

Project Response to the Peer Review Report of the Panel consisting of Prof. Bezanson, Prof. Onchan and Prof. Hirono

The Second Phase of Urban Environmental Management Project (2001-2004) conducted research under three major themes viz. study on process dynamics of urban environmental changes; energy and GHG emissions from mega-cities; and provision of support to the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment, a programme of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), aiming to create a bridge between research and action. Despite the fact that the journey of IGES-UE has been brief thus far, the Project has earned a good reputation internationally.

During its Second Phase, the UE Project had provided substantial research and secretariat support to UNESCAP in implementing the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment. Its efforts and achievements have been well appreciated at various levels and will be reported to the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific scheduled for March 2005 in Seoul. Another important milestone of the UE Project was its role in the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms for Urban Environmental Infrastructure under the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED). The outcome of this study was well received by various high level institutions, as well the Peer Review Panel. Similarly, in the area of energy use and GHG emissions from Asian mega-cities, the Project has established IGES as a focal institution in Asia through its scientific contributions, research networks and promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogues. Though the Project delivered substantial contributions on the above important themes, it has acknowledged that it could not deliver the expected achievements under the first theme, which was set as the core of the Project. This was due to the fact that the Project was not able to manage the procurement of the necessary expertise to carry out that component of work after an unexpected turn-over of researchers.

The Project appreciates the issues raised by the Panel on project management and suggestions provided are positively received. The Project is establishing itself as a leading policy research group in the region working for urban environmental issues; in this course, the Project will definitely give due considerations to past shortcomings.

As an immediate step, the Project had serious discussions on the Third Phase Plan to make it more concrete and focussed. In this endeavour, the Project has reduced the coverage of research area to only three with focus on sound balance of public and private sector in urban environmental management. The areas are: integrated air pollution and GHG strategies for urban transport; solid waste minimization and recycling strategies and strategies for participation and partnerships in urban environmental management. Apart from these immediate steps in research plan, the Project has also discussed various ways to improve its internal management by evaluating its experience in the 1st and 2nd phases. The Project will make further efforts to strengthen the mutual information exchange between the Project members to share common understanding of the vision and objectives of the Project. The Project is also planning to have periodic reviews by outside experts. By these activities, the Project will improve its management which will help to produce more conducive outputs.