



REPORT

**THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE
GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**South Asia Co-operative Environment
Programme
(SACEP)**

**24 – 26 JUNE 2024
THIMPHU, BHUTAN**

(i)



South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
No. 146/24A, Havelock Road
Colombo 05
Sri Lanka

CERTIFICATE

The Report of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme held on 24 – 26 June 2024 in Thimphu, Bhutan is herewith submitted to the members of the Governing Council and the Consultative Committee, in fulfilment of the financial and administrative procedures of SACEP.

Rokeya Khaton
Director General
22nd August 2024



**Report of the Sixteenth Meeting of the
Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
(SACEP)**

**24 – 26 June 2024
Thimphu, Bhutan**

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
REPORT OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

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**SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (16GC-SACEP)
24 – 26 June 2024
THIMPHU, BHUTAN**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sixteenth Meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (16GC-SACEP) was held on 26th June 2024 in Thimphu, Bhutan.

2. ATTENDANCE

The Meeting was attended by representatives from the following Member States: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It was also attended by representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), The World Bank, United State Embassy in Kathmandu, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET) and South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH) as observers. List of participants is at **Annex 1**.

3. INAUGURATION

The welcome address was delivered by Ms. Rokeya Khaton, Director General, SACEP. (**Annex 2**)

The welcome address of the host country was delivered by H. E. Lyonpo Gem Tshering, Minister, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan. (**Annex 3**)

The out-going Chairman of GC-SACEP, Hon' Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, People's Republic of Bangladesh then addressed the august gathering. (**Annex 4**)

The Special Guest, Hon' Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Republic of Maldives then delivered his speech. (**Annex 5**)

The vote of thanks was given by Dasho Karma Tshering, Hon' Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan. (**Annex 6**)

4. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

In accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Association of SACEP, H.E. Lyonpo Gem Tshering, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan was elected as Chairman of the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP. Mr. Pravir Pandey, Addl. Secretary & Financial Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India was elected as the Vice Chairman and Mr. Ahmed Murthaza, Director General (Waste Management and Pollution Control), Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Republic of Maldives was elected as Rapporteur.

5. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted by the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP. **(Annex 7)**

6. COUNTRY STATEMENTS / BRIEF OPENING REMARKS BY THE MEMBER STATES

The Heads of Delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka presented statements. The Country Statements are in **Annex 8 – 11**.

7. STATEMENTS BY THE OBSERVERS

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), The World Bank, United State Embassy in Kathmandu, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET) and South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH) presented their statements **(Annex 12 - 18)**.

8. PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS BY THE RAPPORTEUR

Mr. Ahmed Murthaza, Director General (Waste Management and Pollution Control), Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Republic of Maldives, in his capacity as the Rapporteur, presented the Report of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points held on 24 – 25 June 2024 along with the recommendations of the meeting to the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council for its endorsement **(Annex 22)**.

9. DISCUSSIONS AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AGREED UPON AT THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

The Director General made presentations on the progress report based on following categories:

- 1 Institutional Matters
- 2 Programme Matters
- 3 Financial Matters

The report of the preparatory meeting of the National Focal Points was adopted by the 16th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP. The decisions of the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP under various clauses are as below:

9.1 INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

9.1.1 Creation of a new position at the SACEP Secretariat (Director Administration and Programme)

SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal to create a new position of a Director (Administration and Programme). The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the expenses including salary for this position is proposed to be met from the country contribution. Therefore, there will be an increase in the country's annual contribution.

The 16 GC endorsed the following:

1. In principle agreement for creation of a new position of one Director (Administration & Programme).

2. Request the SACEP Secretariat to prepare and provide following details within three months to the member states for seeking their comments.

i.) The draft Terms of Reference for the proposed position of Director

ii.) Details of financial implications to the current country contribution

3. Request the SACEP Secretariat to compile the submissions from the member states and circulate to the member states at least six weeks in advance prior to the next GC for discussion and adoption.

9.1.2 Immunity of the SACEP Secretariat

Under this agenda item, the SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the SACEP was established in 1982, as per the Articles of the Association of SACEP under 9(c), the host country, Government of Sri Lanka agreed to provide the immunities to the Director General and the SACEP Secretariat. However, the SACEP was not included in the Diplomatic Privileges Act No. 09 of 1996 of Sri Lanka.

The Government of Sri Lanka conveyed that the matter regarding extending the immunities to the SACEP Secretariat is being considered positively and the process is underway.

The 16 GC requested the Government of Sri Lanka, the host country to expedite the process of granting the immunities, and the SACEP Secretariat to follow-up and the progress on this to be reported to the next GC.

9.1.3 Appointment of the Director General of SACEP

The SACEP Secretariat informed that as per the rules of procedure, the next Director General will be appointed from the Government of Bhutan. The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting that a nomination was received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Government of Bhutan. This nomination was submitted to the 138th Consultative Committee Meeting of SACEP held on 04th June 2024 where it was endorsed. **(Annex 19)**

The 16 GC was informed that the matter related to the appointment of the new Director General of SACEP was discussed in the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points and there was no consensus reached on this matter.

The 16 GC observed that the nomination of a suitable competent person for the Director General of SACEP is a prerogatory to the concerned member state.

The meeting agreed to confirm the nomination of Royal Government of Bhutan. To uphold the integrity of the process, H.E Lyonpo Gem Tshering, Hon' Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan informed that additional information will be submitted within a week time to complete the paperwork.

16 GC requested SACEP Secretariat to share those additional details with the member states for records and information.

9.1.4 Salary of the Director General

The SACEP Secretariat presented and informed the meeting that based on the proposal submitted by the Director General, 134th meeting of the Consultative Committee (CC) of SACEP held on 9th June 2022, made a decision that “DG-SACEP shall get an entertainment allowance of 1100 USD per month. He shall be getting this allowance from the date of his joining 8 August 2021”.

Based on the above Decision of the CC, Director General is drawing a monthly salary USD 6100 per month effective from August 2021 and requested to consider endorsing the above decision of the CC.

As per the Articles of Association “The Committee may make such rules and regulations as it deems necessary in relation to Committee procedures and the operation and administration of the SACEP Secretariat, subject to the approval of the Governing Council”.

The 16 GC decided that the entertainment allowance of USD 1100.00 approved by the CC should be immediately suspended and this issue be parked until the Audited reports of those concerned years are submitted to the next GC.

9.1.5 Salary of the Local Staff

Under this agenda item, the SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal requesting an increase in salary for the local staff taking into consideration the inflation due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Meeting noted that as per the decisions of the 11th GC, the salary of the local staff is increased by 25% in every five years term.

The meeting noted the need for increasing the local staff salary with the caution that this proposal of an increment of a salary before completion of five years should not become a precedence in the future.

Therefore, the meeting requested the SACEP Secretariat to submit clear implications on the annual contribution of the member states taking into consideration all other proposals having implication on the annual contribution.

9.1.6 Salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)

The SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal requesting to increase the salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) for South Asia Seas Programme (SASP) indicating that member states are finding difficulties to attract competent candidates for the above position as the current salary is low.

The meeting noted that the matter is on the SASP and requested SACEP Secretariat to submit it to the next Inter-governmental Meeting of the Ministers (IMM) of the South Asian Seas Programme.

9.2 PROGRAMME MATTERS

9.2.1 Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) project in South Asia beyond 2018

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the concept note developed and searched for possible development partners to secure the necessary funding and could not find a development partner so far.

The 16 GC approved carrying forward the activity.

9.2.2 The North East Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (NEIOBI)

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the partner for this proposal, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) has informed that their bid to secure necessary funds was not successful with The International Climate Initiative (IKI) and therefore requested to discontinue this activity.

The 16 GC approved the request to discontinue the activity.

9.2.3 Healthy Landscape: Managing Agricultural Landscapes in Socio- ecologically Sensitive Areas to Promote Food Security, Well-being and Ecosystem Health in Sri Lanka

The SACEP Secretariat presented that it has been implementing this project for the last two years and will be completed by June 2024. The objective of the project was to showcase management strategies for strengthening the restoration and sustainable management of selected Village Tank Cascade Systems (VTCS) in cascade landscapes for the enhanced provision of ecosystem services and protection of biodiversity. And it was informed that the progress of the project was satisfactory. The SACEP Secretariat submitted progress to the meeting for information.

The 16 GC noted the progress made by the SACEP Secretariat.

9.2.4 Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia

Under this agenda item the SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that a number of activities related to Sustainable consumption and Production were carried out in partnership with the SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component (RPAC) funded by the European Union, implemented by UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

The SACEP Secretariat submitted to the meeting for updating the activities performed under the subject area and requested the 16th GC to approve carry forwarding the activities.

The 16 GC approved carrying forward the activity.

9.2.5 South Asia Forum on Environment

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the 15th GC of SACEP approved a proposal submitted by the SACEP Secretariat to organize the South Asia Forum on the Environment. It was planning to organize the First Meeting of the South Asia Forum on Environment in the First Quarter of Year 2020.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it could not be held as planned and also securing financial support had not been successful so far.

The 16 GC approved carrying forward the activity with securing the funding from development partners.

9.2.6 Waste Management

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the 15th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP adopted the Sub-regional Roadmap developed for implementing the Global Waste Management Goals towards addressing SDGs in South Asia. However securing funding support to implement the strategic recommendations was not successful so far. Submitted to the meeting for information.

The 16 GC noted the status reported by the SACEP Secretariat.

9.2.7 Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat reported the meeting for information that it is updating the SACEP website and its Social Media platforms in order to disseminate information on its activities widely.

This was submitted to the meeting for information.

9.2.8 Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its likely Trans-boundary Effects for South Asia

The meeting was informed that recognizing the critical importance of preserving the essence of the Male Declaration in South Asia, the SACEP Secretariat and concerned parties have held several virtual meetings regarding the revitalization of the Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia. This effort is deemed necessary as the original declaration, signed over two decades ago, is now outdated. During this period, member states have undergone significant socioeconomic changes, leading to new environmental challenges related to air quality management. During these discussions, it was agreed that the SACEP Secretariat would host the Male Declaration Programme Secretariat. Consequently, a draft “Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia” and a “Think Piece on Revival of the Malé Declaration” were developed.

The meeting agreed the Male Declaration needs to be revitalized and the ownership should be with the SACEP Secretariat.

The meeting also recommended that the further discussion on the amendment is necessary and requested the SACEP Secretariat to focus on non-climatic pollutants, knowledge sharing, capacity building activities and accordingly improve the draft agreement and the think piece.

9.2.9 Air Quality

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on the activities carried out during the reporting period.

This was submitted to the meeting for information.

9.2.10 Sustainable Nitrogen Management for South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat submitted a proposal “South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management” requesting the 16th meeting of the Governing Council to adopt the “South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management”.

Members States had certain observations on the proposed Roadmap which require careful consideration.

However, realizing the importance of the subject matter, the meeting recommended the SACEP Secretariat to prepare a time bound workplan for finalizing the way forward on sustainable Nitrogen Management to enable resubmission to the next GC for consideration.

9.2.11 Adaptation to Climate Change

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on the activities carried out during the reporting period.

This was submitted to the meeting for information and update.

9.2.12 Regional Cooperation for the Conservation and Wise-use of Internationally Important Wetlands in South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat updated on the status of signing a MoU with Ramsar Secretariat to collaborate in implementing activities mutually benefitting.

This proposal has been dropped as it does not meet the Ramsar criteria.

9.2.13 Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia Project

The SACEP Secretariat updated the status of the implementation of the PLEASE Project.

A member state raised a concern with regards to the progress of the above project and also pointed out that the Project Staff has to be capacitated.

The 16 GC requested the SACEP Secretariat to seek extension of the project duration from the World Bank in consultation with the concerned member states.

9.2.14 South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on activities implemented under the South Asian Seas Programme and informed that a detailed progress report will be submitted to the next Intergovernmental Meeting of the Ministers (IMM) of the South Asian Seas Programme.

9.2.15 Work Programme (2024-2025)

The SACEP Secretariat presented work programme 2024-2025.

UNEP Representative informed the meeting that there are opportunities to collaborate with SACEP in building capacity of member states addressing the priorities of triple planetary environmental challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points recommended 16 GC to consider the adoption of the Work Programme 2024-2025 (**Annex 20**) as proposed by the SACEP Secretariat, taking in to consideration the available funding, the capacity of the SACEP Secretariat and to avoid overlap of activities being undertaken by UNEP.

The 16 GC adopted the work programme 2024 – 2025. The Meeting also recommended the SACEP Secretariat to focus more on the activities where funding from development partners is available.

9.3 FUNDING AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

9.3.1 Country Contributions

The SACEP Secretariat thanked the member states for clearing the arrears of the Country Contribution to a commendable rate. The SACEP Secretariat also informed that it is important to clear the balance arrears if any for the smooth and effective functioning of the SACEP Secretariat.

The 16 GC noted that there were proposals that would have implications on the annual country contributions. Therefore, the SACEP Secretariat is requested to present clear and complete financial details of these implications to the member states for consideration.

9.3.2 External Funding

The SACEP Secretariat submitted a report containing information on external funding received for projects for information of GC.

The 16 GC appreciated the efforts of SACEP Secretariat in generating external funds from several development partners.

9.3.3 Secretariat Budget (2024-2025)

The 16 GC approved the SACEP Secretariat budget for the years 2024 to 2025 with the present agreed annual contributions (Annex 21).

10. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL AUDITED REPORTS OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2018, 2019, 2020 AND 2021

The 16 GC approved the Audited Reports of Accounts for the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

11. VENUE AND DATE FOR THE 17TH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF SACEP

As per SACEP's Articles of Association, the next meeting of the SACEP Governing Council will be hosted by the Government of India. The dates of the meeting will be finalized by the SACEP Secretariat in consultation with the Government of India.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that a case has been filed in two separate courts against the Former Director General and SACEP Secretariat by an Ex-Employee. The case was filed at the Labor Tribunal and District Court in Sri Lanka. A verdict has been issued where it requires the SACEP Secretariat to pay a sum of Rs. 2,534,976/- as compensation.

The SACEP Secretariat has informed the 138th CC of SACEP about this court case and sought their advice on it. The 138th CC recommended SACEP to:

- a) Not make any payment out of country contribution without getting the consent from the member states.
- b) Requested the SACEP Secretariat to share all the information with the member states.
- c) Request the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka to support the SACEP Secretariat in resolving this issue.

This substantive issue has been raised under any other business which was found to be inappropriate. In connection to this, the meeting opined that it is an administrative matter which has become legal issue that needs to be resolved by the concerned head of the SACEP Secretariat.

12.2 A member state brought to the notice of the meeting that the Declaration of Articles of the Association, SACEP 1981 needs to be revisited. Therefore, it is recommended that a working committee from member states be formed and undertake this task.

The 16 GC requested SACEP Secretariat to coordinate this task in consultation with the member states and report the outcome to the next GC.

13. ADOPTION OF REPORT

The 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP considered the Report on 26th day, of June 2024 and adopted.

14. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The Chairman thanked the Hon' Ministers and delegates for their valuable support and co-operation, in making the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP a success.

He then declared the meeting close.

**16TH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF
SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

26 June 2024
held in Thimphu, Bhutan

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Welcome Address by

Ms. Rokeya Khaton
Director General, SACEP
at the Inaugural Session of the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Hon' Ministers
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Invitees
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Very good morning!

As the Director General of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), it is a great privilege and honor to welcome you on behalf of SACEP to the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP.

First and foremost, let me express my deepest gratitude to the Government of Bhutan for graciously offering to host this meeting. Your hospitality and efforts in organizing this event are truly appreciated. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for providing financial assistance to facilitate the participation of member countries at this 16th Governing Council meeting.

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Since its establishment, SACEP has been dedicated to addressing the regional environmental needs and has found its niche in appropriately tackling developmental goals. The field of environment is constantly evolving, always in a state of flux. At SACEP, we are continuously observing these dynamic changes, ensuring that our program activities for the coming years are flexible and adaptive to the needs of our member countries.

I wish to place on record our profound gratitude for the support we have received from our development partners, which has been crucial in advancing our programs. We look forward to their continued support as we move forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the years of its existence, SACEP has achieved significant milestones, one of the most notable being the development and implementation of the "Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia" project, worth 50 million USD.

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental issues of our time, with severe impacts on our rivers, seas, and overall ecosystem. The "Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia" project has been instrumental in addressing this challenge. By implementing

this project, SACEP has provided crucial support to our member countries in their efforts to reduce plastic waste and protect their water bodies. We have engaged with communities, governments, and industries across the region to foster a collaborative approach towards achieving a plastic-free environment.

The success of this project is a testament to the collective efforts of our member countries and the unwavering support from our development partners. It has set a precedent for future initiatives aimed at preserving our natural resources and safeguarding the health of our ecosystems.

Moreover, we have successfully obtained land from the Government of Sri Lanka to build our headquarters in Colombo. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Government of Sri Lanka for this generous allocation and for facilitating all necessary approvals from the concerned authorities to build the Secretariat Headquarters. This land allocation is not merely a contribution of physical space, but a symbol of the trust and support that the Government of Sri Lanka has placed in SACEP's mission and vision.

Additionally, I am pleased to inform you that the construction of our building is underway, with financial support from the World Bank under the PLEASE Project. This support from the World Bank has been pivotal in bringing our vision of a dedicated headquarters to fruition. The new headquarters will serve as a central hub for our operations, providing a conducive environment for collaboration, innovation, and efficient management of our regional environmental programs.

We extend our gratitude to the World Bank for providing the necessary funds. Their continued support has been crucial in ensuring that our infrastructure meets the needs of our expanding programs and initiatives. The new headquarters will not only enhance our operational capabilities but also symbolize our commitment to fostering sustainable development and environmental stewardship in South Asia.

In conclusion, I thank you all once again for your presence and participation. Let us work together towards a more sustainable and environmentally secure future for our region. Your active engagement and collaboration are essential as we strive to address the environmental challenges facing our region and achieve our shared goals.

Thank you.

Welcome Address by

H. E. Lyonpo Gem Tshering
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
Royal Government of Bhutan

at the Inaugural Session of the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimpu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

A very good morning to everyone. I hope you had a good time over here in Bhutan. Though you have been very much here in Bhutan since the day before, I was not able to meet you because of the ongoing parliament session. Even today I was supposed to be there, but considering the importance of this event I took a leave of absence. This is a procedure which we have to follow for leave from the parliament. So, I am very happy to be among all the members here attending the event. I think SACEP is one of the oldest institutions, as old as SAARC, I think.

So, first and foremost, Kuzu Zangpo, and good morning to everyone. His Excellency Mr. Sabir Hussain Chaudhary, Honorable Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Toriq Ibrahim, Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Republic of Maldives, Honorable Secretaries, ladies and gentlemen. Today is a very auspicious occasion, and I think whatever we do, we must look forward to a good day. So, on this auspicious day, I, on behalf of SACEP, as well as the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources welcome all the members for the opening session of this 16th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP here in Thimphu.

The SACEP is a 42-year-old institution organizing the 16th general body meeting in 2024 since its establishment in 1982. Today, we are one of the fastest-growing countries in the world, and South Asia combined has the highest number of populations in the world. Thus, South Asia has a lot of opportunities for growth and expansion in terms of developing a sustainable and green economy. At the same time, we are also posed with the challenges of climate change, environment, waste, pollution, and air quality. So, together we have huge potential to work together towards resolving these issues and challenges. The formation of SACEP was mainly to promote and support the protection, management, and enhancement of the environment in the region. In this regard, the Governing Council of SACEP, among others, is responsible for determining policy and programs, and overseeing activities by meeting regularly to review the ongoing program, plans, achievements, issues, and challenges and way forward. Therefore, I want to once again mention here that when we gather to discuss the issues related to the mandates of the institution, ongoing activities, plans, and any other agenda of the summit/event, the key priorities must be having a common understanding of the issue, unanimous decision, and larger benefits of the outcome to all. The agendas and issues must be reviewed and adopted in such a manner that they make a good representation of all. So, this SACEP meeting is very crucial for the smooth functioning of the SACEP secretariat and clearing its clear path in terms of functions and job responsibilities.

