



Sustainable Infrastructure in Asia

Overview and Proceedings

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Seoul Initiative Policy Forum on Sustainable Infrastructure Seoul, Republic of Korea, 6-8 September 2006

The Seoul Initiative on Green Growth was adopted at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2005. The Seoul Initiative provides a regional cooperation framework for Green Growth, taking into account the economic, social, and geographical features of the region. It also provides a framework for policy consultations, capacity-building, and networking for the promotion of Green Growth at the regional level. The Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth (SINGG), with countries in the Asia-Pacific region as its members, facilitates the implementation of the Seoul Initiative and its activities to create synergies between economic growth and environmental sustainability, and to contribute to the achievement of an economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable future for Asia and the Pacific.

The members of SINGG recommended that a regional overview of sustainable infrastructure in Asia would help policy makers identify the challenges and opportunities for Green Growth in their countries at the First Policy Forum of the Seoul Initiative, held from 6 to 8 September 2006, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The members of SINGG also recognize the need to rethink infrastructure development, taking into account eco-efficiency and resource conservation over the lifetime of the infrastructure. It is hoped that this SINGG, through its members and collaborating organizations, can help to broaden the dialogue on sustainable infrastructure and the promising actions that may be taken in Asia. This can provide a basis for future discussions on policy guidelines for incorporating the Green Growth approach and eco-efficiency concept into the infrastructure development system.



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United Nations publication
Sales No. E.07.II.F.16
Copyright © United Nations 2007
ISBN: 978-92-1-120507-7
ST/ESCAP/2448

Printed in Bangkok
July 2007 – 450



SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN ASIA

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Seoul, Republic of Korea, 6-8 September 2006



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Sales No. E.07.II.F.16
ISBN: 978-92-1-120507-7
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Printed in Thailand
ST/ESCAP/2448

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Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea for the generous funding for the activities of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth, including a regional study on sustainable infrastructure and the Seoul Initiative Policy Forum on Sustainable Infrastructure, held from 6 to 8 September 2006, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Grateful thanks are extended to the contributing authors as well as to the participants in the Policy Forum for sharing their valuable thoughts and the fruitful exchange of ideas.

The publication was prepared by Mr. Jung Kyun Na and Ms. Vivian Raksakulthai, the Environment and Sustainable Development Division (ESDD) of ESCAP. Part I was prepared under the direction of ESCAP secretariat by Dr. Vilas Nitivattananon and Dr. Shinya Hanaoka, the Asian Institute of Technology, with the contribution from colleagues in ESDD. Cover design by Mr. Eric Roeder.

Background

Asia now has 71 per cent of the global population that is without access to improved sanitation and 58 per cent of those without access to safe drinking water. In the coming decades, a growing population and increased urbanization requires Asian countries to build the water, energy, waste management, and transport infrastructure that will support their needs. At the same time, “Green Growth” calls for continued economic growth while ensuring that resources are used sustainably. Yet, environmental infrastructure is insufficient, and as a result, environmental carrying capacities throughout the region are being overwhelmed. Many countries in Asia often face challenges of developing sustainable infrastructure due to institutional, technological, and financial insufficiency.

What are the fundamental and essential factors to facilitate and accelerate this shift towards Green Growth? As home to some of the world’s fastest growing economies, one of the most important issues for the region’s policy makers to consider is that of sustainable infrastructure. New innovations and the incorporation of eco-efficient principles into the infrastructure development process play a critical role in improving environmental sustainability.

SEOUL INITIATIVE ON GREEN GROWTH

The Seoul Initiative on Green Growth was proposed by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2005 (MCED 2005) and endorsed by the 61st Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), held in May 2005. The Seoul Initiative provides a regional cooperation framework for Green Growth, taking into account the economic, social, cultural, and geographical features of the region. It also provides a framework for policy consultations, capacity-building, and networking for the promotion of Green Growth at the regional level. The Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth (SINGG), with countries in the Asia-Pacific region as its members, facilitates the implementation of the Seoul Initiative and its activities to create synergies between economic growth and environmental sustainability, and to contribute to the achievement of an economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable future for Asia and the Pacific.

SINGG focuses on the following three targets: (1) improving environmental sustainability; (2) enhancing environmental performance; and (3) promoting environmental sustainability as an opportunity for economic growth and development. To achieve these targets, the Network focuses on the following four activities: (1) establishing and supporting an action-based network; (2) promoting policy consultation for Green Growth; (3) enhancing members’ capacities to pursue Green Growth; and (4) conducting pilot projects to disseminate the Green Growth approach.

FIRST POLICY FORUM OF THE SEOUL INITIATIVE

In support of these activities, ESCAP and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, in cooperation with the Korea Environment Institute, held the First Policy Forum of the Seoul Initiative from 6 to 8 September 2006, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It was jointly organized with the generous funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea. The Forum brought together approximately

100 experts, policy makers, researchers, and other stakeholders to discuss systematic, integrated approaches to promoting sustainable infrastructure.

Participants shared their wealth of knowledge and experiences from across the region, and reviewed various options and policies to promote eco-efficient and environmentally sustainable infrastructure development. This included topics such as environmental law, institutions, and governance. They also discussed a range of economic instruments that support sustainable infrastructure development. One of the key recommendations was to deliver the messages from the Policy Forum to a broader audience of decision makers and stakeholders who are involved in infrastructure development. This publication aims to contribute to increased understanding of these issues by including several of the papers on sustainable infrastructure in a range of sectors, as well as describing examples of civil society participation in the decision making process.

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The members of SINGG recommended that a regional overview of the current state of sustainable infrastructure in Asia would help policy makers identify the challenges and opportunities for Green Growth in their countries. ESCAP conducted research for the “Regional Study on Sustainable Infrastructure Development in Asia”, included in Part I of this publication, to provide an overview of regional experiences and to point out the good practices that have the potential to be implemented in other locales. The second part of this publication includes the proceedings of the Seoul Initiative Policy Forum on Sustainable Infrastructure: participants’ papers, the agenda, and the meeting report. Parts I and II discuss water, waste management, and transport infrastructure, while Part II also includes two papers on energy infrastructure.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN ASIA

Many Asian countries recognize the need to rethink infrastructure development, taking into account eco-efficiency and resource conservation over the lifetime of the infrastructure. It is hoped that this SINGG, through its members and collaborating organizations such as ESCAP, can help to broaden the dialogue on sustainable infrastructure and the promising actions that may be taken in Asia. This can provide a basis for future discussions on policy guidelines for incorporating the Green Growth approach and eco-efficiency concept into the infrastructure development system, for example through financing mechanisms and innovative partnerships. Achieving this is vital not only for environmental sustainability, but also for sustainable economic growth.

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¹ The original manuscript of Part I was prepared by Dr. Vilas Nitivattananon and Dr. Shinya Hanaoka, the Asian Institute of Technology.

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