

Institutional Coordination, Multi-stakeholder Participation and the Implementation of MEAs

National Experiences of Malaysia and Thailand

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Paper prepared for the Regional Consultation / Workshop on
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Institutional Coordination, Multi-stakeholder Participation and the Implementation of MEAs:

National Experiences of Malaysia and Thailand

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Background paper prepared for the
Informal Regional Consultation / Workshop on

Inter-Linkages:

Synergies and Coordination among Multilateral
Environmental Agreements

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Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community-based Organization
CETDEM	Centre on Environment, Technology and Development, Malaysia
CORD	Coordinating Committee on Rural Development
DANCED	Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEQP	Department of Environmental Quality Promotion
ECNEQ	Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality
EPSM	Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
EQC	Environmental Quality Council
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GMAC	National Advisory Committee on Genetic Manipulation
GOM	Government of Malaysia
IAPG	Inter-Agency Planning Group
ISIS	Institute for Strategic and International Studies
LCSD	Local Council for Sustainable Development
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
MNS	Malaysian Nature Society
NAREBI	Natural Resources and Biodiversity Institute
NCBD	National Committee on Biological Diversity
NCC	National Climate Committee
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NDC	National Development Council
NEB	National Environmental Board
NEPO	National Energy Policy Office
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NTCBD	National Technical Committee on Biological Diversity
OEPP	Office of Environmental Policy and Planning
OPP	Outline and Perspective Plan
PPP	Policy and Perspective Plan for Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality
RTG	Royal Thai Government
TEI	Thailand Environment Institute
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

“Progress in implementing MEAs has been slow as a result of the lack of institutional, administrative and financial capability, and a lack of integration of different MEAs. Although national plans and programmes exist in many countries, institutional arrangements for implementing MEAs are not well developed.”

UNEP, *Global Environmental Outlook 2000*, p. 237.
(Policy Responses, Asia and the Pacific)

1

Introduction

The *Global Environmental Outlook 2000* (GEO-2000) does not provide a very encouraging assessment on institutional co-ordination for the Asia and the Pacific Region. Although the UNEP report does indicate some progress, the rate at which the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) is taking place is undermined by institutional, financial and other coordinating impediments. On a more positive note, however, the GEO-2000 indicates some catalytic work undertaken by NGOs and donor institutions to help implement MEA instruments through a variety of activities and development projects.¹

This discussion paper reviews national coordination, multi-stakeholder participation and the implementation of MEAs in the Asia Pacific region. Institutional coordination and multi-stakeholder participation are important crosscutting themes of Agenda 21. This paper's central argument is that integrating these two concepts will significantly contribute to fulfilling the obligations and reaching the ultimate goals of MEAs.

The practical relevance of these two themes could not be more timely and important as preparations begin at the international, regional, national and even sub-national levels to assess progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. One of the issues sure to arise at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is an assessment of how well governments have fulfilled the objectives and commitments of environmental conventions and enabled major groups to participate in the decision-making and implementation processes.

The content and structure of this paper are as follows: the first section provides a brief overview of the development of multi-stakeholder coordinating mechanisms for integrating environment and development and describes some of the benefits and challenges of this relatively new form governance. Sections two and three then turn to the experiences of Malaysia and Thailand. The case studies review the institutional

landscape of national co-ordination, examine the extent to which stakeholder groups participate in coordinating bodies, and reveal any deficiencies or obstacles that may prevent coherent action and meaningful participation. In addressing these issues, discussion focuses on the specifics of two sectors, climate change and biodiversity, and the general dynamics of integrating environmental considerations in economic development planning. Section four then surveys some noteworthy projects designed to implement MEAs in the respective countries. The last section summarizes the findings and proposes a series of recommendations designed to enhance the participation of multi-stakeholder groups in institutional arrangements and develop a more coordinated approach to MEA implementation.

Methodology

The methodological approach used in this study is based on inductive inquiry. The author administered semi-structured questionnaires in the form of a focused interview to three categories of respondents. The first included officials from key government ministries and departments responsible for national coordination and the implementation of MEAs and policies for achieving sustainable development. The second category consisted of NGO representatives and other stakeholders either participating presently in a national coordinating committee or having participated at an earlier stage. Officials from multilateral and bilateral donor institutions funding development projects linked to the implementation of MEAs formed the third grouping.

The interviews contained a series of open and closed-ended questions and were structured somewhat differently according to the category of the respondent. The aim of the interviews for the first two categories was to trace the institutional landscape on national MEA coordination and gather both facts and opinions on the extent and nature of multi-stakeholder participation. The interviews with the third category of respondents sought to identify and document any projects funded through bilateral or multilateral aid institutions that support synergies and meet the objectives of multiple MEAs.

The author reviewed information from other secondary sources, including national laws, policies, reports, communications, studies, and medium and long-term development plans to verify data collected from the interviews and fill in any possible gaps in the institutional memory of the respondents.

2

Institutional Coordination and Multi-stakeholder Participation

Designing policy-making processes that reflect democratic principles and produce coherent, integrated and efficient outcomes is one of the most pressing challenges facing decision-makers. The difficulty with this task is compounded by the increasing complexity of issues at hand and the numerical surge and variety of actors involved in policy-making. This assessment is particularly true in the area of sustainable development, where environmental, economic and social issues interact, as do the values and concerns that multiple stakeholders assign to them.

Governments and intergovernmental organizations have responded to this imperative by involving civil society groups and NGOs, business and industry, academia and other constituencies in various phases of policy-making and implementation. Terms such as collaborative policy forums, public policy dialogues, cooperative management, and strategic stakeholder engagement all describe such participatory and pluralist approaches to governance.² Although partnership arrangements appear to be more numerous in local communities and municipalities, they surface at all levels of society and address issues as diverse as health care, river basin and coastal zone management, eco tourism, urban development, and sustainable mountain forestry.

The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and Agenda 21 in particular underlined the importance of involving multi-stakeholder groups in decision-making and catalyzed a process of partnership building at the national level. In fact, one of the subsequent outcomes of UNCED was the establishment of national councils for sustainable development (NCSDs) or equivalent mechanisms as a response to Agenda 21's call to better integrate environment and development concerns and enable major groups to play a partnership role in policy and decision-making.³

Over the past eight years, multi-stakeholder bodies have become increasingly recognized as an indispensable mechanism to structure national debate and dialogue for implementing strategies and policies of sustainable development, including the obligations set forth in many MEAs. On the occasion of the 1997 United Nations General Assembly Special Session to Review the Implementation of Agenda 21, the UN CSD reported some 150 countries having established national level coordinating structures for sustainable development.⁴

While national institutional mechanisms have become a necessary condition for implementing Agenda 21, it is important to underscore at least two shortcomings with the above figure. The first is that only

Some 150 countries have established coordinating committees for sustainable development, but only half includes representation from multi-stakeholder groups.

approximately 70 of the national coordinating bodies established worldwide include multi-stakeholder groups.⁵ The second deficiency is the unbalanced geographic distribution of these multi-stakeholder bodies. While the highest concentration of such

bodies is found in the OECD region, fewer developing countries have established such arrangements.⁶ Agenda 21's appeal for wide and meaningful participation of major groups in decision-making processes is thus only being partially met around the globe.

The Asia Pacific Region

The Asia Pacific Region generally reflects these observations where only a handful of countries have either established new or restructured existing mechanisms at the national level to include the participation of stakeholder groups. In September 1992, the Philippines created the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and in 1996, Mongolia and Japan followed suit with comparable entities. In July 2001, Thailand restructured its existing National Environment Board (NEB) Sub-committee on Agenda 21, and in September of the same year, the Republic of Korea established the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development. In other countries of the region, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, NGOs and other non-governmental bodies have tried to either catalyze the establishment of similar entities or strengthen existing co-ordination bodies that would include wide participation of multi-stakeholder groups.⁷

Box 1:

National Level Multi-stakeholder Structures for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific⁸

- Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), 1992
- Administrative Centre for China's Agenda 21 (ACC21), 1994
- Mongolian National Council for Sustainable Development, 1996
- Japan Council for Sustainable Development (JCSD), 1996
- Thai Sub-committee on Agenda 21, National Environment Board, 1993 (revised with multi-stakeholder participation, 2000)
- Korean Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development (KPCSD), 2000

Benefits of Multi-stakeholder Institutional Arrangements

Although the number of multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements is limited in the Asia Pacific Region, it is widely recognized that such mechanisms have become a visible and promising framework to structure the implementation of sustainable development and MEAs for at least three important and interdependent reasons.

