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# News bulletin launched to raise awareness of environmental issues

Bulletin will focus on issues and possible solutions to environmental challenges in South Asia

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Environmental issues hold back actualisation of South Asia's potential for growth, the federal minister for climate change, Zahid Hamid, said at the launch of the weekly environmental news bulletin of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) on Wednesday.

"Although awareness of environmental issues has increased in the last few years, there is still a lot to be done to add to public knowledge, particularly in South Asian countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India, where environmental degradation is highest and is blocked efforts aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," Mr Hamid said.

Pakistan is currently the chair of the SACEP governing council. The launch of the SACEP bulletin was held at the climate

change ministry, and was attended by representatives of various government and non-government organisations.

Mr Hamid told the audience that environmental awareness campaigns had been most successful when they targeted specific groups or populations. He suggested that developing countries in South Asia use print, broadcast and social media to raise awareness of environmental issues and possible research based solutions.

The minister said the media, government agencies, NGOs and educational institutions could help spread such messages by holding press briefings, issuing press releases and setting up online databases that could be used as information centres.

He said that information centres would be an effective tool for education both the public and journalists about environmental concerns.

"It is in this context that the SACEP Weekly News Bulletin being launched today is an important initiative. This bulletin will not only be an excellent medium for dissemination of information and sharing of knowledge, but will also facilitate connectivity and interaction amongst the regional environmental institutions.

"I hope that the news bulletin will also help

motivate youth and young environmental professionals for the promotion of sustainable development and conservation and management of national resources," he said.

Mr Hamid suggested that SACEP member countries synergise their efforts to make the programme an exemplary one.

"Pakistan is committed to this objective. We appreciate the role of the Government of Sri Lanka in supporting the programme and hosting the head office in Colombo," he added.

Sri Lankan ambassador Wijeyanthi Edirisinghe said it was imperative for South Asian countries to adopt a regional approach and strengthen their efforts and cooperation through bodies like SACEP, to focus on options that could address common environmental and climate change related challenges.

Climate Change secretary Arif Ahmed Khan identified some of these common issues as: biodiversity loss, water and air pollution, inadequate waste management, degradation of marine and river resources.

SACEP director general Mohammad Khursheed discussed the key aims and objectives of the SACEP news bulletin. He said the bulletin aims to boost awareness among people, students and the media, regarding environmental issues and possible solutions for South Asian countries.