

**Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA)**



SG/Rep/2008/01  
9 April 2008

**Preliminary Report of the Secretary-General**

**On**

**Enhancing Cooperation Between**

**APA Member Parliaments and their**

**Governments**

**For**

**Implementation of APA Decisions**



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- 1- The Second Session of the APA Plenary decided in paragraph 24 of Tehran Declaration (2007) contained in ... to

*Further discuss the modalities of efficient cooperation and coordination between the APA and respective governments. In this respect, we ask the Secretary-General of the APA to pursue the formation of an ad hoc Committee and prepare all documents required for its work. The ad hoc Committee shall hold at least one meeting before the next session of the Plenary and submit its final report to it.*

- 2- The Secretary-General presents this report to the ad hoc committee for its consideration. The Secretariat will provide to the ad hoc committee views and proposals which may be received from Member Parliaments on the subjects. On the basis of the deliberations in the ad hoc committee, a report with draft recommendation will be submitted to the Plenary for a decision.
- 3- APA is uniquely placed to adopt important decisions to enhance political, economic and cultural cooperation to serve the interests of all Asian countries with a view to achieving the ultimate objective of greater integration in Asia. The fact that APA is composed of parliaments is an asset and not a challenge for implementation of its decisions. Each national parliament has the power to enact, if it so chooses, domestic legislations along the lines of the decisions adopted by the APA. In most cases when a national parliament decides to pass a law that corresponds to an APA decision, then the respective government will enforce that law in accordance with its national constitution and procedures. Therefore, the more the APA decisions are timely, relevant and responsive to the real needs and interests of its members, and are seen as such, the more likely it is to secure the interest and engagement of governments. APA decisions may be implemented either through domestic legislation of national parliaments or administrative decisions of governments, both of which could only be done on a voluntary basis. The more the government officials are involved in the deliberations and decisions of the APA, the more likely it is that the APA decisions are to be implemented.
- 4- There are some instances of close cooperation between parliaments and governments at a continent level, like that in Europe. European integration has its own history and particularities. It was founded on many social and cultural common grounds and it charted its way through structural adjustments on the basis of several treaties. Asia is unique and it needs to develop closer cooperation and greater integration that suits its diverse culture and way of life. Asia is yet to develop the ground for treaty-based adjustment and change. Asia needs to adopt a forward-looking and realistic approach to promoting



cooperation between governments and parliaments to achieve greater integration in Asia. This approach must embody the fact that despite the diversity of culture, political and economic experiences that are the hallmark of Asia, greater Asian cooperation and integration is both achievable and beneficial to all peoples in Asia. It would, moreover, help promote global peace and security. Therefore, APA needs to sow the seed for such forward-looking approach to grow naturally. The key is to promote the culture of cooperation and to enhance the awareness that integration helps all Asians and serves the cause of humanity at large. This can be done through closer cooperation and partnership of governments and parliaments in Asia to give greater voice to the decisions of the APA as called for by Rule 46 (2) of the APA Rules of Procedure.

- 5- To this end, APA may wish to consider adopting some modest steps that are geared to drawing interest from, and enhance cooperation of, governments to the work of the APA, while observing the principle of separation of powers:
  - 5.1 Concerned representative(s) of governments of APA Member and Observer Parliaments are to be invited to participate in APA meetings, including the Plenary and those of the Standing and Sub-Committees. They may share their expert views with their respective APA Delegates so as to further enrich the APA deliberations. Such participation allows for greater interaction between the government representatives concerned and the APA delegates, leading to a more informed and implement-able decision by the APA.
  - 5.2 The governments of APA Member and Observer Parliaments are invited to appoint representatives at the level of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to pursue all APA meetings and deliberations and convey related information to their governments. They also reflect their governments' viewpoints to their respective APA delegates to be considered in its future planning and decisions.
  - 5.3 The APA Secretary-General may be mandated by APA to communicate, on a regular basis, with a liaison bureau in the office of the Foreign Minister of APA Member and Observer Parliaments about APA decisions, status of their implementation, and programs. APA Member and Observer Parliaments may wish to coordinate with their Minister of Foreign Affairs to identify such liaison bureau and convey that to the Secretariat.
  - 5.4 APA may urge Member Parliaments to consider passing, as domestic legislation, those decisions of APA which expressly make such request, and is designed as model legislation.



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- 5.5 (Some) APA (Member Parliaments may wish to adopt common legislations on issues of particular interest to both APA Parliaments and their governments. To start with, such issues may include improving and promoting sports, combating narcotic drugs, relief work at the times of natural disasters.
  - 5.6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs (or their deputies) of APA Member and Observer Parliaments are urged to participate in the plenary session of the APA and to exchange views on the most significant and urgent issues in Asia and on the APA agenda.
  - 5.7 Member Parliaments are urged to propose agenda items in consultation and coordination with their respective governments. It is preferable to make Proposals that have the support of the respective governments and have the most number of co-sponsors.
- 6- The ad hoc committee may consider this item as a cross cutting issue that needs to be under constant review and adjustment. It may wish to recommend to the Plenary to establish a Sub-Committee under the Political Standing Committee to review annually the progress on the proposals concerning the procedure and structure of "Enhancing Cooperation between APA Member Parliaments and their Governments for Implementation of APA Decisions." The ad hoc Committee may recommend that government representatives be invited to participate and advise, where appropriate, their APA delegates during the deliberation of the Sub-Committee.



**Report of the  
APA Secretary-General  
On the  
Asian Integrated Energy Market**



## **Background:**

- 1- The APA Plenary decided, by its Resolution on the Asian Integrated Energy Market, contained in Document APA/Res/2007/08, dated 19 November 2008, to:
  - a) Establish a Sub-Committee under the APA Energy Standing Committee to consider the best strategies leading to the establishment of an organization by participation of Asian Governments to pursue the objectives delineated in the annexed Plan of Action contained in Document APA/Res/2007/08/Annex,
  - b) Request the Secretary-General to prepare a report for consideration by the Sub-committee and to service its meetings. The Sub-committee shall hold two meetings per year to submit its report to the APA Executive Council for its consideration and recommendation to the APA Plenary.
  
- 2- By a second Resolution adopted on 20 November 2007, contained in Document APA/Energy Com/2007/01, the APA plenary decided to:
  - a) Request the Secretariat to set up an expert group for providing technical consultation on the framework and modalities of the integrated energy market in Asia prior to or during the meetings of the Sub-Committee,
  - b) Hold its first meeting in the parliament of the Russian Federation in May 2008 in order to consider the report of the Secretary-General.
  
- 3- In preparation of the Report of the Secretary-General, he officially communicated with all Member Parliaments on 6 December 2007, and sought their views, comments and observations, as well as those of their governments concerning the Plan of Action on Promotion of Asian Energy Market. As of 10 May 2008, when this report is being finalized no observation from Member Parliaments has been received.

## **Introduction:**

4- In light of the above, this report is submitted by the Secretary-General to the Sub-Committee on the Asian Integrated Energy Market for its consideration. The report presents some thoughts and suggestions on:

- The concept of integration in Asia with emphasis on energy;
- Secretary-General's Observations on some elements of the Plan of Action:
  - A) The "organization" or "body" referred to in the relevant Resolutions that best suits, at this juncture, to pursue the objectives delineated in the Plan of Action;



- B) Policy coordination as the salient feature of the Plan of Action;
- C) Stability of Energy Market;
- D) Energy Intensity;
- E) Integrated Asian Routes for Gas Transmission at lower cost: Asian Gas Network (AGN).

As an example of the kind of energy integration that might be possible to explore in Asia, the Secretariat asked a consulting firm to develop some thoughts on the issue. The consulting firm developed some preliminary views on the gas market in Asia. In fact, some studies indicate that promoting some kind of cooperation in Asia in the field of electricity is potentially very promising. The Sub-Committee may wish also to address other sources of energy both renewable and non-renewable.

The report, therefore, presents the preliminary views of an expert group on the concept of and some framework for an integrated Asian Gas Network (AGN). It presents a concept focusing on combining the potentials of gas rich countries in West Asia, Russia and other CIS countries through a network to serve themselves, their neighboring countries and the countries in the wider East Asia. The network would have to serve the interests of all participants including the contributors of gas and consumers of natural and liquid gas. This concept and framework for gas is developed as an example of how Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Plan of Action may be explored. Other concepts and frameworks for the trade of gas, oil and other carriers of energy may also be explored by the Sub-committee.

## **Integration in Asia**

5- Since the end of the World War II, regional cooperation has steadily expanded in most parts of the globe. Asia, particularly its eastern region, has also experienced such growing cooperation. With a population of more than 4 billion people, Asia is the biggest and the most populated continent in the world. Rich history, ancient civilizations, vast natural resources, major and fast growing world economies have doubled the significance of this continent. From an economic viewpoint, Asia ranks third after North America and Europe in terms of Gross National Product. According to IMF survey, the share of emerging Asia in world trade flows reached 34% in 2006, up sharply from 21% in 1990. Moreover, the rise in emerging Asia trade accounted for roughly 40% of the total increase in world trade over the period.

Southeastern and Eastern parts of the continent enjoy a good standing in industrial production. The existence of strategic natural resources, such as oil and gas in the western part of the continent has created a specific and prominent status for Asia. Asia enjoys abundant common grounds for mutual collaborations. In addition to bilateral relations, Asian countries cooperate with each other in various other groupings such as ASEAN, SAARC, ESCAP, ECO, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Shanghai Organization, and in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf Cooperation Council. No structure seems to be in place within Asia to focus on coordination of policy and measures on the critically important issue of energy.

6- Asia also encounters serious challenges. Chronic poverty in many countries of the continent, where 700 million people live in poverty and nearly half of the continent's



population earns less than two dollars per day, creates an unfavorable condition in Asia. The development disparity in Asia and the growing gap within and between Asian countries are among other serious challenges in the continent. Potential disputes over border, territory and ethnic issues, the likely crisis spots and the danger of their escalation into open conflict or spread to other regions should not be overlooked. To overcome the problems and challenges that Asia faces, it is imperative to further develop and expand cooperation and integration in the continent. The presence and participation of all Asian countries, large and small, in the process of promoting cooperation at the continental level would promote the sense of being a stakeholder and prepare the necessary grounds for effectively dealing with such challenges.

## **Energy and Asia**

7- An Integrated Energy Market simply refers to an energy market in a geographic territory composed of a group of countries that agree on a set of laws and regulations concerning all activities relative to energy, including development of energy resources, production of various products, transmission, conservation of energy and all trade and transactions dealing with energy.