□ *A Venue for Pluralist Inputs and Win-Win Outcomes*

First, multi-stakeholder institutional mechanisms provide a venue for integrating pluralist inputs into policy formulation and implementation. By definition, partnerships are based on principles of non-exclusivity and the comparative advantage that each member brings to the table. Involving a vast array of interests in a joint effort to resolve conflicts through coordinated and coherent action lends credibility and legitimacy to government decisions. In fact, through a process of mutual learning, information sharing and joint problem solving, multi-stakeholder mechanisms can identify integrative solutions to some of the most complex and contentious problems facing society. Proponents of such arrangements argue that policy-making and implementation result in Pareto superior or “win-win” outcomes to traditional regulatory processes where major group actors have either been passively consulted or have observed policy formulation processes from the sidelines.

□ *A Framework to Coordinate MEAs and Integrate Response Strategies*

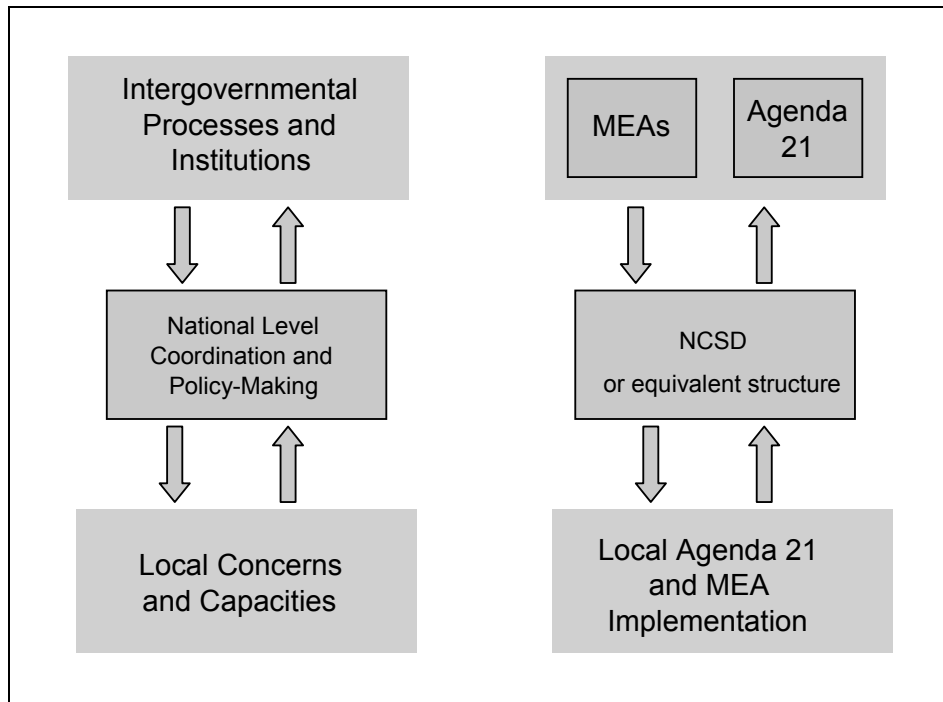
Strategic stakeholder partnerships of this sort are useful mechanisms at the national level to structure debate and forge consensus on implementing the more technical obligations and commitments under MEAs. Many of the NCSD structures include sub-committees or working groups assigned to monitor specific MEAs and oversee policy implementation. Structuring national MEA committees in the framework of a broader NCSD framework is beneficial because of its ability to help integrate the social and economic considerations of environmental commitments into medium and long-term development plans and sustainable development strategies. Organizing MEA sub-committees under a single institutional framework reduces the negative effects of uncontrolled fragmentation of environmental agreements across government ministries, while still permitting different line ministries to be the focal points of individual conventions. Furthermore, it provides opportunities to enhance coordination and communication of the line agencies through the organization of joint working groups or sub-committees to design projects that link the objectives of multiple conventions, thereby responding to multiple agreements through individual action.

□ **Where Global and Local Meet**

National coordination mechanisms with multiple stakeholders are also attractive given their location in society between local and global levels of governance. As Figure 1 illustrates, NCSDs can serve as vehicles to scale down the policies negotiated in intergovernmental forums to national and sub-national levels of governance where implementation actually takes place. The pluralist nature of these bodies is fundamental in the sense that multi-stakeholder groups are often better connected with sub-national and local levels of governance than many government ministries. Non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector can take responsibility and use their networking structures to build capacity and increase public awareness in localities either where government agencies are either ill equipped or simply do not operate.

National level structures are also useful as a networking vehicle to convey broad-based concerns at the local or provincial level to the national and international level of society. As one analyst observes, “multi-partite governance configurations can connect local and national organizations to cross-national and global processes.”⁹

Figure 1: Where Global and Local Meet



Challenges in Managing Coordinating Mechanisms with Multi-stakeholder Participation

Despite their many benefits, the mere existence of a multi-stakeholder institutional structure is not a sufficient condition to effectively implement Agenda 21 or the obligations of MEAs. In fact, the benefits of such arrangements may actually pose a series of constraints and challenges to policy makers.

- ***Coordination Dilemmas***

The first and perhaps foremost challenge is integrating a diverse basket of interests into a policy-making process that reflects democratic and transparent principles as well as produces efficient and coherent outcomes. Partnerships are designed as horizontal networks rather than top-down hierarchies common to government bureaucracies. Flatter structures of governance, however, may give rise to collective action problems and are apt to produce conflict among participants, particularly when agenda items involve determining policy choices and strategic planning.¹⁰ As two analysts rightfully observe, “the road to partnership often begins with and depends upon conflict.”¹¹ This applies not only to the traditional struggles that often surface between ministries common to bureaucratic politics, but also among different multi-stakeholder groups and between them and government.

“...the road to partnership often begins with and depends on conflict.”

From the perspective of social psychology, small group theory offers some insight into decision-making styles of interaction. Heterogeneous groups have the potential to provide the needed creativity and perspectives to tackle the difficult and multifarious dimensions of sustainable development, but incompatibility of interests and the absence of norms are likely to produce decision processes where actors seek self-satisfaction and reward, thus generating conflict and sub-optimal outcomes.¹² In a decision-making process where consensus is the norm, the best outcome that can be achieved is to simply agree to disagree. One of the frustrations experienced by many NCSDs is the slow decision-making process involved when groups with multiple stakeholders and government interact.

One observer of integrated environmental management remarks that if the “collective-action problems associated with intra-organizational coordination are to be overcome, the resulting institutional arrangements must maximize the incentives to cooperate and minimize those that to noncooperative behavior.”¹³ Maximizing incentives certainly includes factors designed to enhance task performance such as instrumental leadership, effective communication processes, clear overall objectives and rules of procedure, and establishing a group history through a continuity of participation and regularity of meetings. Horizontal structures of governance also require different orientations of

thinking. In government hierarchies, officials are accustomed to vertical and analytical reasoning processes; horizontal networks of government and multi-stakeholder representatives, on the other hand, require lateral thinking modes that stress innovation and creative problem solving.¹⁴

- ***Over-Coordination, Competing Roles and Fatigue***

A second challenge is to ensure practical effect and avoid unnecessary duplication with any existing national, regional, and local coordinating mechanisms. Coordination has become an increasingly popular buzzword in government circles over the past decade largely because of the nature of the problems that confront society. The result, however, has been to create coordinating committees without much reflection on the resources needed to be allocated or the organizational consequences on the functioning of existing mechanisms. In some cases, coordinating mechanisms designed to integrate a broad array of interests in policy-making and implementation processes may actually already exist at some levels of governance, particularly given the fact that sustainable development is such a broad and encompassing concept. It is thus important to avoid any duplication that may overburden government administration officials and result in competing roles, coordination fatigue, and counter-productive measures. Over the past decade, coordinating committees have proliferated to the extent that they are experiencing diminishing returns on their objectives. In this regard, it is essential to undertake situational assessments, including an evaluation of whether existing institutional arrangements need to be strengthened, created or even abandoned. Moreover, it is important to realize that not all problems can be addressed through collaborative stakeholder consensus-building processes. In some cases, the most efficient and effective response may involve decisions and action by a sole government agency with or without stakeholder participation.

