**Review and Assessment**

**of the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment**

Draft (as of 28 May 2024)

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1. **Context and Background**

The Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment formerly the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian countries, initiated by fourteen[[1]](#footnote-1) countries in 2007, aims to strengthen cooperation among member countries' environmental and health ministries. It provides a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences, improving policy frameworks, and promoting integrated environmental health strategies. The Forum’s foundational document, the Charter, was adopted in Bangkok on 9 August 2007, setting forth its principles, vision, strategic priorities, and structures. The Forum envisions a development model that safeguards and enhances health and environmental quality while reducing poverty.

The Forum's structure includes the highest policymaking body comprised of environmental and health ministers, designated high-level officials as national communication focal points, and a Secretariat composed of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization. Its principal activities include facilitating information exchange through meetings, conferences, and capacity-building programs through workshops. Since its inception, the Forum has adopted four declarations from ministerial meetings held in Bangkok (2007), Jeju (2010), Kuala Lumpur (2013), and Manila (2016), leading to significant initiatives like the development of National Environmental Health Action Plans (NEHAPs)[[2]](#footnote-2) and preparation of Environmental Health Country Profiles (EHCP) and Environmental Health Data Sheets (EHDS) among member states.

The 2013 Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur introduced a new governance framework “Framework for Cooperation” that replaced the original Charter. In 2016, a Ministerial Meeting in Manila recommended the formation of a task force to revise the governance structure. Ten countries[[3]](#footnote-3) volunteered to participate in the Task Force. The task force through a strategic planning workshop, chaired by the Philippines, met in April 2017 in Manila, the Philippines to strategize on governance enhancement, resource mobilization based on the Implementation Plan 2017-2019, and partnership development, focusing on effective advocacy and operational planning of the Regional Forum.

The Tenth High Level Officials’ Meeting (HLOM) was convened in September 2019 in Manila, the Philippines - to provide recommendations and technical inputs for formal consideration of Ministers at its planned Fifth Ministerial Meeting. First, the meeting reviewed the Forum’s Implementation Plan for 2017-2019 and the progress of the Manila Declaration on Health and Environment. Additionally, it approved recommendations from the Task Force on governance mechanisms for the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment (APRFHE), which included renaming the Regional Forum due to the expanded membership, revising membership and structural arrangements, and reforming the Framework of Cooperation and Thematic Working Groups (TWGs would be closely governed by the APRFHE) for a new five-year workplan. The Government of Indonesia was confirmed as the chair of the APRFHE for the 2020-2024 period, focusing on integrating strategic health and environmental policies into national development to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In November 2023, at the Eleventh HLOM[[4]](#footnote-4) in Jakarta, Indonesia, chaired by the Government of Indonesia, the meeting tackled the strategic focus and operational framework of the APRFHE, including governance, financial sustainability, and monitoring. It also addressed strategic issues, technical areas relevant to the APRFHE, and mechanisms of the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs). Preparations for the Twelfth HLOM and the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in 2024 were discussed, including the APRFHE workplan and the selection process for the next chair.

This paper will present an independent review and assessment of the APRFHE[[5]](#footnote-5) including progress/achievements of APRFHE in relation to the declarations - as input for discussions for the forthcoming Joint Secretariat Meeting and 12th High Level Official Meeting scheduled on 21-22 May 2024 and 24-25 September 2024, respectively - in Jakarta, Indonesia.

1. **Strategic Issues and Technical Areas relevance to the APRFHE**

Health and the environment are critical components of the development 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is integrated into a broader framework that includes the economic, social, and environmental aspects of human well-being and planetary sustainability. Progress in these areas will also enhance health outcomes. Achieving sustainable development related to the Health and Environment nexus necessitates integrated approaches to ensure policy coherence. The Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment (APRFHE) stands out as a key international platform poised to address urgent health and environmental issues.

Despite facing significant challenges, the APRFHE provides a unique platform for actual strategic discussions between the health and environmental sectors. Operational for over 17 years, the Regional Forum benefits from the participation of high-level officials, which facilitates the identification of priorities, decision-making, and responses on the ground. It also enhances the political profile of climate change, health, and environmental issues, stimulate international collaboration, promotes exchanges of best practices, encourages closer ties between science and policy, and showcases the added value of APRFHE.

