

Third APN Scientific Planning Group Meeting

19-21 January 1998, Canberra, Australia

Summary Report from Co-Chairpersons Prof. Aprilani Soegiarto, Prof. Keiji Higuchi

The Meeting was attended by representatives from Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, [SARCS](#), [SASCOM](#), [TEACOM](#), and the International [START](#) Secretariat and by observers from the [IGBP](#), [WCRP](#) and the National Institute for Environment Studies of Japan.

1. Opening

Opening remarks were given by Mr. Yuki Mori, Director of the APN Secretariat and welcome remarks by Dr. Peter Bridgewater, the Chief Science Adviser from Environment Australia.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. Review of Project Activities of 1997/1998

Written reports were available to the Meeting on most of the APN activities in 1997/1998. In addition, oral reports were given on these activities as follows:

1. Human Dimensions Related Activities
 - IIASA Open Meeting - Dr. Nishioka
 - Eco-Consciousness Workshop - Dr. Nishioka
 - Training Workshop for AIM (Asia-Pacific Integrated Model) - Mr. Unisuga

During the discussion Prof. Fuchs reported on development of a proposal to the Global Environment Facility for strengthening the integrated assessment modeling effort that if successful would involve the AIM activity in the region. Dr. Manton reminded the Meeting that care needed to be taken in the handling of the many remaining unresolved research questions involved. There was general support for further collaborative development of the integrated assessment

modeling effort, and for that purpose of the need for ensuring free exchange of data.

2. Land Use and Land Cover Change Related Activities

- LUTEA Support - Prof. Fu
- IGU/LUCC Support - Mr. Toyama

There was agreement that the APN role in database development was to facilitate rather than to hold large databases. The APN Homepage should be able to be used effectively for this purpose.

3. Workshops

- Asian monsoon and rice research workshop - Mr. Toyama
- Regional climate workshop and capacity building - Prof. Fu
- Aerosol, Biomass Burning, Precipitation, Measurement and Modeling - Prof. Mitra

There was recognition that scoping activity was necessary to link the various aerosols initiatives and develop a program based on priorities. It was pointed out that there was already much data available that could be used in this context, and that the significance of the issue had been reinforced for members due to severe fire problems in southeast Asia in the last year.

4. Other Activities

- Northern Eurasia Study (NES) support - Ms. Watanabe
- [GAME](#) support - Ms. Watanabe
- Participation in Pacific Science Inter-Congress in Fiji - Mr. Unisuga
- START-Oceania Consultation (Fiji) - Prof. Fuchs
- Workshop-Greenhouse Gases - Aerosols - LUCC - Mr. Quinn
- 3rd SPREP Climate Change/Sea Level Rise (Noumea) - Mr. Quinn

It was noted that the "START-WCRP-IGBP/GCTE Workshop on Climate Variability, Agricultural Productivity and Food Security in the Asian Monsoon Region" held in February 1997 in Bogor, Indonesia and the "Planning Meeting on the Application of Climate Forecasts in the Asia-Pacific Region" was held in Bali, Indonesia in the following week (sponsored by NOAA and other organizations) on climate issues, and that these had led to the development of various projects that had START, APN and other support.

4. Review of Secretariat Activities of 1997/1998

- Liaison Officer Report (TEACOM) - Prof. Fu
- Liaison Officer Report (SASCOM) - Prof. Mitra
- Procedures and Criteria for Selection on Funded Activities - the Director
- APN Organizational Arrangements and Procedures - the Director

The Procedures have been introduced only during the last year and no doubt will be reviewed in the light of experience gained. There were several possible changes raised:

- the inclusion in the documents of a clearer introduction about the APN,
- a specific reference to the WCRP, IGBP, and [IHDP](#) to recognize their special place in APN activities,
- the possible need to ensure that all APN priorities are accommodated in APN activities (one suggestion was that coastal issues require emphasis now), and
- the desirability of relating much of the APN work more closely to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) processes.

The Secretariat agreed to maintain and disseminate an up-to-date list of Scientific Planning Group (SPG) members. This would be included on the APN Homepage.

