

Chairperson's Summary

Third Inter-Governmental Meeting of the The Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN)

March 11-13, 1998, Beijing, China

Summary Report from the Chairperson, Mr. Liu Yanhua and Vice Chairpersons, Mr. Kazunobu Onogawa, Mr. Aca Sugandhy

This Meeting was attended by representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, the United States of America, and observers from [ENRICH](#), [SARCS](#), [SASCOM](#), START Oceania, [TEACOM](#), the International [START](#) Secretariat, and by a Co-Chair of the APN Scientific Planning Group.

1. Opening

Welcome and opening remarks were given by Mme. Nan Deng, Vice Minister of the State Science and Technology Commission of China. The Vice Minister pointed out that the information provided to governments from global change research efforts was the only way to react appropriately to global change issues. This was evident from the Third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto in December 1997. China will continue to contribute to this research effort and has already invested heavily in a wide range of global change research activities. This will contribute to its development and implementation of sustainable development strategies. China has very good cooperation with other countries on a bilateral and multilateral basis in global change research. She expressed the hope that the APN can help strengthen collaboration on global change research in the APN countries.

The Director of the APN Secretariat reinforced the need for international consensus about global change issues and that the APN play an important role in achieving this in the region. Because the APN was still relatively new it still suffered from the lack of funds although there was recognition of the great need for increased effort on global change issues in this region. He said that everyone should contribute ideas for making the APN more effective.

2. Election of Officers

Mr. Liu Yanhua from China was elected as Chairperson. Mr. Aca Sugandhy of Indonesia and Mr. Kazunobu Onogawa of Japan were elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

4. Presentation on the APN and its Role

The Director of the APN Secretariat made a presentation on the APN and its role. He emphasized the expectation that the APN should undertake much broader activities than those already supported. This was evident from comparing the activities so far undertaken with the list of aims and objectives. These needs have continued to increase, as illustrated by the Kyoto Conference.

5. Science Presentations

Prof. Congbin Fu made a presentation using the Regional Climate Models project to show how the impact assessment of climate change can be improved. By using Asia as an example, he indicated that the confidence of current Global Climate Models in projecting regional climate remains low. More work still had to be done before they were useful for decision makers. In particular, there was a need for emphasis on the relationship between climate and vegetation and between climate and aerosols in Asia. The main progress in the START/TEACOM/APN Regional Climate Model project so far had been the development of a concept of the "general monsoon system". Researchers had concentrated on the physical elements of the system, but it was increasingly evident that the main issue is anthropogenic forcing from land use and land cover change and emissions. Nonetheless, the work to date was already leading to improvements in the capacity to deal with climate change issues.

Dr. Graeme Pearman made a presentation illustrating the interaction of science, enterprise, and government. He said that a major role of science should be to contribute to the formulation and implementation of government and private decision making. This was still hard to achieve as the cultures involved in science, enterprise and government are quite different, leading to many communication difficulties and misunderstandings. The only way to solve global change issues, however, would be from joint effort by these separate cultures.

In the discussion following these presentations the Co-Chair of the SPG, Prof. Higuchi, reported briefly on the OECD Mega Science Forum Workshop on science-policy interaction in Stockholm, Sweden. One element of the discussion was the need for collaboration between OECD and non-OECD countries and the potential value of the APN for this was mentioned at the workshop.

6. Information and Networking

The Secretariat reported on the APN Newsletter and APN Internet homepage, and drew

attention to the reports of the APN Liaison Officers in SASCOM and TEACOM. The report included a reminder about the significance of more effective use of databases (an issue that had arisen in many APN discussions). The meeting was reminded that at the SPG meeting in Canberra in January 1998 there had been suggestions for holding a Global Change Forum, increasing contacts with media interests including through a workshop, and for holding global change science-policy workshops in individual countries, and that follow-up on the past APN work on inventories of research in the region might be useful.