To enhance its effectiveness and responsiveness to environmental health priorities, innovative strategies are essential. These include the expansion of One Health as one of the added priorities of the APRFHE (as discussed and recommended in the 11th HLOM), focusing on integrating environmental considerations as outlined in Action Track 6. The strengthening of the Quadripartite through One Health is also crucial, emphasizing multisectoral coordination, surveillance, risk reduction, and monitoring. The Technical Working Groups (TWGs), which form the technical backbone of the APRFHE, cover key areas: Air Quality and Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Chemicals, Waste and Health, Climate Change and Health, Health Impact Assessment, and One Health.

1. **Review of previous** **High-Level Officials’ Meetings and Ministerial Meeting Outcomes**

This section presents the review of previous High-Level Officials’ Meetings and Ministerial Meeting Outcomes.

Table 1 illustrates a summary of the key points from the four declarations and outcomes of the past HLOMs and Ministerial Meetings. The table provides a concise view of the evolution of agreements/associated workplans, priorities, focus areas, and collaborative efforts as articulated in the declarations from Bangkok (2007) to Manila (2016). Agreements and work plans were developed in reference to the declarations as outcome of the Ministerial Meetings. Each declaration builds upon the foundation laid by its predecessors, expanding the scope of concern and collaboration to address the complex and evolving challenges at the nexus of environment and health within the Asia-Pacific region.

The four declarations from the Bangkok, Jeju, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila meetings underscore a robust and evolving commitment to integrating environmental health into regional governance and cooperation among Asia and the Pacific (South-East and East Asian) countries. This evolution reflects a deepening understanding of the complex interdependencies between human health and environmental integrity, as well as a recognition of the need for collaborative and multisectoral approaches to address these challenges. Each declaration builds upon the preceding ones, expanding the scope of commitment and the range of issues addressed, reflecting the dynamic nature of environmental health challenges and the growing urgency of addressing them.

The Bangkok Declaration laid the foundational framework, emphasizing the critical link between environment and health and the need for preventative actions. It established the Regional Forum on Environment and Health, setting a precedent for future collaboration and action. With original founding 14 member countries in ASEAN and East Asian countries.

Moving forward, the Jeju Declaration expanded on this foundation, introducing health impact assessments as a priority, and emphasizing the importance of international cooperation for capacity building. It highlighted the need for effective management of environmental health risks and for collaborative efforts across sectors and borders.

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration further broadened the scope of action, incorporating the sustainability of environment and health at the center of development and emphasizing the importance of shared information and technology. It also introduced mechanisms for more effective intersectoral collaboration and established a Scientific Panel and Knowledge Network to support these efforts. The structure of TWGs in the Regional Forum is quite loose.

Lastly, the Manila Declaration recognized the unprecedented rate of environmental change threatening both health and the planet, underscoring the critical need for synergy between environment and health sectors. It directly linked the Regional Forum's efforts to global sustainability goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, and outlined specific actions to combat climate change, improve air quality, manage chemicals and wastes, and enhance resilience to environmental health risks.

These declarations collectively signify a progressive and expanding regional commitment to addressing environmental health challenges. They acknowledge the fundamental link between a healthy environment and the well-being of populations, highlighting the necessity for a unified approach to ensure sustainable development and public health. The evolution from Bangkok to Manila illustrates a growing consensus on the urgent need for action and cooperation across sectors and borders, aligning regional efforts with global environmental and health agendas.

In line with the implementation of the Manila declaration series of consultation meetings and high-level officials meeting (HLOM) were held. During the Eleventh HLOM in November 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia, discussions focused on restructuring the governance of the APRFHE. The key points recommended of the 11th HLOM included:

* Recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly disrupted the momentum of the APRFHE, affecting planned activities from the 10th High-Level Official Meeting.
* Acknowledgment of the challenges faced by the APRFHE as outlined in the working document, which detailed issues in governance, monitoring mechanisms, and financial resources.
* Proposal for a restructuring of the Framework for Cooperation of the APRFHE, aimed at enhancing effectiveness. This includes updating the knowledge network and scientific panels. The proposed steps forward are:
  + The Secretariat will work closely with the Chair and will revise the *Framework for Cooperation and related working documents*. These will be shared with all members for feedback and input in advance.
  + The *revised Framework for Cooperation will go through further discussion at a Joint Secretariat Meeting*, chaired by Indonesia in early 2024. This meeting will include past chairs from Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the current and potential future chairs, as well as Chairs of Technical Working Groups (TWGs).
  + The draft revised Framework for Cooperation will be presented at the 12th HLOM and submitted for approval at the 5th Ministerial Meeting in 2024.