The Royal Government of Bhutan was supposed to hold this event in October 2023, but it seems that due to a lack of quorum, the meeting was delayed for a year. Fortunately, we are very happy to be able to host this 16th Governing Council meeting of the SACEP this year in Thimphu, Bhutan. So, it is very important that as we come together and gather for an event such as this, we deliberate on the agendas intensively and bring a positive outcome out of it. Also, I would like to introduce a bit about my Ministry. I am the Minister for the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. We have the Department of Forest and Park Services, the Department of Geology and Mining, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Department of Water, and the Department of Energy. As we gather for this event, I would like to also share that our Ministry, with the initiative taken by the Department of Environment and Climate Change, is according utmost priority in the waste sector to achieve our national target of zero waste by 2030. At the same time, we are also seriously looking at mitigating the environmental and climate-related issues and challenges for which collaboration with SACEP is very much required.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the members of the SACEP have lots of avenues to cooperate and work together to overcome environmental issues. Recently, we have seen a lot of pressure on our natural resources due to increasing demand factored by the rise in the population. Therefore, it may be important to recognize and agree on some common elements of environmental challenges faced by the member states such as climate change, capacity building, technology transfer, and so on. On the climate change concern, I would like to mention here that Bhutan was once upon a time a very hydro-rich country whereby we depend on hydro. But of late, we found that due to climate change, there's lots of glaciers melting and the rivers down the line becoming smaller in volume thereby, affecting the generation of hydropower in the country. So, the Royal Government of Bhutan is now looking forward to renewable energies to diversify our energy sector.

Bhutan has a hydro potential of 33,500-megawatt capacity, of which today we have 2,500 megawatts generation. Another 3,000 megawatts are under construction and several other mega projects are in the pipeline which were declared by His Majesty the King during the National Day on December 17th 2023. Once all those projects are completed, we are looking at the generation capacity of 20,000 MW by 2034. On the renewable energy side, an equal importance is being given to supplement the hydropower. Bhutan has 12,000 MW of solar potential which remains untapped. Recognizing the potential, we are looking at harnessing several thousand megawatts of solar energy in the next five to 10 years.

Coming to the climate and environment side, had you visited Bhutan somewhere in 1970s or 80s, even during the summer, the temperature would not jump more than 10 degrees

Celsius. But today, very recently, I was in Phuntsholing to attend a convocation at one of the colleges. To our astonishment, the temperature has almost reached 40 degrees celsius which was never the case in the past. So, I think this is not imaginable, because in Bhutan, the temperature rising to that height is greatly alarmingly and poses a huge threat to the lives and livelihood of the people. So, this is all concerning the climate changes where the group needs to do something. Now, I would also like to request SACEP to concentrate on climate concerns and environmental challenges going forward. Climate change has a lot to do with the environment and the waste which both contribute towards it. So, this year, I was even suggesting to my friends that we have to concentrate more on waste management which is one of the largest concerns in the country. Therefore, I strongly urge each member state to take advantage of the platform, to collaborate and work towards addressing common challenges of environment and climate change. So that's the most important thing that we must address together.

Before I conclude here, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the National Focal Points of SACEP for helping the representatives and the delegates from the member states, observers representing various international organizations, and of course the SACEP secretariat for conducting this meeting. Therefore, I urge every one of you to cooperate and work together and then find a solution for issues and challenges, particularly in climate change and the environment. So, I thank His Excellency for having chaired the session and putting forth the agendas.

Once again, I thank all the individuals involved in this meeting and making a fruitful contribution. Your contribution has been significant in making the event successful and I wish you all a safe journey to your destinations.

So lastly, thank you for the opportunity and I hope this meeting will lead to a successful outcome and contribute towards creating a better future for all.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.

Address by

Hon' Saber Hossain Chowdhury
Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
People's Republic of Bangladesh and
Out-going Chairman of GC-SACEP

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

As-Salaam-Alaikum, and a very good morning. Let me first, and I am sure I speak on behalf of all of you, thank the Royal Government of Bhutan because I think they have been very gracious in their hospitality and the chair for this morning's session, the Honorable Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, has talked about the dinner last night. So, I am actually surprised that we were all able to make it on time, especially when he talked about the various colored liquids that we had last night. So, it is good that we are all here on time and I think that shows the commitment that we all have towards SACEP. So thank you, Honorable Minister Lyonpo Tshering and I had a meeting with him yesterday also on bilateral basis and I am aware of the rich experience that he brings to this responsibility. And of course, the relationship between energy and climate change is getting more and more critical and fundamental.

Also very delighted to acknowledge His Excellency Honorable Toriq Ibrahim, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Technology from the Maldives, distinguished delegates from the member countries of SACEP and representatives from UN and other international agencies, ladies and gentlemen. This is the first time I am attempting a meeting of the Governing Council. I tried to read up a little on SACEP as you would expect because I wanted to find out and what I want to share with you is how visionary the governments were way back in 1981. As our host mentioned, we are now in our 41st year and so when this came into being in 1982, this was 10 years before, 10 years before the Rio Summit, which is we consider to be the defining international conference where we talked about development and sustainable development and the three principles on which SACEP was actually built. The first was the recognition of environmental degradation and we know that South Asia is one of the fastest growing regions in the world but that growth has come at a cost and that cost has been environmental degradation. Secondly, the second premise of SACEP was the integration of environment and development, which now we recognize as sustainable development. So even we move from MDGs to SDGs. So, the whole concept of sustainable development, the fact that environment and development are not contradictory, they are not confrontational, we can have development and that development can be sustainable. That was also a seed which was laid by SACEP. And then the third realization or recognition that the problems transcend national and administrative boundaries. So, these three principles form the basis of SACEP and just think how visionary the governments were when they came together and we thought about this and now we realize how relevant these themes are today. And of course, as we meet for the 16th Governing Council, the world is confronted with a triple emergency and this is recognized even at the UN. The first is the existential reality and I am not using the term

threat, the existential reality of climate change because it is a reality. Second is biodiversity and nature loss and third is pollution, marine, air, environmental. And these three are all themes. Of course, they apply to the world but they also apply in particular to the South Asian region. And despite all of the, I would say, remarkable growth that we have experienced over the past few years, South Asia, and let us be very honest and I will be candid on this, is the least connected region in the world. The least connected region in the world. So how do we connect South Asia? How do we integrate South Asia? Of course there are the big environmental projects. There is the political understanding and the political will but the other major area is in the field of environment. How can we connect South Asia through the agenda, the broader agenda of environment including positive action on climate change? How can we reconnect with nature? How can we restore our relationship with nature? And of course, on that if I talk about Bhutan, a wonderful example of environmental stewardship. The only carbon positive country, negative country in the world. You know your emissions are around 4 million CO₂ and you are taking in your absorbing about 9 million. No other country has been able to do that. So, we are passing over the baton of the chairmanship to a country which understands the environment, which respects the environment, which knows how not to make peace with nature but how to leverage nature for development.

This is something which is very important and currently in the world we have many conflicts. There are 54 live conflicts in the world but to me the greatest conflict is the war that we continue to wage against nature and that war has to stop for our own existence, for our own survival. In Bangladesh we know what climate change means. We have the Hindu Kush Himalayas to the north and the glaciers are melting at a far greater rate than any other glaciers in the world. Venezuela has lost its last glacier. The way the cryosphere is changing and by that I mean snow, ice sheets, glaciers. It is something which really threatens us to an extent we don't even comprehend. I was recently in a meeting in Baku with some of the scientists who put together the AR6 of IPCC and this is something which has really stuck with me. We always look at temperature but the other indicator we should be looking at is CO₂. CO₂ is now 428 ppm, and the last time this was the case in the history of the earth was almost 3 million years back, and at that time sea level was 15 to 20 meters higher than what they are today. So, we have the glacial melt in the Hindu Kush Himalayas and of course we know that there are 12 major rivers that run from that. We have the Indus; we have the Ganges and we have the Mekong. So, we have almost one fifth of the global population relying on the Hindu Kush Himalayas for fresh water. So, what happens when that runs out? Forget all of your other developments, how does life survive,

sustain, exist without water? So, these really are great challenges and these are challenges we individually as countries cannot face.

There are trans-boundary dimensions to air pollution, to marine pollution which one country cannot solve. In fact, the whole rationale for Rio back in 1992 was the problems and the challenges were so great that no single country could solve them by themselves and this is the realization that led to the formation of SACEP. And I must also say you know yes of course during our tenure when Bangladesh was there, we have a road map from 2022 to 2030. We have the PLEASE project which is being funded by the World Bank and we of course as Bangladesh take our commitments very seriously. I am here not just as a representation but to show that this is an organization that we are committed to which is why we have representation at the ministerial level. We make sure that all of our subscriptions are paid and are up to date. This is how we actually and the reason why I am saying all this is this organization and I say it as the outgoing chair is only going to be as effective as we as politicians want it to be. If we think that this is going to be just another organization where we are only going to be signing our attendance then you know that would be very unfortunate because the potential of SACEP is huge. Where else do we have a regional framework so well documented, so very precise that is going to hasten, that is going to facilitate the regional integration that we talk about. But have we really made use of that potential? And I think these are questions that we should ask and I am not trying to play the blame game here. You know we were the chair but I don't think we have been able to realize the potential of SACEP. You know this is so very important. So, I think one of the first things that we have to do and we have the most able country giving us leadership for the next three years and after that I believe it will be the turn of India if we go alphabetically and that is probably where the next Governing Council meeting is going to be held. We really need to deliver on the plan that we have agreed on. If required we need to, if there is some course correction needed, we should look at that. We should also look at the way we function as an organization. You know how fit are we? How fit for purpose are we? Are our rules, our procedures, our protocols, our SOPs, are they really going to help us achieve what we want to achieve? So, we have to be mindful of the process but we also have to be outcome oriented. We have to be result oriented. Not just having meetings but also to deliver on those meetings and make sure those meetings are productive. These are going to be very, very important because it is at the end of the day it's a regional platform but it is in our own national interest to make sure that the regional mechanisms work. If the regional mechanisms work then all of the eight countries who are part of SACEP you know they are going to benefit. So, this is an extremely critical time in history that SACEP is staying this responsibility.

As I say in terms of population, in terms of diversity of flora and fauna, in terms of the possibilities that we have and also if you talk about climate, the issue of climate equity and climate justice. If you look at South Asia what are our emissions individually and collectively and what is that as a percentage of global emissions? If I talk about my own country we are increasingly, increasingly having to choose between our development aspirations and fighting poverty and on the other hand fighting climate change. In the current financial year the government of Bangladesh has allocated 3.5 billion dollars from our own resources through 25 line ministries to fight climate change. Now these are funds which we could have used for education, for health, for infrastructure, for empowerment of the young generation, empowerment of women but we are having to spend to fight climate change a problem that we have contributed the very least to creating in the first place and that no country should have to make that choice between development aspirations of the people of that country, the fundamental rights of the people of that country and fighting climate change a problem that we didn't create in the first place.

And I think if you look at the number of multilateral agreements that have come into force and continue to come in, so can SACEP be the voice, the powerful voice of South Asia in all of those? Can we have convergence, can we have alignment on various international negotiations? Now the global plastics treaty, we have already had four rounds of it, the next one is going to happen in South Korea I believe and we have three very important CoPs coming up this year. There is the biodiversity CoP in Colombia in October, we have the Climate Change CoP in Baku in November and we have the Desertification CoP in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia in December. So, can we find common ground? We are not going to agree on everything, that is not going to happen but perhaps we can have a common minimum agenda that we as South Asian countries can put forward. So, I think the relevance of SACEP now, not just nationally, not just regionally but also globally is immense and it is really a question of political will, its political will at the end of the day that is going to drive this. It is not the master plans, it is not the roadmap that we make but how, to what extent we want to leverage this regional platform, this regional possibility. So, we really have a very important task in our shoulders and I am glad that we have Bhutan who is going to be giving us leadership for the next three years. Bangladesh is going to be totally supportive of this process, we are going to engage with you to the best of our ability and we will also try to draw up on our experience, we will also try to define the priorities, Excellency you talked about waste, waste is of course and as the economies grow, as urbanization grows, waste management is going to be important and not just municipal solid waste but also as you mentioned e-waste and also medical waste. As our economies grow these are all going to be very important issues and of course the ever-

increasing apparent nexus between health and climate change, absolutely fundamental, we see it every day. So how do we respond to those challenges as well? Many challenges, great opportunities and let us make it work.

So as the outgoing chair of the Governing Council I would like to thank all of you for the cooperation that Bangladesh has received. We certainly are going to be fully engaged under the leadership of Bhutan for the next three years and I wish you all excellent deliberations. Thank you very much.

Address by Special Guest

Hon' Thoriq Ibrahim
Minister of Climate Change, Environment and Energy
Ministry of Climate Change, Environment and Energy

Republic of Maldives.

at the Inaugural Session of the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Honorable Ministers
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalaamu Alaikum and a very good morning,

At the outset, let me thank the Royal Government of Bhutan for graciously hosting this important meeting.

On behalf of Maldives and indeed in my own capacity, I thank the Royal Government of Bhutan and the SACEP Secretariat for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangement for this meeting.

Excellencies,

South Asia is home to globally significant ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as over a billion people. Our growing populations and development trajectories have placed immense pressures on the environment, leading to pollution, habitat loss, and other critical challenges. Addressing these issues requires a collective and concerted effort from all stakeholders. SACEP can play a crucial role in fostering regional cooperation to tackle the environmental challenges we face.

As a small island nation, Maldives is aware of the challenges posed by environmental degradation and climate change. Our nation's vulnerability to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss underscores the urgency for action.

Our marine ecosystems are vital not only to our economy but to our survival. The coral reef systems of the Maldives are the seventh largest in the world and is the fifth most diverse ecosystem of the world's reef areas. Coral reefs provide natural defense to our islands while providing habitat for marine life.

The Maldivian government under the leadership of President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, recognizes the importance of conservation and restoration of our crucial eco systems.

We have initiated an ambitious plan to plant five million trees nationwide within the next five years. Under this initiative we will plant trees at danger of extinction, trees that provide nutrition and shade.

Excellencies,

Maldives's reliance on imported fossil fuel is economically and environmentally unsustainable. In 2023 alone, we spent close to 195 million US Dollars on subsidy to maintain current electricity rates. Transitioning to sustainable energy sources is crucial

for the Maldives, not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also to ensure energy security.

We have set ambitious targets to increase the share of renewable energy in our energy mix. We are committed to developing renewable energy systems capable of providing 33% of the nation's energy electricity needs within the next five years.

Excellencies,

The Maldives is committed to supporting the efforts to promote sustainable nitrogen management in the region. While we still have major gaps in action, policy and data in many sectors, progress has been made to tackle Nitrogen pollution.

Key initiatives include the programs by the Ministry of Agriculture and animal welfare to promote sustainable farming practices as well as the ongoing South Asian nitrogen hub project executed by the Maldives National University. The project is in its closing phase after completing much of the research needed to assess the status of nitrogen pollution in the local agricultural industry.

We are also preparing to launch a project titled "Sustainable Nitrogen Management for a Clean & Healthy Ocean: Maldives as a SIDS regional catalyst" which will also be implemented by the Maldives National University which has now been approved by the GEF. With this project, we hope to tackle the policy and technical capacity gap for Nitrogen management and establish the first National Action Plan on Nitrogen in the country.

With the approval of the proposed south Asia roadmap for sustainable nitrogen management, we anticipate increased coordination and support within the region to tackle this issue. We also hope to see formal endorsement from all the relevant government authorities from each country for this roadmap. As Nitrogen is an often-sidelined issue, we hope that SACEP and other dedicated organizations can continue to initiate and galvanize the member countries to take concrete action.

Many of the targets set forth in the roadmap will be difficult to achieve for developing countries without the continued support and engagement from the region and the organizations dedicated to this cause. We look forward to a successful approval and implementation of the roadmap.

Excellencies,

Reviving the Male' Declaration on air pollution at this critical juncture signifies our united effort to address these interconnected challenges. There is a growing international interest in regional cooperation on air pollution, as highlighted at the World Health Assembly and

the last climate COP. The 2024 report on the State of Global Air released just last week, states that countries in South Asia are among those who face the highest burden of disease by the air pollution. Moreover, climate change and air pollution are also interconnected, as they share common sources and collectively impact greenhouse gas emissions. The Male' Declaration stands as the only intergovernmental network in South Asia dedicated to address this issue at a regional scale and the Maldives is committed to renewing this initiative with our full support.

In conclusion, let me take the opportunity to thank, and commend the efforts of SACEP secretariat. I have every confidence that SACEP will continue to be the nodal organization for environmental cooperation in the region and help to further catalyze regional collective action.

I would like to once again thank the Government of Bhutan for hosting us here in Thimphu. I look forward to fruitful discussions over the course of today's meeting.

Thank you.

Vote of Thanks Delivered by

Hon' Secretary, Mr. Karma Tshering
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
Royal Government of Bhutan

at the Inaugural Session of the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Very good morning to everybody.

His Excellency, Lyonpo Gem Tshering, Honorable Minister for Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan. His Excellency, the outgoing Chairman of the Governing Council of SACEP, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the Honorable Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, People's Republic of Bangladesh. His Excellency, Mr. Toriq Ibrahim, Honorable Minister of Climate Change, Environment and Energy, Republic of Maldives, Delegations of SACEP Member Countries, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It's an honor for me to propose a very brief Vote of Thanks on behalf of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan, the host of this meeting today. Let me clarify that this is only the concluding session of the inaugural session and the actual 16th Governing Council meeting will begin after a short break, where there will be a photo session followed by a health break. With this understanding, let me thank the Honorable Minister Lyonpo Gem Tshering for gracing this opening ceremony as the chief guest, despite his busy schedule due to the ongoing parliament session here in Bhutan. I would like to thank the Honorable Ministers of Bangladesh and Maldives for their kind presence and also delivering addresses at this inaugural session. Our appreciation goes to Heads of Delegations, participants and SACEP Secretariat for the hard work put in during the past two days by staying very late until 11:00 pm yesterday to complete the report of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points, which will be submitted to the 16th Governing Council meeting today for consideration.

I would like to put on record our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and Ministry of Home Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan for their kind support in the organization of this meeting and for facilitating visas and other permits. I would like to thank SACEP Secretariat for the preparation of the documents and logistics for this meeting. I would like to thank our development partners for their continued support rendered to SACEP and its member countries. I would like to thank UNEP and ICIMOD for their partial funding support provided to the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources in conducting this meeting here in Thimphu. I thank our protocol officers and support staff who have helped look after our delegations very well till now. I would like to thank our Royal Bhutan Police for providing security services to our delegations. Similarly, thank our Royal Society for the Protection of Nature, the WWF Bhutan, the Electricity Regulatory Authority, and

the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation for their kind support in this meeting.

I would like to thank our hotel management and staff for attending to the needs of our meeting until very late yesterday night. I thank our media for covering the news of this meeting. Last but not the least, I would like to also thank many others who worked tirelessly behind the scenes and contributed directly or indirectly to the success of this meeting.

In concluding, I would like to wish the 16th Governing Council meeting a great success and wish our foreign delegates a happy stay in Bhutan. Tashi Delek and Kadrinche la.

