



– Forum Summary –

**Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN)
2006 Regional Forum
December 4-5, 2006**

Summary

On December 4-5, 2006 in Hanoi, Vietnam, the Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN) held its 2006 Regional Forum to present results from 2006 activities and share best practices and experiences on compliance and enforcement in the region. Hosted by the Vietnam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), participants included 100 senior environmental officials, policymakers, judges, lawyers and experts from People's Republic of China (PRC), India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) provided funding and technical support for the forum.

In particular, the AECEN Secretariat presented results of program assessments from India, Sri Lanka and PRC (Chongqing), including common challenges for each assessment focus area, which are: (1) legal authority; (2) institutional arrangements and capacity building; (3) compliance monitoring, inspections, self-monitoring and permitting; (4) enforcement response; (5) compliance assistance and information management; (6) economic and other incentive-based instruments; (7) indicators to evaluate program success and programmatic priority setting; and (8) public participation. Representatives from each of these countries discussed the priorities and principal solutions for their environmental compliance and enforcement programs.

The AECEN Secretariat presented draft regional principles for consideration by members as a potential framework for strengthening enforcement and compliance programs. The draft principles are based on international law and national experiences from within Asia and worldwide, and provide a basis for cooperation on AECEN activities. While the principles are universal, the emphasis and approach is tailored to the challenges in Asia, and include: (1) institutional arrangements, (2) planning, performance and evaluation, (3) compliance monitoring and inspection, (4) enforcement response, (5) compliance promotion and incentives, and (6) public participation.

The AECEN Secretariat introduced the draft principles as a starting point for discussion among members and experts, and will solicit feedback via the AECEN website and other means. In 2007, the Secretariat will finalize and distribute a summary document on the principles with examples of best practices in Asia to demonstrate how the principles can be operationalized by agencies and other stakeholders.

To support AECEN's core mission, the Secretariat organized three small-group discussion workshops to identify priority challenges, implementation challenges and innovative solutions in three areas that are priorities for Asian environmental agencies: (1) economic instruments and other incentive-based approaches; (2) compliance promotion capabilities; and (3) public involvement. Based on results of the sessions, AECEN will work with members to develop such activities as pilot projects, training and toolkits. Table 1 (below) provides a brief summary of the regional priorities, implementation challenges and solutions.

Table 1: Regional Priorities and Solutions

Priorities Areas or Activities	Implementation Challenges	Strategies for Addressing Challenges
Economic Instruments and Incentives-Based Approaches		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incentives for environmental infrastructure projects integrated in government programs ▪ Incentives for cleaner production options, environmentally-sound technologies ▪ Emphasize pollution prevention and polluter pays principle ▪ Multi-media economic instruments ▪ Transparency and accountability in use of environmental funds ▪ Economic instruments developed in partnership with local governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing firm legal basis ▪ Streamlining and strengthening institutions ▪ Building public acceptance of fees as “rent,” not tax ▪ Making funds easily accessible ▪ Making sure funds used for actual improvement of the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rewards and rebates for companies that have good compliance records ▪ Negative incentives (higher taxes) for non-compliance or for identified highly polluting industries ▪ Substantive portions of environmental funds actually used for environment management and compliance assistance
Compliance Promotion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to financial resources to promote cleaner technology or production ▪ Access to information regarding new laws and technologies ▪ Educating or incorporating compliance assistance into the inspection/permit process ▪ Developing partnership with media ▪ Strengthening mechanisms of environmental management systems with industry sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability of financial assistance and funding mechanisms ▪ Lack of political will ▪ Liability for offering compliance assistance ▪ Convincing industries of benefits of complying ▪ Establishing constructive stakeholder dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revenue sharing with local governments ▪ Financial assistance/loans to SMEs ▪ Adjustable permits for older industries ▪ Extended permits for companies with good compliance record ▪ Requiring accredited pollution control officers in industry ▪ Developing relocation strategies ▪ Developing environmental consent agreements
Public Involvement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Laws requiring citizen access to information ▪ Improving hotline and other citizen complaint systems ▪ Citizen suits and public interest litigation 	<p><u>Citizen monitoring/hotlines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of effective standards and procedures ▪ Limited resources to maintain and sustain operations ▪ Weak or unclear response and investigation procedures ▪ Inadmissibility of findings in court or agencies’ adjudication boards 	<p><u>Citizen monitoring/hotlines:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designating groups or committees to support monitoring efforts ▪ Training and empowering citizens, creating incentives ▪ Implementing tri-partite citizen monitoring ▪ Effective outreach and coordination with media ▪ Outreach on hotlines and other citizen monitoring programs

