

Summary of Panel session

Panel session was chaired by Professor Mitsumasa Okada of Open University of Japan. Representative of Japan, Korea, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam were participated as panellist in the session. Professor Okada pointed out three issues for discussion in this session : i) challenges of water environment management in WEPA member countries and Asia; ii) necessary actions need to be taken to improve water environment in WEPA member countries; and iii) How Japan can play leading role in water environment management in Asia?

i) Challenges of water environment management in WEPA member countries and Asia

Dr. Chrin Soka, Ministry of Environment discussed about the major challenges of water environment management from the experience in Cambodia. Cambodia is abundant with water resources and water quality of the country is classified as good quality as per water quality monitoring performed by Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. Dr. Chrin pointed out several issues and challenges water environment management: a) lack of technical human resources, b) Laboratory facilities is not enough to perform water environment monitoring at regular basis, c) weak law enforcement, d) Illegal discharge of wastewater and solid waste in natural water bodies, and e) low awareness of private sector and public on water environment management.

ii) Necessary actions need to be taken to improve water environment in WEPA member countries

Dr. Damith Saranga Alhapperum of Sri Lanka of shared recent actions been taken for water environment management. Sri Lanka is going to amendment wastewater standard based on years of experiences. The revised wastewater standard will be in active soon. The Government recruited new environmental officer at division level (300) to increase human resource capacity. In addition budget allocation for water environment management also increased. Infrastructure development for monitoring of water environment is one of the priorities of the government. In response to a question of Professor Okada, Dr mentioned total number of human resources should be enough to monitor water environment in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Do Nam Thang of Viet Nam pointed out that a few number of policies was issued by the government. Dr. Taan stressed on building up pollution inventory for industrial sector. Pollution inventory was conducted for some sectors and river basins. But there is no general methodology for pollution inventory. Therefore it is important to develop technical guidelines of pollution inventory that can be used nationwide. Dr. Taan expected that WEPA can support to develop such guidelines of pollution inventory.

Dr. Simachaya Wijran of Thailand pointed out lack infrastructure of wastewater treatment is a big challenge of Thailand. Wastewater treatment facilities have been constructed in Bangkok with support of JICA. Dr. Wijran stressed on operation and maintenance of the system. Lessons learned from WEPA partner countries like Japan and Korea can be useful. But in the most cases model of developed countries not fit in developing countries.

Dr. Vicente Jr Bassing Tuddao of Philippines talked about the actions taken by the government towards water environment management in Philippines. The government introduced participatory approach for strengthening law enforcement. The Ministry of Environment established green court which investigates environmental pollutions including water environment. The government also initiated a program to improve access to sewerage systems. A wastewater treatment facility is one of the priorities of local governments including Metro Manila. The government is now working on institutionalization of wastewater treatment in outside of Metro Manila.

Dr. Taegu Kang of Korea shared key issues of water environment in Korea. He stressed on advanced urban sewerage system to deal with climate change induced flood in city such as Seoul. Monitoring and early warning system is important for water environment management. Korea has established tele-monitoring system for industrial effluent discharge.

iii) How Japan/WEPA can play leading role in water environment management in Asia?

Dr. Sokha of Cambodia shared his expectation from WEPA and Japan Government as below:

1. WEPA can organise high level dialogue among partner countries to discuss water environment management issues in the region.
2. Support should be offered based on needs of the partner countries
3. WEPA can initiate exchange program of human resources that can facilitate learning of good practices in partner countries.
4. Development of WEPA webpage in country language.

Dr. Tuddao of Philippines expected followings from WEPA/ Government of Japan

1. WEPA can be developed as functional platform to address water quality in partner countries.
2. Technology transfer should be based on local needs and economic conditions
3. WEPA can organize capacity building training program for partner countries
4. WEPA/ Government of Japan can provide project preparatory assistance.

Dr. Thang of Viet Nam shared exaptation from Japan for water environment improvement in partner countries as below:

1. Facilitate locally suitable technology transfer
2. Sharing suitable policy model, good example of water environment management in Japan
3. Japan can provide technical assistance for partner countries.

Dr. Alhapperum of Sri Lanka shared his expectation of Japanese supports for improvement of Water environment in Sri Lanka as below:

1. Sri Lanka will formulate water, soil and Air Act. Dr. Damith expected that Japan can provide support with long term experience of successful environmental management.
2. Japan can invest to wastewater treatment facilities through public privet partnership.
3. Japan can provide training for newly appointed environmental officers.
4. Rainwater harvesting is promoted in Sri Lanka. Japan can introduce rainwater harvesting technologies in Sri Lanka which should be suitable in the local context.
5. Dr. Damith proposed Colombo for organizing next WEPA Annual Meeting.

Dr. Wijarn of Thailand mentioned several issues that need to be considered for future activities of WEPA. These issues are as below:

1. Water environment management should be performed at river basin level including both water quality and quantity.
2. Wastewater management technology is very advanced, particularly in Japan. Operation and maintenance of the wastewater water treatment technologies should be simple considering situation of developing countries.
3. Policy implementation is very important for water environment management. But, main challenge is how to policy being translated into action.
4. Promotion of public participation in water environment management is important.
5. Limited budget is one of the main constraints for making good policies into action. Lessons from Japan and Korea can be useful for Thailand.

Questions:

Q1: Water is called as blue carbon. Deterioration of water quality causes water scarcity. Is there any activities in the WEPA countries that can improve accountability system of business cooperation for water environment management?

Response of Dr. Wijran: Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization (TGO) approves CDM project for wastewater treatment projects. Agro-industries like pig farm and agro-processing industries such as palm oil factory, starch factories produce high COD content wastewater. Bio-gas can be captured from treatment of high COD valued wastewater which contributes to greenhouse gas mitigation as well as improvement of water environment. Some of the activities have also been initiated under green economy policies.

Comment 1: Holistic approach is necessary to promote green growth which is closely linked to quality of life.

In summary of the panel session Mr. Masanobu Miyazaki, Ministry of Environment of Japan talked about WEPA's activities in the last two phases and plan for future activities. At first, Mr. Miyazaki extended his sincere thanks to the experts of the WEPA countries and the audiences of the WEPA seminars. WEPA was established as an initiative of Japanese Government and now WEPA has 10 years experiences to work on water environment management in WEPA countries. In response to the expectations of WEPA member countries to the Government of Japan and WEPA, Mr. Miyazaki mentioned that MOE would like to not only continue WEPA activity but also utilize other tools for WEPA member countries. Mr. Miyazaki said that WEPA focused on knowledge sharing among governments so far. In order to strengthen partnership, WEPA plans to work with private sector in the future. Because many persons from Japanese water companies participated in the WEPA seminar, Mr. Miyazaki said that WEPA likes to facilitate contribution of Japanese private sector to water quality improvement in Asian region. Mr Miyazaki also pointed out that knowledge on policy and experience of overcoming water pollution are very important for Asian countries as well as technology. Finally, Mr. Miyazaki proposed that WEPA would like to propose new approaches in the next phase of WEPA such as thematic workshop for selective countries and activities based on action programme prepared by each country to make the region environmental friendly society.