1. **Assessment of Progress and challenges face**

This section reviews the progress and challenges faced by the APRFHE since 2004, focusing on the progress achieved by member countries, the governance and financial sustainability of the Regional Forum, the contributions of scientific conferences, TWG meetings, workshops, and the operations of the secretariat's governing bodies.

* 1. ***Participating Countries of the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment***
* APRFHE 2013-2016, twelve out of fourteen Regional Forum (RF) countries have produced and implemented NEHAP (and its equivalent plans), these 12 countries include: Cambodia, PR China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
* Environmental Health Country Profiles (EHCP) and Environmental Health Data Sheets were also prepared among the member countries.
* Inter-ministerial agencies on health and environment were also established in respective member countries where close collaboration and cooperation are evident amongst the APRFHE countries.
* From 2004 to date, capacity building through training workshops related to environmental health of the APRFHE were organized among member countries e.g., climate change, chemicals and hazardous waste, air pollution - in line with the existing global and regional frameworks, conventions, and protocols.
* On 26 September 2019, the Government of the Philippines celebrated World Environmental Health Day nationally.
* During the intersessional period, the Government of the Philippines enhanced its environmental health initiatives by updating the National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP) for 2017-2022, setting targets and indicators for relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and developing a Health and Pollution Action Plan to support the NEHAP.
* In response to the Manila Declaration and its implementation plan, countries demonstrated progress toward the SDGs through enhanced multisectoral and international cooperation. Key focus areas included climate-resilient healthcare facilities, water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), air pollution, climate change, and climate-sensitive diseases. These issues provided significant opportunities for exchanging best practices and lessons learned, emphasizing the importance of addressing transboundary air pollution for future collaboration.
* Communication has been challenging due to the outdated and inadequately maintained list of national communication focal points for member countries.
  1. ***Governance of the APRFHE and Financial Matters***
* From 2004 to date, 12 HLOMs including the Extraordinary Meeting and four Ministerial Meetings (Annex 1: List of meetings and activities of the APRFHE) were convened by the APRFHE.
* Adopted in ***2007***, the first Charter of the Regional Forum aimed to help countries in Southeast and East Asia achieve MDGs related to Health, Environmental Sustainability, Poverty, and Global Partnership for Development. It also sought to establish integrated environmental health management at all levels and enable countries to evaluate and address key environmental health risks, develop, and implement effective National Environmental Health Action Plans (NEHAPs), and disseminate these plans to various stakeholders.
* In ***2010***, the Jeju Declaration endorsed the creation of a Task Force to review governance, institutional, and partnership issues within the regional forum and its impact on member countries.
* This communication guideline document was developed by the Secretariat at the request of the fourth High-Level Officials meeting. It provides guidance on procedures for communication between and among national communication focal points, TWG members, TWG Chairs and the Secretariat.
* The recommendations from this Task Force were incorporated into the ***2013*** Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which introduced the Framework for Cooperation as the primary governance document.
* Under the Framework for Cooperation, the overarching aim of the Regional Forum is to establish a collaborative platform for national and regional initiatives that enhance health and environmental conditions and promote sustainable development. The Framework for Cooperation supersedes the first governance document which is the Charter of the Regional Forum (in Figure 1) adapted in 2007. The specific objectives include identifying and tackling priority environmental and health issues requiring regional cooperation, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices, developing ongoing collaborative mechanisms, and mobilizing resources to support environmental and health initiatives. The structure of the Regional Forum is depicted in Figure 2.