8- Data and statistics indicate that Asia enjoys a special position in the world's energy supply and demand. While 70 percent of the world's oil reserves are located in Asia, a considerable share of energy supply and demand in the current situation, and a large share of consumption growth in future will also belong to this continent. West Asia holds the largest energy reserves of the world and the countries in East Asia are the major consumers of energy with the highest growth rate. Obviously, establishing regional cooperative relationship between these two groups, which ultimately leads to a harmonized cooperation and integration on a wider scale throughout the Asian continent, would generate great benefits for all Asian countries.

9- The challenge of promoting security in both energy supply and demand, the emphasis on the stability of the energy market in a sustainable way and in an environment-friendly manner are among the most important issues in the politics and foreign trade of large economies. Compared to other continents, Asia will face a greater challenge because of the growing increase in its energy consumption and the geographical location of its energy resources. Major consumers are likely to follow three distinctively different strategies to guarantee for themselves energy security for the foreseeable future. These include: bilateral agreement between the supplier and the consumer, collective regional cooperation, and resort to the use or threat of the use of force to exert control over energy resources.

10- Bilateral agreements are a sensible way to proceed to securing one's energy needs. However, they could potentially be susceptible to many political variables; some quite unpredictable like the change of government or policy. Collective regional cooperation provides greater stability and security to both the energy producers and consumers. It is less susceptible to political factors relevant to one government. The combined energy resources of several participating producing countries and the aggregate of their political will and influence accord collective regional cooperative arrangements greater security and an enduring character. Resorting to force or threat of use of force is not an option to be



addressed in this report.

11- Currently, there is a focus on relating East Asia to the Pacific region economically. There seems to be little or no focus to promote energy cooperation between East and West of Asia. Greater economic cooperation between East Asia and the Pacific, and the partnership that should naturally be promoted between East and West of Asia as the major global consumer and producer of energy respectively, ought to become mutually inclusive and reinforcing.

12- The supply and demand of energy in the future are influenced by the extent of investment and use of modern technologies in the field. These issues may be addressed through bilateral and regional cooperation that include Asian financial and investment markets. In light of the increasing energy consumption by 2030 and the fact that fossil fuel remains the most important source of energy supply, reducing environmental pollution in Asian countries will likely become a greater challenge. This challenge can only be dealt with or perhaps even turned into an opportunity, through close and focused regional cooperation.

13- Networking and complementing one another in Asia is the only way to work in this globalized age of rapid change. In the context of energy, such networking can begin by encouraging Asian corporations to deal with Asia-wide issues of upstream and downstream oil and gas industries and with global trade of energy. These corporations may also address broader issues of energy trade and exchange of capital and technology specific to Asia.

14- Delegates of Asian Parliaments are well placed to rise above local and national politics and develop the courage, the foresight and the vision to promote such networking in different fields within Asia as a whole. In this context, a closer cooperation between Asian governments and parliaments is the key to success for Asian integration.

15- In the context of the importance which the APA attached to integration in Asia, particularly on the issue of energy, the APA plenary requested, in its First meeting in 2006, the Secretary-General to develop a Plan of Action on promotion of Asian Integrated Energy Market. The APA Plenary decided, in its Second meeting in 2007, as referred to in Paragraph 1 (a) above, to adopt the plan of action and seek ways to promote its implementation by considering the best strategies leading to the establishment of an "organization" or "body" in which representatives of Asian Governments would participate.

## **Secretary-General's Observations on some elements of the Plan of Action**

### **A) Reflection on "organization" or "body" to pursue the Plan of Action**

16- Both APA Resolutions referred to above call on Member Parliaments to encourage their respective governments to ensure that an organization is established to look into studying the implementation of the objectives and measures of the Plan of Action. The Sub-Committee is mandated by the relevant Resolutions to develop the strategies leading to establishment of such organization.



17- In view of the Secretary-General most elements of the Plan of Actions are primarily of a policy nature and therefore require greater policy coordination between APA Members. APA itself is a nascent organization and establishing an associate organization to implement the plan of Action on Asian Integrated Energy Market may require some time for further reflection and greater preparation.

18- The Secretary-General holds firm that cooperation and coordination between APA and governments are an imperative for any progress in the work of the APA. He is convinced that a small group of energy experts from Member Parliaments supported by their governmental energy experts serve the purpose of the APA Resolutions. This group of expert representatives could serve as an "APA Advisory Council on Energy", hereinafter, "AACE." The objective shall be to have every Member Parliament and its government represented in the "AACE." However, "AACE" may be established when at least 5 Member Parliaments and their governments (preferably, three energy exporting and two importing countries) express interest to do so.

19- "AACE" experts rely mainly on communicating between themselves using modern IT. However, the meetings of "AACE" take place in a volunteer country, use existing resources and data which are normally open to energy experts from all Member Parliaments and their governments. The APA Secretariat will serve the meetings of "AACE." The mandate of the "AACE" is that which the 2007 APA Resolutions on Energy have entrusted to an organization to be established, i.e., pursue the objectives delineated in the Plan of Action on promotion of Asian Integrated Energy Market annexed to APA Resolution contained in Document APA/Res/2007/08. "AACE" members may be divided into few sub-groups specializing on different subjects. "AACE" formulates its views in an advisory capacity to be considered by the APA Standing Committee on Energy and the APA Plenary.

20- The first substantive step would be for Member parliaments and their governments to express interest to appoint energy expert(s) to "ACCE" when established. Procedurally, the Sub-Committee on Energy may wish to formulate a draft decision or resolution to be considered by the APA Executive Council and referred to the Plenary for a decision to establish "AACE."

"AACE" may be restructured, at a later stage, to suit the unfolding requirements of changing circumstances.

## **B) Policy coordination as the salient feature of the Plan of Action**

21- Most elements of the Plan of Action deal primarily with issues of policy, like balancing the supply and demand of energy in Asia; minimizing political, technical and bureaucratic impediments of regional and international investment in the field of energy; encouraging joint ventures between producers and consumers in various fields of energy; supporting public and private investment in upstream and downstream energy industries by fostering Asian transnational corporations; and promoting trade in products, equipment and services related to various fields of energy. The more Asia moves towards greater cooperation and integration, the more likely it is that oil and gas producers and consumers



coordinate their national policies. This may resemble the perennial question of whether the chicken or egg came first. Hopefully, "AACE" will demonstrate to both groups of countries that working together along the lines of the Plan of Action is the way of the future that would serve everyone's interests in Asia and beyond. Asia needs to promote an atmosphere conducive to strengthening cooperation: develop incentive for joint ventures by tax credits and equal opportunity programs for domestic and foreign firms; promote transparency in energy statistics and rules and remove bureaucratic and other impediments for policy coordination and for joint venture execution. Many elements of the Plan of Action are mutually reinforcing and some are the results of the others.

22- Some elements of the Plan of Action require certain measures to be taken like establishing banks to promote investment in energy fields and provide financing or establishing an Asian integrated research network and statistical center. They are important measures to be implemented in Asia, but they are also results of some initial policy coordination between Asian countries. Many concur that the utility of such measures would be much greater when a reasonable degree of convergence on policy issues discussed above has emerged between major oil and gas producers and consumers in Asia.

### **C) Stability of Energy Market**

23- The 1<sup>st</sup> Operative Paragraph of the Plan of Action touches on the stability of world energy market and the contribution that Asia can potentially make to that end. This is an important but complex issue. In the years to come, renewable sources of energy; solar, wind, and others, will gain even greater importance in national, regional and global energy plannings. By focusing greater attention to new sources of energy, the APA would also help promote the stability and security of energy market in Asia. The Sub-Committee may wish to task "ACCE", when established, to study the appropriate priority that need to be accorded in explorations of options for closer cooperation in Asia in various fields of both renewable and non-renewable sources of energy.

24- Supply and demand are the main fundamentals of the global oil and gas markets. One of the challenges is to forecast real future supply and demand, particularly when stocks are factored in. Producers regard consumers' demand estimates to be somewhat exaggerated to encourage greater investment on the part of the oil producing countries to increase supply and lower oil prices. Producers adjust their investment for production and supply on the basis of such perception in order to prevent sharp decline of oil prices. The challenge, therefore, is to minimize uncertainties and enhance security of both supply and demand in order to promote global oil market stability. Under such circumstances, where uncertainties are contained, data on production, consumption, stocks and trade are more timely and reliable, there will be less room for speculation and more ground for transparency and stability.

25- Oil and gas industries are, in fact, industries highly sensitive to political environment. Free flow of oil and gas and their unhindered trade do promote confidence in the stability of global energy market. Any type of uncertainty, let alone open unilateral economic sanctions against major oil producers, surely undermine the confidence in market stability and heighten speculations.



26- This was the theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Energy Forum held in Rome from 20 to 22 April 2008, where 74 Ministers and 27 industry leaders participated. The understanding was that only through enhanced dialogue between energy exporting and importing countries, they can tackle the main challenges like high energy prices, enhancing the security of energy supply and demand, promotion of sustainable development, global concerns about the environment and addressing energy poverty.

27- APA delegates, as the representatives of the will of their own people are uniquely placed to promote confidence between exporting and importing countries in Asia. In this context, APA's effort to explore ways to promote the Asian Integrated Energy Market is, in fact, a major step to promoting global energy market stability.

## **D) Energy Intensity**

28- Paragraph 8 of the plan of action calls on Asia to reduce energy intensity and optimize energy consumption by enhancing existing equipments and facilities and utilizing new technologies in order to upgrade current consumption throughout Asia

29- It is encouraging to note that the current primary energy intensity illustrate a decreasing trend in most regions of the world, as a result of several factors, including higher energy prices, energy conservation programs and in some regions, CO2 reduction policies. This trend has been the fastest in China. China had the highest energy intensity level in 1980, but between 1990 and 2000, China achieved the most improvement in energy productivity, around 5% to 7.5% p.a. Consequently, China's energy intensity is now slightly above the world average level, whereas it was 80% higher in 1990. This great achievement of China may be attributed to more efficient use of coal, substituting oil for coal, rapid growth of equipment manufacturing industries and certainly higher energy prices. (Facts and figures on energy intensity are derived from the world energy Council 2008 Report.)

30- Europe is the region with the lowest energy intensity. The CIS uses three times more primary energy per unit of GDP than Europe. India and Asia pacific are close to European level, about 10% higher. High energy intensities in West Asia and the CIS countries are attributed to lower energy efficiency in industry, home use and transportation, dominant role of energy intensive industries and low energy prices.