In discussion on this report it was suggested that the APN could have a role in providing access to databases and increasing avenues for communication among scientists. This would be relevant in the context of homepage development. There was an opportunity to make the whole system more rational from a users point of view, noting that this might require making effective use of the current explosion of fiber optics and World Wide Web development. For example, it may be possible through these means to provide much needed access by all to the rapidly increasing volume of scientific literature.

There was a recognition that greater value might be achieved from the information and networking capacity of the APN system if countries were able to nominate agencies as focal points to provide continuity and a relationship with APN Liaison Officers as well as with the APN Secretariat and other APN interests.

7. Report from the Scientific Planning Group

The Co-Chair of the Scientific Planning Group introduced the Summary Report from the Co-Chairpersons of the SPG of the meeting in Canberra in January 1998. He referred to reports of APN-related scientific activities of the past year, and the proposals received for the next year. The Meeting endorsed the Co-Chairpersons' Report of the SPG.

In considering this report several representatives referred to the need to increase public awareness and that the APN could concentrate on this. As an example, it was mentioned that increasingly the reduction of emissions depends on the action by the public, for example, motorists, and that many policy makers would benefit from the same kind of awareness raising as the rest of the public. There is a need to achieve a proper integration of global change issues and education systems. Some suggestions about future action were:

- promote cooperation with the science and technology museum networks, for example at the Conference of the Asia-Pacific Science and Technology Centres in Beijing in September 1998, and a similar World Congress of Science Museums in Calcutta in January 1999
- use the APN newsletter to cover research outcomes in the region in a way that is usable for decision makers

- executive summaries of outcomes of APN activities should be prepared for review at the IGM
- establish better links with the media, including through media workshops of the kind suggested at the SPG meeting in January 1998, for example, in association with the Open Meeting on human dimensions ,and [IGBP](#) events, and
- provide a wide range of material in different media where there is an established need, for example in many Pacific island countries.

8. Financial Report and Budget

The Director presented a financial report for the past year and proposed a budget for the next year. The report and budget were endorsed by the Meeting. The Chairperson pointed out that APN funding should be seen as only seed money to facilitate collaboration and development of regional outcomes and that increasingly there was need to build up a broader picture of the combined effect of this plus the national contributions involved in APN related activities.

There was recognition that with the increasing growth and success of APN activities there was a need to refine the processes, for example, to ensure clarity about whether or not particular proposals or activities involved a time frame or commitments beyond one year, and to ensure satisfactory reporting of the outcomes from APN activities on a year-by-year basis.

9. Consideration of 1998/99 Project Proposals

The recommendations of the January SPG meeting regarding funding for APN projects were explained by the Secretariat. The Meeting approved the recommendations.

It was reinforced in discussing the report that in some cases the SPG had made positive suggestions about linkage of proposals with other proposals to be funded even though they were not being recommended for separate funding. There were others for which there was a sympathetic response at the SPG but because they did not meet the specific criteria as well as others, the SPG had not been able to recommend that they receive financial support in the competitive process. The IGM agreed that some of these cases could be considered by the Secretariat for application of contingency funds as exceptional in the light of views expressed by the IGM. A desire for continuing support for the [GAME](#) activity was also raised. The Director mentioned the use of the APN contingency fund for GAME if necessary to ensure that no serious gaps arise in the collecting of data. The Meeting approved this proposal.

10. 11. 12. General APN Business

It was agreed that the meeting divide into two working groups, one to consider the

papers on APN Procedures and Criteria for Selection of Funded Activities and APN Organizational Arrangements and Procedures, and the other to consider the paper on Financial Guidelines for APN Activities. These working groups prepared reports for the Meeting's consideration.

13. Overall Discussion

Following consideration of the reports from the working groups, the documents on APN Procedures and Criteria for Selection of Funded Activities, APN Organizational Arrangements and Procedures, and Financial Guidelines for APN Activities at Appendixes to this Summary were approved by the Meeting.