5. Overall Discussion of APN Activities

There was discussion about how membership arrangements are made, directed at achieving the best results in terms of achieving good research outcomes as well as generating country commitments. It was also emphasized that the role of the Secretariat in this would include increasing as much as possible the extent of networking. It was pointed out that in several countries national global change research committees involve the right kinds of connections. In some countries the arrangement of representation can be difficult if the type and level of representation expected is not made fairly clear.

Regardless of mechanisms used in different cases, there was agreement that members should ensure that they arrange effective reporting within their own countries about APN activities.

6. Consideration of 1998/1999 Scientific Program

The Director introduced the results of SPG members' consideration of the project proposals. The Director pointed out that it was expected that total budget available for project proposals and related activities would be the same as last year or in US dollar terms a little lower - about 62 million yen or 0.5 million dollars. START had received 250,000 from the US Global Change Research Program ([USGCRP](#)) for collaborative activities with the APN.

After intensive discussion the Meeting agreed that a small group should address the results and report back on the project proposals to provide a simpler basis for the Meeting to decide which it should support.

The small working group subsequently reported to the Meeting on the basis of the table "Consideration of Funding for APN Projects - Small Working Group Report" at

Attachment 2. The groupings in the table were a straightforward translation of the rankings given by SPG members. As the funds requested far exceeded those available from APN and START sources, the group included proposals for possible APN allocations, and START contributions. They had used some simple formulas to achieve consistency, such as no more than 60,000 dollars total for a workshop activity.

The small working group had dealt with the aerosol proposals as a single group, recognizing that a better definition would be given to what the APN should support here after the "Aerosol, Biomass Burning, Precipitation, Measurement and Modeling" workshop to be held in March 1998 in New Delhi. The Meeting noted that the organizers of the workshop are ensuring that it is an Asia-wide scoping exercise.

The Meeting endorsed the group conclusions. It recognized that at this stage these amounts were indicative only. The Meeting accepted the group conclusion that reductions in the amounts sought were inevitable if a reasonably wide coverage of activities was to be achieved. In accordance with the Procedures, the Secretariat would now need to inform project proponents so that final proposals could be developed for consideration by the APN Inter-Governmental Meeting (IGM). This could lead to modification of some proposals. This could also lead to some relatively minor increases or decreases in some cases and to recommendations for applying any surplus funds to projects in the list or to other APN research oriented activities. It was noted that about 50,000 dollars of the unallocated project proposal funds may be available for this.

There was considerable discussion about possible ways to modify the process for developing and selecting proposals for APN funding, as follows:

- introducing the small ad hoc group process so that assessments are prepared before SPG meetings,
- the need to review the guidelines for preparation of proposals, including the possible use of more prescriptive forms for applications based on those used by other organizations,
- greater conscious involvement of the regional START networks,
- the need to develop funding guidelines as provided for in the procedures (the Secretariat undertook to do so),
- further development of scaling and ranking techniques, including weighting the selection criteria,
- notifying the APN network of APN priority areas receiving less attention in funding proposals (oceans were mentioned),
- the desirability of changing the deadlines in the process so that there is more time to write proposals and to ensure that responses SPG members can be adequately considered in the process,
- the need to seek ways to increase the funds available for research program activities,
- the use of planning and scoping activities should be encouraged, and
- facilitating groups of countries preparing projects, following scoping exercises.

Many of the suggestions took account of the difficulty of arranging a Steering Group meeting as required in the decision-making flow included in the Procedures.

In recognizing that some flexibility needed to be retained to accommodate new and emerging issues, requiring timely action but not yet the subject of developed proposals, the Meeting agreed that the establishment of contingency funds should be considered at the IGM. The need for such funds is obvious in relation to APN's response to the Global Change Forum idea, collaborative activities with [ENRICH](#), IRI and others on climate related issues, and activities recognizing the International Year of the Oceans in 1998.

7. Consideration of Future Directions for APN

There was wide-ranging discussion about issues to be taken into account in considering the future direction of APN activities. The common themes in this discussion were the need to increase support and commitment by the member governments, and to strengthen the APN role in relation to networking and capacity building. Several issues relevant to these themes were canvassed as indicated below.

