

Seventh APN Scientific Planning Group Meeting

18-19 March 2002, Manila, Philippines

Summary Report from Co-Chairpersons Dr. Subramaniam Moten and Dr. Graeme Pearman

The SPG meeting was attended by experts and members from Australia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao P.D.R., Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, USA, Vietnam, SARCS, SASCOM, START Oceania, TEACOM, the International START Secretariat and observers from IAI and the Philippines. The list of participants is given [here](#).

1. Opening

The APN Secretariat Director, Dr. Ryutaro Yatsu, opened the meeting by inviting Honourable Rogelio A. Panlasigui to offer some welcoming remarks. Dr. Panlasigui, Undersecretary for Research & Development, Department of Science & Technology, Philippines, welcomed participants and emphasised that the Philippines commends and supports the work of the APN in global change research and other related issues. Dr. Yatsu expressed sincere gratitude to the Philippines for hosting the meeting and for their organisation and hospitality.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. Review of Activities in 2001/2002

The APN Secretariat gave a review of the year's achievements. Since the 6th IGM the draft APN recognition document has been prepared and will be presented at the 7th IGM. The second year of the Networking and Capacity Building programme was completed. One symposium and two workshops were held in Kobe. The Environmental Management of Coastal Seas 2001 (Asian Forum) conference was held, as was a vegetation recovery workshop, Asia-Pacific Environmental Innovation Strategy Workshop and a biodiversity training course. An APN awareness-raising workshop was also held in the Republic of Korea.

APN entered discussions with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme concerning the possibility of APN membership of Pacific Island Countries. It was also

reported that Viet Nam had appointed an SPG member and that missions have been made to Australia, China, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam.

The SPG recommended that the APN create a web page within the APN website with links to publications that derived from APN funded activities.

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A summary of the 2001/2002 funded projects was distributed. The SPG emphasised the need in reviewing project reports, of some method of assessing the outcomes and success of the investments made despite the recognised time constraints and APN Secretariat resource limitations. It was, however, noted that there is a need to gauge the success of APN projects and distribute project outcomes.

The Liaison Officer (APN supporting officer in START regional centres) Reports were also issued.

4. Proposals Process

The Secretariat reported on the pre-proposal and full proposal stages in the assessment of 2001 proposals and the recommendations for confirmation of multi-year projects. A total of 99 pre-proposals were submitted in the June 2001 pre-proposals round. The SPG suggested that the Secretariat investigate the success of this stage.

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The Secretariat received 78 full proposals in the September 2001 proposals round. In the rapid assessment stage 4 proposals were considered "non-suitable" and rejected. The remaining 74 proposals proceeded to the first stage of the review process by the SPG. Of these, 32 proposals advanced to the final stage of the proposals process. It was noted that the number of developing countries involved in APN proposals has increased, which is a positive trend, but there is still a need to encourage more project leaders from developing countries although there is evidence of a positive trend here too.

Concern was raised by the Small Group at the high number of multi-year projects that the APN are already committed to, and the need to establish guidelines. It was reported that the Small Group had recommended restricting the number of multi-year projects to be considered for funding to 20-30% of the total funded activities budget.

The Secretariat is to modify the "Call for Proposals - Guide for Proponents" to include: "Proponents should be aware that although APN will consider multi-year projects (maximum 3 years), due to budgetary concerns only a limited number of multi-year projects may be funded. Continued funding will not be guaranteed and these proposals will be subject to rigorous review."

The Secretariat presented the revised APN Conflict of Interest Policy. This was accepted by the SPG with minor modifications and is included in this summary report [here](#).

The proposals review system and in particular options to reduce the burden on reviewers was discussed. The SPG recommended that:

1. The pre-proposals stage remains unchanged.
2. The Small Group continue to conduct the Rapid Assessment Stage as before but proponents would be requested to complete an additional page to the existing one-page cover sheet providing a summary of proposal methodologies, the proposed mode of operation of the project team, and an extended description of outputs and timelines. The possibility of reviewers intervening and merging some projects with potential and even providing seed money to develop a stronger proposal for the following year will be explored. The intention is to strengthen the intervention at this stage to assist proponents to overcome shortcomings of their proposals and to encourage more proponents to resubmit as full proposals.
3. Continue with current first stage assessment but target SPG members to review proposals in their fields of expertise. The Secretariat will contact SPG members and identify their fields of expertise.
4. Second assessment stage as before but with a maximum of ten reviewers (flexible) per proposal.

The SPG recommended that the proposed system be implemented this year.

Action Secretariat, Small Group and SPG

5. APN Networking and Capacity Building Programme

The Secretariat reviewed the two-year trial period (2000-2002) and the SPG acknowledged that the programme had generated a lot of interest and was considered very successful.

The following possible future directions were agreed upon:

1. Continue workshops in the same targeted countries in Indochina and South Asia.
2. Partially fund scoping workshops or proposals submitted to APN using networking and capacity building funds.
3. Hold awareness raising symposia in IGM/SPG host countries between SPG and IGM meetings.
4. Consider providing seed money from the network and capacity building fund to proponents of similar proposals with potential who received a low

proposal rating to hold a meeting and develop a stronger proposal to be submitted in the next call for proposals.

