



Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

# Towards a Sustainable Asia-Pacific

## IGES 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Foreword

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing rapid economic growth and extensive urbanisation together with continued population increase. These changes have caused serious depletion of natural resources and the degradation of environmental quality, while at the same time the region is still facing the issue of poverty.

In the face of mounting challenges, the mission of IGES is to conduct strategic and solution-oriented research on policies and practical solutions, and to make the results applicable to the actual policy-making process to support sustainable development, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a formidable task since the region is characterised by diverse climate, topography, eco-systems, cultures and societies, as well as great variance in the level of economic development.

IGES, established in 1998, will have reached its ten-year anniversary in 2008. We would like to take this opportunity and ask ourselves again how strategic policy research for the Asia-Pacific region should be developed, aiming to identify the direction that IGES research should take over the coming decade and beyond.

It is more important than ever for the Asia-Pacific region to play an active part in international efforts to deal with climate change and other critical

environmental issues. IGES hopes to enhance collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders such as national governments, local authorities, businesses, non-governmental organisations and citizens to carry out this challenging task so that it can contribute to the transition towards a sustainable society in the region.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all concerned parties and individuals for their understanding of and cooperation with our research activities.

June 2007



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hironori Hamanaka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Prof. Hironori Hamanaka  
Chair, IGES Board of Directors

# Up to 1998

## Asia and the World

In 1997

Five years after the "Earth Summit", a **UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS)** was held in June and a plan was adopted to further implement **Agenda 21**.

**COP3** was held in Kyoto in December. Developed countries set targets for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and various mechanisms such as emissions trading and the clean development mechanism (CDM) were adopted as part of the "**Kyoto Protocol**". This was seen as a milestone for policy to prevent future global warming.

## IGES Activities

- At **ECO ASIA 96**, held in May 1996, the establishment of IGES through an initiative of the Japanese government was welcomed.



- December 1997 - On the occasion of COP3, the **Charter for the Establishment of IGES** was signed by governments and international organisations in the Asia-Pacific region as well as by international environmental research institutions from various parts of the world.
- March 1998 - **IGES** was established in Hayama, Japan, hosted by the Kanagawa Prefectural Government.

# 1999

## Asia and the World

**ECO ASIA 99** was held in Sapporo, Japan in September focusing on "Climate Change", "Regional Co-operation for Sustainable Development," and "Contributions to Rio+10".

**Recovery from the 1997 East Asian financial crisis** - after the sharp recession triggered by the East Asian financial crisis, several economic indicators showed that 1999 was a year of rebuilding for economies in the whole region.

## IGES Activities

- **IHDP Open Meeting 1999:** IGES co-hosted the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) at IGES Headquarters in June in which a record 300 researchers from 41 countries participated.
- **Open Session at ECO ASIA 99:** Research findings were presented under the theme "Searching for new development methods: Challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st Century".



- **IPCC National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Programme Technical Support Unit (TSU)** was established within IGES in September.
- **The Kitakyushu Office** was established in October with the support of Kitakyushu City.



# 2000

## Asia and the World

At the UN Millennium General Assembly in September, targets for international social achievement were adopted as the **Millennium Development Goals**.

Two important meetings for regional sustainable development - **the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED) and ECO ASIA** were held in Kitakyushu City, Japan in August / September looking towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002.

## IGES Activities

- **Contribution to MCED 2000:** IGES submitted a policy recommendation document entitled "Policy implications in addressing critical environment and sustainable development issues of the region" to MCED 2000.



- **Inauguration of the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment** in September: IGES began providing secretariat support and substantial inputs to the Kitakyushu Initiative Network – a network established under the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment of UNESCAP to facilitate inter-city cooperation on sharing lessons and experiences for environmental management.

- **The International Review for Environmental Strategies (IRES)** inaugural edition was published as an academic journal on research on sustainability issues.



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# 2001

## Asia and the World

**UNFCCC COP7 (Morocco)** in October / November – With the adoption of the "Marrakesh Accords", moves were being made towards ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and global momentum was building to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**The first meeting of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF)** was held in New York in June.

## IGES Activities

- **Contribution to WSSD preparatory process:** IGES submitted a report on the achievement status of Agenda 21 goals in Northeast Asia to the High Level Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in November.
- **Side Event at COP7:** IGES jointly organised the "IGES Climate Policy Dialogue in Asia".



Photo courtesy of IISD / ENB



- **IGES Kansai Research Centre** was established in June for research focusing on "business and the environment". The centre holds international symposia and workshops on the current issues in the field every year.



- **Establishment of APFED:** The Asia-Pacific Forum for Environment and Development (APFED) was officially established in October with the approval of ECO ASIA 2001.

# 2002

## Asia and the World

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), or the Johannesburg Summit, was held in Johannesburg, South Africa in August / September. The conference adopted the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) to clarify the resolutions made by the leader of each member state towards the realisation of sustainable development

## IGES Activities

- **Side Events at WSSD:** IGES conducted four side events at WSSD in cooperation with various organisations, on themes including “Japan’s Challenge for Kyoto Protocol Implementation” and “APFED Recommendations and Commitments: New Partnership Initiatives for Knowledge Networks and Capacity Building”.



