

I. Project Description

1. Background

The growth of the economy in the APEC region brings positive effects on the lives of people with greater prosperity and material wealth. On the other hand, it can potentially damage our environment if we continue the way we have been conducting our business. As we increase consumption of goods and services, through faster turnover of new products, we will produce wastes in greater quantities than we have imagined in the past. Already, in many of the big cities around the APEC region, waste disposal has become a major issue. Therefore, in order to make our economy more sustainable, it is essential to seriously implement the 3Rs of environmental protection, namely Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, as part of integrated sustainable waste management and resource utilization.

In some of the APEC economies, and in selected industry sectors, efforts of 3Rs are already underway. Companies have started to design and develop recyclable products from the conceptual stage to take the entire product life cycle into consideration or, more aptly put, lifecycle design. New business opportunities have been created, while addressing these issues.

On the other hand, most APEC economies are still in their infancy stage as far as implementing 3Rs is concerned. This is due to the fact that it requires not only individual company efforts but also social infrastructure, support industries, relevant technologies, education and awareness, and strong commitment of all stakeholders as well as an appropriate regulatory/policy framework. In other words, an entire social system has to be created to support 3Rs.

The issues have become much more complex, as APEC economies are moving towards more liberalized regimes. Trans-boundary movement of products and services has become increasingly prevalent, reflecting growth in trade and investment. In order to fully promote 3Rs, therefore, it is ideal if we establish a compatible recycling system, whereby goods produced in one economy can be used, and recycled, in any one of the economies within the APEC region.

The importance of developing a recycling-based economy (RBE) was identified by the ABAC during its deliberations in 2003 and included in its recommendation of that year to APEC Leaders.

2. Objectives

Taking the ABAC recommendation into account, APEC Human Resources Development Capacity Building Network has proposed this project, which is the first step towards establishing an RBE in APEC. The aim of this project is to achieve the following objectives to start the daunting task of establishing an APEC-wide system for sustainable development:

- To identify issues and challenges of implementing 3Rs (Reuse, Reduce & Recycling) in the member economies,
- To share best practices of recycling systems used in selected industries
- To design, develop and conduct capacity building programs on a pilot scale basis in three member economies for specific industry sectors,
- To disseminate the programs, materials, and best practices to all APEC economies,
- To establish a network of experts to continue to share information and build a workable RBE system in APEC.

3. Activities

The project was composed of four major components²

(1) Kick-off Expert Workshop

A project kick-off workshop among experts to plan and design pilot programs was held in August/September 2004 in Japan. Sixteen experts in the recycling field from ten economies (China, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, Chinese Taipei and Thailand) were represented at the kick-off meeting. The current status of the recycling of waste in each of these economies, and some best practices, were shared amongst the experts. The experts decided on tentative programs on capacity building activities for the following twelve months.

(2) Pilot Programs

Pilot programs were conducted in three locations to gather issues and best practices in the APEC region. Each program had its specific themes or approaches to accommodate the divergence of the region³.

a) A roundtable discussion in Mexico City, Mexico, in February 25 & 26, 2005.

Ten overseas and 13 Mexican experts gathered from 6 economies (Canada, Chile, Mexico, USA, Japan and Peru-contributed in absentia), who took part in the roundtable discussion.

² See Fig. 1 flowchart - page 4

³ For details, see Reference: Meeting Summaries.

The experts represented educational institutions, non-government organizations (NGOs), and central and municipal governments. The theme of the discussion was “Creation of Markets for Recycling of Products without Actual Demand.” In addition to sharing the status and best practices of RBE in the economies represented at the roundtable, issues and approaches for creating a market were discussed.

b) A conference in Yinchuan City, China, June 3 to 5, 2005.

A conference was organized in Yinchuan City, China, entitled, “A Recycling-based Economy (RBE) and China’s Western Development”. Over 20 experts and officials from China and other APEC economies took part in a one-and a half day conference. The experts represented Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Thailand. It was co-hosted by the Yinchuan Municipal People’s Government and China Enterprises Confederation. It attracted over 400 participants and had great media coverage. As Yinchuan has started its major economic development, it was a critical time for the people of Yinchuan to learn the best practices from APEC economies regarding RBE.

c) A symposium in Pattaya, Thailand, June 24 & 25, 2005

A two-day event including recycling site visits was organized in Pattaya, Thailand. The symposium entitled, “APEC Capacity Building on RBE: Guidelines for Thailand” featured three major industry sectors of Thailand, namely, electric and electronic (E&E), automotive and textile. Industry specific best practices and new technologies for RBE were shared among the industry representatives, educators and government officials. Fifteen experts came from Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand. The sector specific concurrent discussions identified specific issues and possible approaches for each of the industry sectors. Events were covered by local television in their documentary programs on RBE.

(3) Wrap-up Meeting

Following the three pilot programs, the final wrap-up meeting was organized in Chinese Taipei on October 12 through 14, 2005. A roundtable discussion with local and APEC experts took place to identify alternative actions for a vision of RBE in APEC. The final meeting concluded with the project report identifying future courses of possible actions. The session was attended by experts from Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Chinese Taipei and Thailand.

(4) Dissemination of the Results

The compilation of presentation papers and results of discussion in this report has been prepared and handed in to the APEC process, including ABAC, for dissemination.

Figure 1. Flow of APEC RBE Project