The AECEN Secretariat also presented outputs of earlier workshops on the development of environmental compliance and enforcement performance indicators, including different country approaches and similarities among indicators. In addition, the Secretariat presented potential regional common indicators, such as indicators related to improved compliance assurance, enforcement action, behavioral change, and actual environmental benefit.

At the forum closing, Director Chen Shanrong of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) then announced SEPA’s offer to host the AECEN Regional Forum for 2007, to be held in the PRC.

Background

In 2005, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), environmental agency leaders from 13 Asian countries established the Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN), a regional practitioner network. AECEN's mission is to promote improved compliance with environmental legal requirements in Asia through regional exchange of innovative policies and practices.

Network objectives are to: (1) promote the development and implementation of improved environmental policies, laws, regulations, and institutional arrangements; (2) strengthen practitioner capacity through specialized training and skills development; and (3) facilitate regional sharing of best practices and information on strengthening compliance and enforcement.

To support network activities, AECEN has established a Secretariat, and with support from the Secretariat and network partners, members engage in activities that strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks and human and institutional capacity for improved compliance and enforcement. Primary activities include:

- Country program assessments
- Country pilot activities
- Regional cooperation and training
- Compliance and enforcement indicators

The AECEN Secretariat also organizes a regional forum to share results of activities and best practices.

On December 4-5, 2006, the Vietnam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), in partnership with USAID, ADB, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), convened the AECEN 2006 Regional Forum in Hanoi, Vietnam. Forum participants included 100 senior environmental officials, policymakers, judges, lawyers, academics, and other environmental experts from related government agencies and international organizations from a range of countries, including Peoples Republic of China (PRC), India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The objectives of the two-day event were to:

- Present progress on AECEN pilot projects, country assessments and training activities;
- Identify regional priorities in compliance promotion, economic instruments and other incentives-based programs, and public participation; and
- Share best practices and experiences on environmental compliance and enforcement.

What follows is a brief summary of highlights from the 2006 Regional Forum. More information is available on the AECEN website at www.aecen.org.

Forum Opening

Opening the forum, H.E. Mr. Mai Ai Truc, Minister of MoNRE recognized the need and importance of AECEN as a regional platform for sharing lessons and best practices, and building new relationships with others who share the vision of sustainable development in Asia. Minister Mai Ai Truc noted that it is not enough to make institutions and laws work effectively if environmental compliance and enforcement is not improved. He congratulated all member countries for their efforts in connecting with government agencies, courts and other stakeholders to strengthen environmental compliance and enforcement in the region.

Representing the United States Government, Mr. Michael W. Marine, United States Ambassador to Vietnam, praised Vietnam's leadership in promoting improved environmental law enforcement not only in Vietnam, but with regional partners. He congratulated AECEN members from the different countries for their vision and hard work in creating this important network, and for making rule of law and the environment an important priority for the region. According to Ambassador Marine, "implementing and enforcing environmental laws is a complex enterprise that depends on mutual cooperation and exchange between agencies, legislators and citizens within a country, but also between these various counterparts from different countries. International exchange on development priorities can lead to real breakthroughs in new policies and practice."

Representing the ADB, Mr. Nessim Ahmad, Director of the Environment and Social Safeguards Division, welcomed participants and observed that AECEN can add real value to the collective efforts to close the compliance gap in Asia. He stated that while most of the action will need to happen at the national and sub-national levels, regional cooperation can play an important role, and the Forum provides exactly such an opportunity by discussing general principles for compliance and enforcement tailored to Asia, and providing specific lessons emerging from the region.