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

MEETING OF THE SIXTEENTH GOVERNING COUNCIL

Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
9.00 - 9.30	1. Opening of the Meeting 1.1. Welcome address by the Director General, SACEP 1.2. Welcome address by host country 1.3. Address by out-going Chairman of the GC of SACEP, 1.4. Address by Special Guest 1.5. Vote of thanks 1.6. Group Photograph
9.30 - 10.00	TEA BREAK
10.00 - 10.10	2. Election of Office Bearers
10.10 - 10.20	3. Adoption of Agenda
10.20 - 10.40	4. Country Statements / Brief Opening Remarks by the Member States (3-5 Minutes)
10.40 - 11.00	5. Statements by Observers
11.00 - 11.30	6. Presentation of Report of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points by the Rapporteur
11.30 - 12.00	7. Discussions & Endorsement of Recommendations Agreed Upon at the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points
12.30 - 12.40	8. Any Other Business
12.40 - 12.50	9. Adoption of Report
12.50 - 13.00	10. Closure of Meeting

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

MEETING OF THE SIXTEENTH GOVERNING COUNCIL THIMPHU, BHUTAN 26th JUNE 2024

ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be called to order by the current Chairman of the Governing Council

- 1.1. Welcome address by the Director General, SACEP
- 1.2. Welcome address by host country
- 1.3. Address by out-going Chairman of the GC of SACEP,
- 1.4. Address by Special Guest
- 1.5. Vote of thanks
- 1.6. Group Photograph

2. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council of SACEP, a new Chairman will be elected in a manner consistent with the Articles of Association of SACEP. Vice Chairman, a Rapporteur and other officials may also be appointed by the Governing Council. The Director General shall function as the Secretary of the Council during its sessions.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Meeting will consider the Provisional Agenda for adoption.

4. COUNTRY STATEMENTS / BRIEF OPENING REMARKS BY THE MEMBER STATES (2-3 MINUTES)

The Heads of Country Delegations will present their country statements.

5. STATEMENTS BY OBSERVERS

Under this Agenda Item, the representatives of United Nations Agencies, International / Regional Organisations and Aid Consortia may wish to make Statements on matters relating to the activities of their respective Organisations which may be of interest to the Governing Council regarding the Programme activities of the South Asia region.

6. PRESENTATION OF REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS BY THE RAPPORTEUR

The Rapporteur would present to the meeting the report of the Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points

7. DISCUSSIONS & ENDORSEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AGREED UPON AT THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

The meeting will be requested for endorsement of the recommendations from the Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points.

8 . ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Under this Agenda Item, the Sixteenth Meeting of the Governing Council may wish to discuss any other relevant matters that may be raised by the representatives participating at the Meeting or by the Secretariat.

9. ADOPTION OF REPORT

The Rapporteur will present the Draft Report of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP for its consideration and adoption.

12. CLOSURE OF MEETING

Any representative participating in the Meeting may wish to make concluding statements regarding the deliberations at the Meeting and its achievements. The Chairman will finally declare the Meeting closed.

Country Statement by

Mr. Pravir Pandey
Additional Secretary & Financial Advisor for Ministry of Environment, Forest and
Climate Change
Republic of India
Head of Delegation

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates from SACEP Countries and organizations

Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of our Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Mr. Bhupender Yadav, I would like to thank the SACEP Secretariat and the Kingdom of Bhutan for organizing this 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP.

As for India, we attach great importance to the SACEP. The countries of SACEP are more like an extended family. We have many similarities and commonalities in terms of cultures, history, geography, food, beliefs, social values, weather, climate, floras, and faunas.

The SACEP countries are also inter-connected in terms of geography and oceans. Further, most of the South Asian nations share many similar environmental problems as well.

The SACEP countries are most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of extreme weather events, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and other environmental challenges. As these challenges are global in nature and impacts, collective efforts are must to fight these common challenges, and action taken in silos may not bring the intended results.

Excellencies,

India fully appreciates the works and initiatives taken by the SACEP Secretariat on plastics, waste, pollution, climate change, sustainable management of nitrogen, etc. But it is important that initiatives have convergence with national policies, programmes and schemes of the SACEP Member States.

Collective efforts at the global level may not be enough for addressing the environmental related challenges. There are still many gaps in terms of resources,

capacity building, manpower, technology, and finance. Therefore, we should not be duplicating the activities of the UN agencies.

We may focus on country – specific and regional specific activities. While, all our activities should contribute towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and leaving no one behind.

At the international and multilateral fora, it is important that we stress the importance of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), the Rio conventions, and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

There is a need for the developed countries to enhance transfer of low-cost climate technology in an affordable and accessible manner, capacity building along with affordable, adequate, predictable, and timely new additional financial resources as critical enablers of climate action in the developing countries.

At the upcoming UNFCCC COP 29, We expect and an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance prior to 2025, as per the needs and priorities of developing countries.

Excellencies,

To address the contemporary challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and other challenges, India has been taking concrete actions both at the national level and the international level.

At the national level, our recent initiatives include Green Credit Initiative (GCI) Launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on the side – lines of COP 28; Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes(MISHTI) ; Mission Circular Economy; National Clean Air Programme; Digitization of Flora, Fauna and herbarium records; Transcontinental relocation of Cheetah; International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA); Forest

(Conservation) Amendment Act 2023; India Cooling Action Plan; banning of single use plastics; etc.

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister has launched 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' Campaign on the occasion of World Environment Day, 5th June, 2024, i.e. to plant a tree in the coming days as a tribute to our mother. He has called upon everyone, in and around the world, to plant a tree in the coming days as a tribute their mother.

At the global level, India is spearheading Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT) and International Solar Alliance (ISA). We also jointly launched Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) with UK, Australia, Fiji, Jamaica, and Mauritius.

During India's G - 20 Presidency in 2023, international initiatives like Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC) and Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap- Gandhinagar Information Platform (GIR- GIP) were launched, and the G20 High Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development was adopted.

At this August gathering, I take the opportunity to urge the SACEP Member States to join or adopt these global initiatives.

During India's G - 20 Presidency, the needs, and concerns of the Global South on the contemporary global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and other related challenges were emphasized, and deliberated in detail.

Excellencies,

India also pioneered the resolution on Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles (UNEP/EA.6/L.11), Which was adopted by the Sixth Session of UNEA held during 26 February to 1 - March 2024, Nairobi.

Our concrete actions over the years resulted in achieving India's NDC targets well ahead of the time; Remarkable Increase in the Number of Ramsar Sites of the Country; Increase

in the number of Protected Areas; Increase in forest and tree cover; improvement in air quality; etc.

The SACEP countries can also learn from each other experiences, ideas, best practices, and knowledge of tackling the contemporary environmental related challenges. To this end, SACEP can be a very effective platform.

In this connection, the SACEP Member states may also refer to the compendium of experiences, ideas, best practices, and knowledge on the contemporary environmental related challenges available in the G - 20 portal. These were compiled based on the inputs and information shared by the G - 20 countries during India's G- 20 Presidency. We may, however, avoid monitoring and development of common standards for all SACEP countries, as we may differ in terms of approaches and priorities.

Excellencies,

To address, the increase in uncertainties of extreme weather events in the SACEP region, we need to undertake timely course correction in our approaches towards economic growth and development at all levels, including at the individual level.

We suggest that SACEP may also explore promoting activities emphasizing the role of sustainable lifestyles in combating the global environmental challenges.

India looks forward to strengthening and widening the collaboration and cooperation among the SACEP Member Countries, to promote and support protection, management, and enhancement of the environment in the region.

Thank you...



Country Statement by

Mr. Bhupal Baral
Director General, Department of Environment
Ministry of Forests and Environment
Government of Nepal

Head of Delegation

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Mr. Chairman
Hon' Ministers
Director General of SACEP
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Very good morning and Namasthe!

I am honored and privileged to participate in the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP in this beautiful city of Thimpu, Kingdom of Bhutan.

On behalf of government of Nepal, I would like to spread sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this meeting as well as facilitating warm hospitality. I appreciate the SACEP Secretariat for excellent arrangements of the meeting. I congratulate Mr. Chairman on the election for the chair for the 16th Governing Council of SACEP.

South Asia is facing challenges of a variety of trans-boundary environmental issues that SACEP can effectively address with the support and cooperation of the member states. SACEP can be instrumental in the capacity building and development of synergies for improving the professional skills of the environmental and climate change policy and planners in south Asia.

Nepal is fully committed to the aims and objectives of SACEP and we believe in its key role in achieving progress towards protection of environment and climatic change issues in South Asia. Together we can work to ensure a better environment in the region for our future generations.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests,

Nepal is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change. It is at high-risk due to the country's fragile topography, the climate-sensitive livelihoods of the people and their limited adaptive capacity. Nepal is committed to acting on climate change in line with the Paris Agreement, despite the country's negligible contribution on emissions.

We all are aware that environmental degradation is one of the greatest challenges faced by entire globe these days. High population density, low economic growth, geographical location all has accelerated environment risk to us. Despite negligible contribution South Asian region has been impacted by adverse impacts of climate changes and the region is the most vulnerable in the world.

Despite the challenges I'm sure we can find a solution with our joined efforts and collaboration in the region. For the purpose, we need to act towards understanding technical capacity, setting financial resources, creating public awareness and implementing activities in an effective manner.

The Government of Nepal is strongly committed to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development goals which are also the mission of SACEP. We are implementing various policies related to environment like forest policy, environment policy and climate change policy with a vision of protecting environment and biodiversity. Nepal is also formulating a long-term low greenhouse gas emission strategy by 2021. The strategy aims to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2045. As discussed in the meeting we hope we can work together to revise and update Male' Declaration to incorporate current needs.

I believe, during this meeting, we'll share a lot of information to each other and discuss the relevant challenges and explore opportunities for stronger partnership in the future. Environment protection and management is not only the national issue but also a regional as well as global. Regional and global collaboration and cooperation can address the problem on environment challenges. In this front, I assure a strong commitment in working together both regional and global level to meet our common goal.

I once again express my sincere thank to the Royal Government of Bhutan and SACEP for organizing this very important event.

Thank you very much..

Country Statement by

Dr. Mohsina Zubair
Deputy Director (Chemical)
Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination
Government of Pakistan

Head of Delegation,

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you Chair.

Hon. Ministers

Head of delegations of the SACEP Member Countries

ladies and gentlemen

Assalamu alaikum and very good morning.

It gives me immense pleasure and an honor to congratulate the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting the 16th meeting of the SACEP Governing Council and SACEP Secretariat for wonderful arrangements. This is the great platform to discuss regional cooperation issues and to plan mitigation strategies to tackle these environmental challenges. Pakistan is a part of the PLEASE project and SACEP is providing support for the development of a national plastic waste management plan and going to establish the first IT based monitoring dashboard to combat plastic pollution. We can improve regional cooperation on several other environmental issues. The SACEP member states can promote economic growth, social progress in various sectors and cultural development within South Asian countries. SACEP is sharing the developed methodologies, experiences, and good practice .We are neighbor's countries and connected to each other by cultural strings.

I would like to appreciate SACEP initiatives and efforts. These initiatives make us believe and hope that environmental sustainability is the way forward and could become the standard approach for all future meetings and events. SACEP is really doing well in the field of environment for both human and natural, in the context of sustainable development and on regional issues within their available capacity and resources. Pakistan is fully committed to the aims of SACEP. we believe in its key role in achieving progress towards protection of the environment, pollution and resource depletion issues in South Asia. SACEP is also an appropriate forum for action on transboundary environmental issues. South Asian countries can work to ensure a better environment in the region for our future generations.

SACEP provides help to participating countries to expand existing environmentally related activities and additionally to begin new ones, knowledge management and information

sharing, which is a major constraint on sustainable development planning and decision-making in most countries.

Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change. Climate change became major issue for our country. As with the changing climate in South Asia as a whole, the climate of Pakistan has changed over the past several decades, with significant impacts on the environment and people. Recently, Pakistan announced several new national policies for climate change, air pollution, and hazardous waste management. Pakistan is a party of international conventions. Lastly, Ladies and Gentlemen, in the end, let me state that the Government of Pakistan supports and looks forward to continuing working with SACEP on the implementation of its environmental protection programme.

Thank you very much.



Country Statement by

Mr. Mohamed Rizvi Hassen
Director General, Ocean Affairs, Environment & Climate Change Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Head of Delegation

at the

**16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)**

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you, Chair for the floor,

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is an honor to deliver the national statement on behalf of Government of Sri Lanka. At the outset, I would like to convey the greetings of H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka who is also the Minister in charge of Environment to the Hon. Ministers of Environment of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives who are joining today at the 16th Governing Council meeting of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and also he conveyed his good wishes for the successful governing council meeting. Further I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Bhutan for the excellent warm hospitality extended to me right throughout the governing council meeting.

Today, environmental conservation has become increasingly challenging. As an inter-governmental organization in the South Asia region, SACEP holds a prominent role in addressing environmental related concerns, in particular preserving and protection of our precious environment as our countries face many unresolved challenges, and through SACEP, we can work together to overcome them.

Distinguish delegates,

I would like enlighten this august gathering that President Wickremesinghe has placed sustainable environment management and climate change as one of the priority area of his agenda in driving progress of Sri Lanka. Under his leadership we established a climate change office at the Presidential Secretariat to efficiently coordinate all matters related environment & climate change. We are working on bringing new legislations on climate change, environment & living heritage of Sri Lanka to address complex issues that we are facing currently. The work on establishment of the international university on climate change which was launched during COP 27 is progressing smoothly and steadily. Furthermore uplifting the SACEP to the next level and region to play a pivotal role in

addressing global challenges in the spheres of environment and climate change is foremost of his agenda.

Distinguish delegates,

We understand that it is crucial to recognize the triple planetary crisis we face: climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution. These issues profoundly impact every aspect of humankind, largely due to anthropogenic activities. Therefore, we strongly believe that fostering greater regional cooperation among our states will be immensely beneficial. By sharing knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned, we can gain a better understanding of our environmental challenges. This collaborative approach will enable us to develop more effective environmental policies and make informed decisions for a sustainable future.

Distinguish delegates,

I take this opportunity to express the necessity for a strong and active environmental platform in the South Asia region. Therefore, I hope SACEP will enhance its capacity to raise its voice and fulfill this crucial requirement for our region. The SACEP should lead the way in identifying new approaches to environmental conservation. This includes exploring new pathways for funding sources and technology support. Having regular consultation among member countries, we can collaboratively find solutions to address the emerging issues. Sri Lanka is of the view that intuitional mechanism of the SACEP and its staff required to be strengthened with the expertise of technical knowledge & managerial skills to achieve the core objectives of the SACEP declaration.

Distinguish delegates,

I would like to convey that the Government of Sri Lanka will support amplifying the SACEP agenda and transforming its objectives into actionable results.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the SACEP and all Member States for the continuous effort on safeguarding the spirit of environment that makes the life on earth.

Thank you.

Statement Delivered by

Dr. Subrata Sinha
Regional Environmental Affairs Officer
United Nations Environment Programme for
Asia and the Pacific (UNEP-ROAP)

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished Senior Officials, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Regional Director of UNEP, we would like to express our gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan and the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) for the kind invitation and hosting the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP in Thimphu, Bhutan.

We might refer to key global processes that have direct implications to SACEP GC and the South Asia Environmental Agenda:

The 6th session of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), world's highest-level decision-making body for environment matters that sets the global environmental agenda and policy framework, held from 26 February to 1 March 2024 in Nairobi, under the theme of "Effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution". UNEA-6 acknowledged with a sense of great urgency the threats posed to sustainable development by global environmental challenges and crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as desertification, land and soil degradation, drought and deforestation, and their impacts on human health and the environment.

The 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) on 15 December 2022. The Framework provides a blueprint to protect, conserve and restore nature for the good of all humanity. In June 2023, the United Nations formally adopted a historic treaty, a new legally binding international instrument designed to protect life in the high seas, which is increasingly under threat from pollution, climate change and overfishing. The pact extends for the first-time environmental protections to the two-thirds of the ocean that lie beyond national jurisdiction.

At UNEA-5 in March 2022, a historic resolution was adopted to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment by 2024. The resolution requested UNEP to convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop the instrument, which is to be based on a comprehensive

approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal. INC started its work during the second half of 2022 and four sessions of INC have taken place so far. The 5th session of INC will be held in Busan from 25 November to 1 December 2024. The in-person meetings of the adhoc intersessional open-ended expert groups will take place at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok (UNCC) from 24 to 28 August 2024. Ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert groups established by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The 2023 UN Climate Change Conference held from 30 November to 13 December 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, marked the conclusion of the first ‘Global stocktake’ of the world’s efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. Having shown that progress was too slow across all areas of climate action, countries responded with a decision on how to accelerate action across all areas by 2030. This includes a call on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels to renewables. There was a historic agreement on the operationalization of the loss and damage fund and funding arrangement.

At the regional level, the fifth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (5th AP Forum) was held from 1 to 6 October 2023, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Environment and UNEP jointly organized the 5th Asia Pacific Forum. Our deepest appreciation goes to Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Environment for hosting the successful forum that provided regional inputs to UNEA-6. The Forum was an important venue for the region’s Environment Ministers and authorities to discuss their priorities, share challenges and innovative solutions, and propose collective actions for the region’s pathway to sustainability.

In South Asia, SACEP is one of the foremost intergovernmental agencies committed to promoting environment and sustainable development. UNEP and SACEP has collaborated since its inception to address priority environmental challenges through various projects and programme in South Asia. These included: capacity building on data and information management, preparation of state of the environment reports, Male’ Declaration on transboundary air pollution, and capacity building on Multilateral Environment Agreements. More recently, UNEP has collaborated with SACEP to develop a sustainable consumption and production roadmap and a regional marine and coastal biodiversity strategy for South Asia.

In conclusion, we would like to thank once again Excellency Chair, South Asian Member States, and the SACEP Secretariat and look forward to the successful Governing Council outcome, particularly SACEP's workplan over next few years for our cooperation.

Statement Delivered by

Ms. Cecile Fruman
Director

Regional Integration and Engagement in the South Asia Region (SAR)
World Bank
at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you. Thank you very much. And I'd like to start by thanking our host, the Royal Government of Bhutan, for extending such a warm welcome. I'd like to congratulate the Governing Council, the member countries, and the SACEP Secretariat for organizing this meeting so successfully. And it is a critical juncture. It's very important that the Governing Council meet to steer this organization. My remarks will be very short. I want to make really one point, and that is that SACEP matters. This is an institution that plays a very important role, and we've heard it from Honorable Minister Chaudhry, we've heard it from the DG. There are very few regional organizations in South Asia, and yet we know that the fundamental problems are regional in nature. No single country can address plastic pollution, air pollution, or any of the key environmental challenges that you face. So, strengthening SACEP is absolutely critical, and we as the World Bank have been a key partner of SACEP. We've been very honored to work with SACEP on plastic pollution. We have made some inroads. I think we could do so much more. We are in the process of supporting an institutional capacity assessment. We're looking at governance. We're looking at strengthening the organization, and I'm hoping that under the leadership of Bhutan as the chair and India as the vice chair, those recommendations will be implemented in the future.

The way I see this in my remit at the World Bank is regional integration. We are always looking for strong regional institutions to work with, and unfortunately in this region there are very few. We see SACEP as a gem, a gem that unfortunately over the years has been allowed to tarnish, and I think this is the time now to polish that gem, to let it shine so that it can serve all of your purposes. I think we've heard very clearly from the statements of the delegations that you are interconnected, that you believe in cooperation, and this is the institution that can deliver. It has a tremendous mandate. It's been in existence. We've heard it since 1982. It has a strategic action plan. I think the call for all of us now is to help articulate that regional plan at the national level to connect it, and if there's one message, I would like to ask all of you to bring home is please drive home the importance of SACEP. I hope that at the next governing council we have representation at ministerial level from all eight countries. I hope that there is more interest, more commitment to the future of SACEP because SACEP will deliver for you if you deliver for SACEP, and we as the World Bank stand very ready to continue to support this organization. We believe in its mandate. We believe in its mission, and we hope that by strengthening its governance and its management it can continue to deliver at a higher level and be that shining jewel, that shining gem for South Asia.

Thank you very much.

Statement Delivered by

Prof. Mark Sutton
Director
South Asian Nitrogen Hub
UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Edinburgh Research Station,

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you, Honorable Minister, and it's a pleasure to be welcomed so warmly by the Royal Government of Bhutan. Ministers, honored colleagues, SACEP Secretariat, the “South Asia Nitrogen Hub” is the full title of our project, or SANH for short. It's a £17 million investment from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). We had to compete to win this funding: It was like winning the World Cup football championships for scientists.