31- Energy efficiency is influenced by many factors including the following five:

- Individual behavior,
- Technology,
- Equipment,
- Energy prices,
- Public service industry.

32- Energy efficiency is a matter of appropriate equipment and more importantly a matter of individual behavior. It reflects the rationale of energy consumers. Avoiding unnecessary



consumption of energy or choosing the most appropriate equipment to reduce the cost of energy helps to decrease individual energy consumption without decreasing individual welfare and comfort.

Furthermore, cheap energy prices are unlikely to encourage any kind of energy conservation programs. Energy subsidies in most energy producing countries are a major disservice to lowering energy intensity.

Expansion of public service systems and developing sufficient infrastructure promote greater energy conservation programs.

33- Energy efficiency improvement shall be promoted as a priority by governments in all regions of Asia, particularly in West Asia and the CIS countries.

In order to increase energy efficiency, the following measures and policies concerning each of the five factors mentioned above as well as some common to all of them are recommended to be considered by the Sub-Committee:

- Development of a public education program to influence the culture of over-consumption of energy in Asia, particularly in the Middle East and the CIS countries.
- Development and promotion of a program to upgrade the technology, equipment and skills used in various stages of energy production, storage, transportation, conservation programs and consumption.
- Development and promotion of a country-specific program for quality control of equipment used in that country and certification of processes.
- An energy taxation program to encourage more efficient use of energy, combined with a credit program to replace inefficient equipment.
- Encourage governments to create incentives for private sector to become partner in development of public service systems.
- Establishment of appropriate institutional and regulatory framework;
- "AACE" which is to pursue promotion of the implementation of the Plan of Action may wish, in this context, to propose the establishment of a fund for this purpose. This fund is to be used by its members for the sole purpose of decreasing energy intensity. The member using the fund will remit back to the fund from the savings that it accrues. "AACE" may wish to take advantage of a consulting firm to identify the new technology and services to optimize energy consumption and industrial modernization programs.
- "AACE" can help promote exchange of information and best practices for lowering energy intensity in different Asian countries, and
- Adaptation of measures for each national circumstance.



## **E) Integrated Asian Routes for Gas Transmission at lower cost: Asian Gas Network (AGN)**

34- The Secretary-General intended to take the concept of networking in Asia in the field of energy (Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Plan of Action) a step forward. In accordance with paragraph 2 (a) above, an expert group on gas was asked to develop a preliminary conceptual framework for a gas network in Asia where gas rich countries could collectively work together with gas consumers in Asia. Such network would be viable only if it offers a win-win situation for every participant without limiting its options: lower energy cost for all participants, greater availability and security of gas supply and demand, helping feed major growing economies, and at the same time, helping with industrial development of other Asian countries and so on.

35- The preliminary concept developed by the expert group upon initiative of the Secretariat is one of many possible ways to give some meaning to Paragraph 10 and 11 of the Plan of Action. The concept is to be presented to the Sub-Committee on promotion of Asian Integrated Energy Market. It is a 30-minute power point presentation to be followed by some exchanges of views.

36- The Secretary-General suggests that the preliminary concept of Asian Gas Network deserves further study to identify the precise concepts and elements that need refinement and in depth study by experts. One way to proceed is for interested Member Parliaments to have their experts, from the Parliaments and governments, appointed to reflect on the preliminary concept of Asian Gas Network and report to the second meeting of the Sub-Committee (Paragraph 2 (b) above) before the APA Executive Council meeting in 2008. The secretariat is to serve the meetings of the expert group. The Sub-Committee determines the number of meetings of the expert group, their venues and dates.

37- The Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the Plenary that the expert group reflecting on the concept of Asian Gas Network does, in fact, constitute the "AAACE" discussed in paragraphs 16-20 above.

38- Power point presentation of Asian Gas Network.



## Report of the APA Secretary-General On Alleviating Poverty in Asia

### Background

- 1- In 2006, the APA Plenary decided to establish a working group to prepare a Plan of Action for Alleviating Poverty in Asia. In 2007, the APA Plenary adopted the text of the Plan of Action in its Resolution APA/Res/2007/04, and decided to establish a Sub-Committee under the Economic and Sustainable Development Committee to consider how best to facilitate the implementation of provisions of the Plan of Action on Alleviating Poverty in Asia. By the same resolution, the Plenary further requested the Secretary General to prepare a report for consideration of the Sub-Committee.
- 2- To fulfill this mandate, the Secretary-General communicated and consulted with APA Member Parliaments to identify members to this sub-committee, as well as to seek their views and proposals on poverty reduction priorities and projects they regard the most appropriate and urgent.

### Introduction

- 3- In light of the above and based on the text of the Plan of Action, the Secretary-General submits the present report to the Sub-Committee on alleviation of poverty in Asia. The report focuses primarily on the role of parliaments in strengthening national anti-poverty plans.<sup>1</sup> The result of the Sub-Committee deliberations of the Secretary-General's report will be forwarded to the First Executive Council meeting in 2008 to be referred to APA Plenary for further consideration and action by the Standing Committee on Economic and Sustainable Development.

The Report of the APA Secretary-General addresses several structural as well as thematic issues as follows:

#### 3.1- Importance of National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan and its cycles

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<sup>1</sup> There is a good deal of information on the role of parliaments in national poverty reduction initiatives that are available publicly and generated by private and public institutes including international organizations.



- 3.1.1- Proposition 1: the role of Parliaments
- 3.2 - Understanding Poverty
- 3.3- Development of National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan, and certain creative themes thereof: enabling programs, addressing urban poverty
  - 3.3.1- Proposition 2: the role of Parliaments
- 3.4- Implementation of National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan
  - 3.4.1- Proposition 3: the Role of Parliaments
- 3.5- Evaluation and Monitoring National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan
  - 3.5.1- Proposition 4: the Role of Parliaments
- 3.6- Proposition 5: Challenges for effective involvement of Parliament in National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan
- 3.7- Proposition 6: proposals for joint programs of information and experience exchanges within APA
- 4- Since Mid 1990s, alleviation of poverty has been a top priority agenda in every major international economic and development forums. The United Nations, for instance, designated 1997-2006 as the First and 2008-2017 as the Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Developing countries have been encouraged to allocate greater energy and resources to formulating and implementing national strategies for poverty reduction with a view to eliminating abject poverty. In this context, limited international resources for some technical and financial support for such national strategic plans to reduce poverty have been established.

## **National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan**

- 5- The first step to reduce poverty is to develop a sensible National Poverty Alleviation Strategic Plan, hereinafter "NPASP." The key concept in development of "NPASP" is to define poverty appropriately. Implementation and evaluation are the other major steps that would define the degree to which a particular "NPASP" is successful. Therefore, development, implementation and evaluation are the three critical cycles of every "NPASP." Parliaments can play a major defining role in reinforcing the success of "NPASP" at each of the three main cycles. These roles are presented here as proposed parliamentary engagement.

### **Proposition 1: Parliament involvement in "NPASP" cycles reinforces the potential for its success and sustainability.**

- 6- Parliaments generally exercise, albeit to varying degrees from a country to another, an oversight function over the policy decisions and implementation by the executive



branch. As such, parliaments could play a significant reinforcing role in the processes of development, implementation and evaluation of "NPASP." Greater parliamentary engagement with "NPASP" processes fosters a national poverty strategy that is developed, implemented and evaluated through national institutions with a greater degree of political legitimacy and public support to ensure sustainability.

### **Understanding poverty**

- 7- Due to the great social transformation in the recent decades in public health, explosion of population, immigration, urbanization and industrialization, poverty would no longer be treated as a personal misfortune, but as a basic and encompassing social problem. Poverty as a multidimensional problem is influenced by many factors such as national and international economy, employment, education, agriculture, health, population growth rate and labor market. The role of each individual factor requires calculated and contextual analyses based on specific situations and experiences of each country. Definition of poverty is country-specific and based on a country's particular history and social and economic experiences. Generally, however, a person is regarded poor if he/she has very limited: opportunity, due to low income; capability, due to poor levels of education and health; security, due to economic shock; and empowerment, due to constrained access to power.

### **"NPASP" Development**

- 8- "NPASP" should address the prioritization of different needs, budget allocation, human resources and mobilization of all sectors of societies. "NPASP" requires encompassing long, medium and short term programs for poverty reduction in a time-bound and measurable way. It should take into account the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly its first goal: halving the number of the poor living on \$1.00 per day by 2015. "NPASP" in Asia should focus on rural as well as urban productivity, health, education, environment and good governance. Balancing "NPASP" priorities is the key political judgment in development of a country's national poverty reduction strategy and its success in terms of overall result depends on how widely the views of stakeholders in poverty reduction strategies are taken into account.
- 9- The theme of "enabling the poor" is an underlying concept of every "NPASP." This concept is formulated and built in each "NPASP" in accordance with particular social, economic and political experiences of a country. Nevertheless, some themes and basic projects have gained global recognition.

"Enabling the poor" is a theme that by definition is much broader than charity. Charity, a positive and humane practice in and of itself, is not a panacea for poverty. "Enabling the poor" involves, among others, formulation and implementation of national pro-poor strategies for:

- General education,



- Vocational training and improving technical skills,
- Providing initial capital for small and medium size businesses,
- Providing business and marketing skills, and
- Facilitating access to the market.

Grameen Credit initiated by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, and micro credit and finance practiced in many other countries seem to have integrated some of these pro-poor strategies into their projects. The Sub-Committee may wish to look into micro credit and finance schemes that forge a partnership between a government and the private sectors to enable the poor to cross the poverty line. There is a good deal of interests on the part of the private sector, on both humanitarian and business grounds, to engage in such enabling and publicly-funded programs.

- 10- Urban poverty: Most research on poverty has concentrated on the rural poor, because their numbers are so overwhelming. However, with trends showing increasing urbanization and rapid immigrations in Asia, researchers and policy makers are focusing greater attention to the problems of urban poverty. The nature, scale and dynamics of urban poverty are different from those of rural poverty. The tools and programs that have been developed for alleviation of rural poverty do not work in urban areas. The income of poor in urban areas may seem higher than villages, but the cost of living in city margins are much higher than that margin. The cost of housing and necessities of life is high, and access to health and education is very limited. The bulk of the urban poor are living in extremely deprived conditions with insufficient physical services like low cost water supply, sanitation, sewerage, and facilities relating to health care, nutrition, pre-school and non-formal education.