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Figure 1. Structure of the Regional Forum 2007-2013

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Figure 2. Structure of the Regional Forum 2013-2024

* The Fourth Ministerial Meeting in ***2016***, held in Manila and documented in the Manila Declaration, highlighted the importance of addressing environmental health within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with realistic and measurable targets, and creation of the Task Force to review the APRFHE.
* Since its establishment in 2004, the APRFHE has encountered significant challenges in governance and technical functions, despite a renewed commitment from member countries to continue the forum as stated in the Ministerial Declarations.
* In the Tenth HLOM (27-28 September 2019 in Manila), in view of the member countries expressed desire to expand membership in the Regional Forum to other countries of the wider Asia Pacific region, the meeting agreed that the new title, is “***Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment***.” The Tenth HLOM recommendations and technical inputs for the consideration of Ministers at its planned Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta in 2024.
* Mentioned at the 10th HLOM, a quarterly newsletter will be introduced to highlight the activities of the APRFHE. Additionally, membership may be expanded to include the private and corporate sectors, pending appropriate due diligence. Resource mobilization is essential for implementing APRFHE’s workplan.
  1. ***Scientific Conferences and Thematic Working Group of the APRFHE***
* Five Scientific Conferences related to environmental health issues have been held from 2005 to 2016.
* The original Charter of the Regional Forum (refer to Figure 1) established thematic working groups (TWGs) to address six priority areas: air quality; climate change, ozone depletion, and ecosystem changes; emergency environmental health planning and response; solid and hazardous waste management; management of toxic chemicals and hazardous substances; and water, sanitation, and hygiene. At the second ministerial meeting in 2010, a seventh TWG focusing on health impact assessment was added. The TWGs develop work plans for their specific issues, managing knowledge, reporting progress, coordinating, advocating, and mobilizing resources.
* Under the revised Framework for Cooperation, the TWGs operate voluntarily, without administrative obligations, contributing to the Regional Forum alongside other initiatives and institutions. The Framework allows a TWG to be activated solely based on the availability of funds, without needing approval from the Regional Forum or its member countries and permits membership from non-state actors without such endorsements. This flexibility poses risks of TWGs operating independently, potentially in ways that conflict with the goals of the Regional Forum.
* The Framework outlines the TWGs' activities as training courses, conferences, country-level inter-agency coordination, and partnerships with existing national and international initiatives. At the Eighth High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM), it was reported that six of the seven TWGs had been active since the Third Ministerial Regional Forum. However, challenges in producing tangible outputs persist. By the Ninth HLOM, two TWGs had been inactive for three years, and *issues like funding, resource allocation, capacity building, and coordination continue to challenge all TWGs*.
* The TWGs have convened TWG meetings from 2007 to 2016 (Annex 1. List of meetings and activities of the APRFHE. TWGs include Climate Change and Health; Air Quality and Health; Chemicals, Waste and Health; Health Impact Assessment and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. Policy briefs were also produced by respective TWGs which were presented during the Second Ministerial Regional Forum in Jeju, Republic of Korea in 2010.
* Several challenges impeded the work of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), particularly the *lack of resources and inadequate formal oversight by the Regional Forum*.