It means that all eight countries of South Asia are working together across the scientific community, together with you as policymakers on behalf of the governments. We are looking at where the nitrogen pollution is and what are the main impacts for biodiversity, for human health, for coral reefs. We are looking at how we can mitigate nitrogen better, particularly in agricultural practices and fertilizers, manures, wastewater and industrial practices. We've been supporting with policy analysis, developing a database of over 1000 policies relevant for nitrogen across South Asia. And we have been happy to support two resolutions at the United Nations Environment Assembly, working with you as South Asian countries, as well as the Colombo Declaration.

Why are we here? It is clear that South Asia is a global hotspot of nitrogen pollution. You can see it from space. That is not just because of high levels of polluting activities. It is also because of geography. With South Asia being pressed up against the Himalayas, this is a challenging location for pollution.

I, in fact, started life as an air quality researcher. So why am I looking at the whole of nitrogen? We face barriers to change and by bringing all those nitrogen impacts together, air, water and climate, we hope to overcome those barriers.

We've been really happy to support and work with you, and your government colleagues and scientists, in developing the draft ‘South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management’, with input across all eight countries from South Asia. Now, if I am not wrong, so far you do not yet have agreement to endorse that document. I understand that the politics are not yet ready. Now, we as scientists, we can give you scientific support. The politics is your game. We encourage you to work hard in that and get agreement. I think as we go forward, what we would say is do not be afraid to share your concerns

about what you're really concerned about, because there may be misunderstandings that lead to blockages.

For example, sometimes people are afraid that we talk about reducing nitrogen inputs that might challenge food security. But we're not saying that. We are saying reduce the waste of nitrogen resources, which means good for the economy, good for the farmer, good for air, water and climate. Globally, if the world were to adopt a goal to halve nitrogen waste, that would save 150 billion to \$300 billion worth of resources annually. It would be good for climate, air and water quality at the same time.

So that's our message. We're working with you. We look forward to supporting you further as you continue to work on the roadmap. Call us, ask your difficult questions, and as a scientific community we will do our best to provide clear answers.

Statement Delivered by

Dr. D. G. Jagath Premakumara
Principal Researcher / Director
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)- CCET

at the

**16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)**

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, and esteemed colleagues,

It is an honour to address the 16th Governing Council today on behalf of the IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (IGES-CCET). I join my fellow delegates in expressing our gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan and the SACEP Secretariat for successfully organising this council meeting and inviting us to participate. With the cooperation of UNEP and our supporting partners, IGES- CCET is dedicated to assisting national and local governments in enhancing waste management and resource efficiency policies and practices through evidence-based knowledge.

South Asia is a region rich in cultural heritage and natural resources, yet we face significant environmental challenges that threaten our ecological balance and socio-economic development. Effective waste management—particularly of organic and plastic waste, as well as emerging waste types like e-waste and healthcare waste—stands out as a critical issue requiring immediate and concerted actions.

At IGES-CCET, we are committed to working with the SACEP Secretariat, its member countries, and other partners to find sustainable solutions to these issues at both national and regional levels. Leveraging the Regional Roadmap on Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circulation in South Asia (2019-2030), which IGES-CCET supported and was adopted at the 15th Governing Council of SACEP in 2019, we have been collaborating with some SACEP member countries to implement strategic actions that transform our society from a linear to a more circular economy. Additionally, we worked with the Government of India during its presidency of the G20 to publish the G20 Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution report, with support from the Government of Japan.

However, the success of such initiatives depends on national commitments, regional cooperation, the sharing of best practices, and regular monitoring of progress. Therefore, I call upon all member states to join hands in implementing the Regional Roadmap on Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circulation by strengthening our partnerships, exchanging knowledge, deploying innovative technologies, and finding sustainable financing mechanisms to improve waste management across South Asia. By doing so, we can mitigate the environmental impacts of waste, enhance resource efficiency, and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change targets.

Furthermore, it is essential that our strategies are inclusive and equitable, ensuring that the benefits of sustainable waste management reach all segments of society, particularly the most vulnerable, including the poor and the informal sector. By integrating social

equity into our waste management policies and practices, we can build a sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to work together with the SACEP Secretariat and its member states in establishing a zero-waste and sound material-cycle society in South Asia.

Thank you.

Statement Delivered by

Mr.Pema Gyamtsho
Director General
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you, honorable chair, excellencies, distinguished heads of delegations, and our valued development partners. Thank you very much, first of all, to SACEP Secretariat for inviting ICIMOD to be an observer at this very, very important governing council meeting. And I would like to begin by congratulating all the office bearers, the new chair, vice chair, and also rapporteur, and also express our appreciation to the outgoing chair, vice chair, and also the DG and staff of SACEP. Now listening to their excellencies and the heads of delegations this morning, we see great opportunities for ICIMOD to work together with SACEP. ECMO can complement SACEP 's work by bringing in the mountain perspective. Now when I say mountains, mountains and islands are connected, interlinked. When the glaciers melt, where do the meltwater go? They'll end up in the oceans. So, there is strong connection between mountains and other coastal areas as well as the islands. We can also bring in the transboundary dimensions that we need to work beyond our borders. There should be stronger upstream and downstream linkages because in case of disasters, disasters don't stop at our borders. Air pollution don't stop at the airspace. So, we need to strengthen the upstream-downstream linkages and cooperation.

And as a knowledge organization, ICIMOD can bring scientific evidence to the table and also enable the sharing of good practices so that we can have informed policies and plans. This morning, I think His Excellency, the Honorable Minister from Bangladesh, touched on two very important suggestions. One, to identify a common minimum agenda for our region. I think that makes a lot of sense. ICIMOD stands ready to support the member countries in contributing to us building a united front, single voice from the region at the CoPs, now CoP Biodiversity. I believe it's going to be in Colombia, then the CoP on climate change in Baku and the COP on Desertification in Riyadh. I think these are all very important events that we have to prepare as a region. Now, I also heard him say that SACEP was created some 41 years ago or 42 years ago, if I'm not mistaken. And if our predecessors at that time had the vision to create SACEP, I think we should at least have the commitment to honor this vision, come together and implement and pursue the vision that they have given to us.

So, with these words, I would like to wish SACEP all success in the coming years. I'm sure that SACEP will find new energy and truly provide this platform for coming together and presenting a common voice at global agenda. At the end of the day, if you look around, we are all signatories. All our member countries are signatories to all the global conventions and agreements, be it Male Declaration, Sendai Framework or Conventions on

Biodiversity, Conventions on Climate Change, Paris Agreement. And we have also seen that we have beautiful policies on paper. How do we translate these policies into practice?

Thank you very much.

Statement Delivered by

Mr. Patrick S Gan
(ESTH) Officer
Regional Environment, Science, Technology & Health
U.S, Embassy Kathmandu, Nepal

at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Excellencies, distinguished dignitaries and partners,

I would like to extend our thanks to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting this Governing Council meeting as well as the opportunity to provide support and our thoughts on your role in the region. I would like to commend the South Asia Cooperative Environment Program for considering reinvigoration of the Male Declaration on air pollution. As we all know, regional problems, transboundary problems cannot be solved individually by one individual country and it takes a regional approach to do so and it makes sense to really leverage this existing framework to foster cooperation, dialogue and data sharing across South Asia.

We in the United States have a wealth of knowledge and experience in working on air pollution and we are committed to exploring opportunities for partnership, bringing in experts from the United States to share knowledge and their experience and expertise on air pollution as well as on a bilateral level as well as looking at opportunities for really fostering cooperation with intergovernmental organizations such as ICIMOD to really help bring countries together to discuss these challenging issues as well as foster cooperation and share data and harmonize data across the region. We welcome the opportunity to partner and look forward to continuing our engagement on these shared challenges in the region.

Thank you.

Statement Delivered by

Mr. Ken Shimizu
FAO Representative for Bhutan and Nepal
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
at the

16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

held in Thimphu, Bhutan

26th June 2024

Thank you, excellencies, distinguished delegates.

On behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, I'd like to extend our sincere appreciation to SACEP Secretariat, the Royal Government of Bhutan, and of course all SACEP member states for extending an invitation to FAO to participate in this very important governing council meeting. I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Royal Government of Bhutan for its chairmanship and for the excellent organization of this governing council meeting.

FAO recognizes the very important role and mandate of SACEP within the region and would also like to take the opportunity to commend the efforts undertaken so far by the SACEP Secretariat, its member states, in tackling the negative impacts of the triple planetary crisis in the region.

FAO, under our strategic framework and program priority areas, is also committed to strengthening capacities for adapting and mitigating the impacts of climate change, reducing environmental pollution, and minimizing loss of biodiversity. And we look forward to strengthening collaboration and partnerships with the SACEP Secretariat, its member states, and also all the development partners here in addressing these very important challenges and to ensure that the livelihoods and the rights of the people in the community within the region is protected and also to ensure that the voices of people and community within South Asia is heard in international forums. And I'd like to conclude by wishing SACEP Secretariat, its member states, for the successful implementation of the action plan.

Thank you very much.

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My No. 04/03//06/962

உமது இல. /
Your No.

தேதி /
Date 18th Jan. 2011

Ms Jacintha S. Tissera
Officiating Director General
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
#10, Anderson Road, Colombo 05



**Criteria and Terms of Reference for
Selection of Director General of SACEP on Rotation**

This has reference to your letter dated 12th January 2011, on the above subject.

As the Chairman of the Governing Council of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), I am pleased to endorse **the Criteria for Selection of the Director General of SACEP on Rotation, referred in Annex 1**, as decided at the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP (12GC.SACEP) held on 3rd November 2010, the 117th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP (117CC.SACEP) held on 23rd November 2010 and based on the comments/clearances received from SACEP member countries.

Regards

Anura Priyadarshana Yapa
Minister of Environment

Anura Priyadarashana Yapa, M.P
Minister of Environment, Sri Lanka and
Chairman, Governing Council of SACEP

Encl: **Annex 1** - Criteria for Selection of the Director General of South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme on Rotation and Terms of Reference

Noted
Dissecc
20/01/11

" சேர் உகரலாசுரி கல கலகலாசு சீதிசாபி சலசல அகலல் சிலகலல கிலகலலலலல, சிலசில கலல கிலலலலலலல, கிலகல கலலலலலல சிலகல அகலலலலலல"
"நாம் வாமும் இந்த பூமி மற்றும் மரம் செடி கொடிகள் மனிதனுக்கு மட்டுமன்றி வான் வெளியில் பறந்து திரியும் பறவைகள் மற்றும் பூமியிலுள்ள விலங்குகளுக்கும், ஏனைய அனைத்து விலங்குகளுக்கும் சொந்தமானது"

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF
DIRECTOR GENERAL, SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ON
ROTATION**

AND

TERMS OF REFERENCE

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), based in Colombo, Sri Lanka is an Inter-governmental Organization established in 1982 to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of environment in the region (www.sacep.org). Its member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SACEP is also the Secretariat of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) covering its five marine member states.

As decided at the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP held on 3rd November 2010 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the first option to propose a candidate as the Director General of SACEP will be given to Sri Lanka for a period of three years followed by Pakistan. Thereafter, principle of rotation will be followed starting from the alphabetical order beginning from Afghanistan for a period of three years as per the decision of the High Level Meeting to Initiate the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme from 18 – 25 February 1981 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

The Director General, SACEP will be the head of the organization and provide leadership in the efficient and effective functioning of the organization and fulfillment of its mandate as contained in the Declaration and Articles of Association of SACEP and the decisions of the Meetings of the Governing Councils and the Consultative Committee of SACEP / SASP.

In particular the incumbent will be responsible for:

- overall administrative and financial control of the organization,
- programme planning, budgeting and resource mobilization, including fund-raising and co-financing,
- building and developing close relationships with the stakeholder bodies, including alliance partners and other organizations,
- performing other functions and responsibilities entrusted by the Governing Council and its Committees.
- Meeting the reporting requirements laid down by the Governing Council and the Consultative Committee

QUALIFICATION:

- He / She should have an Advanced University Degree (Ph.D. or Post Graduate qualification) in a relevant discipline (Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Planning, Engineering, Law, Business Management, Environmental Management, Environmental Economics)
- 15 years of professional experience, of which, at least 10 years must be at a senior level with demonstrated planning, managerial and leadership capabilities and sound knowledge of environmental and sustainable development issues at the national, regional, and global levels
- Proven skill in identifying, formulating, planning, operating and monitoring environmental programmes, knowledge and experience of the procedures adopted by the UN Agencies and other technical or financial assistance agencies
- Excellent communication skills
- Good interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment with sensitivity and respect for diversity
- Age: 40-55 Years

It would also be desirable for the Director General to have an established and good working relationship with governments of SACEP member and non-member countries, international and regional bodies, aide agencies, relevant non-government organizations, senior management in private sector, corporations, companies and foundations, etc.

(Source : Approved Advertisement and Guidelines & Procedure for the Recruitment of the DG.SACEP by Chairman GC.SACEP dated 2nd August 2004 and Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General dated 1st February 2005)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The post of Director General, SACEP is a statutory appointment, on Contract Basis for a non-renewable term of three years at the Programme's Headquarters at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The appointment as Director General, SACEP will be governed by the following Terms and Conditions:

1. Term of Service

- a) The Director General's appointment shall date from the day on which he / she leaves his / her last duty station to come to Colombo, and his / her salary (including overseas allowance, if any) is payable from that date, provided that salary is not payable for any periods of leave taken in the course of his / her journey to Colombo.
- b) The approved term of service as laid down in the Articles of Association and the Decision of the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP, will be deemed to commence from the date of the Director General's departure from his / her last duty station or normal place of residence to come to Colombo and will exclude travel time on transfer from Colombo and any accumulated leave taken at the end of his / her term of service.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 16 a - b)

c) Period of Overlap

The terms of office of the Director General and his / her successor may overlap for a period not exceeding two weeks plus travel time and accumulated leave: To provide for periods of overlap or to enable the change-over to take place at the most suitable time of year, the Governing Council, Consultative Committee may make small extensions to the terms of contract of the officers concerned subject to the provisions of Article 7 of the Articles of Association.

(Source : GC 4 / page 37, Rule 16 (c))

2. Resignation

In case, if the Director General is withdrawn by his / her government or the Director General resigns, three months written notice shall ordinarily be given to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee. However, the resignation may be accepted on shorter notice. If the Director General stays less than the term of his / her original contract and if he / she has taken advantage of the provision for Home Leave payment of the costs of return travel to the normal place of residence shall be at the discretion of the Consultative Committee.

(Source : Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 17)

3. Transport of Officer and the Family

The selected candidate for appointment as Director General will obtain a Diplomatic Passport from the respective country government and other necessary travel documents including valid visa from the High Commission / Embassy of Sri Lanka of the concerning country, before the commencement of the journey.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 6 dated 1st February 2005)

SACEP will pay the cost of economy class air travel or the equivalent by any other means of transport to Colombo from the normal place of residence or last duty station, and back to his / her normal place of residence for the Director General, spouse and dependent children (including step children and legally adopted children). The term “dependent children” covers those who are under age of 21 on first arrival in Sri Lanka and unmarried, and whom it is intended, will reside in Sri Lanka during the Director General’s term of duty. A son or daughter of 21 years of age and above may also be considered a dependent for travel purpose, if physically disabled or mentally retarded.

In the case of a dependent child receiving full-time education outside Sri Lanka, the Secretariat will pay the cost of economy class return air fare between the Director General’s normal place of residence and Colombo, once in every twelve months except in the twelve-month period in which the Director General has home leave.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 18)

4. Shipment of Car

The Secretariat will pay the cost of shipment of a Director General's car from his / her normal place of residence or last duty station to Colombo and back to his / her normal place of residence.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 19)

5. Removal Allowance

On the first appointment of the Director General and on his / her return to his / her normal place of residence, the Secretariat will pay actual removal expenses for household and personal effects up to a maximum stated below by the most economical means of transportation:

Air baggage accompanied: 66 lbs/person
Air Freight : 100 lbs/person
Surface Freight: 3,500 lbs/family
(300 cu. ft. or 8.50 cu. m)

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 20)

6. Salary

a) The Director General will be given a fixed remuneration of US \$ 5,000/- per month.

(Source : 14 GC.SACEP – 9.1.2 - page 4, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, hosted by Afghanistan on 28 March 2018)

b) Salary is inclusive of all allowances except Travel Allowance, Entertainment Allowance, Medical Expenses, Children's Education Allowance and Furnished Living Accommodation Allowance. The Director General may remit from Sri Lanka amounts up to the total of his / her salary as permitted by the Sri Lanka foreign exchange authorities.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 21. a)

c) The salary and allowances of the Director General are determined on the assumption that he / she will not be subject to taxation, but the Secretariat has no responsibility on account of any taxation that may, in spite of this assumption, be levied on such officer by his / her national Government.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 21.b and Gazette Notification (Extraordinary) 1426/17 under Diplomatic Privileges Act No 9 of 1996; (a) dated 5th January 2006)

7. Travel Allowance

When absent from Colombo on official visits, the Director General will be entitled in addition to the salary, the Daily Subsistence Allowance applicable to staff members in the Director and the Principal Officer category of the United Nations for each country visited, subject to the fulfillment of administrative and financial instructions. Travel by air will be by economic class.

In cases, where the per diem rate is not high enough to cover his / her reasonable expenses, he / she may claim actual expenses supported by vouchers. It is expected to travel in such a way as to economies time and expenses

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 23)

Overseas travel of the Director General of SACEP should be approved by the Consultative Committee of SACEP and a report on the follow up actions should be submitted to CC-SACEP after attending the Meeting / Conference.

(Source : 110 CC SACEP held on 30th October 2008)

8. Personal Accident Insurance

Director General will be provided with insurance cover for capital sum of pounds sterling 10,000/- each, against personal accidents during their terms of office.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 24)

9. Entertainment Allowance

The Director General shall be entitled to be reimbursed in respect of expenditure incurred on entertainment in pursuance of the official representational functions. Such expenditure shall not in the total exceed the sum set aside for this purpose in the annual budget.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 25)

10. Furnished Living Accommodation

The Director General will be entitled to per diem allowance in lieu of house rent for the first 14 days in joining the Secretariat. In case of the spouse and maximum of 2 dependent children, the rate of per diem allowance will be 50% of the rate applicable for Colombo.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment; iii; dated 7th March 2005)

The Director General will be provided a furnished living accommodation with a rental ceiling of Sri Lankan Rupees / US Dollars as given in the below table.

Rental	Period
US\$ 1,737 or LKR 350,000/-	Per Month

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 26 revised by 96 CC SACEP held on 2nd August 2005, 125 CC SACEP dated 17th July 2015 and 132 CC SACEP dated 2nd March 2021, 133 CC SACEP dated 17th February 2022)

11. Utility Expenses

Utility Expenses payable by the Director General for his / her residence supported by vouchers will be borne by the Secretariat with the ceiling of the Utility Expenses of the Director General as per below given table in US Dollars or Sri Lanka Rupees enabling the higher value to be claimed supported by vouchers.

Utility Expense	Monthly Rate
Electricity	US \$ 150 or LKR 20,000/-
Water	US \$ 25 or LKR 3,500/-
Residence Telephone	US \$ 50 or LKR 7,000/-

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 5 dated 1st Feb 2005, revised by 117 CC SACEP held on 23rd November 2010 and 126 CC SACEP held on 26th April 2016)

12. Medical and Hospital Charges

Medical expenses payable by the Director General and the family supported by vouchers will be borne by the Secretariat up to a limit of Sri Lankan Rupees 100,000/- per year and pro rata for fractions of a year and if this allowance is not used in full, an entitlement not exceeding Sri Lankan Rupees 200,000/- may be carried over into any following year. The Director General is a member of the SACEP medical insurance scheme.

(Source : GC 4; page 38 & 39; Rule 27 revised by Special CC SACEP held on 11th Jan 1994 and 128th CC SACEP held on 14th July 2017)

13. Leave

The Director General will be entitled to an **Annual Leave** of 25 working days per annum during the term of appointment, and this may be taken either in or outside Sri Lanka. Leave shall be earned from the date of appointment. Leave for any period of service amounting to less than one complete year will be pro rata.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 28.a)

Casual leave will be fourteen working days per annum, unused casual leave lapses at the end of each calendar year.