- **Completion of the IGES Headquarters building** in June with an innovative design incorporating the latest technology to make maximum use of natural assets including solar energy, light, wind, rainwater and greenery.

# 2003

## Asia and the World

2003 was designated the “International Year of Freshwater” by the United Nations. The 3rd World Water Forum (WWF3) was held in Kyoto, Shiga, and Osaka in Japan in March. WWF3 was the first major international conference exclusively on water for Asia and the Pacific. The event recalled that world leaders agreed to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach, or afford safe drinking water.

## IGES Activities

- **Session at WWF3:** IGES co-organised a session called “Water Quality Monitoring and Modelling – the Present Situation and Partnership in the Future”.
- **The IGES Bangkok Office** was established in May as a focal point for joint research activities in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Publication: People and Forest- Policy and Local Reality in Southeast Asia, Russian Far East, and Japan**



Photo courtesy of IISD / ENB



# 2004

## Asia and the World

Numerous natural disasters in Asia, such as: major floods in Bangladesh and New Zealand, damage from typhoons in Japan and the Philippines, a massive earthquake in the Chuetsu area of Niigata Prefecture, Japan, a devastating earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, and a tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

G8 Summit at Sea Island in June endorsed the 3R Initiative which aims to establish a sustainable society by promoting activities to “reduce, reuse and recycle”.

## IGES Activities

- **IGES CDM Programme**, established in late 2003, began to be implemented in earnest, with various workshops and training sessions to enhance capacity building for people related to CDM projects in each of the countries in Asia.
- **Launch of the new online platform “IGES EnviroScope”**, which provides the latest information on world environment and sustainability issues in real time.



- **International Symposium “Prospective Directions of Sustainable Society – Roles and Possibilities of Industry, Technology and Community”** was held in November in Kobe, Japan, focussing on environmentally sound technology and regional systems, and environmentally sound business models.



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# 2005

## Asia and the World

The **Kyoto Protocol entered into force** in February after seven years of efforts since COP3 was held in Kyoto. The first “COP/MOP” was held in Montreal, Canada in November / December.

The **UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development** began.

The 'Water for Life' Decade was launched on World Water Day, 22 March 2005, by the UN Secretary-General

## IGES Activities



- **IGES launched a series of consultations in Asia on future climate regime** and published the “Asian Perspectives on Climate Regime Beyond 2012: Concerns, Interests and Priorities” which was presented at IGES side event at UNFCCC COP11 and COP/MOP1.

- **Policy Brief newly published:**
  - #001 Networking International Recycling Zones in Asia
  - #002 Information Access as a Vehicle for Sustainable Development in Asia
- **APFED presented its final report at an MCED 2005 side event** in March, which includes more than 100 recommendations for achieving sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region



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# 2006

## Asia and the World

The **Stern Review** stated in October that the costs of dealing with climate change would amount to 1% of global GDP each year but that if no action is taken, the extent of damage might reach 20% of GDP.

At **UNFCCC COP12 and COP/MOP2** held in Nairobi, Kenya in November, there was agreement on starting discussions about the post-2012 climate framework for the realisation of sustainable development

## IGES Activities

- **Contribution to Senior Officials' Meeting on the 3R Initiative** in March and **Asia 3R Conference** in October / November: IGES assisted in the preparation of the issue papers and the Chair's summary.
- **The first issue of the IGES White Paper** presenting a number of broad policy recommendations that promote regional sustainable development.



- **Beijing Office was established** in July, as a centre to further facilitate joint research with China.
- **The first meeting of NetRes**, an Asia-Pacific Network of Research Institutes for environment and sustainable development was held at IGES which is acting as its secretariat.
- **Policy Brief**
  - #003: Combatting Forest Degradation - Certification as a driving force for amelioration
  - #004: Rationalisation of Industrial Sector Water Use is the Key to Sound Groundwater Management
  - #005: Foreign Carbon Credit Purchasing Options Open to Japan to Achieve the Kyoto Target

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# 2007 and beyond

## Asia and the World

The **IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report** concludes that major advances in climate modelling and collection and analysis of data now give scientists "very high confidence" that their understanding of how human activities are causing the world to warm is correct.

At the **G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany** in June, leaders of the main industrialised nations agreed to seek "substantial" cuts in emissions. Whilst no mandatory targets were set, a **50% emissions cut by the year 2050** was included in the agreed statement.

## IGES Activities

Alert and responsive to the emerging needs of the Asia-Pacific region, IGES has started its Integrative Strategic Research Programme in the Fourth Phase (April 2007 to March 2010). By making full use of research outcomes and networks developed through activities over these ten years, IGES conducts strategic research and proposes pragmatic and effective policy recommendations.

Research projects include: Climate Policy, Biofuels, Forest Conservation, Freshwater, Waste and Resources, Business and the Environment, and Capacity Development and Education.



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