* Various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) presented updates on their activities during HLOMs. Air Quality TWG shared a policy brief and outlined upcoming actions to address transboundary air pollution. The TWG-HIA reported on its progress in developing a legal framework, country-specific guidelines, and educational initiatives. Additionally, the Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Waste TWG proposed coordinating its activities with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).
* During the meeting, multiple TWGs provided updates on their initiatives. The Air Quality TWG distributed a policy brief and outlined its forthcoming efforts on transboundary air pollution. The TWG-HIA discussed its progress in developing a model legal framework, country-specific guidelines, and training programs. Meanwhile, the Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Waste TWG suggested aligning its efforts with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).
* Subsequently, the 11th HLOM agreed that the Secretariat would help draft the Terms of Reference for each TWG. Each TWG would create a five-year workplan, with regular progress reports for the Regional Forum's review. The lifespan of the TWGs would coincide with the five-year chairmanship of the Regional Forum, and their updated terms would shape the Forum's new agenda. Membership in the TWGs would be open to all member countries, though participation by non-member organizations would require due diligence by the Secretariat and approval from the Regional Forum. *The TWGs are responsible for securing their own funding.*
  1. ***Secretariat’s Governing Bodies of the APRFHE***
* The APRFHE serves as a critical platform for evidence-based policy discussions that can influence both national and regional policymaking. However, the decisions made at the APRFHE are *not mandatory for members* to implement. Enhancing the APRFHE 's effectiveness could be achieved by establishing connections with the governing bodies of the UN Environment and the WHO, allowing the Forum's discussions to directly impact policymaking in these organizations.
* During the *Seventy-second session of the Regional Committee of South-East Asia, WHO SEARO* reached a significant milestone by securing the endorsement of the Regional Plan of Action. This plan aligns with the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment, and Climate Change and outlines four strategic areas for the next decade. It aims to tackle environmental health determinants and monitor progress, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the activities of the APRFHE.
* *WHO WPRO* highlighted several key developments in the Western Pacific Region, including the establishment of the *Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health*. Important initiatives included regional consultations on air pollution and health, developing project concepts on climate change, and implementing WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) projects in healthcare facilities across seven member states. Additionally, the completion of new regional reports on environmental indicators, WASH, and air quality marked significant progress. The *67th Regional Committee Meeting adopted the Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet in 2016*, acknowledging the vulnerability of certain member states, like those in the Mekong and Pacific Island regions, to climate change impacts.
* UNEP emphasized the recognition by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3, 2018) of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment as a pivotal platform for strengthening environmental governance related to health. A resolution adopted at the UNEA encouraged engagement from member states and stakeholders in these efforts, underscoring the forum's importance in addressing the environment-health nexus.
* The Eleventh HLOM underscored APRFHE’s function as a *voluntary platform that unites various international agencies* to collaboratively tackle urgent global environmental health challenges.
* Formal connections have been established between the APRFHE and the UN Environment Assembly, as well as between the APRFHE and the Regional Committee meetings of the WHO for the South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions.
* Member countries should take action to establish formal linkages between the APRFHE and key regional bodies such as APEC, ASEAN, SAARC and SPC.