In approving the changes to APN Procedures and Criteria for Selection of Funded Activities, the meeting agreed on: the proposal process; eleven criteria and their weighting for selecting the proposals, and the Appendixes to the paper on Decision Making Flow for APN Supported Research Program, and Format for Proposals.

In the future the refinement of the eleven criteria and their weighting will be kept under review as more experience is gained. The IGM meeting will ask for the advice of the SPG for any refinement needed in the future.

The observer from ENRICH offered to arrange detailed discussions with the APN so that they could share their experiences and learn from each other and be in a better position to become involved in collaboration.

In approving the changes to APN Organizational Arrangements and Procedures, the Meeting agreed that the SPG should be asked to consider the ways in which the APN might ensure proper evaluation and reporting about projects funded by the APN. In doing this, the SPG should consider the implications of activities or proposals with budget implications going beyond one year.

In consideration of the APN Organizational Arrangements and Procedures, there was some discussion about membership expansion of the SPG arising from the establishment of START Oceania. The Director of the International START Secretariat advised that there would be no new START groups in the region, as complete coverage had now been achieved.

It was noted that the Secretariat would continue development of the APN financial management systems so that they would meet all the needs of APN interests that contribute to APN activities. The Secretariat also took under notice a number of points of detail about the terms of agreements with proponents and acquittal and accounting processes, with a view to modifying the project management process as necessary to accommodate them.

A need for auditing of APN expenditures was raised. It was agreed that such auditing will be conducted for the next IGM.

14. Future Directions of APN

The Chair of the START Oceania Regional Committee made a presentation on the establishment of the START Oceania network. This network has extensive geographic coverage in the north and south Pacific, including Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. The Secretariat is located in the University of the South Pacific which is a truly regional institution as it belongs to 12 Pacific countries and has campuses or extension centres in all of them. Because of the development process leading to the START Oceania establishment and because of the considerable work done in many forums about priorities for action in the Pacific, there is a good foundation for generating effective action quite quickly. Initial focus will be on global warming and coastal issues.

The Meeting welcomed the addition of START Oceania to the APN network, noting that there were many common issues right across the Asia-Pacific region.

The Director of the Secretariat introduced the paper on Future Directions of APN, indicating that it would be helpful if the Meeting could reach conclusions on several issues, including priority areas for the APN over the next year and for the medium to long term, on possible future action on information and data activities, and on the nature and range of partnership activities to be pursued. It was explained that the material on possible country contributions to the APN had been included as a first step in helping representatives raise this important issue for future consideration.

Many representatives thanked the Secretariat for the constructive way it had ensured progress with APN development over the last few years, and the help it had provided to members to allow them to participate in APN activities. They appreciated that the time had come to consider and reach some conclusions on where the APN should go from here, and that this raised resourcing issues. It was clear from discussion that the progress so far and the indications of further development should help generate an appropriate level of commitment in member countries.

The representative from the United States advised that requests could be considered to support the participation in APN activities by scientists from the United States where this would make a substantial contribution to those activities. It was noted that all the APN countries could look at the possibility of enhancing APN activities in a similar way.

Several representatives elaborated on the desirability of instituting a strategic planning process to help the APN determine a possible approach to its activities for the next five years or so. This would help clarify thinking on the most productive role for the APN (for example as a brokering point for science-policy interaction), help countries consider how best they could contribute to APN's development and provide a satisfactory basis for dealing with outside funding agencies.

It was recognized that to do this well would require preparation of a range of background documentation on matters such as the state of global change research activities in the region, indications of uncertainties or knowledge gaps relevant to decision making processes and international activities related to those of the APN. There would also be a need to establish a process to ensure continuing effective work, for example by using the SPG.

