

## **The 3rd General Meeting of Awap**

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International Affairs Department

The SDGs, adopted at the UN Summit in September 2015, set out 17 Sustainable Development Goals, one of which, Goal 6, aims to achieve Clean Water and Sanitation - ensuring safe and clean water and sanitation systems. -Goal 6 further outlines eight specific Targets, of which Target 6.3 is "By 2030, reduce pollution, reduce and minimize dumping of hazardous chemicals and materials, halve the proportion of untreated wastewater, and significantly increase recycling and safe reuse globally."

The Asia Wastewater Management Partnership (AWaP), the subject of this paper, was established by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) and the Ministry of Environment(MOE) in collaboration with several Asian countries and international organizations. One of the primary goals of AWaP is to contribute to halving the ratio of untreated wastewater by 2030, which is one of the targets of SDG 6.3.

In addition, Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Myanmar participated in the AWaP's first General Meeting held in Kitakyushu City in July 2018. The participants agreed to establish a secretariat in Tokyo to be jointly managed by Japan's MLIT and MOE and discussed implementation guidelines and work plans.

AWaP members consist of government officials from various countries involved in wastewater management and its policy-making. Through regular meetings of these stakeholders, the AWaP aims to share the current status of wastewater management and common issues, discuss solutions, and eventually mainstream wastewater treatment, which currently has a lower priority than water supply and other public works, in each participating country.

The 3rd AWaP General Meeting was held on August 1 in Sapporo, Japan, as a parallel event to the Sewage Works Exhibition; it was the first time in five years that the meeting was held in person, as the 2nd General Meeting in 2021 was held online due to COVID-19.

In addition to three representatives from each country invited from Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, about 40 participants from MLIT and MOE, the organizers of the event, and related organizations such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), the Japan Sanitation Consortium (JSC), and JS. As in the first and second meetings, the meeting was chaired and facilitated by Prof. Tak Fujiwara of Kyoto University and Dr. Pierre Flamand of JSC.

The General Meeting consisted of Session 1, during which activity reports from each country were presented, and Session 2, during which activity plans for 2030 were discussed.

In Session 1, each country, including Japan, reported on its efforts to raise awareness of sewage systems and solve common problems. At the end of Session 1, each country gave its impressions of each other's activity reports. I was impressed by the comments made by the Indonesian representative regarding one of Japan's initiatives. In Japan, to cope with the declining population, the optimization of areas for centralized and decentralized processing systems is being conducted, and the balance point between these two systems is regularly reviewed. Indonesia's comment on this initiative was that it is interesting that in Japan, where population decline is an issue, optimization is being done for the opposite purpose of their own country, which is in the midst of population growth. Although the status of sewerage systems in each country varies, considering the life cycle of wastewater projects, it was felt that the examples of all countries have either been experienced in the past or will be experienced in the future, and that this is not something that concerns others.

In Session 2, the participants discussed activity plans up to 2030. The secretariat summarized each country's proposals in advance and presented them as a work plan for the future. All countries agreed to this work plan, and it was decided that AWaP activities would continue to be promoted following this policy until 2030.

During the discussion in Session 2, four countries other than Japan requested that numerical targets be set as a guide for AWaP activities. The secretariat responded that AWaP has not set any specific numerical targets at this time but will consider doing so in the future if everyone requests it. He added, "If the guideline for the sewerage penetration rate refers to the rate of connection to the public sewerage system, the Philippines and Indonesia, which are island countries, will not see their

penetration rates rise anytime soon in terms of numerical values, since decentralized treatment is the mainstream. For this reason, there was a request to clarify the definitions of sewerage system penetration rate, decentralized treatment, centralized treatment, and other related terms in the AWaP. The secretariat's response to this request was that they would like to define them in the future.

After the general meeting, a technical seminar was held in the afternoon. The nine Japanese companies that applied presented their sewerage technologies to partner countries. This time, instead of a Q&A session after the presentations, a short session (networking) between each country and the companies was set up. The participants then moved to the Sewage Works Exhibition site, where they visited the booths and other facilities of the companies that had entered the seminar.

The afternoon schedule was quite tight, and the participants from each country must have been exhausted. Still, they listened intently to each company's representatives' explanations and asked questions at the Sewage Works Exhibition booths.

AWaP plans to hold an Operations Committee in 2024 and the 4th General Meeting in 2025. The General Assembly in 2025 could be hosted in a country other than Japan, and we look forward to expanding future activities.