Urban Poverty is a major and growing challenge in Asia and calls for serious attention and innovative approaches. Urban population in Asia is increasingly growing, so is the urban poverty. As the Asian Development Bank, (ADB) has estimated, 700 million people in Asia and the Pacific live on less than US\$1 a day, 400 million of whom are residing in urban areas. Moreover, each day a further 120,000 people are added to the populations of Asian cities due to rural-urban migration and job-mobility. In addition, the highest population growth rate belongs to the least developed centers. Many Asian cities face deteriorating sanitation and environmental conditions, inadequate housing and infrastructure, and other problems.

APA should accord high priority to the expansion of programs designed for improving the quality of life of the urban poor. The urban poor residing in low income neighborhoods are the target groups for provision of social services. Urban issues require integrated approaches that distinctly target the poor, promote economic development, treat cities as a living ecosystem, and engage private sector, NGOs, and civil society. The goal is to sufficiently feed, educate, house and employ the large and rapidly growing number of impoverished people in the margins of cities.

Failure to reduce poverty in rural areas has exacerbated the poverty situation in urban regions. Comprehensive programs for enabling poor in rural areas would have



positive impact on narrowing down the number of poor in the margin of the cities. Higher productivity and income in rural areas, and not necessarily the provision of welfare services, would provide better and acceptable situation of living for poor in those areas. Greater balanced development in rural and urban areas helps to control migration from rural to urban areas.

Due to the increasing challenge that Asia faces with respect to urban poverty, the Sub-Committee may wish to accord priority to it in terms of its future work and reporting to the Secretary-General for exchange of best practices. This could constitute a thematic topic of consideration by the meeting of the mayors of big Asian cities to be held in 2008 in Tehran under the auspices of the APA.

### **Proposition 2: Parliaments and "NPASP" Development**

- 11- As the most representative institution of a state, parliament should develop the technical capacity and knowledge to ensure that the views of its constituencies are adequately represented in the process of developing the "NPASP." In this context, Parliamentarians need to develop a two-stage work plan:

First, they need to initiate outreach programs to invite feedback on "NPASP" priorities through town hall or village meetings, public hearings or committee hearings with NGOs on sector-specific issues of the "NPASP."

Second, they need to get involved in the process of developing the "NPASP" at an early stage to ensure proper representation. Governments usually establish working groups in various sectoral areas to help develop that country's "NPASP." Parliaments need to develop an institutional mechanism in cooperation with the government to match issue or region-specific expertise of parliamentarians with relevant working groups to ensure adequate contribution by parliaments to developing that country's "NPASP."

If direct participation of parliamentarians in the working groups developing the "NPASP" is not possible for any reason, then sector-specific parliamentary committees, such as health, education, finance, etc, can request periodic hearings/briefings by "NPASP" working groups on priorities, targets and indicators of results.

### **"NPASP" implementation**

- 12- Implementation of "NPASP" is perhaps the most challenging and arduous cycle of poverty alleviation initiative in any country. In recent years, the Asia and Pacific region, though with different rates, has made remarkable progress in alleviating poverty due to its strong economic growth and appropriate policies. Nevertheless, based on the finding of ADB, an estimated 1.7 billion people in Asia still live on less than \$2 a day, out of which seven hundred millions live on less than \$1 a day. Asia, therefore, still has a long way to go to achieve its target for poverty reduction. This much is clear, nonetheless, that greater success of poverty reduction strategies in Asia is positively correlated with greater integration in Asia.



### **Proposition 3: Parliaments have a definite role in "NPASP" implementation: budget allocation, legislation and public education**

13- In order for a government to implement the "NPASP", it needs the parliament to approve "NPASP"-sensitive budget and laws. Therefore, the national budget approved by the parliament is the single most important tool at the disposal of the government to implement "NPASP." Hence, prior engagement of the parliamentarians in "NPASP" processes makes it all the more likely for that parliament to approve budgets and pass laws that reflect already agreed upon "NPASP" priorities.

Parliamentary outreach programs to constituents strengthen implementation of "NPASP" by increasing public awareness of the anti-poverty initiatives. Furthermore, sustained communication with citizens has the added benefit of contributing to the public trust in democratic institutions by encouraging the perception that elected officials work on behalf of their constituents.

### **"NPASP" Evaluation and Monitoring**

14- As part of the "NPASP" process, governments establish special groups to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the "NPASP" over a period of time, like 12 months. These special groups seek to find out the degree to which implementation adhered to "NPASP" priorities and the expenditures were consistent with the budget allocated to various sectors, projects and priorities. Based on information gathered in these assessments, "NPASP" priorities may be adjusted, resources may be shifted or a determination be made that a priority target has been met.

### **Proposition 4: Parliamentary oversight function and "NPASP" Evaluation and Monitoring**

15- In countries where the parliaments are constitutionally mandated to exercise an oversight function over the government's policy formulation and implementation, parliaments are a natural partner in the evaluation and monitoring phase of the "NPASP." Parliamentarians have a variety of sources of information within their constituencies on public's view of the assessment of "NPASP" implementation. Parliamentary oversight activities, such as meeting directly with the constituencies, requesting information through briefing from the ministries and government agencies or public hearings in which sector or issue-specific NGOs are heard will help determine whether the executive is pursuing activities consistent with "NPASP" priorities or whether a particular anti-poverty strategy or activity has been effective. Furthermore, such oversight activities tend to strengthen a country's capacity for self-assessment of "NPASP" implementation and by extension it promotes the efficiency of that country's poverty alleviation strategies.

Like the development phase of the "NPASP", parliamentary engagement with special groups charged with monitoring and evaluation would promote the sustainability of the "NPASP" process by providing the parliament's political legitimacy to executive-



appointed special groups. This can be achieved either by assigning a number of parliamentarians serving on relevant sectoral parliament committees to evaluation and monitoring special groups, or, by institutionalizing a scheme of regular briefings by special groups on their findings for relevant parliament committees and interested parliamentarians. The combined practice of parliamentarian integration into evaluation and monitoring teams and institutionalized regular briefing of the Parliaments promotes transparency of general budget expenditure, which in turn, helps reinforce that country's anti-corruption efforts.

### **Proposition 5: Challenges and opportunities for effective involvement of Parliament in "NPASP" processes**

16- The national impact of parliamentary involvement with "NPASP" processes vary from country to country. Such impact is influenced by many factors. By and large, parliaments in countries where separation of powers has a stronger tradition face less political challenges to contribute effectively in all phases of "NPASP", provided, of course, that technical capacity and resources are available. More general challenges facing many parliaments which could potentially limit its contribution to "NPASP" processes include:

- Less than ideal internal capacity to engage in constructive analysis of "NPASP" policies.

Even under such circumstances, parliament can still serve as a forum to build parliamentary and public awareness of the "NPASP" and its impact. This can be done through reporting requirement and regular briefing of the parliamentarians by relevant ministers and government agencies.

- Limited staff and other resources.

In parliaments where committee systems have assigned support staff but those staff have limited technical skills necessary to provide meaningful assistance to committees and the parliamentarians, or there is limited access to accurate data or to computers and the internet, committees should explore drawing on the expertise from the civil society or the international community for technical skills and capacity building.

### **Proposition 6: Proposals for joint programs of information and experience exchanges within APA**

17- Development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of "NPASP" is qualitatively improved when best practices in Asia and elsewhere are shared, information exchanged and lessons learned from past practices. These efforts which aim, among others, to enable the poor and tackle urban impoverishment require information, networking and coordination among Asian countries. To this end, the Secretary General presents the following suggestions for consideration of the Sub-Committee:

## Asian Parliamentary Assembly



- 1- Establish a networking relationship among major governmental and non-governmental institutions dealing with poverty reduction in each Asian country, to share their experiences with "NPASP" formulation, implementation and evaluation and monitoring.
- 2- Establish databases at national and continental levels to collect and compare all basic data with respect to poverty reduction efforts in all Asian countries.
- 3- Strengthen coordination among international and regional organizations, in particular ADB, ESCAP, UNDP to provide technical support to the implementation and monitoring of the APA Plan of Action on Alleviating Poverty.
- 4- Establish "Advisory Groups" as need arises on specific issues to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee in order to pursue the implementation of the objectives delineated in the APA Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation in Asia in a time-bound and measurable way.



## **Asian Parliamentary Assembly**

### **Preliminary Report by the Secretary-General**

Submitted to the First Meeting of the  
Sub-Committee of the APA Political Committee on

## **Friendship Pact in Asia**

SG/Rep/2008/04  
3 June 2008



## **I. Background**

1. In its first Plenary Session in November 2006, the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) adopted the Tehran Declaration in paragraph 9 of which it welcomed the adoption of a “decision to set up a working group in the Islamic Republic of Iran to study and draw up a plan of action” for subjects including the “promotion of solidarity, friendship and good neighborly relations among Asian states leading to a friendship pact in Asia.”
2. In paragraph 42 of the Tehran Declaration of 2006, the APA Plenary also recognized *inter alia* “the need for developing a Friendship Pact in Asia and request the Asian Parliaments to consider this issue thoroughly in order to enhance amity and friendship among Asian countries. In this regard they decided to set up a working group to study the subject and submit a draft Friendship Pact to the Assembly next year for its further consideration.”
3. Pursuant to this mandate, the APA Secretariat set up an expert group comprised of parliament members, lawyers, diplomats, policy makers, and scholars from various fields to study the subject matter and prepare a draft to be considered by the APA. The Second APA Plenary annexed to its resolution (APA/Res/2007/06) the text of the Friendship Pact of Asia in September 2007.
4. In the said resolution, the APA Plenary decided to establish a sub-committee under the APA Political Committee “to consider the best strategies leading to the signing, ratifying, and acceding to Friendship Pact of Asia as annexed to the resolution by Asian States and to pursue the objectives delineated therein.”
5. The Plenary further “requested the APA Secretary General to prepare a report for consideration by the sub-committee.” This is the report of the Secretary-General to the first meeting of the sub-committee which is scheduled to be held on June 23-24 in Bahrain. It is expected that the deliberations in the sub-committee on the basis of this report, would result in a report containing a set of recommendations to be considered by the Third APA Plenary for a decision.

## **II. Consolidating Integration in Asia through the Friendship Pact**

Considering the fundamental developments occurred at the international level in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War era, the crucial role of Asia in the world order is increasingly unfolding.

The global community is undergoing rapid, vast, and deep changes in all aspects of its public life. Technological advancements have facilitated, broadened and upgraded both quantity and quality of interactions among



individuals, groups, organizations, nations and states. In result, there has emerged a global context which provides a fertile ground for increasing integration at various levels and in various regions.