For the keynote address, Mr. Antonio Oposa, Jr., President of the Law of Nature Foundation and Team Leader of the Visayan Sea Squadron, emphasized the value of convincing the regulated community and the public that it makes economic sense to protect the environment, adding that, enforcement may be useful for making violators comply but in the end, it is long-term behavioral change that is important. In a video presentation, Mr. Oposa shared with participants film clips of enforcement actions that the Visayan Sea Squadron has conducted in central Philippines to stop blast fishing practices. The video reinforced his message that enforcement can only be conducted effectively by the collective effort of police agents, environment officials and concerned citizens. Enforcement actions are successful when the violator is reformed, through "creative penology," where the violator is made to serve as guardian of the environment.

Country Program Assessments

Understanding the strengths and limitations of country environmental compliance and enforcement programs is crucial to identifying priority reform areas and developing effective country-based pilot activities. Identifying common environmental compliance and enforcement challenges also provides a strong basis for regional cooperation and dialogue. As a result, AECEN conducts country assessments to provide a basis for pilot projects.

With assistance from the AECEN Secretariat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other partners, network members develop country program assessments that address: (1) legal authority; (2) institutional arrangements and capacity building; (3) compliance monitoring policies and procedures on inspections, self-monitoring and permitting; (4) enforcement response; (5) compliance assistance and information management; (6) economic and other incentive-based instruments; (7) indicators to evaluate program success and programmatic priority setting; and (8) public participation.

At the Forum, the AECEN Secretariat presented the results of program assessments for the India, Sri Lanka and Chongqing in PRC, including common challenges (see table below).

Table 2: Common Challenges for India, People’s Republic of China and Sri Lanka

Assessment Focus Area	Common Challenges
Legal Enforcement Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental agencies lacking full enforcement authority
Institutional Arrangements and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate coordination among different agencies Limited human capacity (lack of training, expertise) Insufficient resources (funding, equipment, etc.)
Compliance Monitoring: Inspections, Self-Monitoring and Permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection procedures not standardized or take too long Limited coverage of SMEs Limited implementation of self monitoring requirements
Enforcement Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited agency powers (Sri Lanka & India) Low penalties do not promote compliance (Chongqing & India)
Compliance Assistance and Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited compliance promotion programs and unsystematic data collection; Fragmented management aggravated by low level of IT application in data management
Economic Instruments and Other Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited use of economic incentives Limited use of other incentive-based instruments (like public disclosure programs)
Indicators to Evaluate Program Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comprehensive indicators developed to evaluate program success and for programmatic priority setting Insufficient data collected to accurately measure improvement No comprehensive baseline data on industry compliance
Public Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited public access to complete and accurate information - only India has Right to Info Act

Mr. Kolitha Himal Muthukuda Arachchi, Deputy Director General of the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) of Sri Lanka, discussed CEA’s priorities, which are to move forward with implementation of a wastewater discharge fee scheme; establish an environmental fund; and enhance the level of human capacity for implementing compliance activities. The principal challenge of the CEA is to modify the wastewater discharge law with legal fixes and then submit it for approval by the parliament.

Dr. D.B. Boralkar, Member Secretary of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, explained that the priorities are: (1) the need to apply uniformity in enforcement of environmental compliance because development is varied across Indian states; (2) the revision of the Strategy Action Plan is also a priority need, since India currently lacks a national action plan; (3) and the promotion of public participation in pollution control programs. A principal challenge in all areas is capacity building.

Mr. Chen Sanrong, Deputy Director General, Department of Environmental Protection of the PRC State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), discussed one of SEPA’s priorities, which is to implement plans to target heavily polluting sectors and solve problems using a systematic approach. The principal challenge is to build up a comprehensive environmental compliance framework, which will be nationally supervised and locally enforced. Mr. Sanrong discussed a number of other tasks that must be done to develop this framework, such as strengthening local independence in carrying out enforcement activities, implementing the disclosure of non-compliance, and working closely with financial institutions to prevent further bank loans and initial public offerings for heavily polluting industries.