(Source: GC 4; page 39; Rule 29)

There is no special provision for **Sick Leave**. The Secretariat may make an ad hoc decision in any case where the Director General is sick and has exhausted his / her leave entitlement.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 30)

Home Leave may be granted after completion of two years of service with the Secretariat to the Director General nominated by a country other than Sri Lanka, provided that he / she spends a substantial part of his / her leave in that country,

and subject to his / her assurance in writing that he / she intends to serve the full term on his / her contract. The Secretariat will pay the cost of return passages (economy class for air travel or the equivalent by other means of transport) for the officer, the spouse, and dependent children, by the most direct route to the country by which he / she was nominated.

Except for travel time not exceeding five days each way, the leave involved shall be charged to annual leave. Daily Subsistence Allowance shall not be paid for journeys on home leave.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 31 & page 37; Rule 18 (a) and 104 CC.SACEP held on 7th Dec 2007)

14. Encashment of Accumulated Annual Leave

Encashment of Accumulated Annual Leave for the Director General with an upper ceiling of 70% of the Accumulated Annual Leave as a Terminal Benefit at the end of the tenure.

(Source : 105 CC.SACEP held on 19th December 2007)

15. Children's Education Allowance

Educational Allowance for 2 children upto the age of 21 years is payable.

In case, the children are studying in Sri Lanka / Third Country, 75% of the actual expenses will be reimbursed subject to a ceiling of US \$ 3,000/- per child per annum and where as the children are studying in their home country, a lump sum amount of US \$ 1,500/- per, child per annum.

(Source : Special CC held on 6th Feb 1995 and 100 CC SACEP held on 30th Aug 2006)

When the Director General is from Sri Lanka and his / her children are studying in Sri Lanka 75% of the actual expenses will be reimbursed subject to a ceiling of US \$ 1,500/- per child per annum and where as the children are studying in another country, a lump sum amount of US \$ 3,000/- per, child per annum.

(Source : 117 CC SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

16. Official Car

The Director General will be provided with an official car for self and family use, which is maintained by SACEP. Personal usage should not affect the official requirements of the Director General.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment; vii; dated 7th March 2005 revised by 128 CC SACEP held on 14th July 2017)

17. Customs Privileges

(a) By arrangement with the Government of Sri Lanka, the Director General is entitled to privileges as contained in Sections 19, 20 and 21 of the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. "First Entry" is interpreted as including the first six months

of their stay for the purpose of importing such durable goods as automobiles and refrigerators, on the understanding that only one of each such article is brought by the Director General.

- (b) Items brought to the country duty free should not be sold to private parties but handed over to the Government Supplies Department on Government valuation.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 32)

18. Standards of Conduct

The Director General will conduct him/herself at all times with fullest regard for the purpose and principles of SACEP and in a manner befitting his / her relationship with SACEP and shall not engage in any activity that is incompatible with those purposes and principles or the proper discharge of his / her duties with the Programme. He/she will avoid any action and in particular of any kind of public pronouncement, which may adversely reflect on that relationship, or on the integrity, independence and impartiality, which are required by the relationship.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 8 dated 1st Feb 2005)

19. Termination of Service

SACEP reserves the right to terminate the appointment of the Director General, in the event of gross misconduct, default or in some other circumstances, which will render the contract unenforceable. Notice for termination would not be applicable in such cases.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 12 dated 1st February 2005)

20. Sudden Demise

Considering the special circumstances, the family of the late Director General will be compensated with an ex-gratia payment of US \$ 8,000/- as a special gesture.

(Source : 50 CC.SACEP held on 25th May 1993)

21. Rights and Obligations of the Director General, SACEP

The rights and obligations of the Director General, SACEP are strictly limited to the Terms and Conditions of the Service Contract. Accordingly, he / she shall not be entitled to any benefit, payment, subsidy, compensation or pension from SACEP, except as expressly provided in the contract.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

22. Use of Name, Emblem or Official Seal of SACEP or SASP

The Director General shall not use the name, emblem or the official seal of SACEP / SASP or any abbreviation of the name of SACEP and SASP for any purpose except for strict official use.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

23. Title Rights

The title rights, copyrights and all other rights of whatsoever nature in any material product under the provisions of this contract shall be vested exclusively in SACEP.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

General

24. All disputes arising shall be dealt with in accordance with the relevant laws of Sri Lanka.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 13 dated 1st February 2005)

25. The Organization reserves the right at its discretion to effect changes in the job description and the duties and tasks to be performed as may be deemed necessary.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 9 dated 1st February 2005)

26. The Director General will take reasonable steps to ensure that Programme's assets are adequately safeguarded and optimised.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 10 dated 1st February 2005)

27. The Director General will be governed by the provisions relating to financial and administrative matters of the secretariat and other such rules as applicable during the period of his / her stay at SACEP.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment – Last sentence dated 7th March 2005)

28. The Director General is not expected to give any national sentiments of political and religious convictions, he/she shall at all times bear in mind the reserve and tact required by the reason of his / her relationship with SACEP.

29. The Director General shall not accept any favour, gift or remuneration from any source external to SACEP.

SACEP shall not be responsible for any criminal or civil liabilities, which may be brought by a third party against the Director General in his / her performance of services under this contract; and the Director General will hold SACEP harmless against third-party claims.

APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME OF SACEP

YEAR 2024 - 2025

GC 16.SACEP / NFP Agenda Item 5.2 Page 1 of 2		Annex 20 GC 16.SACEP
Funding Source		
5.2.1	Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) in South Asia beyond 2020: Mainstreaming biodiversity for improved diets and nutrition	GEF, GBFF or other donors
5.2.2	Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia South Asia Forum on SCP Now linked to South Asia Forum on Environment Sustainable Public Procurement Sustainable buildings policy dialogue	On-going (partners) Funds expected from Donors and partners to carryout activities
5.2.3	South Asia Forum on Environment	Donors and other partners
5.2.4	Waste Management Implementation of Sub-regional Roadmap for Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circulation in South Asia and implementing pilot projects on sustainable waste management in the member countries	Funding to be secured from donor agencies such as IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET), UNEP
5.2.5	Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia Revitalized SACEP website, enrichment of Data and Information System of SACEP with regular updates in the database	Managed in-house
5.2.6	Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia	Country contributions and donor funding

APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME OF SACEP

YEAR 2024 - 2025

		Funding Source
5.2.7	Air Quality Concept Note developed by SACEP to establish a Regional Platform on Air Quality Management in South Asia (Could be implemented in conjunction with activities outlined in the Malé Declaration.)	India/Pakistan/Other possible donors such as UN Environment
5.2.8	Sustainable Nitrogen Management for South Asia As a partner of the South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) SACEP in consultation with the member countries developed the "South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management". Subject to adoption by 16GC-SACEP	UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) - Period of 5 Years
5.2.9	Adaptation to Climate Change Regional Capacity building and Knowledge sharing workshops to be convened	ADB/UNFCCC/NDCP
5.2.10	Explore possibilities of Accreditation to Global Funding Mechanisms	
5.2.11	South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)	IMO, OCPP
5.2.12	Plastic Management Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia Project (PLEASE)	World Bank

GC 16.SACEP / NFP
Agenda Item 5.2
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Annex 20
GC 16.SACEP



APPROVED SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2024 - 2025

	PRESENT AGREED INCOME	EXPENDITURE
	US \$	US \$
1 ANTICIPATED INCOME		
1.1 AFGHANISTAN	8,050.00	
BANGLADESH	23,430.00	
BHUTAN	3,555.00	
INDIA	31,850.00	
MALDIVES	14,575.00	
NEPAL	8,050.00	
PAKISTAN	31,850.00	
SRI LANKA	17,842.00	
TOTAL COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS	139,202.00	
1.2 Interest earned	67,000.00	
1.3 Secretariat Cost from Sri Lanka	25,000.00	
TOTAL INCOME	231,202.00	
2 ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE		
2.1 Salary Director General		60,000.00
2.2 Salaries of Local Staff		83,500.00
2.3 International Travel		20,000.00
2.4 Secretariat Cost		102,000.00
SUB TOTAL		265,500.00
3 Capital Costs		17,500.00
4 TOTAL EXPENDITURE		283,000.00
5 INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		(51,798.00)



SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**Report of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points
For the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP
THIMPHU, BHUTAN**

24-25 June 2024

1. 1 INTRODUCTION

The Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for the Sixteenth (16th) Meeting of the Governing Council (GC) of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) was held on 24-25 June 2024 in Thimphu, Bhutan.

The meeting agreed that the Report of the Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points (NFPs) on the various Agenda items is the basis for discussion for the Sixteenth Meeting of the Governing Council.

1. 2 ATTENDANCE

The Meeting was attended by representatives from the following Member Countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It was also attended by representatives from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH) as observers at the discussion of concerned agenda items

List of Participants is attached as under **Annex I**.

1. 3 INAUGURATION

The welcome address was delivered by Ms.Rokeya Khaton, Director General, SACEP Secretariat (**Annex II**).

This was followed by an opening remarks by Hon'ble Secretary, Mr. Karma Tshering, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan, the host of the 16th GC Meeting of SACEP. (**Annex III**)

Mr. Tapan Kumar Biswas, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, the out-going Chairman also addressed the meeting (**Annex IV**).

Mr. Karma C. Nyedrup, Alternate Director General from Bhutan proposed a vote of thanks (**Annex V**).

2. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Mr. Tapan Kumar Biswas, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh called the meeting to order and announced that the new Chairman needs to take over the charge of Chair in conformity with the Rules of Procedures of the Governing Council of SACEP. In this regard, Hon'ble Secretary, Mr.Karma Tshering, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan was handed over the Chairmanship. The new Chair presided over the meeting and elected the following officials, in consistent with the Articles of Association of SACEP.

Vice Chairman: Mr.Pravir Pandey, Additional Secretary & Financial Advisor
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India

Rapporteur: Mr.Ahmed Murthaza, Director General, Waste Management
and Pollution Control, Ministry of Climate Change,
Environment and Energy, Maldives

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The provisional Agenda of the Preparatory Meeting of the NFPs for the 16th GC Meeting of SACEP was presented for adoption. The proposed provisional agenda was approved by the meeting with deletion of agenda item 5.1.13 - Thimphu Declaration. **(Annex VI)**

4. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

The meeting discussed the following items:

4.1 CREATION OF A NEW POSITION AT THE SACEP SECRETARIAT (DIRECTOR ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAMME)

The SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal to create a new position of a Director (Administration and Programme) **(Annex VII)**. The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the expenses including salary for this position is proposed to be met from the country contribution. Therefore, there will be an increase in the country's annual contribution.

However, the meeting recommended to the 16th GC Meeting of SACEP to consider the following :

1. In principle agreement for creation of a new position of one Director (Administration & Programme).
2. Request the SACEP Secretariat to prepare and provide following details within three months to the member states for seeking their comments.

- i.) The draft Terms of Reference for the proposed position of Director
 - ii.) Details of financial implications to the current country contribution
3. Request the SACEP Secretariat to compile the submissions from the member states and circulate to the member states at least six weeks in advance prior to the next GC for discussion and adoption.

4.2 IMMUNITY OF THE SACEP SECRETARIAT

Under this agenda item the SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the SACEP was established in 1982, as per the Articles of the Association of SACEP under 9(c), the host country, Government of Sri Lanka agreed to provide the immunities to the Director General and the SACEP Secretariat.

However, the SACEP was not included in the Diplomatic Privileges Act No. 09 of 1996 of Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka conveyed that the matter regarding extending the immunities to the SACEP Secretariat is being considered positively and the process is underway.

The meeting recommended to request the Government of Sri Lanka, the host country to expedite the process of granting the immunities, and the SACEP Secretariat to follow-up and the progress on this to be reported to the next GC.

4.3 Appointment of the Director General of SACEP

The SACEP Secretariat informed that as per the rules of procedure, the next Director General will be appointed from the Government of Bhutan. The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting that a nomination was received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Government of Bhutan. This nomination was submitted to the 138th Consultative Committee Meeting of SACEP held on 04th June 2024 where it was endorsed (**Annex VIII**).

The matter related to the appointment of the new Director General of SACEP was discussed in the meeting. There was no consensus on this matter.

4.4 Salary of SACEP Secretariat staff

4.4.1 Salary of the Director General

The SACEP Secretariat presented and informed the meeting that based on the proposal submitted by the Director General, 134th meeting of the Consultative Committee (CC) of SACEP held on 9th June 2022, made a decision that “*DG-SACEP shall get an entertainment allowance of 1100 USD per month. He shall be getting this allowance from the date of his joining 8 August 2021*”.

Based on the above Decision of the CC, Director General is drawing a monthly salary USD 6100 per month effective from August 2021 and requested to consider endorsing the above decision (**Annex IX**).

As per the Articles of Association “ *The Committee may make such rules and regulations as it deems necessary in relation to Committee procedures and the operation and administration of the SACEP Secretariat, subject to the approval of the Governing Council*”.

The meeting recommended that the entertainment allowance of USD 1100.00 approved by the CC should be immediately suspended and this issue be parked until the Audited reports of those concerned years are submitted to the next GC.

4.4.2 Salary of the Local Staff

Under this agenda item the SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal requesting an increase in salary for the local staff taking into consideration the inflation due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka **(Annex IX)**.

Meeting noted that as per the decisions of the 11th GC, the salary of the local staff is increased by 25% in every five years term.

The meeting noted the need for increasing the local staff salary with the caution that this proposal of an increment of a salary before completion of five years should not become a precedence in the future.

Therefore, the meeting requested the SACEP Secretariat to submit clear implications on the annual contribution of the member states taking into consideration all other proposals having implication on the annual contribution.

4.4.3 Salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)

The SACEP Secretariat presented a proposal requesting to increase the salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) for South Asia Seas Programme (SASP) indicating that member countries are finding difficulties to attract competent candidates for the above position as the current salary is low **(Annex IX)**.

The meeting noted that this matter is not relevant here as it is related to the South Asian Seas Programme.

5. PROGRAMME MATTERS

5.1 PRESENTATION OF PROJECT STATUS REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, SACEP

The SACEP Secretariat presented the status of programme activities of SACEP from September 2019- May 2024 **(Annex X)**.

The Meeting took note of the efforts undertaken by SACEP for implementation of activities and recommended to focus on prioritizing activities.

5.1.1. Biodiversity

a. Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) project in South Asia beyond 2018

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the concept note developed and searched for possible development partners to secure the necessary funding and could not find a development partner so far.

Based on the request of the SACEP Secretariat, the meeting recommend 16 GC to consider to approve carry forward the activity.

b. The North East Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (NEIOBI)

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the partner for this proposal, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) has informed that their bid to secure necessary funds was not successful with The International Climate Initiative (IKI) and therefore requested to discontinue this activity.

c. Healthy Landscape: Managing Agricultural Landscapes in Socio-ecologically Sensitive Areas to Promote Food Security, Well-being and Ecosystem Health in Sri Lanka

The SACEP Secretariat presented that it has been implementing this project for the last two years and will be completed by June 2024. The objective of the project was to showcase management strategies for strengthening the restoration and sustainable management of selected Village Tank Cascade Systems (VTCS) in cascade landscapes for the enhanced provision of ecosystem services and protection of biodiversity. And it was informed that the progress of the project was satisfactory. The SACEP Secretariat submitted progress to the meeting for information.

5.1.2 Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia

Under this agenda item the SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that a number of activities related to Sustainable consumption and Production were carried out in partnership with the SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component (RPAC) funded by the European Union, implemented by UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

The SACEP Secretariat submitted to the meeting for updating the activities performed under the subject area and requested the meeting to recommend the 16th GC to approve carry forwarding the activities.

5.1.3. South Asia Forum on Environment

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the 15th GC of SACEP approved a proposal submitted by the SACEP Secretariat to organize the South Asia Forum on the Environment it was planning to organize the First

Meeting of the South Asia Forum on Environment in the First Quarter of Year 2020.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it could not be held as planned and also securing financial support had not been successful so far.

The meeting recommended 16 GC to approve carry forward the activity with securing the funding from development partners.

5.1.4 Waste Management

The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that the 15th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP adopted the Sub-regional Roadmap developed for implementing the Global Waste Management Goals towards addressing SDGs in South Asia. However securing funding support to implement the strategic recommendations was not successful so far. Submitted to the meeting for information.

5.1.5 Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat reported the meeting for information that it is updating the SACEP website and its Social Media platforms in order to disseminate information on its activities widely.

5.1.6 Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its likely Trans-boundary Effects for South Asia.

The meeting was informed that recognizing the critical importance of preserving the essence of the Male Declaration in South Asia, the SACEP Secretariat and concerned parties have held several virtual meetings regarding the revitalization of the Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia. This effort is deemed necessary as the original declaration, signed over two decades ago, is now outdated. During this period, member countries have undergone significant socioeconomic changes, leading to new environmental challenges related to air quality management. During these discussions, it was agreed that the SACEP Secretariat would host the Male Declaration Programme Secretariat. Consequently, a draft “Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia” and a “Think Piece on Revival of the Malé Declaration” were developed (**Annex XI**).

The meeting agreed the Male Declaration needs to be revitalized and the ownership should be with the SACEP Secretariat. The meeting also

recommended that the further discussion on the amendment is necessary and requested the SACEP Secretariat to focus on non-climatic pollutants, knowledge sharing, capacity building activities and accordingly improve the draft agreement and the think piece.

5.1.7 Air Quality

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on the activities carried out during the reporting period.

5.1.8 Sustainable Nitrogen Management for South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat submitted a proposal “South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management” requesting the 16th meeting of the Governing Council to adopt the “South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management” (**Annex XII**).

Members had certain observations on the proposed Roadmap which require careful consideration. However, realizing the importance of the subject matter, the meeting recommended the SACEP Secretariat to prepare a time bound workplan for finalizing the way forward on sustainable Nitrogen Management to enable resubmission to the next GC for consideration.

5.1.9 Adaptation to Climate Change

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on the activities carried out during the reporting period.

5.1.10 Regional Cooperation for the Conservation and Wise-use of Internationally Important Wetlands in South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat updated on the status of signing a MoU with Ramsar Secretariat to collaborate in implementing activities mutually benefitting. However, this proposal has been dropped as it does not meet the Ramsar criteria.

5.1.11 Plastic Free Rivers and Seas Project for South Asia

The SACEP Secretariat updated the status of the implementation of the PLEASE Project. A member country raised a concern with regards to the progress of the above project and also pointed out that the Project Staff has to be capacitated.

The meeting recommended the 16th GC should request the SACEP Secretariat to seek extension of the project duration from the World Bank in consultation with the concerned member states.

5.1.12 South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)

The SACEP Secretariat updated the meeting on activities implemented under the South Asian Seas Programme and informed that a detailed progress report will be submitted to the next Intergovernmental Meeting of the Ministers (IMM) of the South Asian Seas Programme.

5.2. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME (2024-2025)

The Meeting decided to recommend the SACEP Secretariat to focus more on the activities where funding from development partners is available.

UNEP Representative informed the meeting that there are opportunities to collaborate with SACEP in building capacity of Member States addressing the priorities of triple planetary environmental challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The meeting recommended 16th GC to consider the adoption of the Work Programme 2024-2025 (**Annex XIII**) as proposed by the SACEP Secretariat, taking in to consideration the available funding, the capacity of the SACEP Secretariat and to avoid overlap of activities being undertaken by UNEP.

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS

The SACEP Secretariat thanked the member states for clearing the arrears of the Country Contribution to a commendable rate. The SACEP Secretariat informed that it is important to clear the balance arrears if any for the smooth and effective functioning of the SACEP Secretariat (**Annex XIV**).

The meeting noted that there were proposals that would have implications on the annual country contributions. Therefore, the SACEP Secretariat is requested to present clear and complete financial details of these implications to the member countries for consideration.