Other points which had broad support during discussion of these proposals and the issues in the Future Directions paper were:

- the pattern of activity already evident in APN development was confirmed
- priority should be given in 1998-1999 for: - climate change work, particularly relating to the outcomes of the Kyoto Conference and to the question of how developing countries can respond to global warming issues; - and for human dimensions and global environmental change to support the proposed Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community to be held in 1999 in Japan
- priority should be given in the medium to long term (i.e. from 1999) for climate change issues, science-policy links, and coastal processes and oceans
- priority should also be given to support for START Oceania activities
- some topics on which there had been little APN work, for example biodiversity, would need to be taken up as part of the agreed priorities
- continuing high priority is needed for capacity building
- continuing consideration is needed, as priorities and resources permit, of the suggestions from the SPG meeting in January 1998 of the information, networking and data management activities
- preparation of proposals is needed on improving data collection and management, including data quality and communication issues
- for the time being, the best approach to partnerships would be the deepening and strengthening of the relationship with the START system and with ENRICH and [IAI](#), and that
- representatives should stimulate thinking in their countries about increasing country commitment and in-kind or financial contributions for the APN and its activities.

The Meeting confirmed that a strategic planning process should be put in place quickly with a view to a report to the next IGM. The Director advised that the strategic planning process can be pursued within existing resources. It was agreed that the small group involved in the project proposal selection process would be an appropriate steering group for this. The process would involve continuing interaction with countries and others with an interest in the APN.

It was also agreed that the group should cover issues such as overall science direction, science-policy links, public awareness issues, communications, financial base of the APN, and any other matters that members raise for consideration.

The representative from the United States advised that it may be possible to share in funding an APN sponsored workshop on data management issues sometime in 1999.

15. Other Business

The need for a representative from an international global change organization for the small group to assist the SPG was raised. The proposal from the Co-Chair of the SPG that Professor Fuchs, Director of the International START Secretariat be the representative was accepted.

The possibility of establishing an award system to recognize scientific achievement was discussed. The Secretariat advised that this idea could be further explored over the coming year, and asked that more details be provided by interested members. This issue will be on the agenda for the next IGM.

The desirability of reconfirming the country focal points and distributing the list to facilitate communication among them was accepted. The longer term intention is to develop an inventory of researchers in the region as well as to assist APN members.

The Co-Chair of the SPG raised the need for more discussion on data collection and management problems. As an example, data on human dimensions elements needed for integrated assessment work was usually hard to get. Members shared this concern, mentioning problems of comparability that can inhibit or prevent merging of data and of a tendency to understate data management needs in funding proposals. At the same time, there were some positive development, for example to meet the requirements of processes under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and in the GAME work. START has been producing CD-ROM datasets for its projects and has asked IGBP-DIS to concentrate its future efforts on regional and global datasets.

The desirability of the Secretariat preparing a short paper on the data collection and management issues was confirmed. It should cover the many aspects involved, including data standardization and comparability, data archiving and management, and improving access to existing databanks and sources. The Secretariat undertook to do this, and report to the next IGM on possible further action. The observer from ENRICH offered to share their experience in seeking to deal with similar issues. IAI also has relevant experience. A joint workshop may be useful.

It was agreed that an issue for the APN is to discuss and agree on what its role should be in respect of data collection and management. There would be a need to be selective if a role in relation to datasets is envisaged. It was noted that START has some experience that can be drawn on, and there are other relevant activities underway, for example by IGBP-DIS.

The representative from Pakistan indicated his country's appreciation of the opportunity

to be involved in APN activities and said that without making any financial commitment at this juncture, a proposal on the possibility of financial support would be made when the outcome of this Meeting was available.

16. Chairperson's Summary

The Meeting endorsed the Chairperson's Summary.

17. Next Meeting

The Meeting accepted with appreciation the offer from Japan to host the next Inter-Governmental Meeting in March 1999.

The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of China for the excellent meeting arrangements and hospitality it had provided, and thanked the Secretariat for its continuously helpful and competent support for the Meeting, and for its support for APN expansion reflected in the attendance at this Meeting.