In addition, Mr. Eugene Mazur, Project Manager of the Environment and Globalization Division of the Environment Directorate for OECD discussed OECD's environmental performance review of PRC, which was meant to serve as a bridge between the actual performance review and a global study on compliance assurance. The priorities are to increase institutional and financial independence; make local leaders accountable for environmental performance; and strengthen the environmental permitting system. The principal challenge is to integrate environmental considerations into economic planning and strategy, especially since growth is currently the overarching consideration in PRC.

Draft Regional Principles

The AECEN Secretariat presented draft regional principles for consideration by members as a potential framework for strengthening enforcement and compliance programs. The draft principles are based on international law and national experiences from within Asia, and worldwide, and provide a basis for cooperation on AECEN activities.

While the principles are universal, the emphasis and approach is tailored to the challenges in Asia. There are 16 principles and six categories: (1) institutional arrangements, (2) planning, performance and evaluation, (3) compliance monitoring and inspection, (4) enforcement response, (5) compliance promotion and incentives, and (6) public participation.

At the Forum, the AECEN Secretariat introduced the draft principles as a starting point for discussion among members and experts, and will solicit feedback via the AECEN website and other means. In 2007, the Secretariat will finalize and distribute a summary document on the principles with examples of best practices in Asia to demonstrate how the principles can be operationalized by agencies and other stakeholders.

Workshop Sessions: Identifying Regional Priorities

To support AECEN's core mission, the Secretariat organized three small-group discussion workshops to identify priority challenges and innovative solutions in three areas that are priorities for Asian environmental agencies: (1) economic instruments and other incentive-based approaches; (2) compliance promotion capabilities; and (3) public involvement. Based on results of the sessions, AECEN will work with members to develop such activities as pilot projects, training and toolkits.

Economic Instruments and Incentive-based Approaches

In this workshop, representatives from the Environmental Management Bureau of the Philippines, the Laos Environmental Protection Fund and Vietnam MoNRE presented experience on how their agencies employ economic instruments and other incentive-based approaches. The panel discussed the Philippine pollution charge system and clean water funds, the establishment and management of the Lao PDR Environmental Protection Fund, as well as the pollution charge system and environmental funds in Vietnam.

Workshop participants identified *priority areas* for strengthening economic incentives activities, and its main conclusions included:

- Integrating environment into infrastructure projects by providing incentives via low interest loans, grace periods, longer repayment periods, capital subsidies and guarantees;
- Providing incentives for cleaner production options/environmentally-sound technologies;
- Creating incentives for implementing polluters pays principle and pollution prevention;
- Implementing multi-media economic instruments via incremental implementation; and

- Building transparency and accountability in the use of environmental funds.
- Ensuring economic instruments are developed in partnership with local governments consistent with devolution

Participants then discussed *key implementation challenges*, which include:

- Establishing firm legal basis for economic instruments and incentives;
- Streamlining and strengthening institutions involved (authorities, structure and functions to levy fees, professional management of the fund);
- Building a conceptual understanding and public acceptance of environmental fees as “rent” not tax;
- Making the funds easily accessible to enable timely response; and
- Making sure that funds are used for actual improvement of the environment (easier for public to then accept obligation to pay).

Participants shared *innovative strategies* to address the implementation challenges that have demonstrated some success, including: rewards and rebates systems for companies that have good compliance records (Sri Lanka and India), or negative incentives (higher taxes) if the company is found not in compliance, or for identified highly polluting industries (India); and ensuring that substantive portions of environmental funds are actually used for environment management and compliance assistance (Philippines).

Developing Compliance Promotion Capabilities

Representatives from U.S. EPA and the Pollution Control Department of Thailand and the Pollution Control Department of Singapore made presentations on experiences in their countries, including the U.S. compliance assistance program, Thailand’s plans to develop a national compliance assistance center, and the comprehensive compliance assurance strategy in Singapore.

Workshop participants identified *priority areas* for strengthening or expanding compliance promotion activities, and its main conclusions identified:

- Providing access to financial resources for industries to promote cleaner technology or production;
- Ensuring access to information regarding new laws and technologies;
- Educating or incorporating compliance assistance into the inspection/permit process;
- Developing a close partnership with the media (print or broadcast) to promote compliance; and
- Strengthening mechanisms of environmental management systems with industry sectors to promote greater compliance.