5. Hold a regional meeting for North East Asia to be convened in Russia.
6. Hold a joint START/APN workshop in Central Asia and allow participating country scientists to submit proposals to APN.
7. Hold a joint APN/IAI workshop.

6. 2002/2003 APN Funded Activities

The Secretariat Director announced that the total budget available for APN funded activities would be approximately US \$963,000 in the next fiscal year. The budget includes networking and capacity building funds and a contingency fund.

Dr. Pearman, as SPG Co-Chair, explained the rationale behind the Small Group recommendations. The SPG rating for scientific excellence and average score were used as the main basis for the funding recommendations. Additional factors included budgetary aspects, the number of high scores, number of workshops and meetings proposed, regional and thematic distribution.

The Small Group also presented to the SPG for their approval recommendations, based on progress reports submitted, regarding the multi-year projects for which funding should be continued.

Several procedural considerations were raised:

1. The SPG recommended that the Secretariat check to see if procedures exist for determining if a project leader has secured the stated additional funds. If no such system exists, such a procedure needs to be established.

Action Secretariat

2. Reviewer guidelines are to be revised allowing for a ten-point rating scale.
3. The SPG suggested that, in writing a proposal, proponents should clearly explain the scientific contribution of each participating country.

After detailed discussions on the proposals and multi-year projects requesting continuation, the Small Group recommendations were approved by the SPG for presentation at the IGM. The recommendations are 13 new projects (9 one-year and 4 multi-year) and 5 continuing multi-year projects. This brings the total number of projects recommended for funding to 18. In addition, the Secretariat is to seek the possibility of merging one of the recommended new projects (p51) with a current multi-year project (2001-17) with the aim of not only economising on the joint budget but also to improve the scientific outcomes.

7. New APN Activities

The Secretariat introduced three new activities, the Asia Pacific Environmental Innovation Strategy, Vegetation Recovery Workshop and an APN "White Paper". The first two activities were accepted. The Secretariat was strongly advised to inform the Steering Committee meeting and SPG members of other new activities well in advance.

The SPG, with support from the Small Group, recommended the Secretariat to proceed with producing an annual report (and not call it a white paper) using existing publications of the APN, including a special edition of the newsletter, focussing on sound scientific products as well as performance indicators of the APN. The SPG recommended that an adhoc committee be set up to assist the Secretariat to ensure the language of the report is matched to the target audience, such as policy-makers and the general public.

A synthesis seminar will take place in Kobe in 2002 with a "Land-Use Cover Change" theme. The SPG agreed that a synthesis seminar should take place annually with location and theme changing each year.

Action Secretariat and Small Group

8. Election of New Co-Chair

Dr. Subramaniam Moten explained that a new Co-Chair from a developed country has to be elected since, according to APN procedures, Dr. Graeme Pearman's two-year term is now at an end. Dr. Pearman proposed Dr. Andrew Matthews of New Zealand as his successor, outlining his extensive scientific knowledge and active involvement in the APN, which makes him an ideal candidate for the post. The nomination was seconded by Dr. Amir Muhammed, strongly supported by the SPG members, and accepted by Dr. Matthews.

9. Any Other Business

- The Secretariat discussed the per diem rates and pointed out that there were no changes from previous years. Dr. Moten also pointed out that these rates were recommended by the Focal Points of the respective countries listed. The SPG recommended, however, that the per diem rates for Australia and New Zealand be reduced by about 20%. The SPG recommended that the Secretariat change the wording of the APN per diem guidelines to make it clear that all participants are expected to seek lower rates than cited in the per diem table. This revised document is to be presented at the 7th IGM.

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- As the 10th anniversary of the APN approaches (2005) it is important to take action, for example, evaluate the APN scientific activities since its establishment. As the new APN Strategic Plan will be implemented in the same year, this could be a joint undertaking.

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- The Secretariat elaborated on progress made concerning membership of Pacific Island Countries. The SPG felt that it would be useful from a scientific perspective that the Secretariat approach Pacific Island Countries and Singapore concerning membership. It was, however, acknowledged that such matters fall under IGM jurisdiction.
- The Secretariat to develop and distribute a template and cover sheet for project reports to promote the character of APN.

Action Secretariat

10. Science Presentations

Science presentations were made by:

- Dr. Gerhard Breulmann, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI). "About IAI."
- Dr. Rodel D. Lasco, University of the Philippines. "Carbon Budgets of Forest Ecosystems in Southeast Asia."
- Dr. Kanayathu Koshy, Director, Pacific Center for Environment and Sustainable Development. "Climate Change Impact, Vulnerability and Adaptation Options for Pacific Island Countries."

11. Closing

Dr. Moten, as SPG Co-Chair, thanked SPG members, the Secretariat and the Filipino Government for their contributions. The Secretariat Director expressed his sincere appreciation to SPG members and Co-Chairs for their active discussions and constructive suggestions. The Director also thanked the Filipino Government for hosting the meeting this year. Dr. Dung Le, the Vietnamese SPG member, informed participants of the Ministry of the Environment of Viet Nam's willingness to host the 8th Inter-Governmental Meeting and Scientific Planning Group Meeting in Hanoi in March 2003. Finally, the Secretariat Director expressed sincere gratitude for Dr. Pearman's excellent leadership and crucial role in all APN activities and looks forward to his continuing support.