Too much coordination leads to competing roles, duplication and administrative fatigue.

3

Malaysia

Institutional Coordination and Multi-stakeholder Participation

Institutional Coordination

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) coordinated Malaysia's policy inputs into the 1992 Rio Conference and the parallel climate and biodiversity negotiations through the National Steering Committee for Environment and Development.¹⁵ Shortly after the 1992 Conference, however, the Cabinet dissolved the National Steering Committee and transferred the follow-up of Agenda 21 to the Inter-Agency Planning Group (IAPG) since it was considered to be the more appropriate body to oversee the implementation of sustainable development.

The IAPG's task is to facilitate and coordinate the preparation of the Malaysia Plans (five-year development plans). The Group is chaired by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department and composed of ministers from the principal line agencies, including Health, Public Works, Housing and Local Government, International Trade and Industry, Education, Primary Industries, Finance, and the State Economic Planning Units of Sarawak and Sabah. The IAPG meets approximately every two years and reports to the EPU, which then reports to the National Development Council, one of two inter-ministerial councils chaired by the Prime Minister.

Long-term Outline Perspective Plans (OPPs) guide the short-term Malaysia Plans. During the first plan (OPP1) from 1971-1990, development planning concentrated on promoting growth with equity. The second OPP (1991-2000) shifted focus to correcting the social and economic imbalances, and OPP3 (2001-2010) seeks to respond to the challenges of increased globalization and meet the objective of achieving developed country status by 2020.

Environmental and sustainable resource management became an integral part of the Malaysia Plans in the 1990s, and for the 7th Malaysia Plan from 1996-2000, the IAPG established three technical working groups on the environment, natural resource management, and environmental public awareness and data management.¹⁶ Although environmental objectives were included in earlier plans, it was not until the 7th plan that sustainable development became an integral part of its national development policy. The Government of Malaysia (GOM) thus strives to integrate environmental concerns directly into the institutions and processes of economic development planning. The 8th Malaysia Plan was adopted in April 2001 and places increased on addressing

environmental and natural resource issues in an integrated and holistic fashion.

In addition to assigning the IAPG the task of overseeing the implementation of Agenda 21, the Cabinet also decided after Rio that the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (MOSTE) would be the focal point to formulate policy and manage inter-ministerial input on Rio's environmental conventions.¹⁷

National Committee on Biological Diversity

Following Malaysia's signature to the Convention on Biological Diversity, MOSTE established the National Committee on Biological Diversity (NCDB) in 1992 with the objective of overseeing the implementation of the CBD, including the preparation of appropriate legislation, strategies and plans for the conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity. The NCDB is composed primarily of representatives of government ministries and departments, but several national research institutes also participate.¹⁸

Under the NCDB, National Technical Committee on Biological Diversity (NTCBD) operates as a sub-committee to coordinate research and development programmes as well as to advise government on acquiring funding for biodiversity related projects. The NTCBD established three task forces assigned to Malaysia's national policy on biodiversity, the country study and access to genetic resources. In addition, a National Advisory Committee on Genetic Manipulation (GMAC) was also created and composed of members from government, research institutes, universities and NGOs.¹⁹

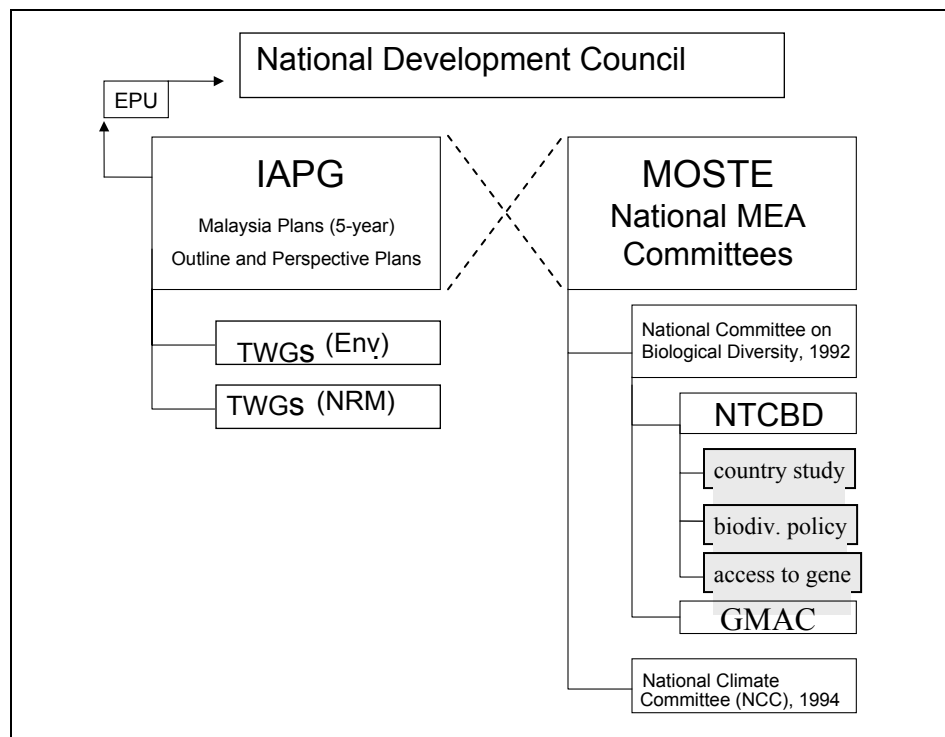
National Climate Committee

MOSTE also set up the National Climate Committee (NCC) to oversee the implementation of the commitments under the Climate Convention. The NCC is composed primarily of the concerned government line ministries, including the Ministries of Finance, Transport, Primary Industries, Energy, Communications and Multimedia, International Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Education, Foreign Affairs. A representative from the Regional Economic Section of the EPU and the Attorney General's Office also participates, as does the Centre for Environment, Technology and Development, Malaysia (CETDEM). Two sub-committees on Scientific Research and Impact Studies and on Climate Data were established.

Figure two sketches Malaysia's institutional structures for following up on Agenda 21 and implementing the commitments of MEAs. Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of Malaysia's institutional landscape is the structural change that occurred following Rio. Recall that the National Steering Committee for Environment and Development coordinated Malaysia's inputs to the UNCED and the intergovernmental negotiations on the climate and biological diversity conventions. MOSTE now

coordinates the implementation of the various MEAs while the IAPG oversees the follow-up of Agenda 21. While this division of labor is appropriate, the parallel structure presents challenges in terms of managing ministerial coordination and ensuring that the environmental objectives of MEAs are fully integrated in development planning. As a means to address this issue and ensure communication links, officials from MOSTE sit on the technical working groups under the IAPG, and a representative of the EPU sits on the MEA committees.²⁰

Figure 2: National Coordination, Malaysia, Post Rio



In terms of outputs, the NTCBD released the Country Study on Biological Diversity in 1997, and an abridged version of the study was submitted as Malaysia's National Report to the Conference of Parties to the Conference of Parties of the CBD. In 1997, the Cabinet also approved National Policy on Biodiversity. Under the climate committee, Malaysia's Initial National Communication was prepared as a project managed in parallel to the NCC.

