

By IndianMirror Staff , Coimbatore

According to a PIB release, Shri T Chatterjee , Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests said that focus of Sixth Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting (RSC6) is to enhance regional cooperation, monitoring impact assessment, strengthen the initiatives which were started in earlier phases and initiate new ones. Addressing RSC6 of Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of air pollution and its likely trans-boundary effects for South Asia he said it is required to conduct national level public awareness campaign in all member countries. He expressed a hope that these deliberations and sharing of experiences during these meetings will further strengthen the implementation of the Male Declaration Programme.

Ms Jacintha S Tissera, Director General , South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme, (SACEP) said, " We are successfully progressing in the Fourth Phase of this programme which continued to assist the member countries to enhance their regional co-operation in monitoring , impact assessment and strengthening the initiatives started in the First Three Phases. Since its inception, Male declaration has come a long way in terms of building the scientific capacity. The declaration has initiated activity in all major areas of air pollution research, and this is embedded within national policy structures and forms part of the work plan for the Ministries of Environment involved."

"Under the programme, mapping of various emission sources and understanding the complex relation between them and their contributions to ambient air concentrations and effects on human health, crops, buildings etc in South Asia has been understood. It has contributed significantly in promoting international co-operation and developing scientific information for the policy process. Through these improvements, our shared understanding of regional trans-boundary effect of Air Pollution has grown tremendously," Ms Jacinth added. Referring to fast dynamic changes taking place in the Region of South Asia every day, she elaborated that Air pollution does not stop at national borders and therefore everyone is affected by air pollution. Integration in ways of controlling pollution can be a more cost-effective and an efficient path rather than dealing with our challenges alone. As a Regional Environmental Secretariat, SACEP has the mandate to take a lead role in addressing the emerging environmental issues. In 2008 SACEP joined the UNEP's programme on Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) which has now set its sights on reducing the Sulphur content of the Vehicle fuel.

Giving details of various initiatives taken by the participating countries along with other coordinating agencies to control and prevent the air pollution since the implementation of the Male Declaration, Prof S P Gautam, Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board said these initiatives helped in studying the impacts of Trans boundary air pollution on the human health , cultural heritage, monuments, vegetation and crop yield and to incorporate the policies and the strategies that are effective in the reduction of the air pollution and its impacts.

Inter-governmental network assisted the member countries to enhance their regional cooperation. It also conducted the base line studies and the action plans that provide the information on air pollution management programs and to identify the gaps in the existing monitoring systems to understand the trans- boundary air pollution. Capacity building programs has helped to strengthen the monitoring network and training

The implementation is now in Phase IV that mainly deals with the enhancement of the regional cooperation, monitoring, impact assessment to strengthen the issues initiated in the first three phases and to initiate the new ones. A Task Force on Future Development (TFFD) of MD' is also established in this phase (IV Phase) to consider the aspects related to expanding the network that involves the development of regional centres, regional frame work agreements between the member countries for the air pollution reduction in the South Asia and to establish the sustainable financial in the South Asia and to establish the sustainable financial mechanism. One of the major agenda of the task force meeting is to discuss on the establishment of the Regional Centres which bears the responsibility to exchange knowledge & to support the research and development on air pollution issues in the region on proposed theme.

The Ministry of Environment & Forests (India's National Focal Point) and Central pollution Control Board (India's National Implementing Agency) not only actively interacting, participating as major Stake Holder in the South Asia but also help in the organization various programs.

In India, activities are initiated exclusively for regional Development program. They include establishment & operation of trans-boundary Ambient monitoring stations have been established, Emission Indian National Inventory completed by IIT-Kanpur , Health Impact studies completed by Chittaranjan Cancer Research Institute, Kolkata and crop studies have been taken up by Banaras Hindu University. Award of Corrosion Impact studies have been awarded to National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur.

This is Phase four of implementation of Male Declaration Programme. Representatives of Bangla Desh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating in this two day meeting. The 12th session of the Intergovernmental Meeting (IG12) will be followed this meeting.

India has the resources / expertise / reputed organizations / institutes to undertake activities and programs highlighted under the declaration, viz. Monitoring & measurement, emission inventory, health impact assessment, crop impact assessment, materials impact assessment, modelling for trans - boundary movement of pollutants etc. independently. As decided in the task force, India is being nominated for two regional centers viz.; CPCB - Regional Center for Dry & Wet Deposition Studies and NML- Regional Centre for Corrosion Impact assessment.