Participants then discussed *key implementation challenges*, which include: the availability of financial assistance and funding mechanisms, lack of political will, liability for offering compliance assistance, convincing industries there are benefits for complying, and establishing constructive dialogue with key stakeholders and civil society.

Participants highlighted *innovative strategies* to address these challenges, such as: revenue sharing with local governments (Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) of the Philippines); financial assistance/loans to SMEs (Indonesia and West Bengal); adjustable permits for older industries; extended permits for companies with good environmental compliance history (LLDA and India); promoting public disclosure (blacklist in Vietnam); requiring accredited pollution control officers in industry (accredited by LLDA); developing relocation strategies, including the transfer of land use rights, rental costs of new area less than market price, and government assistance for purchase of new land (Vietnam); and a partnership with industry associations – developing “environmental consent agreements” where industry members share good practices with peers, and monitoring is through the industry association, not individual firms.

Public Involvement in Compliance and Enforcement

In this workshop, representatives from SEPA and Chongqing Environmental Protection Bureau in PRC presented the implementation of Hotline 12369 in Chongqing City. A representative from the Ministry of Environment in Indonesia discussed New Directions for Indonesia's Program for Pollution Control Evaluation and Rating (PROPER), a public disclosure program. The Asia Pacific Jurist Association presented India's Right to Information Act and environmental enforcement.

Workshop participants identified *priority areas* for strengthening or expanding public involvement activities, and its main conclusions identified:

- Laws requiring citizen access to information are a necessary prerequisite and top priority in the region, and provide a basis for all public involvement. Most countries have laws, but there are implementation challenges and issues of interpretation;
- Strengthening citizen monitoring by improving hotline and other citizen complaint systems and procedures is a priority. There is a particular need to improve not only systems and capabilities, but also response actions (including investigations) by governments and feedback mechanisms; and
- Citizen enforcement through the courts via citizen suits and public interest litigation is also recognized as a valuable mechanism. Courts should move forward in relaxing procedural requirements (e.g., standing to sue).

Key implementation challenges for implementation of citizen monitoring and hotline programs were: lack of effective standard and procedures; limited resources to maintain and sustain operations; weak or unclear response and investigation procedures; and inadmissibility of findings in court or agencies' adjudication boards.

Panelists highlighted *innovative strategies* that have been used to address these challenges related to implementation of citizen monitoring and hotline programs, including empowering citizens via designated groups or committees to support monitoring efforts (e.g., LEAC in Maharashtra, India), which is analogous to court-appointed committees for public interest litigation suits; training and empowering citizens, and creating incentives for participation; implementing tri-partite citizen monitoring (government, industry and community) programs (e.g., Philippines EIA monitoring process); effective outreach and coordination with media on negative and positive results; and public information, education campaigns on hotlines and other citizen monitoring programs.

Technical Presentations and Discussion: Sharing Lessons Learned

Sharing experience on innovations and best practices is at the heart of AECEN. In these plenary sessions, practitioners presented innovative strategies and solutions in addressing compliance monitoring and inspection, and enforcement response.

Strategies for Effective Compliance Monitoring and Inspection:

Three panelists presented strategies in Asia for strengthening compliance monitoring and inspection. Dr. D.B. Boralkar, Member Secretary from the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board discussed strategies for effective consent management in India. These strategies include: uniform consent procedures; combined applications for air, water and hazardous waste pollution; and categorization of industries based on size, pollution load and location of industry.

Ms. Vivien Rosa, Head of the Criminal Enforcement Division from the Indonesia Ministry of Environment discussed strategies for reforming environmental licenses and inspections in the context of decentralization. One strategy is to establish integrated mechanisms for environmental licensing systems, such as an inspection mechanism where the first line inspection is conducted by a licensing institution, and the second line inspection is conducted by environmental institutions at the central or provincial levels. This mechanism can be used to clarify inspection coordination and enforcement tasks between the Ministry of Environment and licensing institutions.