Multi-stakeholder Participation

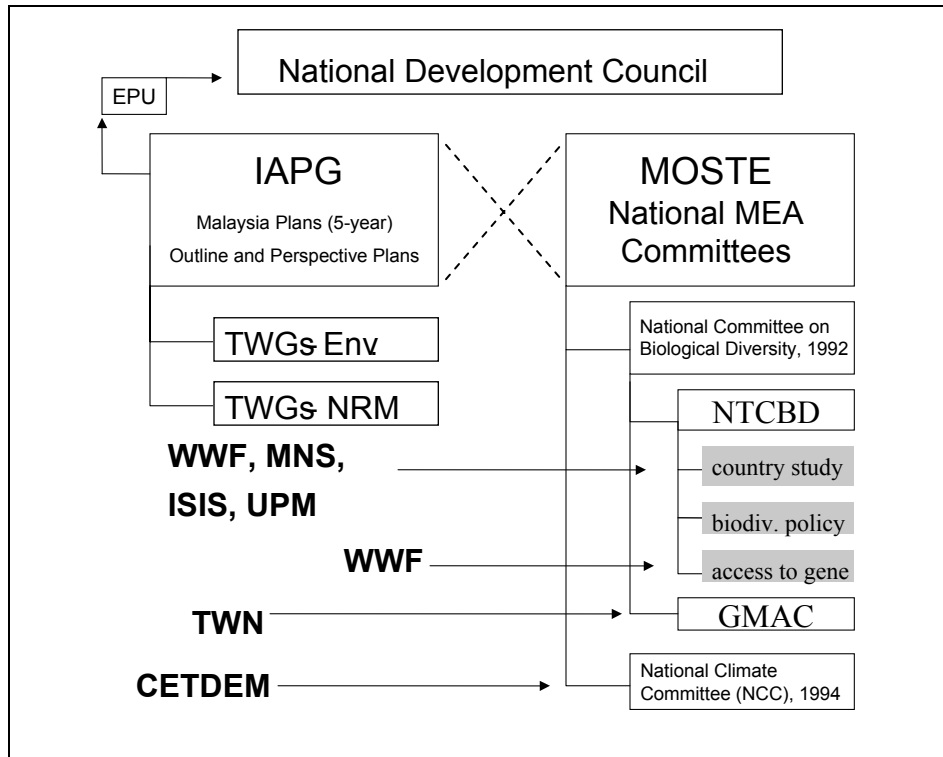
Over the years, the IAPG has consulted with various NGOs and research institutes, such as WWF Malaysia, the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM), Third World Network, the Consumers Association of Penang, the Environmental Management and Research Association of Malaysia

(ENSEARCH), the Business Council for Sustainable Development of Malaysia, and the Maritime Institute of Malaysia. Multi-stakeholder participation is generally limited, however, to occasional consultation and funneled through its technical working groups, such as those established under the 7th Malaysia Plan.

As figure 2.1 illustrates, participation of multi-stakeholder groups is also limited to low-level task forces in the MEA national coordinating committees, with the exception of the Centre for Environment, Technology and Development, Malaysia (CETDEM), which has participated in the NCC since 1997. CETDEM's director is a leading authority in Malaysia on climate change and is perhaps one of the few individuals who has followed the climate negotiations since the beginning of the intergovernmental policy process. As a result, CETDEM has played an active role in the national committee and was even given the task of drafting the education, training and public participation chapter of Malaysia's Initial National Communication.²¹

Non-governmental groups and research institutes are more numerous and active in the task forces under the NTCBD, mostly because the nature of Malaysia's reporting obligations of the CBD enables them to make significant contributions on the technical issues. The Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, for example, jointly coordinated the country study task force under the NTCBD, with members representing the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), MNS, WWF-Malaysia and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia. These research institutes and NGOs assisted in compiling background documents, which were then used as substantive inputs for the country study. WWF-Malaysia was a former member of the still active task force on Access to Genetic Resources, and the Third World Network is a current member of the GMAC task force.

Figure 2.1: Multi-stakeholder Participation, Malaysia, Post Rio



Assessment

Since the 1992 Rio Conference, Malaysia has sought to integrate environmental considerations into existing institutional structures and processes for economic and development planning. In 1994, the EPU created an environmental unit under the its Regional Economics Section, technical working groups on environment and natural resource management were established under the IAPG, and the Director of the Department of the Environment was invited to participate in the National Development Council (NDC). Moreover, cross participation of environmental and economic planning officials in the various committees and working groups under IAPG and MOSTE facilitate the process of integrating environment and development in decision-making.

Despite these changes, several factors constrain the implementation of sustainable development and MEAs in Malaysia. From an institutional perspective, an overall structure at the national level to coordinate inter-ministerial policy responses and input from multi-stakeholder groups is lacking. Although the Cabinet transferred the follow-up of Agenda 21 to the IAPG, this body is essentially a planning agency that facilitates the preparation of the Malaysia Plans. At a higher administrative level, an implementation and coordination unit exists with the NDC, but the unit reportedly only examines economic dimensions of development.

The low frequency and sector specific nature of the committee meetings represents additional institutional constraints. As mentioned above, the IAPG only meets approximately every two years for the mid-term reviews and for the preparation of subsequent development plans. Under the MOSTE committees, the NCBD meets on a more regular basis, but the frequency of its meetings is viewed as inadequate.²² The NCC, however, has only reportedly met once in the past two years to compile the initial communication. In fact, one of the strategic recommendations of Malaysia's Initial National Communication calls for closer inter-agency cooperation.²³

Cross participation of environment and development planning officials opens lines of communication, but the infrequency of committee meetings is inadequate to craft the needed integrated and holistic policies.

Inter-institutional coordination is also limited in scope, making it difficult to identify possible synergies in implementing MEAs and integrating MEA objectives into overall economic development planning. Although the MEA committees are structured under the same ministry, the NCC and the NCBD have never organized joint working sessions. Moreover, despite officials from MOSTE sitting on the technical working groups of the IAPG and a representative of the EPU sitting on the NCC and the NCBD, a more intensified form of cooperation between the MEA committees and the IAPG is absent. The complex relations and jurisdiction between Federal and State Governments in Malaysia makes institutional coordination and the implementation of environmental commitments all the more difficult and challenging.²⁴

The framework and functioning of national institutional coordination appears to contribute to a sector-by-sector approach to sustainable development. One of the expectations of Malaysia's Initial Communication on climate is that it will increase awareness on the impact of climate change across sectors. The 1997 Country Study on Biological Diversity points to the same direction, recommending the need to integrate biodiversity considerations into all levels of planning and decision-making.²⁵

Although much progress has been made over the past decade to consult with multi-stakeholder groups, public participation and involvement in decision-making is not very advanced.

Multi-stakeholder participation has made noticeable progress over the past ten years, but as a concept it remains relatively undeveloped in practice. Although one of the strategies of the Regional Economics Section of the EPU is to promote participation from all

sectors of society in environmental management, interaction with multi-stakeholder groups has generally not developed further than occasional consultations in the IAPG working groups. NGOs are slowly joining the

policy-making process, as witnessed by their participation in the task forces under MEA national coordinating bodies, but they are not yet involved at the level where policy decisions are made.

The Malaysian Academy of Sciences has suggested the need to establish an overall coordinating body for sustainable development with a more advanced form of interaction with multi-stakeholder groups. The government has been reluctant, however, to agree with this idea for several reasons. First, there is concern that a new coordinating arrangement could clutter existing institutional arrangements, namely the IAPG and the NDC. Since the latter is Malaysia's supreme development planning body under the Cabinet and chaired by the Prime Minister, another committee would have to be under it, precisely at the level where the IAPG operates. A second reason relates to the dissolution of the National Steering Committee after Rio. At the time, there was widespread concern at the domestic level that UNCED was becoming too focused on the environment, and that integrating environmental and social dimensions into development could compromise the double-digit economic growth rates.

Several reasons may explain why a more intensified form of interaction between multi-stakeholder groups and government has not unfolded in Malaysia. First, general public awareness of environmental issues was virtually insignificant until the early 1990s.²⁶ Second, although public perception of environmental issues has undoubtedly increased following Rio, the number of environmental NGOs is limited to a rather modest number²⁷ and they have tended to undertake activities independently of one another. This began to change somewhat in the 1990s with the organization of networking groups such as the Malaysian Climate Change Group (MCCG), but member organizations are still quite limited in number. Third, business and industry related organizations have not shown much interest in matters relating to the MEA policies. Fourth, the national decision-making culture of Malaysia has traditionally been top-down in nature, precluding any significant involvement of non-state actors, be they from the private or nonprofit sector.²⁸ And finally, the very low frequency of meetings in institutional coordinating mechanisms does not provide an enabling policy environment for a more intensified relationship.