Based on the identified challenges within the APRFHE, recommend the following actions:

* Revise the Framework for Cooperation (including annexes) by incorporating the agreed components and contents from the 11th HLOM, including updates to the name, governance mechanisms, and structure of the APRFHE, as well as its financial sustainability.
* Regularly update and maintain the list of National Communication Focal Points and the list of TWGs.
* Establish a task force dedicated to ensuring the financial sustainability of the APRFHE, covering both the Regional Forum's activities and its secretariat, as well as the Technical Working Groups (TWGs).

Table 1: List of Declarations of the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature**/**Declaration** | **Bangkok (2007)** | **Jeju (2010)** | **Kuala Lumpur (2013)** | **Manila (2016)** |
| Agreements/associated workplans | Adoption of the Charter and approval of the composition and work plans of TWGs. Priorities for 2007-2010 are: i) governments should address health impacts and implications on priority areas of environmental concern at the local, national, and global levels; ii) multisectoral planning and community mobilization; and iii) capacity building, information dissemination, education training and further studies. | Addition of health impact assessment as a new regional priority for 2010-2013.  Agreement to i) cooperate to develop and implement national environmental health action plans; ii) study ways and mean to create within the region an environmental health capacity-strengthening programme; and iii) resolve to strengthen cooperation to improve inter-agency, multi-sectoral, regional and international cooperation, coordination and planning.  Endorsement of the cooperation established by the TWGs.  Approval of a Task Force report to the Regional Forum’s Advisory Board to review governance, institutional and partnership issues. | Adoption of the Framework for Cooperation with the vision of “Health and environment at the center of development”  Workplan for 2014-2016: i) strengthen the NEHAP; ii) develop EHCP and EHDS; iii) enhance and strengthen environmental health capacity of member countries; and iv) improve regional and international cooperation, coordination, fellowships, and partnerships. | Implementation Plan for 2017-2019: i) Review of the Regional Forum; ii) identify national priority sustainable development goal (SDG); iii) setting of national SDG targets; iv) collective target setting for the Regional Forum countries; v) implementation of workplans on priority SDG targets; and vi) monitoring and evaluation. |
| Focus | Establishing the Regional Forum and setting initial priorities | Adding health impact assessment; enhancing cooperation | Integrating global frameworks; establishing EHCPs and EHDS | Emphasizing urgent action against climate change and environmental health risks  Expansion of the RF  Creation of Task Force for measurable targets  Transboundary issues |
| Priority areas | Air and water quality, waste management, toxic chemicals, climate change, emergency response | Reinforces previous thematic areas; introduces health impact assessment | Puts sustainable environment at development's center; emphasizes information sharing and technological sharing | Climate resilience, air quality improvement, water and sanitation, waste management, reducing chemical exposure |
| Collaboration and cooperation | Calls for multi-sectoral cooperation and capacity building | Stresses international cooperation and thematic working group activities | Fosters technical cooperation through a Scientific Panel and Knowledge Network | Highlights need for closer collaboration between health and environment sectors; calls for WHO and UNEP support |
| Action calls | Inter-agency, private sector, civil society involvement | Same as Bangkok declaration, with emphasis on integrating efforts across sectors | Encourages creation of regional environmental health capacity-strengthening programmes | Urgent actions to mitigate and adapt to environmental health threats, including climate change |
| Institutional and Financial Mechanisms | Requests UNEP and WHO to serve as joint Secretariat | Establishes a Task Force to review governance, institutional and financial mechanisms | Approves mechanisms for better sharing between health and environment sectors | Encourages WHO to seek accreditation for mobilizing resources against environmental risks |
| Global and Regional Integration |  | Endorses cooperation with ASEAN and SAICM among others | Aligns with Agenda 21, MDGs, and discussions on the post-2015 agenda | Aligns closely with SDGs, Paris Agreement, and calls for international support for identified policy priorities |
| Future Directions | Agreement to meet in three years for progress review | Similar to Bangkok declaration, with added emphasis on thematic working group outcomes | Plans to review progress in building environmental health capacity and to discuss new priorities | Stresses on addressing emerging environment and health priorities and calls for ongoing dialogue and collaboration |
| Status/Progress/Achievements | Seven TWGs were established.  Guidance document on the mechanisms for conducting meetings.  Five scientific conferences have been convened from 2005 to 2016. | Report of the Chair and Vice-chair of the Regional Forum on the governance, impact, partnerships, and sustainable mechanism (2010-2013). The report discussed specific findings and recommendations (2) on governance, partnerships, achievements, and sustainable financial mechanisms.  Cooperation has been established between TWGs and other national and international initiatives.  Workplans were prepared in the succeeding ministerial meetings. | Twelve of the 14 Regional Forum countries have produced NEHAP.  Synthesis report of Environment health country profiles was presented in October 2016.  Scientific Dialogue was conducted in October 2016.  Number of workshops and trainings have been held among member countries on climate change, health, and environment and development. | Strategic planning workshop was conducted in April 2017 in Manila, Philippines to review the overall progress of the APRFHE.  A Task Force were created with 10 volunteered member countries.  10th HLOM and 11th HLOM were convened, in 2019 and 2023, respectively. |
| Challenges | Need for resources; governance complexity | Resource mobilization; governance enhancement | Effective sharing of information; sustainable financing | Resource mobilization; addressing emerging health threats; need for effective communication |

1. **Identification of Continuity Strategies for Enhanced Regional Cooperation on Health and Environment**
2. **Objective**

To strengthen the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment by addressing critical challenges of funding, governance, and resource mobilization, ensuring the effective implementation of the goals that shall be outlined in the forthcoming Jakarta Declaration and approval of the Ministers.