Both global context and situational elements of integration make Asia an outstanding case for a successful regional integration: not only the geographical span of this continent, but also the interplay of its rich history and civilizations; the sizable natural resources and developmental imperatives; massive production capabilities and vast consuming markets; enormous cross-national interactions and transnational networks of communications; have made the regional integration for Asia an imperative rather than an option.

While geographical proximity is a substantive element of regional integration, elements of such integration are not limited to geography. Indeed, historical, cultural, economic, political, and security ties have their own distinctive effects in shaping up a viable regional integration within the global context. Furthermore, solid and enduring institutions of cooperation and competition in sports, media, arts, and sciences across the continent; unique assortment of natural and artistic attractions for tourism; growing commonalities in public aspirations; and Asia's great potentials for the maintenance of international peace and security; all point to a fertile field for increasing and promising integration in Asia.

The Friendship Pact in Asia is a bold initiative that would considerably contribute to the process of regional integration in Asia. It provides a framework for agreement and a platform for active interaction at a macro level throughout Asia. The contents of the Friendship Pact in Asia, as articulated by the APA Plenary, cover common purposes and principles and encompass a wide range of subjects vital to further convergence in the Asian community at large.

From a regional perspective, the Friendship Pact in Asia as initiated by the APA signifies the deep-rooted ties of history, geography, culture, and civilization which bind Asia together. The common interests of all Asian states, as well as the shared challenges and opportunities facing their peoples, have been the guidelines for drawing up the Friendship Pact in Asia as a road towards further integration at the continental level.

From a global perspective, the Friendship Pact in Asia will definitely contribute to the promotion of Asia's prominence at the world level. The great capabilities of Asia as a whole are essential to the world peace, security, and prosperity. There is every reason to believe that an integrated Asia will play an even more constructive role in the future of world affairs in conformity with the interests of all Asian Nations and beyond.



### ***III. Friendship Pact in Asia: Challenges and Concerns***

Like any other innovative proposition, the idea of the Friendship Pact in Asia faces certain challenges and concerns. Part of these challenges has to do with its distinctive novelty. While there are certain precedents to the Friendship Pact in Asia and in other continents, the Friendship Pact in Asia as initiated by the APA has distinctive features: previous instances of friendship pacts are mostly bilateral but the APA proposed Friendship Pact in Asia is multilateral the scope of which is to cover a whole continent. Furthermore, the Friendship Pact is a comprehensive document embracing a range of economic, political, cultural, and legal subjects for cooperation among Asian states.

Other challenges to the Friendship Pact initiative arise from the very fact that its contents are mostly policy-oriented in nature thus usually fall in the executive branch's domain of authority. Therefore, the degree of progress in this initiative will be dependent upon the degree of cooperation and coordination between the APA and the Asian governments as well as on the political will of their respective states.

While the Friendship Pact of Asia, as annexed to the APA Resolution APA/Res/2007/06 dated 19 November 2007, should be given much credit for effectively incorporating substantive issues of concern for all Asian Nations and States, from a political point of view, its title may seem too ambitious. Since the contents of the Friendship Pact involves decisions and arrangements to be made in partnership of Parliaments and Governments, it seems both appropriate and more effective to get the Governments involved in a piecemeal process with a view to reach an agreement.

### ***IV. Suggestions for Further Progress***

In light of the above, there may be several ways forward. The Sub-committee may wish to deliberate different approaches to this Pact. There are three obvious approaches to take the Friendship pact forward:

- 1- How to proceed with a Friendship Pact in Asia as annexed to APA Resolution APA/Res/2007/06. Generally, a Pact is negotiated by representatives of governments and after their signature it would become available for parliaments to review it and based on their constitutional laws and procedure, ratify or accede to the pact. This would be a very formal approach to the Friendship Pact in Asia.

Theoretically, since the Friendship Pact in Asia was initiated by the parliaments, the Sub-Committee may wish to consider how best each Member Parliament can formally engage its respective government in a legislative process it initiates.



- 2- Another option which is less ambitious is to replace the title: "Friendship Pact in Asia" with "Declaration on Principles of Friendship and Cooperation in Asia." This change of title is very significant both legally and politically. How to proceed with a "Declaration on Principles of Friendship and Cooperation in Asia"? Generally, this Declaration can simply be adopted as an annex to an APA resolution. However, it would be best if the Sub-Committee explores the possibility of holding a joint APA and Foreign Ministers meeting in which the APA Resolution which is not binding on the governments but enjoys their political support is adopted.
- 3- The Third option is even less ambitious and more likely to be achieved in the upcoming APA Plenary. This option is a version of the second option without direct involvement of the Foreign Ministers. In this approach, the APA Resolution with the "Declaration on Principles of Friendship and Cooperation in Asia" is adopted without being binding on the governments. However, the APA Resolution is to be considered at each national parliament in order to give it the political and legislative support. At the same time, the APA Resolution may include some provisions on the need to promote the Declaration through the media, hearings and briefings by the executive officials, and public campaigns through the civil society and the NGOs at the national level.

### **Annex I**

The Text of the APA Resolution on Friendship Pact of Asia (APA/Res/2007/06 dated 19 November 2007)

### **Annex II**

The Text of the Friendship Pact of Asia as Annexed to the APA Resolution: APA/Res/2007/06 dated 19 November 2007



APA/Res/2007/06  
19 November 2007

## **Resolution on Friendship Pact of Asia**

We, the Members of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly,

*Cognizant* of the deep-rooted ties of history, geography, culture, and civilization which bind our peoples together;

*Conscience* of the common challenges and opportunities facing the people of Asia as well as their mutual interests pointing to the need for further collaboration;

*Being Aware* of the crucial role Asia plays in shaping the world future by reliance on its great human and natural resources, as well as its technological advancements;

*Emphasizing* the importance of regional arrangements for consolidation of ties among Asian countries in all fields;

*Encouraging* various methods of dialogue and peaceful interactions among Asian cultures and civilizations fostering cultural diversity and tolerance throughout the Asian continent;

*Recognizing* the constructive role of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly in paving the way for and strengthening the amity and friendly relations among the people of Asia with reliance on commonalities of the Asian States in all areas;

*Convinced* that effective structures for cooperation among Asian countries could augment the benefits of globalization and diminish its harmful effects in Asia,

*Committed* to promote peace and security, at global as well as continental levels, on the basis of justice and the rule of law through expanding cooperation with all peace-loving nations within and outside Asia;

*Decide* to establish a Sub-Committee under the APA Political Committee composed of delegates from at least (7) Member Parliaments to meet at least once a year prior to the APA Executive Council session and consider the best strategies leading to the signing, ratifying, and acceding to Friendship Pact of Asia as annexed to this resolution by Asian States and to pursue the objectives delineated therein.

## Asian Parliamentary Assembly



*Request* the APA Secretary General to prepare a report for consideration by the sub-committee and to service its meetings. The sub-committee shall hold two meetings per year in a volunteer country or in the country of the president of the APA and submit its report to the APA Executive Council for its consideration and recommendation to the APA Plenary.



## THE FRIENDSHIP PACT OF ASIA

### CHAPTER I PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

#### Article 1

The term "Contracting Parties" under this Pact hereby refers to the Governments of the Asian States.

#### Article 2

The purposes of this Pact consist of the following:

- a) Promoting permanent peace, enduring friendship and constructive cooperation among States and peoples of Asia;
- b) Strengthening friendly relations among Asian States on the basis of equality and mutual respect;
- c) Facilitating further advancement and sustainable development of all Asian States in economic, social, scientific and technological fields; and
- d) Exploring potential capabilities of all Asian States for expanding collaboration in all areas of common interests;

#### Article 3

To achieve the aforementioned purposes, the Contracting Parties shall be guided by the following fundamental principles:

- a) Mutual respect to independence, territorial integrity and national sovereignty of all states on the basis of non-interference in others internal affairs;
- b) The right to self-determination of all Nations under foreign occupation;
- c) Respect for fundamental human rights and human dignity;
- d) Renunciation of the threat or use of force and the utilization of



peaceful means in international relations; and

e) Cooperation on the basis of the rule of law.

## **CHAPTER II FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION**

### **Article 4**

In pursuance of the purposes of this Pact, the Contracting Parties shall endeavor to develop and strengthen their traditional, cultural, economic and historical ties of friendship. In this respect, they shall move to expand their diplomatic and commercial relations and facilitate communication and interaction among their peoples.

### **Article 5**

Consistent with the provisions of the Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the Contracting Parties shall undertake mutual confidence-building measures through appropriate regional arrangements in order to promote peace and stability throughout Asia and in the World.

### **Article 6**

The Contracting Parties shall enhance collaboration within the United Nations to promote the role of Asia in the world community.

### **Article 7**

The Contracting Parties shall uphold cooperation with APA and Parliaments in Asia, in fulfilling and achieving the purposes and principles of this Pact, and the ultimate goal of establishing an Asian Parliament.

### **Article 8**

The Contracting Parties shall collaborate for the acceleration of the economic growth in Asia. To this end, they shall promote greater utilization of their capabilities in research and development, exchange of information, transfer of technology and foreign investment towards a viable and sustainable growth.

### **Article 9**

The Contracting Parties shall intensify their concerted efforts in combating illiteracy, poverty, and environmental degradation. For this purpose, they shall adopt appropriate strategies at continental and regional levels for the mutual benefit of all Asian countries.



## **Article 10**

To promote and consolidate peace in Asia, the Contracting Parties shall encourage inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue among Asian civilizations.

## **Article 11**

To strengthen their economic and commercial relations, the Contracting Parties shall undertake appropriate measures to create an integrated energy market in Asia.

## **Article 12**

The Contracting Parties shall provide for the exchange of information and experiences pertinent to reducing damages and alleviating the trauma inflicted by natural disasters.

## **Article 13**

The Contracting Parties shall collaborate in eradicating all roots of terrorism and other organized crimes in order to make a strong and secure community of nations in Asia.

## **Article 14**

The Contracting Parties shall intensify their efforts through bilateral and multilateral modalities in combating all sorts of illegal trafficking including the illegal trafficking of human beings, goods, weapons, and drugs.

## **Article 15**

Denouncing all sorts of aggression and foreign occupation, the Contracting Parties shall refrain from any activity in their territories that would constitute a threat or use of force against the security, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of other Parties.

## **Article 16**

The Contracting Parties shall maintain regular contacts and consultations with one another on international and regional matters in order to harmonize their views, actions and policies.



**CHAPTER III  
PROCEDURES**

**Article 17**

The signatory States shall ratify this Pact in accordance with their own constitutional procedures.