4

Thailand

Institutional Coordination and Multi-stakeholder Participation

Institutional Coordination

The National Environment Board (NEB) is the principal coordinating structure at the national level overseeing the implementation of MEAs. The Board was originally created in 1975 under the initial Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act (ECNEQ). The NEB was restructured in 1978 and 1979, and then transferred under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy (MOSTE) with the enactment of the 1992 ECNEQ. Operating at the cabinet level, the NEB is the highest decision-making body on environmental issues.

The Prime Minister chairs the Board with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of MOSTE serving as vice chairmen. Members include the Ministers of Defense, Finance, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Transport and Communications, Interior, Education, Public Health, Industry, and the Secretaries General of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) and the Bureau of the Budget. In addition, the composition of the NEB also includes eight persons qualified in environmental matters, no less of which half represent private sector interests. MOSTE's Office of Environmental Policy and Planning (OEPP) is the NEB's secretariat and focal point for most MEAs.

The functions and responsibilities of the NEB entail prescribing environmental quality standards pursuant to the 1992 ECNEQ.²⁹ The NEB is also required to prepare a long-term Policy and Prospective Plan for Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality (PPP). Spanning a period of 20 years (1997-2016), the plan establishes a framework of policies and guidelines aiming to integrate natural resource management, environmental conservation and sustainable economic and social development. In essence, the PPP is a response to decades of industrially oriented development. The PPP is further divided into a series of five-year environmental quality management plans outlining the roles and functions of government ministries and state agencies in implementing the plan.

Today the NEB is a complex institutional matrix composed of 42 sub-committees and 13 expert committees covering an extensive range of sector and cross-sector issues.³⁰ Individual committees are assigned to the climate, biodiversity, and wetlands conventions, the Agenda 21 Sub-

Committee oversees general sustainable development issues, and several committees are formed for *ad hoc* purposes (e.g. preparing the National Committee on the Policy and Perspective Plan for Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality).

National Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity

The National Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity was established in June 1993, shortly after Thailand signed the Convention. The Committee operates under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), and the OEPP serves as its secretariat. Members of the Committee include various line agencies under MOAC, MOSTE, Public Health and Foreign Affairs.

The Committee's mandate has changed over the past few years from a consultative body designed to facilitate the ratification of the Convention to one formulating National Policies, Measures and Plans on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (Thailand's national biodiversity strategy).³¹ Several *ad hoc* working groups have been established under the committee to carry out these tasks, such as the Working Group on National Policies, Measures and Plans on Conservation and the Sustainable Utilization of its Benefits, the Working Group on Alien Species, the Working Group on the Clearing House Mechanism and the Working Group on Biodiversity Data Management.

Thailand is one of the few countries which has not yet ratified the CBD. Interestingly, the NEB approved the Convention for ratification in March 1994, but for legal reasons and a lack of understanding of the issues, the Parliament has not yet acted. Some NGOs and CBOs also reject the convention, fearing that Thailand may lose jurisdictional authority or national sovereignty over its natural resources. Despite this rather unique situation, Thailand strives to comply with the Convention's obligations, particularly through the implementation of the national biodiversity strategy.³²

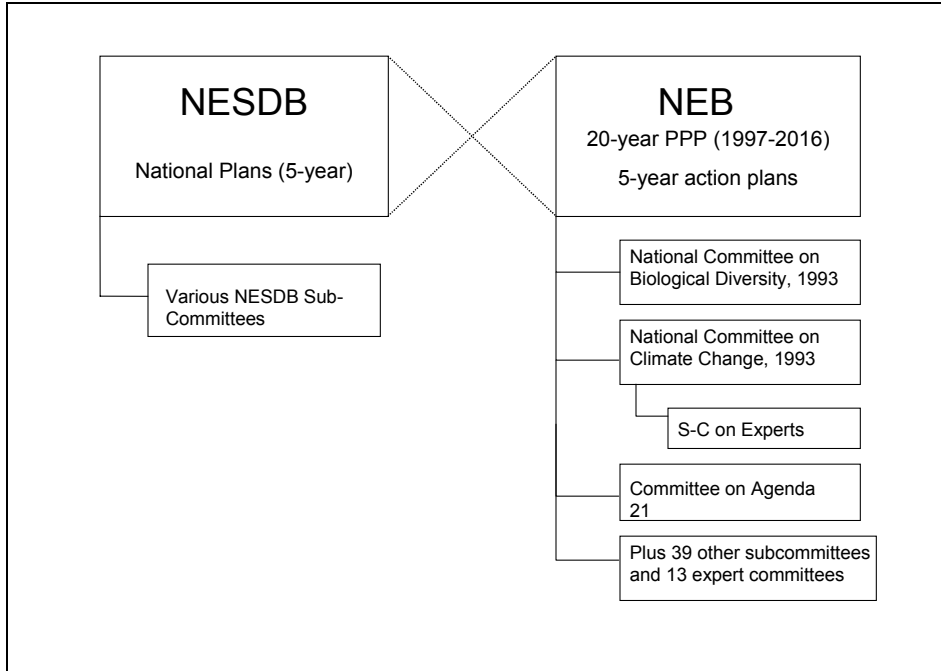
National Committee on Climate Change

In September 1993, following Thailand's ratification of the FCCC, the NEB established the National Committee on Climate Change as one of its sub-committees. The Committee's main task is to advise the RTG on matters relating to the Convention and to develop a national policy on climate change issues. Policies and issues advanced in the Committee have been integrated in the five-year National Plans since the early 1990s.³³

The Permanent Secretary of MOSTE chairs the Committee and OEPP serves as its secretariat. Members include officials from the principal line ministries, a representative from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the Chulabhorn Research Institute, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the Thai Chamber of Commerce, as well as the

President of the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) and the Director of the Energy Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University. A Sub-Committee of Experts on the Global Climate Change Convention, headed by the Secretary General of the OEPP, provides technical recommendations to the Committee.

Figure 3: National Coordination, Thailand



Multi-stakeholder Participation

Multi-stakeholder participation in environmental policy-making, especially from the non-governmental sector, is a relatively new and untested concept in Thailand. Since the early 1990s, however, multi-stakeholder participation has gradually gained acceptance by Thai authorities and has been explicitly mentioned various legislative revisions and in the aims of new policies and national development plans.

The enactment of the 1992 ECNEQ brought about some significant legislative changes supporting NGO participation. Section 7 of the law, for example, recognizes public participation by providing registered NGOs the right to participate in environmental management. Participation has also included assistance to government in public awareness campaigns and advice or recommendations to government agencies for environmental management as indicated under Section 8 of the same law. Registering with the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP/MOSTE) entitles NGOs to apply for financial support under the Environment Fund, also established by the 1992 law.

Article 56 of the New Thai Constitution of 1997 also grants public participation in environmental management. The 8th National Plan, also approved in 1997, underlines the importance of public participation in development and states as one of its objectives “to reform the system of public administration so as to allow greater participation of nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, communities and the general public in the process of national development.” (NESDB 1997: 3) Decentralizing power and authority from the central government to regional, provincial and local authorities, as well as strengthening the relationship between government, the private sector, NGOs and local people is one of the overall policies of the 1997 long-term PPP.

Multi-stakeholder Participation in National Coordinating Bodies

Multi-stakeholder participation in the NESDB and the NEB is relatively weak. As mentioned previously, eight other members participate in the NEB of whom no fewer than four must come from the private sector.³⁴ It is important to stress, however, that the non-governmental and private sector representatives who sit on the two Boards officially serve in their personal capacity.³⁵

Multi-stakeholder participation in the various sub-committees under the NEB is also limited, but recent revisions to the committees have brought welcome changes. The president of the TEI sits on the National Climate Change Committee; other stakeholder groups in the committee include the Chulabhorn Research Institute (a think-tank supported by the Royal family) and the Energy Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University. The OEPP commissioned TEI to draft the chapter on greenhouse gas inventories for Thailand’s Initial National Communication under the Climate Change Convention. This illustrates an NGO interacting with government through a national coordinating mechanism to participate in fulfilling commitments under an MEA.