1. **Proposed Strategies**
   1. ***Funding and Resource Mobilization:***

* Establish a Dedicated Funding Mechanism on Health and Environment: Create a multi-donor trust fund to secure financial support from various stakeholders, including UN agencies, governments, private sector, and development organizations.
* Establish a permanent and or outreach secretariat to support the International Joint Secretariat - with dedicated funding and resources to facilitate and coordinate closely with the APRFHE's activities.
* Innovative Financing Models: Explore innovative financing solutions in the implementation of the APRFHE workplan 2025-2030 such as attaching to the existing global and regional conventions/frameworks activities e.g., capacity building through training on Climate Change and Health, Air and Health, Chemicals and Waste, One Health, and public-private partnerships to generate sustainable funding for environmental health projects.
  1. ***Governance and Coordination:***
* Streamline Governance Structures: Simplify the governance structure to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring clear roles and responsibilities TWGs, among member countries and partner organizations as well as APRFHE International Secretariat (WHO WPRO, WHO SEARO and UNEP ROAP).
* Enhance Coordination Mechanisms: Establish a central coordination body within the Regional Forum (Coordination Centre that will serve as an arm of the APRFHE taking into consideration the EU Health and Environment model) to oversee the implementation of initiatives, ensuring alignment with global frameworks and regional priorities.
  1. ***Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:***
* Regional Capacity Building Programs: Develop comprehensive capacity building programs focused on environmental health management, governance, and financing, tailored to the needs of member countries.
* Knowledge Sharing Platform: Launch an online platform to facilitate the exchange of best practices, innovations, and technologies among member countries and partners.
  1. ***Engagement and Partnerships:***
* Strengthen Multi-Sectoral Partnerships: Foster closer collaboration among governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector to leverage expertise and resources related to SDGs environmental health.
* Enhance International Collaboration: Strengthen ties with global initiatives and frameworks, such as the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, to align regional efforts with global goals related to health and environment nexus.
  1. ***Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER):***
* Develop a Robust MER Framework: Implement a comprehensive MER framework to track progress, measure impact, and identify areas for improvement, ensuring transparency and accountability.
* Encourage research and innovation of member countries through awards for outstanding contributions to environmental health.
  1. ***Addressing Emerging Environmental Health Issues:***
* Rapid Response Mechanism: Establish a rapid response mechanism to address emerging environmental health crises and adapt to changing global health landscapes.

1. **Implementation Roadmap:**

* Short-term (1-2 years): Focus on establishing the funding mechanism, streamlining governance structures, and initiating capacity building programs.
* Medium-term (3-5 years): Expand partnerships, fully operationalize the knowledge sharing platform, and implement the MER framework.
* Long-term (5+ years): Continuously evaluate and adapt strategies to meet emerging challenges, ensuring the APRFHE's objectives are achieved.

By implementing these proposed strategies, the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment perhaps can overcome current challenges, enhancing its ability to address the complex interplay between environmental factors and health outcomes. This identified strategic approach will ensure sustained progress towards achieving the aspirations outlined in the previous declarations and forthcoming Jakarta Declaration, ultimately contributing to the health and well-being of the Asia-Pacific region's populations.

