

JUNE 29, 2024

## Climate Change Minister Calls for Strengthening of SACEP at Bhutan Meeting



Minister for Climate Change, Environment, and Energy Thoriq Ibrahim has called for an urgent update and reinforcement of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), the leading organisation advocating for environmental issues in South Asia. His remarks were made during the closing ceremony of the 16th SACEP Governing Council meeting, held in Bhutan.

In his address, Minister Thoriq underscored the significance of the meeting in enhancing cooperation among South Asian nations to tackle the pressing challenges posed by climate change. He emphasised the critical need for small island nations like the Maldives to proactively prepare and take immediate action against environmental threats such as global warming, sea level rise, air and water pollution, and land erosion.

The Minister highlighted the Maldivian government's initiatives aimed at mitigating these challenges, sharing President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu's ambitious commitment to plant five million trees across the Maldives. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to combat the adverse effects of climate change on the nation.

Minister Thoriq called on SACEP member countries to engage in collaborative dialogue to enhance the organisation's effectiveness. He stressed the necessity of reforming and strengthening SACEP's regulations to address evolving regional environmental concerns. "SACEP, as a regional environmental organisation, must adapt to meet the changing needs of member countries. It is crucial to revise and enhance its framework so that it can effectively advocate and engage on environmental issues at international forums," he stated.

Established in 1987, SACEP has been instrumental in fostering regional cooperation on environmental sustainability. The meetings serve as pivotal platforms for environmental discussions involving member countries and other Commonwealth agencies. The 16th convening of SACEP this year highlights the organisation's ongoing role in promoting regional collaboration on environmental matters.

Minister Thoriq's call for a strengthened SACEP framework reflects the increasing urgency for collective action in the face of escalating climate challenges, particularly for vulnerable nations within the South Asian region.