The Earth Council and TEI have promoted the establishment of a Thai council for sustainable development with greater representation from multi-stakeholder groups.³⁶ The composition and function of NCSDs vary widely from country to country, and the NEB, particularly its Sub-committee on Agenda 21, represents one variation of the NCSD concept.³⁷ In 1999, TEI increased its efforts and was eventually invited and designated by the OEPP to attend the Earth Council’s International Forum on NCSDs in April 2000. In June, TEI submitted a list of recommendations to OEPP in view of establishing a Thai NCSD. The proposal called for the RTG to increase nongovernmental participation in the sub-committee and enhance “the roles, and functions, duties, and powers and responsibilities of the new organization to be more integrative, meaningful and holistic.”³⁸ In July, the OEPP revised the composition of the sub-committee by including a representative of TEI and several other stakeholder groups.

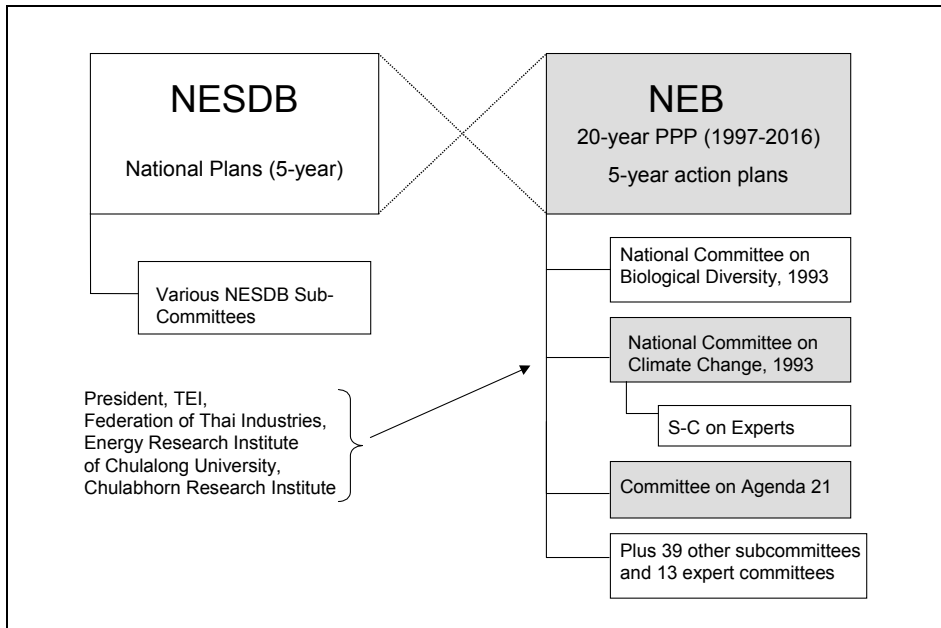
Public Consultation Processes

The RTG has also made progress in terms of consulting the public in decision-making processes. During the early drafting phases of the 7th and 8th national plans (1992-1996 and 1997-2001), the NESDB convened a series of regional workshops with the aim of providing input from various multi-stakeholder groups. Public consultation during the 9th National Plan was organized more loosely in order to avoid blocking stakeholder groups from the process. Nevertheless, the NESDB opening admits that public participation is still weak and needs to be enhanced.

In preparing the 20-year PPP, the OEPP facilitated a series of seminars for the purposes of integrating the views and opinions of various stakeholders such as NGOs, the media, and academic institutions. Prior to adopting Thailand's national biodiversity strategy in 1998, the OEPP organized a meeting with a panel with over 100 experts from government and private sector organizations. Recommendations from the meeting were then integrated into the national strategy.

Although numerous laws, policies and plans extend new rights to non-governmental actors, the degree to which government should include them in policy-making remains somewhat ambiguous. As one policy observer remarks, NGO participation in most cases has been limited to providing legal aid to persons injured or who have sustained environmental damage.³⁹

Figure 3.1: Multi-stakeholder Participation, Thailand



Assessment

Thailand's experience with respect to institutional coordination and multi-stakeholder participation in policy-making exposes both promises and constraints. On the one hand, new laws and policies have been enacted throughout the 1990s calling for decentralization and democratization, and especially an increase in public participation in environmental decision-making processes. The RTG has also strengthened the NEB and created various sub-committees to address individual MEAs.

Nevertheless, many of the institutional obstacles and constraints facing the Thai government in the early 1990s are still present. Competing roles, over centralization of policy implementation, inadequate integration of environmental and development policies and ineffective responses to international issues obstruct

Although institutional coordination has improved over the past few years, competing institutional roles, over centralization and inadequate integration of economic and environmental policies roles still hampers the implementation of MEAs.

the effective implementation of international environmental commitments (Ministry of Environment and Energy 2000: 19). To provide a telling illustration of competing institutional roles, the national focal point of the CBD is the OEPP/MOSTE; however the MOAC has administrative and legal jurisdiction over most natural resources. OEPP, on the other hand, is the national focal point and the secretariat of the National Committee on Biological Diversity, while MOAC presides over the group and reportedly attaches less importance, at least in the views of some observers, to the Convention.

The NEB, while having received Cabinet-level authority in 1992, has become a monstrous institutional matrix with sporadic multi-stakeholder involvement. There thus appears to be a significant gap between the intent of legislation (ECNEQ), policies (PPP), and National Plans (8th National Plan) on the one hand, and the practice of public participation in decision making (NEB) on the other.

Multi-stakeholder participation has been limited in the NEB and the NESDB to eminent persons and select organizations.

Several factors explain Thailand's limited but growing experience with multi-stakeholder participation and consultation in environmental policy-making. First, the non-governmental movement is relatively young and still

developing. Although the government lists over 12,000 foundations and associations that are registered with the National Culture Commission, less than five percent of them work on development issues⁴⁰ and a similar figure likely applies to environmental organizations. Second,

while environmental NGOs have diversified their interests considerably over the past 20 years, they have failed to create cross-sectional alliances or networks similar to the National Coordinating Committee on Rural Development (CORD).⁴¹ Third, very few NGOs have acquired the experience and capacity (personnel and financial) to work effectively in national level politics.⁴² TEI is widely known as a leading Thai environmental NGO, but in many respects the organization is in a league by itself, providing an extensive range of services and working on projects from local to international levels as well as with the business sector.⁴³ The great majority of NGOs are actually CBOs working at the grass-roots level of society. And fourth, while policy-makers have welcomed the notion of public participation and consultation in environmental management, there is a lingering reluctance or caution on behalf of government to involve NGOs in decision-making forums. The environmental NGO movement originated from student-organized ecology groups and protests in the early 1970s, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many environmental movements adopted confrontational and anti-state attitudes. These factors taken together help explain why a more advanced form of partnership between government and multi-stakeholder groups has not yet emerged at the national level.

5

Implementing MEAs

Selected Projects and Coordinated Activities in Malaysia and Thailand

Many development and/or environment projects have been implemented in cooperation with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and bilateral as well as multilateral donor agencies. The discussion below highlights a snapshot of projects and activities implemented in Malaysia and Thailand. Although the list of projects is far from exhaustive, it identifies a handful of projects linked to the implementation of MEAs. The list also indicates a need to advance reflection on ways to further implement and foster synergies across agreements at the national and sub-national levels.

Intergovernmental Organizations and Multilateral Donor Institutions

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided funding between 1991-1992 and 1994-1997 to support research on compiling national information on biodiversity and to assist OEPP in creating a network of experts on biological resources in Thailand. The outcome

resulted in the Thailand Biodiversity Country Study in 1997. The roster of experts later became a key source for various biodiversity initiatives, including the national strategy on biodiversity.⁴⁴ UNEP also supported the preparation of Malaysia's Assessment of Biological Diversity.

Through the UNDP, Malaysia and Thailand both received funding from the GEF to prepare its initial national communication under the Climate Change Convention. The national climate committees in the respective countries oversaw the compilation of the report, which were undertaken in cooperation with various stakeholder groups. TEI, the only NGO to sit on the committee, was commissioned to draft the chapter on greenhouse gas emission inventories. The report identifies the possible impacts of climate change across sectors and looks at GHG projections and mitigation options across sectors.⁴⁵

The UNDP currently has two GEF large-scale projects on its agenda in Thailand. The first is a biomass project related to energy production that is being implemented with the OEPP and the National Energy Policy Office (NEPO), and the second is a proposal pending approval and funding on the Mekong River Basin Wetland Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme.