**Article 18**

This Pact shall enter into force on the date of the deposit of the twenty first instrument of ratification with a Government of the signatory State which will be designated as the Depository of this Pact and the instruments of ratification or accession.

**Article 19**

The Pact shall remain open to accession by all Asian States.

**Article 20**

Any modification or amendments to this Pact shall be agreed upon by the Contracting Parties and formalized in accordance with the rules of procedure of the APA.

**Article 21**

Any Contracting Party may withdraw from this Pact upon giving a ninety days written notification to the Depository. The Depository shall inform the other Contracting Parties within thirty days from the date of receipt of the notification.

**Article 22**

This Pact is drawn up in the English language. Any divergent interpretation of the text shall be settled amicably through negotiation.



**Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA)**

**The Secretary General Report on  
Environmental Issues,  
Global Warming, and  
Planting Billions of Trees throughout Asia**

**SG/Rep/2008/05  
6 July 2008**



## Background

The Second Session of the Plenary of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly in paragraph 18 of its Resolution on Economic and Sustainable Development, contained in document APA/Economic Com/200/2007/01, decided to establish a Sub-Committee of Environmental and Global Warming under the Standing Committee of Economic and Sustainable Development of APA to call a special meeting in the Republic of Korea in 2008 to deal with environmental issues as well as global warming, planting of billions of trees throughout Asia and submit its report, including its Plans of Action to the Plenary.

The Republic of Korea later informed the Secretariat that it would be prepared to host the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Environmental Issues, Global Warming and Planting of Billions of Trees throughout Asia in 2009. Subsequently, the Syrian Arab Republic graciously offered to host the Sub-Committee Meeting in Damascus on 21-22 July 2008.

On 23 June 2008, the Secretary-General communicated with all Member Parliaments and sought their views and those of their governments on environmental issues, global warming and planting billions of trees throughout Asia.

The present Report of the Secretary-General is submitted to the Sub-Committee for its consideration.

## Introduction

Asia and the Pacific is the largest region in the world with rich and diversified natural resources. However, according to ESCAP State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific 2005, its freshwater availability per capita is the lowest of all global regions, its biologically productive area per capita is less than 60 percent of the global average, and its arable and permanent crop land per capita is less than 80 percent of the global average. Furthermore, two thirds of the global population, the majority of the world's undernourished and two thirds of the world's poor live in this region. Equally important is that more than 600 million people are without safe drinking water, around 1.9 billion people do not have access to improved sanitation, more than 800 million people have no access to electricity, and millions are prone to diseases.

In order to remedy these deficiencies, Asia and the Pacific developing countries have made every effort to achieve economic growth and they have accomplished some success in this regard. The speed of economic growth in Asia and the Pacific developing countries is higher than global growth rates. According to ESCAP, more than one third of the 17 fastest-growing Asian and the Pacific countries are among least developed countries.

In this region, the push for economic growth based on unsustainable growth patterns has threatened the environment. Therefore, it is necessary to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection objectives.



## **Environmental Performance vs. Sustainable Development**

Environmental problems have affected the whole planet Earth. Since early 1990s, great efforts have been made at the international level to address these problems and national, regional and global commitments have been defined to protect the environment. Although Asian governments have attempted to improve the environment, they seem to have focused more on other causes of environmental problems than on the rapidly changing consumption and production patterns as root causes of environmental degradation.

There is a link between the consumption and the production. Changing consumption patterns define growing production patterns. To give an example in this regard, one can refer to the lifestyle in an urban area which is characterized by energy and high waste production. A normal individual in an urban area uses three times the water as a person living in a rural area.

Changing consumption patterns have influenced the use of resources. For instance, water shortage has been identified as a problem for many areas in Asia, as over-extraction and pollution have been responsible for degradation of surface and groundwater resources.

In order to address environmental challenges, Asian countries may consider, in due time, defining Asia Sustainable Development Strategy (ASDS) which can identify a roadmap for implementing sustainable development in Asia covering economic, social, environmental and financial aspects. ASDS requires new and clean environmental technologies which can add to economic growth. These technologies would lead to a better environment while investing in them would create jobs.

The Asian governments should do their utmost to educate the general public on environmental issues and persuade it to protect the environment. Educational programs should be established to promote environmental awareness. Furthermore, at the national level, environmental taxes and charges particularly to those who pollute most may be applied. One other important endeavor on the part of the governments is to define the industrial policy of the country which should comprise of environmental and sustainable development policies. Within the energy policy, National Action Plans (NAPs) may be designed to achieve yearly energy savings.

### The Role of Asian Parliaments

The parliaments may give priority to sustainable development in the preparation of legislations as well as in the allocation of national budget. They may also stress that sustainable development must be a guiding principle for all government activities. Bearing in mind that most Asian countries are among developing countries, a balance needs to be created between the prerogatives for development of these countries and protection of their environment. In other words, while the Asian developing countries are expected to protect their environment, they should be provided with financial and technological assistance to do so.

The Asian parliaments may adopt the following measures:



- a) Working closely with the Asian governments to generate funds, from developed countries and international financial institutions, for new technologies to combat the environmental degradation,
- b) Considering a ban on imports of all outdated and polluting technologies,
- c) Transferring a proportion of road transport to more environmentally friendly modes of transport,
- d) Levying an environmental tax on all unsustainable activities,
- e) Strengthening environmental aspects of all legislative proposals,
- f) Adopting a sustainable development strategy with a view to achieving the Asia Sustainable Development Strategy (ASDS),
- g) Adopting a national action plan to achieve yearly energy savings,
- h) Phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies in the budget,
- i) Devoting special attention, in the budget, to increasing environmental awareness among the general public,
- j) Allocating more budget to activities of the government's environmental department,
- k) Overseeing the government's activities related to the environment, including holding hearings with the participation of officials directly involved in environmental issues,
- l) Working with other APA Member Parliaments to improve legislations in the field of sustainable development, particularly on environmental issues, and to come up with common guidelines for better protection of the environment in Asia.

### **Climate Change**

Temperatures are rising all across the globe and warming of the climate system is indisputable. Over the past 100 years, the world mean temperature has increased by 0.7 degree Celsius and most of the warming is attributed to the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that is increasingly concentrated in the atmosphere.

Activities of human beings such as deforestation and burning of fuels, including fossil fuels, have contributed to the climate change. Global warming has caused floods, droughts, heat waves, tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis, disappearance of glaciers and less snow falls.

About half of Asia's biodiversity is at risk due to climate change which is likely to affect forest expansion and exacerbate threats to biodiversity as a result of land use/cover change and population pressure in most of Asia. Furthermore, marine and coastal ecosystems in Asia are likely to be affected by sea level rise and temperature increases.



According to the Stern Review on the economics of climate change, published in October 2006 and reproduced by the European Parliament, the cost associated in the fight against the climate change is much less than inaction. While reduction of GHG emissions would cost around 1% of global GDP every year, inaction could cost the economy 5% to 20% of global GDP each year. Therefore, Asian governments are encouraged to take measures in line with the Kyoto Protocol to combat global warming.

### The Role of Asian Parliaments

The Asian parliaments may adopt the following measures:

- a) Working closely with the Asian governments to generate funds, from developed countries and international financial institutions, for new technologies to combat the climate change,
- b) Adopting a strategy on climate change, particularly in the area of energy and transportation systems, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of achieving the Asian Strategy for Climate Change,
- c) Considering a ban on import of all old and fuel inefficient vehicles,
- d) Removing fossil fuel subsidies,
- e) Promoting the development of alternative fuel and fuel efficient vehicles,
- f) Passing legislations to encourage greater energy efficiency,
- g) Allocating more budget to research and innovation in environment friendly energy technologies,
- h) Promoting adherence to and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol,
- i) Preparing a post-Kyoto instrument which preserves the interests of Asian countries,
- j) Overseeing the government's activities related to climate change and global warming,
- k) Working with other APA Member Parliaments to improve legislations in the field of climate change and to come up with common guidelines to combat global warming.

### **Planting of Trees**

According to UNEP, at the global level, deforestation continues at a disturbing rate of 13 million hectares per year. In Asia, where there was net loss in the 90s, a net gain of forests in the last couple of years occurred primarily due to large scale reforestation in china.

The major causes of deforestation include the expansion of industrial and agricultural needs, population growth, poverty, lack of proper lands and consumer demand.



We cannot save the planet just by planting trees, nevertheless, it can be considered as one unique response to the global climate change because each tree can remove more than a ton of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere over its lifetime. Planting trees preserves the environment, strengthens sustainable development, and develops forests and green cover.

The Billion Tree Campaign was announced on 8 November 2006 at the UN Convention on Climate Change Conference and initiated in January 2007. The objective was to plant at least one billion trees around the world each year. After five months, the pledge campaign surpassed its target of planting one billion trees. Some Asian countries have already started planting trees in large scale.

The proposal for planting billions of trees throughout Asia which was made by the Parliament of the Republic of the Philippines requires financial and technical resources.

In the long run, the tree planting program can support itself financially. The income generated from selling fruits and woods of planted trees as well as the savings associated with the reduction of GHG emissions provide financial resources for the program. However, necessary measures should be taken to provide money to start the program. The governments can give priority to the mass tree-planting program in the budget and seek the financial support of regional and international organizations to this end. The governments can also provide investment opportunities to the private sector so as to encourage it to be part of this endeavor.

Technical support for the mass tree-planting program can be provided by the domestic private sector, other governments and NGOs as well as regional and international organizations.

People, organizations, business and industry, and civil society should be encouraged to be involved in tree-planting programs.

The implementation phase of the program should take due account of different characteristics of each area including its population size, topography, and climate condition.

Efforts should be made to plant indigenous trees and trees that are appropriate to the local environment.

UNEP has a solemn Billion Tree Campaign. The Secretary General intends to communicate with UNEP to seek its advice as to how the Asian parliaments can better promote mass tree-planting program in Asia and oversee the activities of governments in this regard more efficiently.

### The Role of Asian Parliaments

The parliaments may adopt the following measures:

- a) Allocating the necessary budget for mass tree-planting program in the country,



- b) Devoting special attention, in the budget, to public education regarding the mass tree-planting program,
- c) Passing legislations to encourage mass tree-planting program,
- d) Overseeing the government's activities related to mass tree-planting program,
- e) Working with other APA Member Parliaments to improve legislations in the field of mass tree-planting program and to exchange experiences in this regard,
- f) Encouraging Asian governments to work more closely with UNEP on different aspects of mass tree-planting program.

