



## NEWS RELEASE

### Stakeholders Boost Regional Cooperation on Environment in Policy Planning

*Hanoi, Viet Nam (8 December 2008): At a workshop held in Hanoi, Viet Nam last week, experts from across South East Asia and the Pacific met and determined a set of priorities that will guide and strengthen the future integration of environment in national and regional policy planning.*

Governance specialists and environment experts as well as senior government officials from across the region discussed approaches of integrating environment considerations in national sector policy planning processes at the workshop, which was co-organized by the World Bank Institute and ADB's Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Operations Center which also supported participants from Thailand. The workshop was part of a two-day event on Strategic Environment Assessments held in Viet Nam. While the first day was hosted by OECD and focused on Viet Nam's experiences with SEA, the second day concentrated on how SEA is developing in the South East Asia and Pacific Region.

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is a tool that supports and strengthens environmental considerations in policy planning by institutionalizing them in the planning process. An SEA directive for all 15 member states in the EU was endorsed in June 2001, and the process and growing awareness of the usefulness of environmental considerations as an integrated part of policy development in the South East Asia and Pacific Region in many ways resembles that of the European Union prior to the passing of the SEA directive.

Mr. Le Hoai Nam, Deputy Director, Agency for Environmental Impact Assessment and Appraisal, Vietnam Environment Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment attended the workshop to share experiences with his regional colleagues. "In our experience, it is very important to familiarize planners from different sectors and administrative levels with the process and method of Strategic Environment Assessments – in fact it is one of our success measures. We do this through awareness raising workshops, trainings and capacity development initiatives, and it adds an important dimension that we have the opportunity to qualify our experiences with colleagues from other countries".

Viet Nam and China are among the first countries in the South East Asia and Pacific region with SEA systems that focus mainly on environmental concerns, but other countries such as Indonesia, the Phillipines, Fiji, Thailand, Malaysia, Lao PDR and Cambodia have undertaken pilot SEA activities that proved the benefits of SEA in their policy processes.

The workshop provided an important platform for further refinement of a tailored regional model for SEA use that takes into account features of the national planning systems, environmental

assessment traditions as well as the rapid economic growth that determines the region. Sharing experiences in this area provides a stronger regional network with benefits for the environment, countries and ultimately the region's shared natural resources.

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