The expected outputs of the Mekong River Basin Programme activities will ultimately meet objectives of CITES, Ramsar, and the CBD. It is important to underline, however, that the project was not conceived to meet the goals of multiple MEAs. The project was submitted under the GEF CBD funding, but it addresses multiple objectives related to wetland biodiversity conservation and sustainable use (RAMSAR) and fulfils priorities identified in national biodiversity strategies.

The GEF has also funded a total of 133 small grants programme projects focusing on climate change or international waters since 1994, of which 46 are still ongoing as of this writing. The beneficiaries of these projects are CBOs and local communities.

Bilateral Donor Agencies

Numerous bilateral donor agencies are active in Thailand, including GtZ, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Danish Cooperation on Environment and Development (DANCED), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), US-Asian Environmental Partnership (US-AEP), Australia Aid (AUSAID), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development

During the 1998-2001 period, DANCED programmes in Malaysia and Thailand have emphasized integrating environmental considerations in development plans and policies. The programmes have also support for the implementation of international conventions through awareness raising and capacity building initiatives.⁴⁶ In Thailand, for example,

DANCED assigns a high priority to the ratification and implementation of MEAs, including the FCCC, CBD, CITES and Ramsar, POPs, the Basel Convention, and the international recommendations in the forestry sector.

BOX 2

Selection of DANCED Projects linked to MEAs in Thailand

- ❑ Support for Thailand's Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1994. Funds for this project enabled IUCN experts to participate in the drafting of the national biodiversity strategy, supported the 1996 Conference on Prospects of Cooperation on Biodiversity Activities, and assisted in compiling the lists of selected groups of species.
- ❑ The Natural Resources Management Support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC). This project seeks to develop MOAC's capacity to respond to Thailand's obligations under multilateral environmental conventions.
- ❑ Support for the implementation of CITES in collaboration with the Royal Forest Department (RFD) of MOAC, 1995-1998. This programme trained Thai custom officials, police and CITES officials on the modalities of the Convention.
- ❑ Natural Resources and Biodiversity Institute Development Project (NAREBI), 1999-2001. This project assisted MOAC in establishing NAREBI, a think-tank designed to coordinate among MOAC line agencies and other ministries as well as with NGOs on the implementation of natural resource and environmental management policies.
- ❑ National Inventory of Natural Wetlands (1995-1998), OEPP/MOSTE. The project supports the compilation of a national wetlands survey and promotes the ratification of Ramsar.

In Malaysia, DANCED has been active in supporting compliance with the RAMSAR Convention, and has implemented a project in cooperation with Wetlands International to establish the contours of sustainable management for the Tasek Bera Ramsar site.

During the mid-1990s, WWF-Malaysia cooperated in an international review of the implementation of the CBD funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).⁴⁷

As the above list indicates, most DANCED funded projects to date have focused on green issues. Several brown issue projects on the Basel Convention, POPs, and climate change are being developed. Although all DANCED projects to date have been designed with the objective of supporting the implementation of individual conventions, implicit synergies spanning several green issue projects can be identified (e.g. NAREBI).

The DANCED will soon enter a third project phase from 2002-2008. Implementing international environmental conventions will continue to be one of the overall objectives.

NGO Initiatives

NGOs have been involved numerous activities linked to the implementation of specific MEAs in both countries as well as on a regional basis. In Malaysia, CETDEM has been active on the biodiversity and climate issues. At one point, it attempted to link climate change and forestry issues in the framework of a meeting organized by the Malaysian Climate Change Group (MCCG), but the event was not as successful as originally hoped since invited participants did not respond with much enthusiasm. At the regional level, CETDEM is in the process of organizing a Biodiversity Policy Innovation Workshop to discuss challenges and improvements in the implementation of biodiversity policies across in countries (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia).

In Thailand, there are also many different initiatives, particularly related to climate change and energy issues. For example, the Thai-Danish Sustainable Energy Project is a joint initiative of the Appropriate Technology Association (ATA) and the Danish Organization for Renewable Energy (OVE). Launched in 1997, the programme addresses energy and environmental problems of the Isaan Region in Northeast Thailand through capacity building, training and awareness-raising. The programme also seeks to stimulate cooperation among consumers, producers and authorities on achieving sustainable, energy solutions.

6

Conclusions

Findings and Policy Recommendations

The experiences of Malaysia and Thailand lend partial support to UNEP's rather pessimistic observation quoted at the outset of this paper. While institutional frameworks have been established in both countries, response strategies have generally been slow to emerge and disconnected with overall economic development planning. In both countries, this has resulted in part from a separation of institutions designed to look at environmental issues and those addressing development planning. Other factors contributing to the slow momentum of MEA implementation are the low frequency of committee and planning agency meetings as well as the absence of a significant inter-

institutional relationship to address possible synergies across MEA agreements.

On a more optimistic note, exceptions can be identified to the GEO—2000 assessment. With support from the GEF and the UNDP, Malaysia and Thailand have complied with their obligations under the FCCC. Malaysia has also fulfilled its commitments under the CBD, and Thailand, although not yet a contracting party to this instrument, has also released a national report and biodiversity strategy. Good practices can also be identified in terms of working with the constraints of a fragmented institutional structure. In Thailand, representatives from the OEPP/MOSTE chair the working group designed to draft the environment chapters of the national development plans of the NESDB. As a result, policies advanced in the NEB's climate committee have been integrated in the Thai National Plans since the mid-1990s. In Malaysia, MOSTE staff overseeing MEA coordination sits on the technical working groups of the IAPG, and a representative of IAPG participates on the respective national MEA committees.

The nature and degree of multi-stakeholder participation in decision-making bodies are also similar in Malaysia and Thailand. Although progress has been achieved since the early 1990s, participation is generally limited to “on demand” consultation or involvement in low-level technical working groups or task forces. When compared to the actual outputs of the MEA national committees, however, multi-stakeholder participation has actually been rather significant. In Thailand, OEPP commissioned TEI to write the national inventories of GHG for the Initial Communication, and in Malaysia, CETDEM contributed the chapter on education, training and public participation and WFF-Malaysia, MSN and several research institutes played an important role in compiling the background documents used to draft the country study.

Several obstacles have clearly prevented a more effective institutional response to the implementation of MEAs and Agenda 21 more generally. For both government and multi-stakeholder groups, the lack of financial and staff capacity, coupled with little public and institutional awareness are the most important contributing factors to the present situation. In Malaysia, for example, the staff assigned to MEAs in the Environment Conservation and Management Division was limited to just a few individuals until very recently.

The lack of financial and staff capacity, coupled with little public and institutional awareness, are the most important contributing factors.

Various donor institutions and grant-giving foundations have financed numerous projects to support the implementation of MEAs in the Malaysia and Thailand. Although the range of these activities has extended from national to sub-national and local levels, the projects have generally aimed to implement the objectives of individual agreements, and little reflection has been given on ways to enhance the

coordination the objectives of multiple MEAs within the scope of a single project.

The outlook appears encouraging, however. The experience of compiling the national reports and communications has increased awareness of the issues and the need to better integrate the environmental objectives within individual agreements across sectors. Experience has also pointed to the need to improve practice of institutional coordination and continue to enhance stakeholder participation in decision-making processes.

Recommendations

Strengthening National Coordination

Institutional coordination related to the implementation of MEAs suffers from fragmented structures and sector specific management. Although the focal points of these committees are generally located within the same office and ministry, the national coordinating committees meet infrequently and undertake activities in parallel.

Recommendations

- ❑ Closer relations should be established between MEA coordinating committees and national development councils to ensure that the environmental objectives of MEAs are more fully integrated across sectors and into short and long-term development plans and policies. This may entail reforming the institutional landscape and/or reviewing the roles of individual ministries.
- ❑ National MEA committees should increase the frequency of meetings and organize occasional joint workshops with other committees (e.g. green-brown issues) with the aim of identifying means to further implement the conventions through more coordinated actions at the national level.

Enhancing Multi-stakeholder Participation

An enabling environment for multi-stakeholder participation in national coordinating mechanisms is lacking in both countries. Current policies and strategies aiming to ensure public participation in decision-making processes are often ambiguous and do not provide clear and sufficient guidance to government agencies on how to bring non-governmental actors on board.

