“ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN REGION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROSPECTS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY”

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I. Introduction

SEA, richest and most diverse natural environments in the world.

500 M, resources for consumption and production, risk to droughts and floods.

Serious social consequences from environmental problems:

> Urban excess > Global Warming
> Deforestation > Air pollution
> Overfishing > Limited safe water supplies

• ASEAN leaders view the protection of the environment as essential to the long-term economic growth of the countries and the region.

• Economic development, have damaged the environment of the region (overpopulation, health degradation, encroachment on natural systems, air and water pollution). These problems are caused by environmental mismanagement, influence of global forces, inefficient and ineffective governance.

• Rapid economic growth made the region more populous, tropical forests were converted into megacities, and agricultural lands were intensely used.
• Environmental problems in ASEAN countries vary differently and have different root causes.

• **Asian Environment Outlook**, industries have an evident, increasing impact on the environment:
  - Resource depletion
  - Contamination of air, water and land
  - Health hazards
  - Degradation of natural ecosystems

II. Five Major Environmental Problems

1. **URBAN EXCESS**

   - Mass immigration of labor to urban industries is encouraged by economic policies, that causes over crowding in cities, increases the risk of socio-political conflict and environmental problems.

2. **DEFORESTATION**

   - Almost 75% of SEA’s original forest cover has been destroyed because of both overexploitation for profit and ignorance of good practices.

3. **Limited Safe water supplies**

   - Water supplies will increasingly be polluted, as demand grows with fast growing population and economy from untreated sewage, industrial discharges, and from salt-water intrusion of overexploited water tables.

4. **Air Pollution**

   - Vehicles, power plants, incinerators and industry, the use of high polluting fuels, and outdated pollution control technology causes air pollution and is a major problem in Asia.

5. **Overfishing**
- World fisheries are being overfished as marine catches increases. As a result, a steady increase in the frequency of clashes and incidents at seas caused by foreign fishing trawlers illegally encroaching into Exclusive Economic Zones and territorial seas.

### III. Key Environmental Issues and Causes in ASEAN

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Shared Issues</th>
<th>Key Causes</th>
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<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Seasonal smoke and haze, solid wastes</td>
<td>Transboundary pollution from land and forest fires</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Soil erosion, sedimentation, water pollution, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and threats to natural fisheries.</td>
<td>Unmanaged waste and Effluent discharge into Tonle Sap lake; destruction of mangrove wetlands through extensive industrial and aquacultural development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Deforestation; loss of biodiversity; water pollution; air pollution in urban areas; national and transboundary seasonal smoke and haze; land degradation; pollution of Malacca straits.</td>
<td>Deficiencies in urban infrastructure – unmanaged industrial wastes and municipal effluents and waste; vehicular congestion and emissions; extensive land clearance and forest fires for pulp wood and oil palm production; extensive and unmanaged mining activities; national and transboundary industrial pollution; tourist developments in coastal regions beyond carrying capacity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Deforestation; loss of biodiversity; soil erosion;</td>
<td>Land clearance; shifting cultivation; inadequate water</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Environmental Issues</th>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Limited access to potable water; water-borne diseases.</td>
<td>Supply and sanitation infrastructure</td>
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<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Deforestation; loss of biodiversity; urban air pollution; soil erosion; water contamination and water-borne diseases.</td>
<td>Land clearance; excessive mineral extraction; vehicular congestion and emission; deficiencies in urban infrastructure – unmanaged industrial and municipal effluents.</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Deforestation; loss of biodiversity; land degradation and soil erosion; shortage of water resources in dry season and flooding in rainy season conflict of water uses; coastal degradation and loss of mangrove habitat; urban air pollution; pollution from solid waste; hazardous material and hazardous waste.</td>
<td>Sporadic development and destruction of watersheds; unmanaged aquaculture; tourist growth exceeding growth in carrying capacity; deficiencies in urban and rural infrastructure; freshwater resources polluted by domestic/industrial wastes and sewage runoff.</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Deforestation and soil degradation; loss of biodiversity; loss of mangrove habitat; water pollution and threats to marine life; groundwater contamination; limited potable water supply; natural disasters (e.g. floods)</td>
<td>Land clearance for industry; extensive aquaculture and overfishing; growing urbanization and infrastructure deficiencies; inadequate water supply and sanitation (particularly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City)</td>
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### IV. Concerns for the Environmental Problems of ASEAN

**Aims of the ASEAN Working Group on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (AWGMEA):**

- Strengthen cooperation among member countries in the implementation of existing international instruments or agreements in the field of environment and in particular, the needs of ASEAN.

- By indentifying and addressing the problems that constraint the member countries from participating in international environmental agreements and to revise for the purpose for integrating environmental concerns into the development process.

- Promote and support the effective participation of ASEAN countries in the negotiation, implementation, review and governance of international environmental agreements including appropriate provision of technical and financial assistance.

- By exchanging views and information on new or revised Multilateral Environmental Agreements and

- Upgrade ASEAN capacity for negotiations in Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

**Ten Priority Areas for Environmental Cooperation in Sustaining Development and Regional Integration in ASEAN (2009-2015)**
• Addressing global environmental issues related to atmospheric and chemical related conventions such as climate change, hazardous and toxic wastes.

• Managing and preventing transboundary environmental pollution

• Promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation

• Promoting the adoption of the cleaner production processes and technologies.

• Promoting quality living standards in ASEAN cities/urban areas which focus on addressing urban environmental challenges such as water pollution with access to clean water and air pollution due to vehicular emissions, and solid waste management.

• Harmonizing environmental policies and databases wherein ASEAN published different SoER or State of the Environment Report to update the Summit on ASEAN’s progress towards the fulfilment of Agenda 21.

• The ASEAN adopted the Marine Water Quality Criteria, the Criteria for National Marine Protected Areas and the Criteria for Marine Heritage Areas to help promote and protect the shared marine waters in the regions.

• The ASEAN’s commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of rich biological resources, continue to promote biodiversity conservation through networking, training, research and database management.

• By recognizing the importance of freshwater resources, ASEAN adopted a Strategic Plan of Action on Water Resources Management which aims to tackle issues that are related to demand and supply allocation, water quality and sanitation, governance and capacity building

• As the region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the ASEAN leaders resolved to enhance cooperation, expressing their support to the development of ASEAN Climate Change Initiatives. Thus to further strengthen regional coordination and cooperation in addressing climate change and undertake action to respond to its diverse impacts.

V. Conclusion

The need to ensure the sustainability of their nation’s development and the protection of the environment shall be the essential part of economic activities.
The ASEAN and its member states should focus on planning actions and programmes regarding problems in the environment that tend to integrate on helping each other so that it should benefit the whole especially its society.

They should harmonized laws and standards regarding environmental issues in the region and plan for comprehensive laws to provide the national policy framework for environmental objectives and actions towards sustainable development.

Centralization of responsibility for the environment in a single government body.

ASEAN countries should pass laws governing toxic waste where new laws provide more sophisticated monitoring of toxic substances.

ASEAN countries should pass laws and regulations governing forest protection and preservation, soil management, fisheries conservation, land management, wildlife protection and conservation, management of marine resources, among others.

ASEAN countries should encourage the private sector to take part in environmental activities.

* All countries are involved in this issue and as such the rich countries who are more industrialized will suffer much on its environmental effects because of the materials they use that could hurt and damage their environment and thus we cannot control our environmental problems and we cannot resolve immediately these consequences but we can try to lessen the impacts of these environmental concerns.

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