6.2 EXTERNAL FUNDING

The meeting submitted a report containing information on external funding received for projects as annexed (**Annex XV**) for information of GC.

6.3 DRAFT SACEP SECRETARIAT BUDGET (2024-2025)

The meeting recommends to the 16th GC to approve the SACEP Secretariat budget for the years 2024 to 2025 with the present agreed annual contributions (**Annex XVI**).

6.4 PRESENTATION OF AUDITED REPORT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEARS 2018 - 2021

The meeting recommended the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP to approve the Audited Report of Accounts for the years 2018 to 2021 (**Annex XVII**).

7. VENUE AND DATE FOR THE 17TH GOVERNING COUNCIL

As per SACEP Articles of Association, the next meeting of the SACEP Governing Council will be hosted by the Government of India. The dates of the meeting will be finalized by the SACEP Secretariat in consultation with the Government of India.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 The SACEP Secretariat informed the meeting that a case has been filed in two separate courts against the Former Director General and SACEP Secretariat by an Ex-Employee. The case was filed at the Labor Tribunal and District Court in Sri Lanka. A verdict has been issued where it requires the SACEP Secretariat to pay a sum of Rs. 2,534,976/- as compensation.

The SACEP Secretariat has informed the 138th CC of SACEP about this court case and sought their advice on it. The 138th CC SACEP recommended SACEP to:

- a) Not make any payment out of country contribution without getting the consent from the member countries.
- b) Requested the SACEP Secretariat to share all the information with the member countries.
- c) Request the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka to support the SACEP Secretariat in resolving this issue.

This substantive issue has been raised under any other business which was found to be inappropriate. In connection to this, the meeting opined that it is an administrative matter which has become legal issue that needs to be resolved by the concerned head of the SACEP Secretariat.

8.2 A member country brought to the notice of the meeting that the Declaration of Articles of the Association, SACEP 1981 needs to be revisited. Therefore, it is recommended that a working committee from member states be formed and undertake this task. The SACEP Secretariat is requested to coordinate this

task in consultation with the member states and report the outcome to the next GC.

9. AGREEMENT OF REPORT

The meeting agreed to the draft report presented by the rapporteur of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points for the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council.

10. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The Chairman finally declared the Meeting closed.

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**Preparatory Meeting of the of National Focal Points for
16th Meeting of the Governing Council**

24 - 25 June 2024
held in Thimphu, Bhutan

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**Inaugural Session of
Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for
16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Thimphu, Bhutan**

24th June 2024

Welcome Address by

**Ms. Rokeya Khaton
Director General of SACEP**

Distinguished Delegates from all the member countries of SACEP

Honoured delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

As the Director General of SACEP, it is my great privilege and honour to welcome you all to the Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP, here in the beautiful city of Thimphu, Bhutan.

Firstly, let me extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Bhutan for their generous hospitality and for providing an excellent venue for this crucial meeting.

Distinguished delegates

South Asia, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse ecosystems, faces unique and complex environmental challenges. These challenges, from climate change and biodiversity loss to pollution and natural resource depletion, demand our collective and concerted efforts.

Over the years, SACEP has been a beacon of regional cooperation, fostering partnerships and promoting initiatives that transcend national boundaries. Our work is a testament to the power of collaboration in addressing environmental issues that affect us all.

Today, I would like to reflect on our achievements, discuss the current challenges, and outline our path forward. Through our joint efforts, we have made significant strides in areas such as marine pollution, climate change biodiversity conservation, and air pollution control. Our projects have not only yielded tangible environmental benefits but have also strengthened the bonds of cooperation among our member countries. For example, the initiatives under the PLEASE project targets a long-term goal of eliminating leakage of plastics into the marine environment across the South Asia Region, which can only be achieved beyond the life of the project. The project seeks to catalyze actions that reduce the flow of plastic pollution into South Asian seas while our regional biodiversity strategy have enhanced the conservation of our unique flora and fauna.

However, our journey is far from over. The environmental challenges we face today are more pressing than ever. Climate change continues to exacerbate natural disasters, threatening lives and livelihoods across our region. Urbanization and industrialization, while driving economic growth, are also contributing to pollution and resource depletion.

In light of these challenges, our meeting today is crucial. We must evaluate our strategies, learn from our experiences, and innovate our approaches. Let us consider how we can leverage emerging technologies, strengthen policy frameworks, and enhance community engagement to achieve our environmental goals. It is also imperative that we integrate the principles of circular economy and sustainable development into our national and regional policies.

I urge all National Focal Points of SACEP to actively participate in our discussions, share your insights, and bring forth the unique perspectives of your respective countries. Your contributions are vital in shaping the future direction of SACEP. Let us work together to develop actionable plans that are both ambitious and achievable.

Looking ahead, I envision a SACEP that is more resilient, adaptive, and proactive. A SACEP that not only responds to environmental challenges but anticipates and prevents them. A SACEP that empowers communities, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized, to be active stewards of their environment. And most importantly, a SACEP that serves as a model of regional cooperation and solidarity.

In conclusion, let us reaffirm our commitment to the vision and mission of SACEP. Let us harness our collective wisdom, resources, and determination to create a sustainable and prosperous future for South Asia. Together, we can turn our challenges into opportunities and our aspirations into reality.

Thank you

**Inaugural Session of
Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for
16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Thimphu, Bhutan**

24th June 2024

**Speech by
Hon'ble Secretary, Dasho Karma Tshering
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
Royal Government of Bhutan**

Your Excellency, Tapan Kumar Biswas, Additional Secretary, Government of Bangladesh, who is the current Chairman of the meeting.

Your Excellency, Praveer Pandey, Additional Secretary from Government of India.

It is quite unfortunate to mention that we are not able to be joined by Additional Secretary from Pakistan who actually have confirmed for the meeting. But we are glad that we have representative from Pakistan in this meeting.

The Director General of SACEP, Ms. Rokeya Khaton, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, we also have expert with us, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning and Kuzuzangpo la. So, you will hear this word now and then when you are in Bhutan. The two words that you will come across is the Kuzuzangpo la and Kadrinche la, so these are the two common words you will come across.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, and on my own behalf I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Experts, SACEP Secretariat Officials led by Director General to the land of happiness and to this very important preparatory meeting of the National Focal Points of South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme. My special welcome to those of you who are visiting Bhutan for the first time and to those of you who are repeat visitors, welcome back to Bhutan, though this may not be the best season to be in Bhutan.

Let me start with a small background on the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources which used to be then called the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Bhutan has undertaken a major civil service reform in the year 2022 which also included the restructuring of the whole government set up as a post-pandemic measure. We reduced the total number of Ministries from 10 to 9 as part of the reform in 2022. So therefore we have only 9 ministers and with the inclusion of Prime Minister we have only 10 ministers.

The National Focal Point for SACEP then used to be the National Environment Commission which used to be an autonomous agency. With the reforms, the environment mandate has come under this ministry called the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and hence the Department of Environment and Climate Change is now the new National Focal Point for SACEP.

We know that as per the Articles of Association of SACEP, we are required to meet annually unless the Member States decides otherwise. Further, the Governing Council meeting which is preceded by this meeting of the Preparatory meeting of the National Focal Points is organized on a rotation basis in alphabetical order.

While the 15th Governing Council meeting of SACEP was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh way back in 2019 before the COVID pandemic, the 16th meeting could not be held due to the COVID pandemic from 2020 to 2022, though the venue has already been decided as Bhutan in the 2019 meeting in Dhaka.

All member countries have faced serious health and economic challenges, among others, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we all know that. In the case of Bhutan, while we do not lose a single life to COVID-19 pandemic per se, like others, we also suffered very badly in terms of economy, as we have prioritized lives over livelihood during the whole pandemic phase under the wise leadership of our monarchs.

We are still very far from the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still recovering. Nevertheless, Bhutan was ready to host this Governing Council meeting last year in October, and we have conveyed our readiness to SACEP secretariat accordingly, as per the established practice. However, the meeting could not be held last year due to lack of quorum, for whatever reasons. Bhutan is honored and happy that the 16th Governing Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP is finally happening now, and here in the capital city of Bhutan, Thimphu.

We like to express our sincere appreciation to all member countries, observers, experts and the SACEP secretariat for agreeing to travel to Bhutan to attend the 16th Governing Council meeting preceded by the preparatory meeting. I once again cordially welcome each one of you to this beautiful and wonderful Kingdom. Bhutan has been and will always be

one of the forefront countries when it comes to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. Bhutan is probably the only country in the world whose constitution requires 60% of the country's area to be under forest cover for all times to come. And at this stage, 52% of the country's under protected areas. We also have one of the most stringent environmental laws, any development activity has to pass through the tough environmental, social and cultural safeguards and standards. Bhutan also committed to remain carbon neutral for all times to come. And we are currently one of the very few carbon negative countries in the world. This means that Bhutan is net carbon sink for now. For your motives and appreciate that Bhutan has been making huge economic sacrifices to protect environment, conserve and enrich biodiversity and absorb greenhouse gas emissions which are emitted by others. For example, Bhutan's current electricity supply comes from 99.9% clean sources like hydropower and solar. But sustaining carbon utility and ensuring energy security is becoming a daunting task for us,

Distinguished delegates,

As per the principal organs of the governance structure of SACEP, Governing Council is the highest decision-making body while there is also a consultative committee and the SACEP secretariat. Bhutan is not on the consultative committee because we do not have diplomatic mission in Colombo. Of course, the national focal points of the respective member states play a pivotal role in assisting the SACEP secretariat and the Governing Council in their deliberations. Since there has been a long gap between the 15 Governing Council meeting and the current meeting, I am informed that there are many items on the agenda to be discussed at this meeting. Therefore, this preparatory meeting of the national focal points has many substantive items to be discussed dealing with institutional matters to programme matters. One very important agenda is the work programme for 2024 and 2025. The other items on the agenda are the financial matters including audit reports from 2018 to 2021. The outcome of the preparatory meeting in a form of recommendations will be submitted to Governing Council meeting the day after tomorrow for adoptions or for further directives. I would like to therefore urge and request all the delegates to kindly deliberate the issues in this period of cooperation, goodwill, mutual understanding and compromise wherever feasible.

We all know that it is not possible to reflect views and positions of every member state in all the agenda items submitted for discussion. My sincere wish as a host country is that the preparatory meeting will resolve as many issues tabled for discussion amicably and through consensus so that they can be forwarded to the Governing Council the day after tomorrow for endorsement. On the lighter note, while the ultimate objective of your presence in Bhutan is to attend the preparatory meeting and the Governing Council

meeting, please take time off from your busy schedules especially in the mornings and evenings to enjoy fresh and clean air that we have offer for you.

Apart from the fresh air, please enjoy the Bhutanese culture, the tradition, architecture, hospitality, arts and crafts and many more that you will discover during your stay here. Take a lot of memories if you are visiting Bhutan for the first time. My colleagues at the secretary will be happy to render any assistance and support that you may wish to able to make your stay a more comfortable and memorable one.

In concluding, I would like to wish all of you a successful, productive and happy meeting in Thimphu. Once again, hearty welcome to Bhutan, thank you Tashi Delek, and Kadrinche la.

**Inaugural Session of
Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for
16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Thimphu, Bhutan**

24th June 2024

**Speech by
Mr. Tapan Kumar Biswas
Additional Secretary
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh and
Out-going Chairman of GC-SACEP**

Honorable Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Bhutan,

Respected Director-General, South Asia Cooperative Environmental Programme (SACEP)

Distinguished Personalities and all dignitaries coming from different countries belonging to South Asian region,

A very good morning to all of you. First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all of you for letting me have the opportunity to share my ideas and comments in this very colorful and splendid program. As a matter of fact, it is my exquisite pride and pleasure to attend this program arranged by SACEP and the support of Bhutanese government. I am wholeheartedly extending my thanks to SACEP Secretariat as well as the government of Bhutan for their coordinated and cordial support in this regard. As a matter of fact, this is my first visit in Bhutan.

I have never visited Bhutan before, so undoubtedly, it's a very much splendid and exciting experience for me. Bhutan is a country which is enriched entirely with high mountain topography belonging to Hindu Kush Himalayan region and it is variegated with splendid and magnificent natural beauty which at a glance touches the deepest point of our heart. Personally, I became so much excited and captivated that my feelings and emotions have transcended my abilities to express these. I also became very much excited and impressed with the hospitality and cordiality of Bhutanese people. I would always remember this. Bhutan is considered as a pollution-free country. This can be treated as an example for

all of us, carbon-negative

country already it is declared. So, undoubtedly this can be an example for all of us which should be followed. As a matter of fact, the relationship between Bangladesh and Bhutan is enshrined geographically, historically, politically, culturally, socially and our cornerstone of this relationship is based on mutual belief, faith, confidence, fraternity, coordination and cooperation. We wholeheartedly express our gratitude that Bhutan is the first country who has recognized our independence. Regarding this, we are indebted, always indebted and grateful to them. As a matter of fact, environment pollution, degradation, the negative impact of climate change, these are the global phenomenon, highly discussed phenomenon over the globe. Now, this has become the great concern of all of the world and also we are highly concerned that the South Asian people are also concerned about this. With respect to that and considering this phenomenon, South Asian, that is, this SACEP was established in 1981 with a view to addressing this negative impact of climate change, that is, environmental issues. And there is no denying the fact and I think everybody would admit that since its establishment, it has made remarkable achievements in different crucial sectors, although it has some sorts of limitations also. So, despite these limitations, its achievement should be appreciated and we should welcome the activities of SACEP. Our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman undertook different effective activities with a view to addressing these environmental pollutions and upgrading our environment. And following the steps of father of the nation, the existing government under the prudent and far-sighted leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also has undertaken different effective activities and has given highest impact, emphasis and importance on environmental issues. I think it would be odd mentioning in this regard that environment pollution, degradation and negative impact of climate change, these have become the great concern for us, although Bangladesh has very much insignificant and negligible role in greenhouse gas emission, which is almost only 0.48% of the overall global emissions. However, Bangladesh has become one of the vulnerable countries to the adverse impact of these climate changes and it has to face and it is having to face different types of adversities and sufferings due to this negative impact of climate change. Our Bangladesh, we are very much sincere and dedicated to all sorts of issues to do with combating environmental degradation, pollution and negative impact of climate change. As per certain to that, Bangladesh has engaged in different international environment organizations, environmental bodies and has adopted their rules, regulations, agreements, protocols consigned with these performances. We are always sincere and dedicated and eager to comply with these directives of international organizations and our rules, regulations, whenever we are going to formulate, then

definitely they should become in alignment of the directives of these international rules, regulations. That is, we are very much respectful to international rules, regulations and Bangladesh government, I told you that has given highest priority importance in this regard. I can mention in this regard, I think it would be also mentioning that our ministry, that is Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has undertaken an innovative program, it is titled 100-day program. Under this program, we have some significant achievements and I can clarify that we have introduced a system to eliminate single use of plastic from our secretariat building, that is secretariat territory. First this begins at home, we have introduced these strategies and simultaneously and ultimately, we will be introducing these strategies or enter the country to eliminate single use of plastic and plastic related issues also it has become our great concern and we are having different types of activities regarding these. Environment pollution and degradation is not the issue of a particular country or an individual country, it is a trans-boundary issue which we should focus strongly, that is, it is an issue related to some neighboring countries even extending to far wide. Considering this perspective, the issue of environment pollutions leading to water pollution, air pollution, plastic pollution and some other factors, these have become the common problem, that is trans-boundary issues of this region, Hindu, Himalayan region which we should foster and take into consideration strongly. So, in conclusion, I would tell you that all the neighboring countries belonging to this territory, belonging to this sub-region should come up with effective initiatives, coordinated efforts and combined activities to address these issues of great concern so that we become successful in mitigating this problem. It is my firm belief that SACEP will play a vital role and they will be doing in future all sorts of activities regarding this issue.

There is a saying in the modern perspective that connectivity is productivity. The more we would be capable of enhancing our connectivity, the more we would be capable of enhancing our productivity. There is all sorts of issues considering that perspective. It is once again in my firm belief that this meeting, this Governing Council meeting would play a very much vital role in addressing the issues of plastic pollution, elimination of plastic pollution, water pollution, which are the trans-boundary issues, especially with the countries in the downstream like Bangladesh. It would be our solemn prayer to all of you to mitigate the issues and hoping that in the bright future, I am once again extending my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Thank you all.

**Inaugural Session of
Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for
16th Meeting of the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

24th June 2024

**Vote of Thanks by
Mr. Karma C. Nyedrup
Alternate Director General**

**Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources
Royal Government of Bhutan**

Your Honorable Secretary, Dasho Karma Tshering, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources,

Honorable Additional Secretary, Tapan Kumar, and also Additional Secretary Pravir Pandey from India, on behalf of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, I have the pleasure of proposing this vote of thanks. To begin with, I would like to thank all the delegates who are here. And before that, I would like to acknowledge some of the hard work and dedication required for preparing such a meeting.

First, I would like to acknowledge the support rendered by the Honorable Minister, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, because when we host such meetings, it all starts with the invitation letters. So, the Hon'ble Minister was very supportive in this matter. I would like to thank our Hon'ble Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources for all the kind approvals for visas and many other things that were needed to fulfill in host the meeting. With this, I would like to, without in any particular order, thank the SACEP Secretariat for the preparation of all documents, compiling information on visas, and organizing the national focal points for the meeting, which takes a lot of efforts and time. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade who have supported directly and indirectly in hosting this meeting. And the other agencies or organizations I

would like to acknowledge are the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature, Electricity Regulatory Authority, World Wildlife Fund, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation. These agencies have helped us in organizing this meeting including some of the development partners who have assisted this meeting, in particular UNEP and ICIMOD. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the help or the assistance rendered by the hotel staff here for the preparation of the venue. Finally, if I have missed out any of the agencies that we owe gratitude, it is not deliberate. It will be unfair if I don't thank those people behind the scene who made sure this meeting went on well. So, with this, on behalf of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, I'd like to thank all of you once again and wish a very successful and fruitful meeting.

Thank you so much.