- ❑ Governments should broaden membership in national coordinating committees to include representatives from the

private sector, NGOs, research institutes and academia on a more permanent basis in the design and implementation of policies.

- While some degree of flexibility needs to be maintained, policies and strategies on multi-stakeholder participation should be more specific on the modalities for involvement in decision and policy-making processes.

Building Capacity and Increasing Public Awareness

The lack of capacity and awareness at the national and sub-national levels government continues to be a significant obstacle for the effective the implementation of MEAs. There is a need to build capacity and increase public awareness in both governmental and non-governmental sectors of society.

- Capacity building and public awareness programmes should be designed with the aim of identifying inter-linkages and coordination across MEAs. Targeted audiences should include government officials, NGOs and private sector representatives at the national and sub-national levels of society.
- To the extent possible, capacity building and awareness programmes should be implemented through existing structures, such as the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in Malaysia or through NGO networks like CORD in Thailand, and target national and sub-national levels of governance.

Environment/Development Projects

Bilateral and multilateral donor institutions offer promising avenues to support concrete examples of MEA synergies and coordination at national and sub-national levels. Projects implemented to date, however, have been designed to address the objectives of individual agreements.

- Funding institutions and implementing agencies should develop pilot projects on a national, sub-national, and/or regional scale that explicitly aim to link the objectives of multiple MEAs, either within the set of green issues or crosscutting green and brown themes.

Virtual Enabling Frameworks

Internet sites and other virtual frameworks provide an important means for information dissemination and interactive communication. Although governments, private sector actors, NGOs, and other actors maintain Internet sites, their full potential as an interactive tool is not being met. While many Internet sites provide useful information linked to policies on sustainable development and MEAs, they are generally limited descriptive information.

- Governments need to investigate the means of enhancing Internet sites to provide more direct and frequent interaction with multi-stakeholder groups. “Virtual road shows,” for example, could be used to broaden public audiences at sub-national levels, reduce transaction costs, and generally increase the efficiency of consultation processes.

Notes

¹ United Nations Environment Programme (1999), pp. 237-238.

² For an overview, see Meadowcroft (1999a & 1999b).

³ See Chapters 8 and 38 as well as Section 3 of Agenda 21. Considerable ambiguity has arisen in both literature and general parlance as to what constitutes a national coordinating structure for sustainable development. This paper defines NCSDs as institutional arrangements composed of government officials and representatives of NGOs or civil society organizations, the private, profit-making sector and academic institutions. Arrangements that are purely intra-governmental in composition are referred to as national coordinating structures or bodies, and those that are purely non-governmental in nature are simply identified as multi-stakeholder bodies.

⁴ Commission on Sustainable Development 1997. Overall Progress Achieved Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Report of the Secretary General, Addendum (Chapter 8 of Agenda 21) E/CN.17/1997/2/ Add.7, p. 5

⁵ Maurer (1999), p. 2.

⁶ Since the 1997 five-year review of UNCED, more developing countries have started to create national-level coordinating bodies with stakeholder representation, and almost all Latin American states have established an NCSD. Africa and Asia remain the exceptions, though. The Earth Council has played an important role in facilitating the process of creating such mechanisms. For an overview and progress report of selected NCSDs worldwide, see Earth Council (1999-2000).

⁷ Fiji's Sustainable Development Bill proposes the creation of an NCSD. This bill is still pending approval, however, and due to its complexity and the ensuing political problems, the bill will not likely be enacted in its current form. For a discussion of this bill and the proposed NCSD structure, see discussion in Nicole and McGregor (1999).

⁸ This list does not include countries who are members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) because of overseas territories or possessions, such as the United States, United Kingdom or France.

⁹ Meadowcroft (1999), p. 228.

¹⁰ Imperial (1999), p. 452.

¹¹ Murphy and Bendell (1999), p. 2.

¹² Boyer and Crémieux (1999), p. 260.

¹³ Imperial (1999), p. 452.

¹⁴ Boyer and Crémieux (1999), p. 277.

¹⁵ For a thorough background and overview of Malaysia's contribution to UNCED, see discussion in Mohd Taib (1997).

¹⁶ For the 8th Malaysia Plan (2001-2005) there are only two working groups (environment and natural resource management).

¹⁷ The task agency under MOSTE is the Conservation and Environmental Management Division.

¹⁸ The NCBD includes the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Primary Industries, Agriculture, Land and Cooperative Development, the Departments of the Environment, Agriculture, Fisheries, Wildlife and National Parks, national research institutes and representatives of State Governments. Research institutes include ISIS, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, and the Malaysian Agricultural Research Institute.

¹⁹ There has been some talk of creating a task force on promoting institutional and educational awareness, but this has not yet materialized. For a complete list of government and non-governmental institutions, see Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment – Malaysia (1997), pp. 125-142.

²⁰ Coordinating committees also exist for the ozone (Montreal Protocol) and wetlands (Ramsar Convention) agreements.

²¹ See Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment – Malaysia (2000), pp. 93-96.

²² The task force on access to genetic resources is an exception.

²³ Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment - Malaysia (2000), p. 98.

²⁴ Conflicts of interest between Federal and State Governments have been frequently cited as a major challenge in implementing environmental policies and MEAs. See Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment – Malaysia (1997), p. 122.

²⁵ Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment - Malaysia (1997), p. 153.

²⁶ Results of a 1986 survey, for example, indicated that the public ranked the environment next to last on a list of eight public issues! (Modh Taib 1997: 32).

²⁷ A WFF project estimated about 10 environmental NGOs working in Malaysia. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1999), p. 15.

²⁸ In fact, the participation that does exist today is largely a result of donor institutions requiring stakeholder dialogues in the design and implementation of development projects.

²⁹ For a complete list of duties, see sections 13 and 32-34 of the 1992 ECNEQ (Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment 1992)

³⁰ The 13 expert committees involve various aspects related to the preparation of environmental impact assessments.

³¹ For additional roles and responsibilities of the Committee, see Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment – Thailand (2000a), pp. 56-57.

³² For a list of projects under the strategy, see Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment - Thailand (2000a), pp. 22-54.

³³ See Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment – Thailand (2000b), p. 77.

³⁴ Because members from the nongovernmental and private sector participate in their individual capacity, it is often difficult to identify to which organizations they belong. It is interesting to note, however, that the former and current TEI presidents both sit on the NEB. Thailand's 1997 National Report to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) lists the following organizations and individuals as the eight additional NEB members: the President of the TEI, the Director of Thailand's National Commission on Women's Affairs, the president of an oil company, the Secretary General of the Population and Community Development Association, the Chairman of the Society for the Conservation of National Treasures and Environment, a senior civil servant of the Ministry of University Affairs, a professor of environmental engineering, and the Vice President of Chulabhorn Research Institute.

³⁵ The personal capacity status of multi-stakeholder groups in the NEB is reflected on the list of members in these mechanisms where only the names—not organizations—appear.

³⁶ TEI became involved in these efforts in 1998 on the occasion of an Earth Council sponsored regional NCSD conference in Bangkok.

³⁷ For a list and description of 20 NCSDs worldwide, see Earth Council (1999-2000).

³⁸ Thai Agenda 21 News Brief 2000, 15 February 2000, p. 3. Thailand Environment Institute, Bangkok.

³⁹ Mallikamarl (1995), p. 324.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment – Thailand (1997), p. 109

⁴¹ CORD is a network of over 200 CBOs working on development issues. For a discussion on the origins and contours of the Thai NGO movement, see So and Lee (1999).

⁴² As of this writing, only 114 NGOs are registered with the NEQP, up from 67 in 1997. Since the ECNEQ established the Environment Fund 1992, only a total 25 projects have received funding.

⁴³ Former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, who still serves as its executive chairman, founded TEI.

⁴⁴ For further information, see Biodiversity Conservation in Thailand: National Report, p. 62.

⁴⁵ See Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (2000). Thailand's Initial National Communication under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, October.

⁴⁶ For a complete list of DANCED projects in Malaysia and Thailand, see Ministry of Environment and Energy (1999).

⁴⁷ For an evaluation of this project, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1999).

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