Mr. Eugene Mazur, Project Manager of the Environment and Globalization Division of the Environment Directorate from OECD presented guiding principles on effective environmental permitting systems and explained that guiding principles create a reference for governments, generate high-level political and institutional support for permitting reform, guide the gradual transition to a new environmental permitting system, and facilitate international cooperation on environmental permitting. Mr. Mazur also presented reforms needed in Asia, particularly in PRC and India.

Strategies for Effective Environmental Enforcement Response:

Panelists in this session explored various strategies for strengthening enforcement response, focusing on criminal enforcement, the establishment of green courts and administrative adjudication. In Vietnam, Mr. Duong Thanh An, Acting Director of the International Division on Environment explained that MoNRE has established environmental police to support state management of environmental protection, monitor environmental performance, investigate environmental violations, implement penalties of environmental violations, and conduct inspections.

In Thailand, Judge Pongdej Wanichkittikul, Secretary of Court of Appeal, Court of Justice explained that the Supreme Court and all Courts of Appeal have established green benches, and future plans involve establishing green benches in Courts of First Instance. Challenges remain, however, such as the classification of environmental cases, consideration for criminal penalties, determination for damages, use of expert witnesses, and limited choices of judgments.

Dr. Ely Ouano, Director of the Environmental Management Bureau presented information on the Philippines' Pollution Adjudication Board (PAB), which is a quasi-judicial body created for the adjudication of environmental cases. Any PAB decision or order is enforced and executed in the same manner as decisions of Courts of First Instance, and likewise may be appealed to the Court of Appeals. The PAB has expanded jurisdiction to hear cases for violations of both the Philippine Clean Air Act and Philippine Clean Water Act, impose fines, issue cease and desist orders, and file criminal charges against violators.

Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Indicators

Performance indicators are a key tool for decision-makers developing and implementing environmental compliance and enforcement programs. Indicators allow decision-makers to: (1) monitor and control the program operations; (2) ensure accountability to legislative bodies, budget authorities, constituent groups and the public; and (3) improve overall program performance.

In June 2006, with support from ADB, USAID, and U.S. EPA, AECEN member agencies in the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam organized trainings and national consultations to identify and develop national-level environmental compliance and enforcement indicators in each country. Participants included government agencies concerned with environmental management, industry associations, non-governmental organizations, and international development partners.

At the Forum, the AECEN Secretariat presented outputs of the workshops, including different approaches in each country and similarities among indicators. The Secretariat also presented potential regional common indicators, such as indicators related to improved compliance assurance, enforcement action, behavioral change, and actual environmental benefit:

- Number and types of trainings conducted (program)
- Hours of training received per inspector per year (individual skills)
- Budget increase for manpower, equipment and training
- Percentage increase in qualified technical personnel
- Percentage of violators penalized (closed, fined, imprisoned, paid damages)
- Amounts invested in pollution control and clean technology
- Percentage reduction in effluents or emissions

To provide a sense of country strategies and activities in developing indicators, Ms. Mavic Abrera, Chief of the Planning and Policy Office from the Philippine Environmental Management Bureau shared the experience in developing new indicators and refining enforcement and compliance promotion indicators to increase overall agency accountability. Next steps for the Philippines include agency adoption, development of an operations manual, and organization of national orientation and training of the central and regional EMB offices.

Closing Remarks

Some of the participants shared comments on how the Forum provided them the opportunity to understand the work of the different agencies and also strengthened peer-to-peer coordination with their counterparts from the different countries.

Director Chen Shanrong of SEPA then announced SEPA's offer to host the AECEN Regional Forum for 2007, to be held in PRC.

To conclude the workshop, Mr. Winston Bowman from USAID stated that this second forum was significant opportunity for sharing AECEN's impressive work for the first year. He remarked that the participants and presenters made significant contributions, indicating AECEN's role in regional cooperation.

Mr. Nguyen Xuan Bao Tam of MoNRE also made closing remarks, thanking all of the participants for a successful conference and emphasizing the importance of AECEN and its role within the region.