### **The Way Forward**

The Sub-Committee has before it a host of environmental issues. It has been asked to submit its report, including its Plan of Action to the Plenary. The Sub-Committee may decide on the following points:

1. Environmental issues are plentiful and diverse. The Sub-Committee may decide to choose one of its three general themes, namely, environmental issues, climate change and large scale tree-planting for further discussions in the next session of the Sub-Committee.
2. Drafting an Asian plan of action for environmental issues is an ambitious and arduous task. The Sub-Committee may discuss the steps needed to be taken by the Asian parliaments to encourage the relevant agencies of Asian countries to come up with an Asian plan of action for environment. The Secretary General is of the view that when discussions referred to in paragraph one above is exhausted, APA will be in a better position to discuss the plan of action.
3. The Sub-Committee may request the Secretary General to report to its next session the results of his communication with UNEP on planting billions of trees throughout Asia.
4. APA may establish contacts with IPU and other parliamentary assemblies in order to exchange views and experiences on environmental issues.
5. The Sub-Committee may discuss possible areas of cooperation between the parliaments and the governments on legislation, allocation of budget and overseeing the activities of governments with regard to environmental issues, global warming and planting billion of trees throughout Asia.
6. The Sub-Committee may endorse the following measures to be taken by the parliaments:
  - i) Working closely with the Asian governments to generate funds, from developed countries and international financial institutions, for new



- technologies to combat the environmental degradation and the climate change,
- ii) Considering a ban on imports of all outdated and polluting technologies and all old and fuel inefficient vehicles,
  - iii) Transferring a proportion of road transport to more environmentally friendly modes of transport,
  - iv) Levying an environmental tax on all unsustainable activities,
  - v) Strengthening environmental aspects of all legislative proposals,
  - vi) Adopting a sustainable development strategy with a view to achieving the Asia Sustainable Development Strategy (ASDS),
  - vii) Adopting a national action plan to achieve yearly energy savings,
  - viii) Phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies in the budget,
  - ix) Devoting special attention, in the budget, to public education and increasing environmental awareness among the general public including in the area of mass tree-planting program,
  - x) Allocating more budget to activities of the government's environmental department, to research and innovation in environment friendly energy technologies and to mass tree-planting program in the country,
  - xi) Overseeing the government's activities related to the environment, climate change and mass tree-planting program, including holding hearings with the participation of officials directly involved in environmental issues,
  - xii) Working with other APA Member Parliaments to improve legislations in the field of sustainable development, particularly on issues related to environment, climate change and mass-tree planting program, and to come up with common guidelines for better protection of the environment in Asia.
  - xiii) Adopting a strategy on climate change, particularly in the area of energy and transportation systems, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of achieving the Asian Strategy for Climate Change,
  - xiv) Removing fossil fuel subsidies,
  - xv) Promoting the development of alternative fuel and fuel efficient vehicles,
  - xvi) Passing legislations to encourage greater energy efficiency and mass tree-planting program,
  - xvii) Promoting adherence to and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol,
  - xviii) Preparing a post-Kyoto instrument which preserves the interests of Asian countries,
  - xix) Encouraging Asian governments to work more closely with UNEP on different aspects of mass tree-planting program.



**Preliminary Report of**  
**the APA Secretary-General**  
**On**  
**Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia**

## **Background**

In 2006, the APA Plenary decided to establish a working group to prepare a Plan of Action for managing globalization impact in Asia. In 2007, the Plenary adopted the text of the Plan of Action in its Resolution APA/Res/2007/03, and decided to establish a Sub-Committee under the Social and Cultural Committee to consider how best to facilitate the implementation of provisions of the Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia. By the same resolution, the Plenary further requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for consideration of the Sub-Committee.

To fulfill this mandate, the Secretary-General communicated and consulted with APA Member Parliaments to identify members to this sub-committee, as well as to seek their views and proposals on how to manage globalization impact in Asia and priorities and projects they regard the most appropriate and urgent. On this topic, unfortunately the Secretariat received no response from Member Parliaments, thus the Secretary-General was obliged to prepare this report based on general observations and previous debates within the APA.

## **Introduction**

In light of the above and based on the text of the Plan of Action, the Secretary-General submits the present report to the Sub-Committee on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia. The report focuses primarily on the role of parliaments in strengthening national and regional plans. The result of the Sub-Committee deliberations of the Secretary-General's report will be forwarded to the First Executive Council meeting in 2008 to be referred to APA Plenary for further consideration and action by the Social and Cultural Committee.



Globalization as the most dominant factor of the present time has increasingly shaped a new era of interconnected and interdependent human actions in economy, culture, communication and society. Such massive and great transformation has changed human interactions particularly in market (trade, investment, finance) and communication (information technology, media networks). This far reaching process has brought in new actors (global organizations, international NGOs) and new rules that have major impact on people's lives all around the world.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

This global trend has brought challenges such as undermining cultural identities, neglecting sustainable development, widening gap between poor and rich, and opportunities that include access to information technology, access to world market and fostering economic growth. Asia that roughly contains two-third of world population should play significant role in the world cultural economic and social development. To manage the globalization impact, human dignity, good governance, accountability, transparency, alleviating of poverty, cultural diversity and access to information, technology and market should be promoted as underpinning principles governing relations in Asian and beyond.

## **Major Areas**

In line with above guideline, the Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia contains different proposals that can be classified into two main categories:

- A- Establishing proper mechanism for exchange of information and experiences in the following fields:
  - 1- Advanced electronics, information, and agricultural technologies.
  - 2- Comparative advantages of each Asian countries regarding to their Technological capabilities.
  - 3- Human resources and movement of skilled and semi-skilled labor.
  - 4- Advantages and disadvantages of each Asian Countries in export and import of goods and services.
  - 5- Major financial and economic developments due to global fluctuations and crisis.



6- Privatization in Asia, its predicaments and solutions.

7- Cultural goods and services.

8- Cultural and natural tourist attractions in Asia.

B- Common investments in structural fields:

1- The development of multimodal transportation networks with easy access to local and global markets.

2- The development of labor intensive industries with due consideration to needs of each Asian Countries.

3- The development of necessary infrastructure for tourism.

4- The development of modalities for promotion of Asian Integrated Energy Market.

### **The Role of Parliaments**

1- Common Asian Approach to Globalization

Due to the fact that globalization is a controversial concept with different proponents and opponents, it is imperative, to the possible extent, to promote a common understanding among Asian countries. If divergent views among Asian Parliaments on globalizations remain intact, it would hinder adoption of common policies and appropriate legislative actions. To pave the way for such common understanding APA may plan to hold an inclusive and analytical conference at Continental level with participation of academic and intellectual figures. The main goal of such deliberation among Parliamentarians and social and political thinkers is to define “Common Asian Understanding of, and Approach to Globalization”.

To achieve this goal necessitates a policy oriented debate and dialogue on the nature of globalization and its impact on Asian countries. Globalization as a relentless social and economic process, is creating fear and hope: Fear of insecurity, instability and inequality, due to intrusive nature of globalization in economy and politics, and fear of its overcoming force against local cultures and social identities, as well as its threat to traditional social institutions such as family, education and employment, Hope to generate an integrated, prosperous and fair era with more access to market, media, information and immigration for promising job opportunities.



Whatever the nature of this global trend may be, its impact on Asian people is overwhelming. Such effects may be examined in several fields such as:

- a- The economic growth rate at national and global level,
- b- Global free trade and local employment and income,
- c- Poverty rate, inequality and widening gap between poor and rich,
- d- Global media and local economic and social life style,
- e- Economic globalization and cultural homogenization,

By profoundly addressing these areas in a comparative way at Continental level, APA would introduce a framework that defines the common understanding of globalization. Benefited from such guiding principles APA would be in a position to adopt common policies in dealing with opportunities and challenges of globalization in Asia, either in the form of common legislation or a unified strong declaration.

Thus APA would deal with this significant issue by taking several interrelated measures at different stages:

- a- Engagement in dialogue and debate to formulate common understanding of Globalization, through holding regional and Continental seminars and workshops.
- b- Preparing general policy papers.
- c- Engagement in consensus building process among Member Parliaments to take unified position and action.
- d- To pass common legislations on the most important and less controversial aspects of Globalization in Asia.

### 2- Exchange of information and experiences

Globalization as a multifaceted phenomenon is permeating almost all aspects of Asian societies. It is becoming much more complex with various linkages with different areas and enormous new players benefited from inexpensive digital communication. Thus we are obliged to identify those priorities that can be achievable in the next two years of APA activities. For that the Secretary-General wishes to suggest to the Sub-Committee the following areas as the most appropriate and relevant.



- a- Exchange of information in the fields of information technology with the aim to narrow the digital divide among Asian countries as well as Asia and the World.
- b- Exchange of information and good practices in the field of cultural goods and services such as film, music, art crafts, painting, sculpture and architecture.
- c- Exchange of experiences and information on major financial and currency crisis in order to face the challenges that drastically affect living conditions of Asian people.

### **Suggested Practical Measures**

- 1- Establish a networking relationship among major governmental and non-governmental institutions dealing with globalization impact in each Asian country, to share their experiences and studies with the view to formulate common strategy.
- 2- Establish “Asian Virtual Parliament” in order to enhance debates and deliberations in an easy and prompt way. Global net-working provides opportunities for Member Parliaments to engage in fruitful dialogue on issues of concern for Asia in a constant and regular basis. This mechanism is not intended to substitute the APA structure and functions, but to accelerate its function in a more timely and effective as well as less expensive and bureaucratic way. The Secretary-General will provide a detailed explanation on this to the next APA Plenary session.
- 3- Establish databases at national and continental levels to collect and compare all basic data with respect to globalization impact in social, political and economic fields in all Asian countries.
- 4- Establish “Advisory Groups” as need arises on specific issues to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee in order to pursue the implementation of the objectives delineated in the APA Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia.



## **Report by the Secretary General**

Plus the views received from member parliaments

Submitted to the Meeting of the Sub-Committee of  
The APA Social and Cultural Committee on

## **Protecting and Respecting Cultural Diversity in Asia**

### **Background**

In 2006 APA Plenary decided to establish a working group to prepare a Plan of Action for Protecting and Respecting Cultural Diversity in Asia. In 2007, after this Plan of Action was discussed by the APA Executive Council and certain modifications were made, the Plenary adopted the text of the Plan of Action by passing the Resolution APA/Res/2007/02.

In that Resolution, the APA Plenary decided to establish a Sub-Committee under the Cultural and Social Committee to consider the best ways and means to facilitate the implementation of provisions of the Plan of Action on Cultural Diversity in Asia. The Plenary further requested the Secretary General to prepare a report for consideration of the Sub-Committee.