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for 16th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP

Thimphu, Bhutan

24 – 25 June 2024

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
9.00 – 9.30	1. Opening of the Meeting
09.30 – 10.00	TEA BREAK
10.00 – 10.10	2. Election of Office Bearers
10.10 – 10.30	3. Adoption of Agenda
10.30 – 12.00	4. Institutional Matters 4.1. SACEP Secretariat's proposed organogram 4.2. Immunity of SACEP Secretariat 4.3. Appointment of the Director General of SACEP 4.4. Salary of SACEP Secretariat staff
12.00 – 13.30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:30	5. 5.1. Programme Matters 5.1.1. Biodiversity a. Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) project in South Asia beyond 2018 b. Healthy Landscapes: Managing Agricultural Landscapes in Socio-ecologically Sensitive Areas to Promote Food Security, Well-being and Ecosystem Health in Sri Lanka. c. The North East Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (NEIOBI)

	<p>5.1.2. Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia</p> <p>5.1.3. South Asia Forum on Environment</p> <p>5.1.4. Waste Management</p> <p>5.1.5. Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.6. Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.7. Air Quality</p> <p>5.1.8. Sustainable Nitrogen Management Project for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.9. Adaptation to Climate Change</p> <p>5.1.10. Regional Cooperation for the Conservation and Wise- use of Internationally Important Wetlands in South Asia</p> <p>5.1.11. Plastic Free Rivers and Seas Project for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.12. South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)</p> <p>5.1.13. Thimphu Declaration</p>
15:30 – 16:00	TEA BREAK
16:00 – 16:30	5.2. Work Programme (2024 - 2025)
16:30 – 17:00	<p>6. Financial Matters</p> <p>6.1. Review of Country Contributions</p> <p>6.2. External Funding</p> <p>6.3. DRAFT Secretariat Budget (2024 - 2025)</p> <p>6.4. Presentation of Audited Reports of Accounts for the year 2018,2019,2020,2021</p>
17:00 – 17:15	7. Venue and Date for the 17 th Governing Council
17:15 – 17:30	8. Any Other Business
17:30 – 17:45	9. Agreement of Report
17:45	10. Closure of Meeting

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points
for 16th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP**

Thimphu, Bhutan

24-25 June 2024

ANNOTATED AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
9:00 – 9:30	<p>1 OPENING OF THE MEETING</p> <p>It is expected that a Senior Dignitary from the Government of Bhutan will inaugurate the Meeting.</p>
09:30 – 10:00	TEA BREAK
10:00 – 10:10	<p>2 ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS</p> <p>In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council of SACEP, a new Chairman will be elected in a manner consistent with the Articles of Association of SACEP. Vice Chairman, a Rapporteur may also be appointed by the Meeting. The Director General shall function as the Secretary of the Governing Council during its sessions.</p>
10:10 – 10:30	<p>3 ADOPTION OF AGENDA</p> <p>The Meeting will consider the Provisional Agenda for adoption.</p>
10:30 – 12:00	<p>4 INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS</p> <p>Under this Agenda Item, the meeting will consider and submit its recommendations to the Governing Council regarding the Institutional Matters</p>

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
12:00 –13:30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:30	<p>5.1 PROGRAMME MATTERS</p> <p>Director General will present the project implementation status report under each of the projects listed below:</p> <p>5.1.1 Biodiversity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) project in South Asia beyond 2018 b. The North East Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (NEIOBI) c. Healthy Landscape: Managing Agricultural Landscapes in Socio- ecologically Sensitive Areas to Promote Food Security, Well-being and Ecosystem Health in Sri Lanka <p>5.1.2 Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia</p> <p>5.1.3 South Asia Forum on Environment</p> <p>5.1.4 Waste Management</p> <p>5.1.5 Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.6 Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.7 Air Quality</p> <p>5.1.8 Sustainable Nitrogen Management Project for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.9 Adaptation to Climate Change</p> <p>5.1.10 Regional Cooperation for the Conservation and Wise- use of Internationally Important Wetlands in South Asia</p> <p>5.1.11 Plastic Free Rivers and Seas Project for South Asia</p> <p>5.1.12 South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)</p> <p>5.1.13 Thimphu Declaration</p>

TIME	AGENDA ITEM
15:30 – 16:00	TEA BREAK
16:00 – 16:30	<p>5.2 WORK PROGRAMME (2024-2025)</p> <p>Under this Agenda Item, the meeting will consider for approval of the work programme (2024-2025)</p>
16:30 – 17:00	<p>6 FINANCIAL MATTERS</p> <p>Under this agenda item, the meeting will consider the review of the Country Contributions, External Funding, the Draft Secretariat Budget for 2024 -2025. It will also consider the Audited Reports of Accounts for the year 2018- 2021 for endorsement.</p>
17:00 – 17:15	<p>7 VENUE AND DATE FOR THE 17th GOVERNING COUNCIL</p> <p>Under this Agenda Item, the meeting will decide on the venue and tentative dates for the 17th Governing Council meeting, which will be submitted to the Ministerial meeting for formal agreement.</p>
17:15 – 17:30	<p>8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Under this Agenda Item, the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points may wish to discuss any other relevant matters that may be raised by the representatives participating at the Meeting or by the Secretariat.</p>
17:30 – 17:45	<p>9 AGREEMENT OF REPORT</p> <p>Under this Agenda Item the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points will consider and Adopt the Report which will be submitted to the Ministerial meeting</p>
17.45	<p>10 CLOSURE OF MEETING</p> <p>Any representative participating in the Meeting may wish to make concluding statements regarding the deliberations at the Meeting and its achievements. The Chairman will finally declare the Meeting closed.</p>



**Creation of a new position at the SACEP Secretariat
(Director administration and Programme)**

Based on a proposal by the Director General of SACEP presented at the 134th Consultative Committee (CC) meeting on June 9, 2022 (**Annex 01**) CC members noted that the existing SACEP organogram (**Annex 02**) requires reorganization to adapt to the changing global environmental protection landscape. The current structure lacks a senior position in the Secretariat responsible for program management and coordination with member states on environmental issues and various administrative activities.

Additionally, there is an urgent need for capacity building within the SACEP Secretariat. To address this, the Consultative Committee approved the proposal to establish a Director (Administration & Programme) post, which is now awaiting approval from the 16th GC of SACEP. The proposed organograms are attached here (**Annex 03**). The GC is requested to approve the new organogram of SACEP Secretariat.

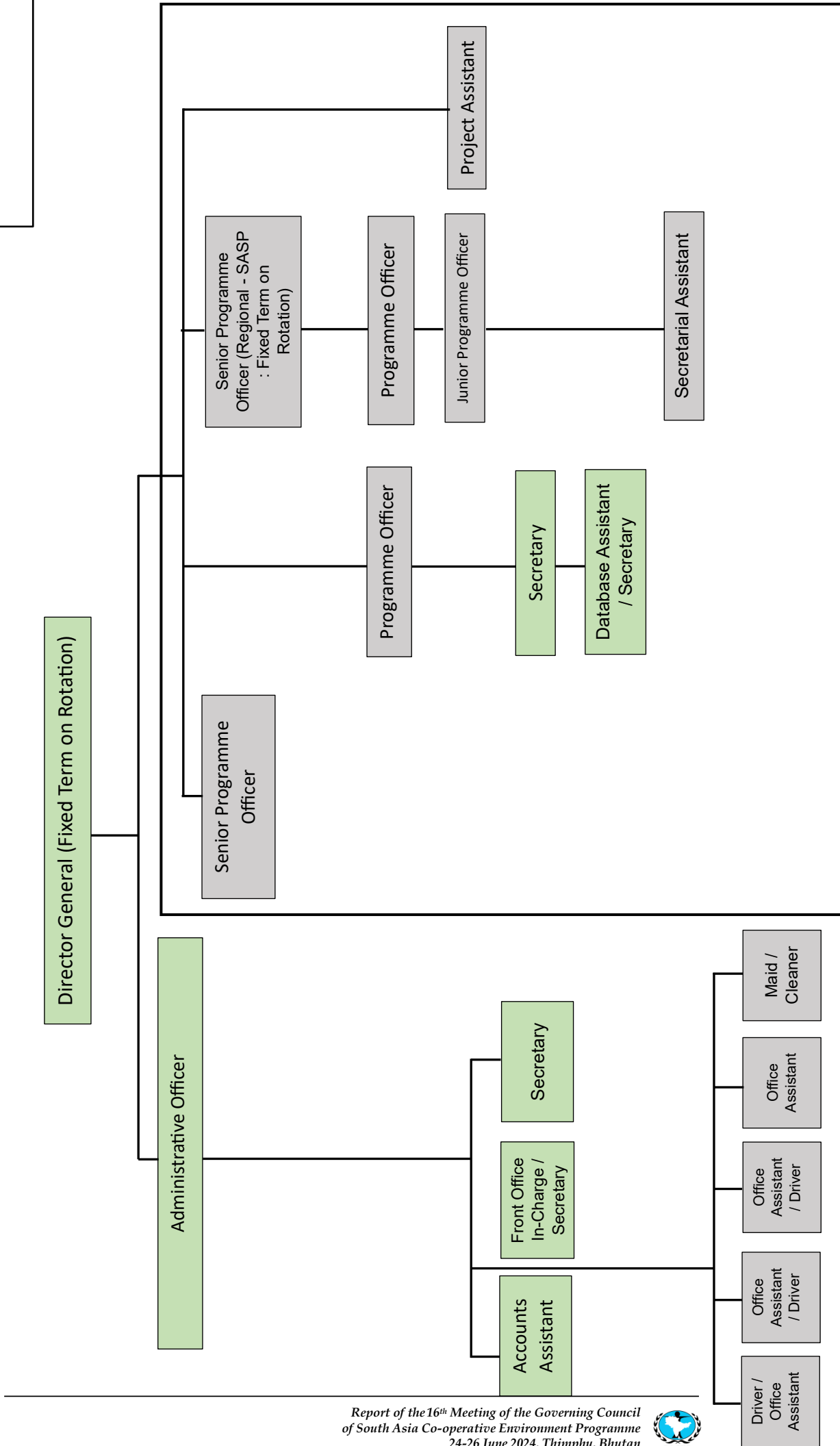
Proposed Appointing process:

- The Director (Administration & Programme) will be nominated by the National Focal Point (NFP) of the respective member states of SACEP.
- The Director General of SACEP and the Director (Administration & Programme) shall not be appointed from the same member states at the same time in the SACEP Secretariat.
- The Director (Administration & Programme) shall be a regional posting and will be recruited alphabetically from the member states of SACEP for a non-renewable period of three years.
- As the present Director General is from Bangladesh and next DG will be appointed from Bhutan, so the new Director (Administration & Programme) will not be appointed from Bangladesh and Bhutan. Alphabetically, India will nominate the first Director (Administration & Programme) for the SACEP secretariat. After that it will be rotating within the member states alphabetically.
- The Director (Administration & Programme) will be a mid-level officer of the government of the respective member state who shall be directly working under the overall supervision, guidance, management and control of the Head of the Mission of SACEP (DG-SACEP) as per the Terms of References.
- The Director (Administration and Programme) will be entitled to an all-inclusive fixed remuneration of US Dollar 4000/ (Four Thousand) per month. The salary includes house rent and any other expense.
- The salary will be paid from the SACEP member states contribution fund and other possible sources.
- The member states need to increase their contribution rationally as per the yearly budget for the new post.

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme

Existing Organization Structure

Annex VII
GC 16.SACEP / NFP





SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

MINUTES OF THE 134th MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF SACEP

10:00 hrs at SACEP Secretariat
9 June, 2022

The 134th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP was held on 9th June 2022 at 10:00 hrs at SACEP Secretariat, No. 146/24A, Havelock Road, Colombo 05.

The list of participants to the 134th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP is enclosed as (Annex – A)

Members Present

Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Secretary
Ministry of Environment, Government of Sri Lanka and
Chairman of the Consultative Committee of SACEP

H.E. Tareq Md Ariful Islam, High Commissioner
High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dr. Sushil Kumar, First Secretary (Technical Cooperation and Head of Chancery)
High Commission of the Republic of India

Ms Maryam Zahir, Second Secretary
High Commission of the Republic of Maldives

Mr. Balakrishna Bhandari, Diplomatic Officer
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Mr. Tanvir Ahmad, Deputy High Commissioner
High Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Dr Md Masumur Rahman, Director General, SACEP and Secretary of CC-SACEP



Agenda Item No.1: Welcoming the esteemed members of Consultative Committee of SACEP by the Director General of SACEP;

Dr Md Masumur Rahman, Director General, SACEP welcomed the esteemed members of Consultative Committee of SACEP.

Agenda Item No. 2: Opening Remarks by Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Government of Sri Lanka and Chairman CC-SACEP

Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Government of Sri Lanka and Chairman CC-SACEP delivered his opening remarks and expressed the sincere appreciation to the members for attending the meeting.

Dr. Jasinghe further stated that (**Annex – B**)

Agenda Item No. 3: Adoption of Agenda

The 134th Meeting of the Consultative Committee adopted the proposed meeting agenda.

Agenda Item No. 4: Confirmation / Adoption of the Minutes of the 133rd Meeting of the Consultative Committee Meeting of SACEP held on 17th February 2022

The Chairman of CC-SACEP invited comments from the members, on the minutes of the Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP held on 17th February 2022. In the absence of any comments, the meeting declared the minutes of the 133rd Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP held on 17th February 2022 as adopted.

Agenda Item No 5: Endorsement of the Project Proposal, Legal agreement and UNOPS TOR Submitted by UNOPS and approval to sign the agreement by the Director General of SACEP;

The secretary of the meeting, Dr. Md. Masumur Rahman, Director General of SACEP informed the CC members that The World Bank has requested the Director General of SACEP (Implementing Partner of the PLEASE project) to sign the agreement with UNOPS for assisting the PIU of PLEASE project for implementation of the project. He requested the member to see the matter for approve and endorsement of the Project Proposal, Legal agreement and UNOPS TOR Submitted by UNOPS and approval to sign the agreement by the Director General of SACEP.

Decision: The consultative committee endorsed and approved the documents and agreement unanimously and requested the Director General of SACEP to sign the agreement.

Agenda Item No. 6: Endorsement of the appointment of the Project Director of “PLEASE project”

Dr. Md Masumur Rahman, Director General of SACEP informed the meeting that SACEP secretariat has appointed Dr. Thomaskutti, as the Project Director of the Regional Project Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for the South Asia (“PLEASE”). His CV is attached.

He also informed that as the “PLEASE project” is a regional project, so the advertisement for the post of PD was made accordingly and it was circulated to all member states of SACEP. SACEP received total 38 applications for the post of PD from different member

countries of SACEP. Out of that 4 candidates were short listed and conducted interview by the SACEP secretariat.

The merit based result of the final selection was as follows-

- 1) Dr Rovi Mishra, (India)
- 2) Dr Thomaskutti (India)
- 3) Dr Masudul Haque Bhuya (Bangladesh)
- 4) Mr. M.J. Jayavilal Fernando (Sri Lanka)

The merit based first candidate Dr Rovi Mishra was offered by SACEP secretariat to join as Project Director but due to not getting deputation from the government of India he couldn't join.

Then SACEP secretariat offered Dr Thomaskutti, the merit based second candidate to join as Project Director. He has signed the contract service and informed that he will join on 3 July 2022.

Decision: After examining the appointment process the Consultative Committee members appreciate and thanks the Director General of SACEP for appointing the Project Director of the PLEASE project. The consultative committee approved and endorsed the appointment of Project Director. The committee has requested the Government of Sri Lanka to facilitate Dr. Thomaskutti's work permit and to facilitate him to have the resident visa during his working tenure and any other services if needed to provide.

Agenda Item No. 7: 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP

Dr. Md Masumur Rahman, the Director General of SACEP informed the meeting that the SACEP member state Bhutan will be arranging the next 16 Governing Council meeting of SACEP. The SACEP secretariat has already formally requested the NFP of Bhutan to organize the next meeting on December 2022. The committee member appreciates the initiative taken by the SACEP secretariat and they have requested the DG to expedite the issue in consultation with the government of Bhutan.

Agenda Item No. 8: Progress Report of SACEP and SASP

The Chairman of the Consultative Committee invited Dr Md Masumur Rahman, Director General, SACEP to summarize the Progress Report tabled by the Secretariat (**Annex D**). Then the Director General presented the progress report highlighting some salient points. The chairman invited all members to make their comments on the progress report if there is any. The committee members feel satisfy to see the progress report and they request to continue the efforts in future.

Agenda Item No. 9: Any other matters

9(a): The financial matters the Bank account co-signatory

The Director General of SACEP said that SACEP has a number of bank accounts in Sampath Bank but sometime banking transaction is very difficult as there is no alternative co-signatory other than the Administrative Officer. If the Administrative Officer is absent, sick or not in a position to work then the whole organization and the staff members are suffering huge to have their salary and other financial services.

①

So, alternative co-signatory of the Administrative Officer may resolve this undesirable and unexpected problem. The committee has approved the following proposal-

Decision: Any one of the following local staff member of SACEP will be the co-signatory of the bank accounts along with the mandatory signature of the Director General of SACEP

- 1) The Administrative Officer; or
- 2) Senior Programme Officer,

The Sampath Bank/other bank in Sri Lanka shall implement the decision and the Director General of SACEP will take necessary actions in this regard.

9(b) Establishment of the post of the Director (Administration and Programme) of SACEP

As per the discussion of the 133 CC meeting, the Director General of SACEP informed the meeting that SACEP is an intergovernmental organization and Director General is a regional posting which is rotating alphabetically within the member states every after three years. After the DG there is no other senior post in the secretariat for programme management and coordination with the member states regarding the environmental issues and different administrative activities.

Then the other members of the CC told that making the secretariat more vibrant/effective and to increase the participation of the member states in SACEP's programme/activities more efficiently and intensively, the creation of the new post Director (Administration and Programme) is very important.

i) Appointing process:

The Director General of SACEP and the Director (Administration and Programme) shall not be appointed from the same member states.

The Director (Administration and Programme) shall be a regional posting and will be recruited alphabetically from the member states of SACEP for three years.

As the present Director General is from Bangladesh and next DG will be appointed from Bhutan, so the new Director (Administration and Programme) will not be appointed from Bangladesh and Bhutan. Alphabetically, India will nominate the first Director (Administration and Programme) for the SACEP secretariat. After that it will be rotating within the member states alphabetically.

The National Focal Point (NFP) of the respective member states shall nominate the Director (Administration and Programme) as requested by the SACEP secretariat

The Director (Administration and Programme) will be a mid-level officer of the government of the respective member state who shall be directly working under the overall supervision, guidance, management and control of the Head of the Mission of SACEP (DG-SACEP) as per the Terms of References.

ii) SALARY

- a) The Director (Administration and Programme) will be entitled to an all-inclusive fixed remuneration of US Dollar 3000/ (Three Thousand) per month. The salary includes house rent and any other expense.

- b) The salary will be paid from the SACEP member states contribution fund and others sources if necessary.
- c) The member states need to increase their contribution rationally as per the yearly budget for the new post.

Decision: After threadbare discussion on the subject matter, the committee approved the proposal of establishment of the post of the Director (Administration and Programme) in the SACEP secretariat and the committee requested the DG-SACEP to develop the qualification of the candidate, terms of reference of the post and to start the appointment/recruitment process immediately.

9(C) Selection of new chairman of the Consultative Committee

The Director General informed the meeting that as per the Article of the Association of SACEP the tenure of the Chairman of the CC committee is for one year. The present chairman of SACEP (Sri Lanka) took the responsibility chairmanship on 02 March 2021.

Article 5(d) of SACEP (d) At its first session, the Committee will elect a Chairman who will chair its sessions for not more than one term of one year from the date of election. For any period, during which the Chairman is" absent from the country, or is otherwise prevented from exercising the functions of Chairman, the Council shall elect an Acting Chairman;

The present chairman of CC of SACEP is from Sri Lanka and as per the article and practice of the SACEP; the next chairman will be nominated from Afganistann. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Afganistan has informed the SACEP secretariat that **"Ashraf Haidery is not representing the Current Government of Afghanistan and he is not in touch with the Center here in Kabul, so we are not Recommending him as our Representative in the upcoming event of SACEP"**.

In this circumstance, the CC members agreed that the next member state (alphabetically) is Bangladesh. So H.E. Tareq Md Ariful Islam, High Commissioner, High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is proposed to be nominated as the next chairman of Consultative Committee of SACEP.

Decision: H.E. Tareq Md Ariful Islam, High Commissioner, High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is nominated as the next chairman of Consultative Committee of SACEP. After completing his tenure, SACEP member state Afghanistan will be the next CC-Chairman depending on the availability of the Ambassador of Afghanistan in Colombo, otherwise normal practice will be continued.

9(d) Entertainment Allowance for the Director General

The meeting discussed about the matter and they have approved the entertainment allowances' for the Director General of SACEP at the rate of 1100/= USD per month.

Decision: DG-SACEP shall be getting the entertainment allowance monthly basis and it will be 1100/-USD per month. He shall be getting this allowance's from the date of his joining 8 August 2021.

Dr Md Masumur Rahman, Director General of SACEP informed the meeting that Mr. Zammatt Khaleel, Senior Programme Officer, South Asia Seas Programme(SASP) of SACEP secretariat was call back by the NFP of Maldives on 4th May 2022. From then till

now the SPO (SASP) post is vacant. For this, the regular activities of SASP are hampering. He requested for a replacement immediately.

Finally, the committee members discussed on the Component 3 of the "PLEASE project" and about the Director General's official residence in the proposed land. After a thread bear discussion on this issue the committee agreed that based on the submission of SACEP Secretariat and considering the all available options, including the limitation of the space in the land provided, limitation of the available funds, privacy of the DG's family, status of the Secretariat operations, also the World Bank project needs to be completed in time, it was decided to construct Secretariat building only at this stage. A new proposal to construction of DG's residence or purchasing a new apartment in Colombo will be submitted to the next GC for approval.

