/IG 8/5) was presented by the Secretariat. The Session was invited to discuss the report.
18. Major discussions included the following points:
  - It was suggested to promote passive sampler analysis in the region.
  - Representative from Bhutan suggested that an alternative for crop impact assessment could be considered for Bhutan, because Bhutan does not have enough data for crop impact assessment studies.
  - Some countries emphasized the need for proper criteria for selecting a country for establishing new monitoring stations. It was clarified that countries were selected based on the requests during the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental meeting held in New Delhi. The Secretariat will develop criteria for selecting countries for additional monitoring stations.
  - Representative from Pakistan requested to consider support for a health impact assessment study in Pakistan.
  - Two new monitoring stations are proposed to be established during phase 3: one each in Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Representatives from Bangladesh, Iran, and Nepal requested support for the establishment of additional monitoring sites in their countries.
19. The Session adopted the document, with the understanding that the Secretariat will implement the programme by incorporating the above discussion.

Closing of the Session

20. Dr. Johan Kuylenstierna of SEI mentioned that SEI will be happy to continue its participation in the implementation of the Malé Declaration and will increase its involvement in the Technical Committee. Dr. Johan also suggested that the proposal for Phase IV could be discussed in the next intergovernmental meeting.
21. Dr. Arvind Boaz of SACEP during his closing remarks expressed that the Malé Declaration could provide the framework for intergovernmental cooperation in South Asia not only on air pollution but also for environmental issues as a whole. Dr. Boaz mentioned that SACEP will actively collaborate with the governments and the partner institutions in the implementation of Malé Declaration.
22. Mr. Surendra Shrestha of UNEP during his closing remarks thanked the representative of Afghanistan for its participation as an observer. Mr. Shrestha informed the participants that the new management in UNEP is giving priority to regional issues and implementation of Malé Declaration is one of UNEP's priorities in the region. Mr. Shrestha recalled that the political leadership in South Asia has requested for a step by step approach for the implementation of Malé Declaration:

capacity building, generate data, impact assessment, and policy development for prevention and mitigation. Mr. Surendra highlighted some of the efforts that are being carried out in several countries in the region to mitigate the air pollution issues. The next phase of Malé Declaration needs to move towards promoting prevention through pilot demonstration of zero emission, zero waste, and carbon neutrality. Mr. Surendra emphasized the need for broadening the financial base of Malé Declaration. He thanked the Government of Bhutan for hosting the meeting; His Excellency Mr. Dasho Nado Rinchhen for his guidance as the Chair of the meeting; Mr. Rajamani for his continued guidance for the implementation; SACEP for their role as sub-regional partner; SEI and MoC for their technical support; and Sida for the financial support. He expressed the hope that these collaborations will continue in phase IV and beyond.

23. Ms. Sara Stenhammar of Sida suggested that the proposal development for Phase IV needs to be started soon. Therefore, a consolidated proposal would be developed before the completion of Phase III, the current phase, in early 2008. Ms. Sara thanked the Government of Bhutan and the organizers for organizing this meeting.
24. Mr. R. Rajamani summarized the proceedings by saying that the ownership is gradually being transferred to governments and the member countries need to be involved more actively. He reminded and highlighted the equally emphasized objectives of Malé Declaration, i.e., monitoring and mitigation of air pollution. He emphasized need of considering “where we want to be”, when developing the next phase. He indicated that some impact assessment studies have been started and suggested to take advantage of ongoing initiatives in the region. He suggested that the training programmes initiated during previous phases, needs to be continued. He also suggested that those trained earlier should continue on that job and sent for further training when required as frequent change of personnel caused problems in implementation. Mr. Rajamani thanked the Government of Bhutan, UNEP, SACEP, SEI, MoC, and Sida for their role in the organization of this meeting and implementation of the Malé Declaration.
25. During the closing session, His Excellency Mr. Dasho Nado Rinchhen mentioned that the purpose of the meeting was to review the implementation process and discuss the way forward. His Excellency expressed satisfaction that the meeting achieved its purpose and benefited from sharing of experiences from countries and experts. His Excellency indicated that the implementation of Malé Declaration has been initiated 8 years ago and now we need to focus on prevention and the control of air pollution. There is also the need to continue the monitoring activities as the monitoring data will help us to comply with the mitigation. His Excellency emphasized the need for awareness through brochures and news papers. His Excellency thanked Sida for the financial support and urged to continued its support. His Excellency thanked UNEP, SACEP, SEI, MoC, and National Implementing Agencies for their continued support in the implementation of Malé Declaration.

26. The Chair closed the Session, thanking participants for their constructive contributions.