To fulfill this mandate, the Secretary General communicated and consulted with APA Member Parliaments to identify interested members to this sub-committee, as well as to give their views and suggestions on the priorities and projects that they regard the most appropriate and urgent. In line with such consultations and based on the text of the Plan of Action, the Secretary General wishes to make the following suggestions for consideration of the Sub-Committee.



## **A- Cultural Challenges of Globalization**

The globalization process and its negative impact on cultural identities is increasingly threatening Asian societies as well as the world cultural diversity due to its universal demand for global cultural homogenization. It seems no country is immune from globalization, yet the point is how to strike a balance between the so-called global culture and different cultural identities. Globalization in its cultural manifestations is continuously changing the human attitude toward life and death, prosperity and salvation, social relationships, human nature and communal life styles; thus threatening long lasting traditions and well rooted identities. To study different dimensions of such changes, and to make practical recommendations for active participation in the global processes in order to protect Asian cultural identities require critical and deep evaluation of the status quo and the prevalent forward-looking trend.

For this, it is advisable to hold a critical and brain storming conference in Asia with high level participation of intellectuals, parliamentarians and policy makers. The goal of this conference is to critically review different cultural dimensions of globalization and to formulate policies to seize opportunities and actively face challenges of globalization. The result of such deliberations will be reported to the Social and Cultural Committee for further consideration and action.

## **B- Citizenship Rights and Cultural Diversity**

In order to protect and promote cultural and value systems of different communities, cultural rights should be differentiated from individual rights. It is imperative to recognize that every person is entitled to enjoy prosperity within his/her own specific culture, free from humiliation, degradation, marginalization and suppression. This cultural rights is an integral part of citizenship rights which is rooted in the cultural, historical and national characteristics of each Asian nations.

There are two different approaches in cultural discourses: one considers cultural rights as part of individual rights, and the other regards them as an integral part of citizenship rights. To protect and promote cultural diversity in Asia gravely depends on the position that APA may take in regard to these two approaches.



This cultural discourse has both intellectual implications and practical applications. Thus the Secretary General deems it appropriate to hold a brain-storming conference in Asia with high level participation of intellectuals, parliamentarians and policy makers to critically review different cultural dimensions of individual, as well as citizenship rights and to formulate policies that best promote cultural rights and protect diversity.

### **C- Cultural Diversity and Economic Development**

Asia as a continent with the greatest cultural and spiritual heritage, and with the most speedy economic growth rate is indeed facing a challenge; how to strike a balance between development and culture? With regard to the relationship between culture and economy there are two competing approaches. First, the developmental approach which pays little attention, if any, to various traditions and life styles of different communities. Second, the cultural approach that regards due attention to cultural context as the most appropriate ground for economic development. The first approach, in practice, not only has failed to produce a sustainable development, but has also generated social and cultural disparities and conflicts. In the second approach, development itself is regarded as an integral part of social and cultural life and in close interaction and collaboration with its social contexts. In this way, a balanced and interactive relationship between economic development and cultural diversity may emerge.

Thus, it is imperative to pay special attention to the relationship between development and culture, particularly in societies with rapid economic growth rate. The Secretary General would like to propose to the Sub-Committee to discuss this issue with high priority. For this, it is advisable to hold regional workshops with the aim of studying different experiences and identifying the best policies and practices of each region. Through such exchange of experiences the most suitable modality for each region can be defined. The Sub-Committee would suggest these modalities to the Main Committee for its consideration and then through it to the APA plenary for final approval.

### **D- Asia a Cultural Continent**

To facilitate integration in Asia requires a common Asian understanding as well as a solid cultural ground for cooperation and coordination among Asian nations. Cultural exchanges consolidate Asian solidarity and integration.



Thus it is necessary to design short, medium, and long term cultural programs aimed at promoting cultural integration in Asia. Such programs may include:

- Production of short movies about the role of Asia in human civilization and the significance of Asian integration,
- Holding annual film festival with the aim of introducing different proper grounds for Asian integration,
- Holding Asian cultural festivals in music, theater, etc,
- Promoting tourism among Asian nations,
- Facilitating consulate services for citizens of Asian countries.

To begin with, the Secretariat of APA suggests to hold annual competition and to award prize to the best movie in Asia that supports Asian integration.

### **E- Combat Smuggling of Cultural Items**

Asia as the most ancient civilization in the world with the richest cultural heritage has always been the victim of smuggling of its cultural items. To combat such anti-cultural phenomenon requires close cooperation among all Asian countries. Transparent laws and regulations for protecting cultural items constitute the most important aspect of this campaign.

Therefore APA should take certain steps in order to remove legal loopholes in trafficking cultural items. First the existing rules and regulations on this particular matter should be reviewed. Second, the Sub-Committee may wish to undertake drafting and proposing a common legislation among Asian nations to combat smuggling of cultural items. After the approval of the Social and Cultural Committee it will be forwarded to the Plenary for adoption. Then it is advisable to request national parliaments to pass this legislation within appropriate time duration.

This coordinated campaign in Asia would pave the way for a better integration and helps to protect cultural diversity and Asian solidarity.



### **F- APA Cooperation with International Cultural Institutions**

At international and regional levels there are several institutions operating in cultural, educational and artistic fields. It is imperative for APA to concentrate on innovative and neglected areas of cultural activities and avoid repeating or reproducing what have already been done by others. Thus the Secretariat should establish an effective working relationship with institutions such as UNESCO and ISESCO in order to exchange views and experiences leading to joint actions and projects.

If the Sub-Committee supports this proposal, the Secretariat would review and study the core cultural programs of these institutions and identify the specific areas of cooperation. Based on such findings, a report will be prepared by the Secretary General to be submitted to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee in 2009.

### **G- Establishment of an Asian Cultural Foundation:**

Cultural issues are not confined to official or governmental activities but embrace all walks of societies and underpin the life style of all communities. To coordinate cultural activities at the continent level, it is advisable to establish a Non-Governmental Cultural Foundation through networking among active cultural foundations in Asia or/and with the participation of Asian prominent cultural figures as its board of trustee. Though this Foundation would operate as an NGO, it would have the support and blessing of Asian Parliaments and Governments.

The Secretary General is prepared to present a feasibility study report on this proposal. Such report may contain vision and mission statements, long and short term goals, structural and managerial requirements as well as terms of reference and methods of conduct.

### **G- Dialogue among Asian Religions**

Asia has been the origins of great religions and majority of believers in the world live in Asia. This provides a unique opportunity for Asia to take initiative measures to enhance dialogue and understanding among believers. Promotion of constructive dialogue among Asian religions is imperative for removing stereotypes and negative images to paves the way for common understanding toward integration. Based on theology and belief systems religions in Asia may be classified into two main groups; Abrahamian and



Non-Abrahamic. Abrahamic Religions rooted in the teachings of Prophet Abraham and continued in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The second contains ancient Asian religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism.

Dialogue among religions may be conducted in several ways. However, the most relevant one for APA is focusing on basic contemporary issues in order to compare the ways that Asian religions are responding to modern challenges. How religions and traditions in Asia has encountered modernity and globalization. To address such a great challenge, it is imperative to conduct fruitful and serious dialogue on significant issues such as:

- 1- Human dignity and human rights
- 2- Peace and friendship
- 3- Justice and equity
- 4- Social relationships (family, generational gap)

The result of such interfaith dialogue would provide common understanding and narrow the divide among believers in facing modern challenges.

To utilize the existing institutions dealing with interfaith dialogue in Asia, it was proposed to the Secretary General to study the possibility to establish a working relationship between the APA and the “Asian Conference of Religions for Peace” (ACRP). This organization is an interfaith body consisting of religious representatives from 16 Asian countries founded in Singapore in 1976. ACRP will hold its 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly at Manila Philippines on Oct 17-22 2008. The Secretary General of ACRP has invited members of the APA to participate in the coming General Assembly. Based on such findings and in line with the APA recommendations the Secretary General would present a report to suggest an effective and relevant mechanism for interfaith dialogue in Asia.



# Annex

## Views received from Member Parliaments

Views received from Mr. Sunggon Kim  
Member of Parliament of Korea, APA Representative of MP of Korea

17 July 2008

I want to point out something missing in your report. I fully agree with you that we Asians need to keep cultural identity under the threat of globalization and economic development. At the same time, you stress the Asian solidarity and integration and recommend the various way of cultural exchange among Asian countries. But I want to point out that not only the solidarity of Asian but also the solidarity of humankind as a whole is important. We should protect of the cultural identity of Asian from the threat of globalization, but we also should protect the humankind and our planet as a whole under the crisis of total annihilation.

Globalization and economic development in modern time are the products of the modern science and mass product which originates mainly in the West. Along with this material power, many Western countries (including Japan) colonized Asian and African countries politically, economically, and culturally. Even after their political independence, Asian and African people are under the influence of Western economy and culture.

This is the process of globalization which threatens the uniqueness of Asian culture. For Asian people now, like the people in other capitalistic society, money and goods have become the primary object of worship. Here people, whether Asian or non-Asian, lost their human nature (or divine nature), which is the most serious crisis caused by globalization and economic development. People worship money rather than God.

Moreover, globalization and economic development has devastate our environment. The earth is the only planet we human beings can live. But, due to the climate change caused by the increasing production of CO<sub>2</sub>, rising sea levels may engulf many cities and many creatures face annihilation. Polarization and food crisis is also a serious byproduct of globalization. The poor becomes poorer and the rich becomes richer. Billions people, especially

## Asian Parliamentary Assembly



in Asia and Africa, are suffering through poverty, disease, shortage of water, food and energy.

Asia is the continent of the origin of the most important spiritual tradition such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. These great world religions have taught people how to recover our human nature, how to achieve the true happiness, and how to live together with the poor and other creatures on earth. I am sure this is the most important heritage of Asian culture which can heal the suffering of humankind. The modern mankind should find a solution of the crisis in these spiritual traditions, which is a forgotten truth while people worship money and goods.

Due to the rapid economic development and globalization, the balance between material civilization and spiritual civilization has broken, and the result is the suffering of humankind. But through rediscovery of the spiritual heritage of Asia, we can heal our sick civilization. This is the role of Asian culture to save the humankind in crisis. It is important to keep the cultural diversity of Asia and build up the Asian solidarity. But it is more important to find a solution of the survival of humankind in the cultural heritage of Asia. Now we Asia have the answer to save our earth and humankind.

Thank you. Sincerely Yours

Sunggon Kim,  
Member of Parliament of Korea.  
APA Representative of MP of Korea