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# **Annex 1: List of Meetings and Activities of the APRFHE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Location and Date** |
| ***Ministerial Meeting*** | |
| First Ministerial Regional Forum in Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries | Bangkok, Thailand  9 August 2007 |
| Second Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries | Jeju, Republic of Korea  15 July 2010 |
| Third Ministerial Regional Forum in Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  9-10 September 2013 |
| Asia-Pacific Regional Forum in Health and Environment | Manila, Philippines  6-8 October 2016 |
| ***High-Level Officials’ Meeting (HLOM)*** | |
| First High-Level Officials’ Meeting (HLOM) | Manila, Philippines  24-26 November 2004 |
| Second HLOM | Bangkok, Thailand  12-13 December 2005 |
| Third HLOM | Bangkok, Thailand  8 August 2007 |
| Fourth HLOM | Beijing, P.R. China  24-25 March 2009 |
| Fifth HLOM | Jeju, Republic of Korea  14 July 2010 |
| Sixth HLOM | Bandung, Indonesia  23-24 October 2012 |
| Seventh HLOM | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  9 September 2013 |
| Extraordinary HLOM | Bangkok, Thailand  20-21 August 2014 |
| Eight HLOM | Video Conference  21 June 2016 |
| Ninth HLOM | Manila, Philippines  7 October 2017 |
| Tenth HLOM | Manila, Philippines  27-28 September 2019 |
| Eleventh HLOM | Jakarta, Indonesia  22-23 November 2023 |
| ***Thematic Working Group Meetings*** | |
| Climate Change and Health | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  2014 |
|  | Jakarta, Indonesia  9-12 December 2014 |
| Air Quality |  |
| AQ TWG Meeting | Seoul, Republic of Korea  7 May 2007 |
| Pre-event workshop on Better Air Quality 2008 on Air Quality and Health in Asia | Bangkok, Thailand  11 November 2008 |
| Joint meeting with TWG HIA | Seoul, Republic of Korea  27-28 July 2011 |
| International Experts Meeting on Air Pollution and Health in Asia | Seoul and Cheonan, ROK  19-20 June 2014 |
|  | Seoul, ROK  June 2016  Bangkok, Thailand  November 2015 |
| Toxic Chemicals |  |
| TC TWG Meeting | Nonthaburi, Thailand  2-4 November 2009 |
| Contingency and Emergencies |  |
| CE-TWG Meeting | Manila, Philippines  15-17 December 2008 |
| Health Impact Assessment |  |
| First Meeting | Seoul, ROK  16 April 2010 |
| Second Meeting | Dunedin, New Zealand  19 November 2010 |
| Joint meeting with TWG Air | Seoul, ROK  27-28 July 2011 |
|  | Bangkok, Thailand  12-14 September 2016 |
| Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |  |
| WASH | Luang Prabang, Lao PDR  26-28 May 2010 |
| WASH | Bali, Indonesia  13-14 September 2012 |
| WASH | Bangkok, Thailand  2-3 April 2013 |
| WASH | Manila, Philippines  19-20 August 2013 |
| WASH | Manila, Philippines  24-25 November 2015 (4th TWG Meeting) |
| Solid and Hazardous Waste |  |
| TWG-SHW 1st Meeting | Singapore  28-29 February 2008 |
| TWG-SHW 2nd Meeting | Siem Reap, Cambodia  2-3 December 2008 |
| Note: Solid and Hazardous Waste; Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Substances  In 2016, there has been correspondence with Japan on a possible merger of TWG Solid and Hazardous Waste, and TWG Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Substances to create a TWG on Chemicals and Waste  In 27-28 September 2019 at the Tenth HLOM meeting the meeting agreed to merge the two TWGs to TWG Chemicals, Waste and Health |  |
| ***Workshops, Trainings and Conferences*** | |
| First Scientific Conference which identified and discussed significant emerging environmental health issues | Bangkok, Thailand  December 2005 |
| Second Scientific Conference focusing on priority environmental health issues for the region | Seoul, ROK  May 2007 |
| Third Scientific Conference which highlighted the effects of environment on human health | Jeju, ROK  April 2008 |
| Fourth Scientific Conference in conjunction with the International Society for Exposure Science/International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISES/ISEE) which reviewed adaptation and mitigation policies to respond to climate change-related risks | Seoul, ROK  September 2010 |
| First bi-regional training on climate change and health | Jogjakarta, Indonesia  26-30 January 2015 |
| First Regional Training on Health, Environment and Development | Incheon, ROK  December 2015 |
| Thailand Occupational Health Services (OHS) Study Tour |  |
| ***Advisory Board Meeting of the Regional Forum*** | |
| Interim Advisory Board Meeting | Manila, Philippines  September 2006 |
| First Advisory Board Meeting on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries | Bangkok, Thailand  10 August 2007 |
| Second Advisory Board Meeting | Jeju, ROK  16 April 2008 |
| Third Advisory Board Meeting | Beijing, PR China  29 March 2009 |
| Fourth Advisory Board Meeting | Jeju, ROK  16 July 2010 |
| Fifth Advisory Board Meeting | Bangkok, Thailand  20 October 2011 |
| Sixth Advisory Board Meeting | Bandung, Indonesia  22 October 2012 |
| ***Task Force Meetings*** | |
| First Meeting of the Task Force on Governance, Partnerships and Impact of the Regional forum on Environment and Health | Manila, Philippines  8-9 June 2011 |
| Second Meeting | Bangkok, Thailand  18-19 October 2011 |
| Third Meeting | Pathumthani, Thailand  28-29 October 2012 |
| Strategic Planning Workshop (Chaired by Philippines and participated by Task Force member countries) | Manila, Philippines  26-28 April 2017 |

1. Ten Southeast Countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam) and four East Asian Countries (PR China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Based on the Progress Report of the Regional Forum (2013-2016), twelve out of fourteen RF countries have produced NEHAP using WHO document. The 12 countries include: Cambodia, PR China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Member countries of the Task Force: Cambodia, Indonesia, Kiribati, Malaysia, Palau, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hybrid 11th HLOM attended by 62 participants from eleven participating countries (9 member countries and 4 non-member countries). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The terms "Regional Forum" and "APRFHE" used in this document are interchangeable. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)