There were several references to the desirability of reviewing and further developing APN publications in the context of establishing and enhancing networks. These included further work on the APN Homepage, and APN Newsletter, and the need for other publications that reported on APN in a way that would be attractive and useful for decision makers and for those with whom the APN wanted to establish contact. It would be essential for the APN to introduce standard practice of using easily understandable summaries or abstracts conveying the major elements of its work or the outcomes of research and other activities fostered by it. Science presentations could also be included in IGMs.

Several members pointed out the need to raise the APN profile in countries in the region as one means of encouraging increased participation in APN activities by more countries. Similarly it was recognized that the time has come to start developing greater interaction with relevant international research, political and funding organizations. This would include inviting their representatives to participate in APN meetings and discussions.

There was further elaboration of members' views about APN priority areas. It was recognized that the current list of priority areas had been based on detailed consideration by APN countries and by the APN. It was equally recognized that there had been more attention paid to some priority areas than to others, and that therefore the IGM should consider whether there was a need for a regular determination of priority areas so that some encouragement or preference could be given to the areas that had been receiving less attention, or that have become more important. It was emphasized that this should not be done so that action on any of the priorities was discouraged, noting that these apparently competing objectives raised issues of

sensitivity and careful management.

Continuing themes in the discussion were the need to continue to relate APN activities to government needs and interests as much as possible, in order to increase the commitment of member country governments and to enhance the effectiveness of APN activities. Part of this issue was the need to continue development of activities that would increase science-policy links in an effective way.

It was considered that more attention to synthesis and analysis work derived from the many research outcomes already available would assist with this, as this tended to produce publicly available products in terms more closely in line with the way the general public and decision makers deal with issues. One way to do this would be to arrange workshops with participation by researchers and decision makers. Another suggestion was to establish project teams consciously involving researchers and decision makers.

Another major issue was the need for using APN activities to increase public awareness and improve the knowledge base about global change issues of particularly interested groups in countries. The idea of arranging workshops in particular countries was favorably received. There was also confirmation of past APN observations about the need to improve data arrangements and to continue development of the APN Homepage and the use of modern media and communication techniques generally for APN purposes. The APN could consider arranging a workshop for media interests, perhaps in association with an IGM.

The outcome of the discussion about the potential size of APN projects and the extent to which they should be based on researcher initiative led to the conclusion that a range of approaches would continue to be the best. The APN has a synergistic or facilitation role.

In all these situations there was clear support for seeking links between the APN and regional political organizations and with other networks with similar interests, such as the Asia-Pacific Network of Science and Technology Centres.

The Director raised for consideration the desirability of modifying APN arrangements so that SPG meetings and IGMs are held back-to-back. This would reduce costs and ensure productive inter-mingling of SPG and IGM members. It should be possible to accommodate the needs of the project selection system under this arrangement.

8. Other business

Professor Fuchs mentioned the continuing progress with the START Oceania development, informing the Meeting about the joint APN/START-Oceania/SARCS meeting to be held immediately after the Meeting.

There was a discussion on the relationship between the APN, START and other organizations. START elements are an important part of the APN program, and the partnership is a good model. It was agreed that the relationship needs continuing development and refinement.

The Meeting agreed that the APN financial base needs broadening, for example by member country contributions. The Meeting suggested that this issue should be considered at the next IGM. There was also a need to emphasize that APN progress to date reinforced the need to develop a strong APN program, to increase cooperation in the region and to increase the support for APN activities.

9. Election of Co-Chairs and Next Meeting

The Director advised that the rules for selecting SPG Co-Chairs do not come into effect until the next IGM. The Meeting accepted with acclamation his suggestion that the current Co-Chairs continue until an election occurs at the next SPG meeting. They expressed their pleasure in accepting the post for this transition period. The SPG members expressed their appreciation for the excellent work the two Co-Chairs had done for the APN.

The Director advised that Indonesia had offered to host the next SPG meeting. The Meeting accepted this offer with sincere appreciation. The date and venue will be advised when they are settled.

Participants expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government of Australia for hosting this meeting and to the Secretariat for its continuing excellent efforts to ensure smooth and productive handling of the Meetings. They also conveyed best wishes to the new Director.