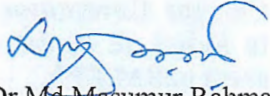
In the absence of any other business, the Chairman of the Consultative Committee of SACEP declared the 134th Meeting of the Consultative Committee as concluded.



Dr. Anil Jasinghe,
Secretary
Ministry of Environment, Government of Sri Lanka and
Chairman of the Consultative Committee of SACEP

Cc

- 1) All members of the CC-SACEP
- 2) Office Copy

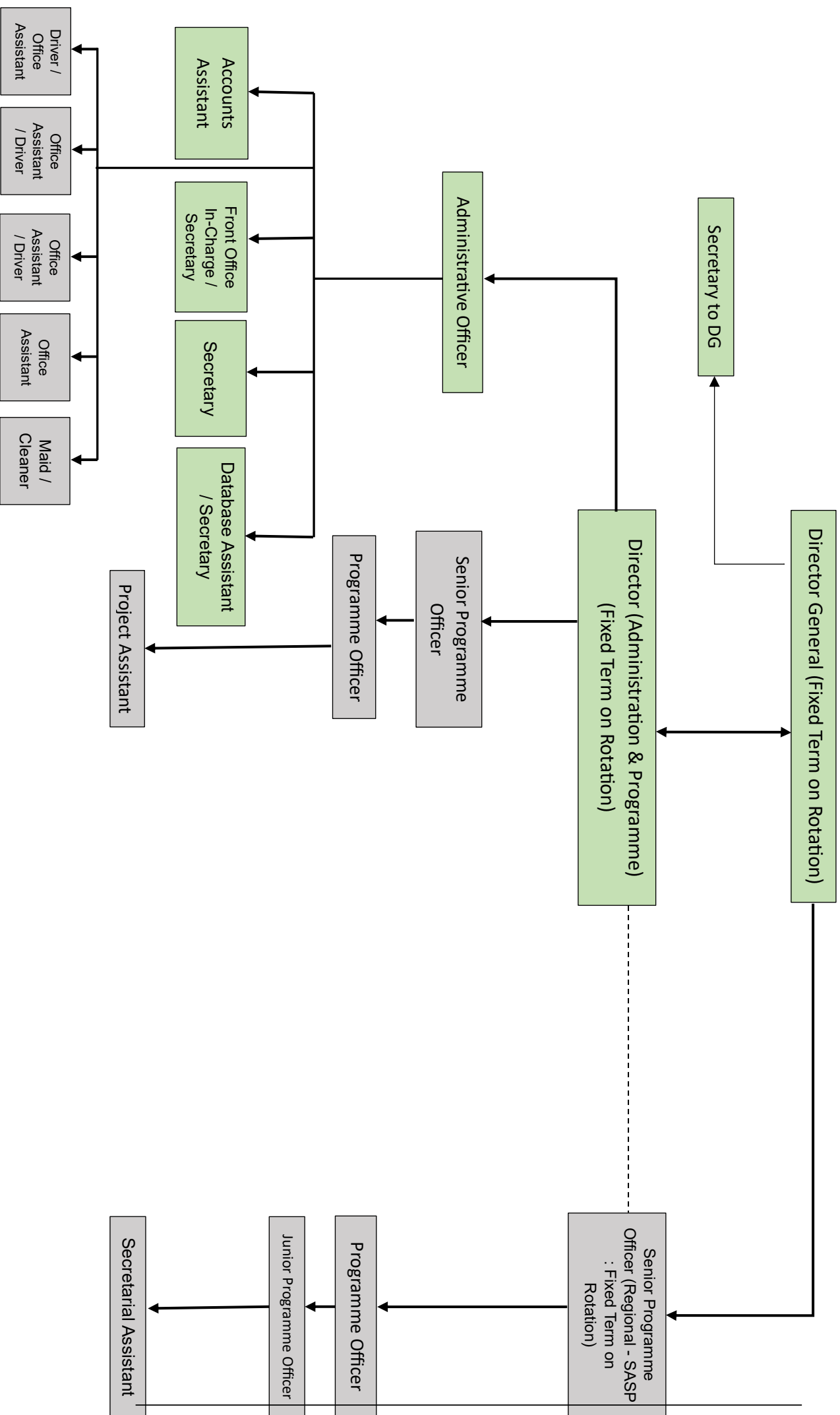


Dr Md Masumur Rāhman
Director General

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme

Proposed Organization Structure (For approval of 16th GC)
(Already approved by 134th CC)

Annex VII
GC 16.SACEP / NFP





Appointment of Director General of SACEP on Rotation

Nomination for the Next Director General of SACEP from Government of Bhutan

This has reference to the Decision No. 9.1 of the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP (12GC.SACEP) held on 3rd November 2010 regarding the appointment of the Director General of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (DG-SACEP) on Rotation. **(Annex 01)**

12GC-SACEP; Decision No. 9.1

INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SACEP

The meeting appointed a three member committee comprising of Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to resolve the matter of the Appointment of DG-SACEP on merit. Bhutan was requested to facilitate the negotiations.

Based on the recommendation of the sub-committee, it was decided that first option to propose a candidate as DG-SACEP to be given to Sri Lanka for a period of three years followed by Pakistan.

Thereafter, principle of rotation will be followed starting from the alphabetical order beginning from Afghanistan for a period of three years as per the decision of the High Level Meeting to Initiate the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme in February 1981, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

It was decided that the criteria for the selection of Director General and the Terms of Reference to be drafted by the SACEP Secretariat and to be circulated to the member countries for comments within one month.'

The Criteria for Selection and the Terms of Reference of the appointment of the Director General was approved by the Chairman of the Governing Council on 18th January 2011 as recommended by the 117th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP (117CC.SACEP) held on 23rd November 2010 followed by the comments / clearances received from SACEP member states and revised Item No. 10, 11, 12 and 16 by the 125th, 126th and 128th Meetings of the Consultative Committee of SACEP held on 17th July 2015, 26th April 2016 and 14th July 2017 respectively. **(Annex 02)**

The present Director General of SACEP nominated by Government of Bangladesh will complete the tenure on 08th August 2024.

Invited Government of Bhutan to nominate a suitable candidate to be the next Director General of SACEP in accordance with the approved Criteria	10 th October 2023
Nomination sent by Government of Bhutan for the post of DG-SACEP (Annex 03)	25 th April 2024
Comparison of CV with Approved Criteria (Annex 04)	

As SACEP Secretariat received the nomination directly from Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Secretariat written back to the National focal Point informing that Secretariat received a nomination for the post of Director General representing The Royal Government of Bhutan.	15 th May 2024
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The nomination received from the Government of Bhutan was presented at the 138th Meeting of the Consultative Committee (CC) of SACEP, where it was subsequently endorsed by the CC.



REPORT
THE TWELFTH MEETING OF THE
GOVERNING COUNCIL

South Asia Co-operative Environment
Programme
(SACEP)

1 – 3 NOVEMBER 2010
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

9. DISCUSSIONS AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AGREED UPON AT THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

Based on the recommendations of the Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points under the following categories;

- (1) Institutional Matters
- (2) Programme Matters
- (3) Financial Matters,

the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council, SACEP endorsed the decisions below.

9.1 INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SACEP

The Preparatory Meeting of the National Focal Points for the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP appointed a three member committee comprising of Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to resolve the matter of the Appointment of the Director General of SACEP on merit basis. Bhutan was requested to facilitate the negotiations.

Based on the recommendation of the sub-committee, it was decided that first option to propose a candidate as the Director General, SACEP to be given to Sri Lanka for a period of three years followed by Pakistan.

Thereafter, principle of rotation will be followed starting from the alphabetical order beginning from Afghanistan for a period of three years as per the decision of the High Level Meeting to Initiate the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, 18 – 25 February 1981 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

It was decided that the criteria for the selection of Director General and the Terms of Reference to be drafted by the SACEP Secretariat and to be circulated to the member countries for comments within one month.

9.2 PROGRAMME MATTERS

9.2.1 Establishment of Basel Convention Regional Centre for South Asia

The meeting was informed by the SACEP Secretariat that an updated proposal on Establishment of Basel Convention Regional Centre for South Asia was submitted and was taken



**CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF
DIRECTOR GENERAL, SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ON
ROTATION**

AND

TERMS OF REFERENCE

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), based in Colombo, Sri Lanka is an Inter-governmental Organization established in 1982 to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of environment in the region (www.sacep.org). Its member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SACEP is also the Secretariat of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) covering its five marine member states.

As decided at the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP held on 3rd November 2010 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the first option to propose a candidate as the Director General of SACEP will be given to Sri Lanka for a period of three years followed by Pakistan. Thereafter, principle of rotation will be followed starting from the alphabetical order beginning from Afghanistan for a period of three years as per the decision of the High Level Meeting to Initiate the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme from 18 – 25 February 1981 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

The Director General, SACEP will be the head of the organization and provide leadership in the efficient and effective functioning of the organization and fulfillment of its mandate as contained in the Declaration and Articles of Association of SACEP and the decisions of the Meetings of the Governing Councils and the Consultative Committee of SACEP / SASP.

In particular the incumbent will be responsible for:

- overall administrative and financial control of the organization,
- programme planning, budgeting and resource mobilization, including fund-raising and co-financing,
- building and developing close relationships with the stakeholder bodies, including alliance partners and other organizations,
- performing other functions and responsibilities entrusted by the Governing Council and its Committees.
- Meeting the reporting requirements laid down by the Governing Council and the Consultative Committee

QUALIFICATION:

- He / She should have an Advanced University Degree (Ph.D. or Post Graduate qualification) in a relevant discipline (Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Planning, Engineering, Law, Business Management, Environmental Management, Environmental Economics)
- 15 years of professional experience, of which, at least 10 years must be at a senior level with demonstrated planning, managerial and leadership capabilities and sound knowledge of environmental and sustainable development issues at the national, regional, and global levels
- Proven skill in identifying, formulating, planning, operating and monitoring environmental programmes, knowledge and experience of the procedures adopted by the UN Agencies and other technical or financial assistance agencies
- Excellent communication skills
- Good interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment with sensitivity and respect for diversity
- Age: 40-55 Years

It would also be desirable for the Director General to have an established and good working relationship with governments of SACEP member and non-member countries, international and regional bodies, aide agencies, relevant non-government organizations, senior management in private sector, corporations, companies and foundations, etc.

(Source : Approved Advertisement and Guidelines & Procedure for the Recruitment of the DG.SACEP by Chairman GC.SACEP dated 2nd August 2004 and Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General dated 1st February 2005)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The post of Director General, SACEP is a statutory appointment, on Contract Basis for a non-renewable term of three years at the Programme's Headquarters at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The appointment as Director General, SACEP will be governed by the following Terms and Conditions:

1. Term of Service

- a) The Director General's appointment shall date from the day on which he / she leaves his / her last duty station to come to Colombo, and his / her salary (including overseas allowance, if any) is payable from that date, provided that salary is not payable for any periods of leave taken in the course of his / her journey to Colombo.
- b) The approved term of service as laid down in the Articles of Association and the Decision of the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP, will be deemed to commence from the date of the Director General's departure from his / her last duty station or normal place of residence to come to Colombo and will exclude travel time on transfer from Colombo and any accumulated leave taken at the end of his / her term of service.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 16 a - b)

c) Period of Overlap

The terms of office of the Director General and his / her successor may overlap for a period not exceeding two weeks plus travel time and accumulated leave: To provide for periods of overlap or to enable the change-over to take place at the most suitable time of year, the Governing Council, Consultative Committee may make small extensions to the terms of contract of the officers concerned subject to the provisions of Article 7 of the Articles of Association.

(Source : GC 4 / page 37, Rule 16 (c))

2. Resignation

In case, if the Director General is withdrawn by his / her government or the Director General resigns, three months written notice shall ordinarily be given to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee. However, the resignation may be accepted on shorter notice. If the Director General stays less than the term of his / her original contract and if he / she has taken advantage of the provision for Home Leave payment of the costs of return travel to the normal place of residence shall be at the discretion of the Consultative Committee.

(Source : Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 17)

3. Transport of Officer and the Family

The selected candidate for appointment as Director General will obtain a Diplomatic Passport from the respective country government and other necessary travel documents including valid visa from the High Commission / Embassy of Sri Lanka of the concerning country, before the commencement of the journey.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 6 dated 1st February 2005)

SACEP will pay the cost of economy class air travel or the equivalent by any other means of transport to Colombo from the normal place of residence or last duty station, and back to his / her normal place of residence for the Director General, spouse and dependent children (including step children and legally adopted children). The term “dependent children” covers those who are under age of 21 on first arrival in Sri Lanka and unmarried, and whom it is intended, will reside in Sri Lanka during the Director General’s term of duty. A son or daughter of 21 years of age and above may also be considered a dependent for travel purpose, if physically disabled or mentally retarded.

In the case of a dependent child receiving full-time education outside Sri Lanka, the Secretariat will pay the cost of economy class return air fare between the Director General’s normal place of residence and Colombo, once in every twelve months except in the twelve-month period in which the Director General has home leave.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 18)

4. Shipment of Car

The Secretariat will pay the cost of shipment of a Director General's car from his / her normal place of residence or last duty station to Colombo and back to his / her normal place of residence.

(Source : GC 4; page 37; Rule 19)

5. Removal Allowance

On the first appointment of the Director General and on his / her return to his / her normal place of residence, the Secretariat will pay actual removal expenses for household and personal effects up to a maximum stated below by the most economical means of transportation:

Air baggage accompanied:	66 lbs/person
Air Freight :	100 lbs/person
Surface Freight:	3,500 lbs/family
(300 cu. ft. or 8.50 cu. m)	

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 20)

6. Salary

a) The Director General will be given a fixed remuneration of US \$ 5,000/- per month.

(Source : 14 GC.SACEP – 9.1.2 - page 4, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, hosted by Afghanistan on 28 March 2018)

b) Salary is inclusive of all allowances except Travel Allowance, Entertainment Allowance, Medical Expenses, Children's Education Allowance and Furnished Living Accommodation Allowance. The Director General may remit from Sri Lanka amounts up to the total of his / her salary as permitted by the Sri Lanka foreign exchange authorities.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 21. a)

c) The salary and allowances of the Director General are determined on the assumption that he / she will not be subject to taxation, but the Secretariat has no responsibility on account of any taxation that may, in spite of this assumption, be levied on such officer by his / her national Government.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 21.b and Gazette Notification (Extraordinary) 1426/17 under Diplomatic Privileges Act No 9 of 1996; (a) dated 5th January 2006)

7. Travel Allowance

When absent from Colombo on official visits, the Director General will be entitled in addition to the salary, the Daily Subsistence Allowance applicable to staff members in the Director and the Principal Officer category of the United Nations for each country visited, subject to the fulfillment of administrative and financial instructions. Travel by air will be by economic class.

In cases, where the per diem rate is not high enough to cover his / her reasonable expenses, he / she may claim actual expenses supported by vouchers. It is expected to travel in such a way as to economies time and expenses

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 23)

Overseas travel of the Director General of SACEP should be approved by the Consultative Committee of SACEP and a report on the follow up actions should be submitted to CC-SACEP after attending the Meeting / Conference.

(Source : 110 CC SACEP held on 30th October 2008)

8. Personal Accident Insurance

Director General will be provided with insurance cover for capital sum of pounds sterling 10,000/- each, against personal accidents during their terms of office.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 24)

9. Entertainment Allowance

The Director General shall be entitled to be reimbursed in respect of expenditure incurred on entertainment in pursuance of the official representational functions. Such expenditure shall not in the total exceed the sum set aside for this purpose in the annual budget.

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 25)

10. Furnished Living Accommodation

The Director General will be entitled to per diem allowance in lieu of house rent for the first 14 days in joining the Secretariat. In case of the spouse and maximum of 2 dependent children, the rate of per diem allowance will be 50% of the rate applicable for Colombo.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment; iii; dated 7th March 2005)

The Director General will be provided a furnished living accommodation with a rental ceiling of Sri Lankan Rupees / US Dollars as given in the below table.

Rental	Period
US\$ 1,737 or LKR 350,000/-	Per Month

(Source : GC 4; page 38; Rule 26 revised by 96 CC SACEP held on 2nd August 2005, 125 CC SACEP dated 17th July 2015 and 132 CC SACEP dated 2nd March 2021, 133 CC SACEP dated 17th February 2022)

11. Utility Expenses

Utility Expenses payable by the Director General for his / her residence supported by vouchers will be borne by the Secretariat with the ceiling of the Utility Expenses of the Director General as per below given table in US Dollars or Sri Lanka Rupees enabling the higher value to be claimed supported by vouchers.

Utility Expense	Monthly Rate
Electricity	US \$ 150 or LKR 20,000/-
Water	US \$ 25 or LKR 3,500/-
Residence Telephone	US \$ 50 or LKR 7,000/-

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 5 dated 1st Feb 2005, revised by 117 CC SACEP held on 23rd November 2010 and 126 CC SACEP held on 26th April 2016)

12. Medical and Hospital Charges

Medical expenses payable by the Director General and the family supported by vouchers will be borne by the Secretariat up to a limit of Sri Lankan Rupees 100,000/- per year and pro rata for fractions of a year and if this allowance is not used in full, an entitlement not exceeding Sri Lankan Rupees 200,000/- may be carried over into any following year. The Director General is a member of the SACEP medical insurance scheme.

(Source : GC 4; page 38 & 39; Rule 27 revised by Special CC SACEP held on 11th Jan 1994 and 128th CC SACEP held on 14th July 2017)

13. Leave

The Director General will be entitled to an **Annual Leave** of 25 working days per annum during the term of appointment, and this may be taken either in or outside Sri Lanka. Leave shall be earned from the date of appointment. Leave for any period of service amounting to less than one complete year will be pro rata.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 28.a)

Casual leave will be fourteen working days per annum, unused casual leave lapses at the end of each calendar year.

(Source: GC 4; page 39; Rule 29)

There is no special provision for **Sick Leave**. The Secretariat may make an ad hoc decision in any case where the Director General is sick and has exhausted his / her leave entitlement.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 30)

Home Leave may be granted after completion of two years of service with the Secretariat to the Director General nominated by a country other than Sri Lanka, provided that he / she spends a substantial part of his / her leave in that country,

and subject to his / her assurance in writing that he / she intends to serve the full term on his / her contract. The Secretariat will pay the cost of return passages (economy class for air travel or the equivalent by other means of transport) for the officer, the spouse, and dependent children, by the most direct route to the country by which he / she was nominated.

Except for travel time not exceeding five days each way, the leave involved shall be charged to annual leave. Daily Subsistence Allowance shall not be paid for journeys on home leave.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 31 & page 37; Rule 18 (a) and 104 CC.SACEP held on 7th Dec 2007)

14. Encashment of Accumulated Annual Leave

Encashment of Accumulated Annual Leave for the Director General with an upper ceiling of 70% of the Accumulated Annual Leave as a Terminal Benefit at the end of the tenure.

(Source : 105 CC.SACEP held on 19th December 2007)

15. Children's Education Allowance

Educational Allowance for 2 children upto the age of 21 years is payable.

In case, the children are studying in Sri Lanka / Third Country, 75% of the actual expenses will be reimbursed subject to a ceiling of US \$ 3,000/- per child per annum and where as the children are studying in their home country, a lump sum amount of US \$ 1,500/- per, child per annum.

(Source : Special CC held on 6th Feb 1995 and 100 CC SACEP held on 30th Aug 2006)

When the Director General is from Sri Lanka and his / her children are studying in Sri Lanka 75% of the actual expenses will be reimbursed subject to a ceiling of US \$ 1,500/- per child per annum and where as the children are studying in another country, a lump sum amount of US \$ 3,000/- per, child per annum.

(Source : 117 CC SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

16. Official Car

The Director General will be provided with an official car for self and family use, which is maintained by SACEP. Personal usage should not affect the official requirements of the Director General.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment; vii; dated 7th March 2005 revised by 128 CC SACEP held on 14th July 2017)

17. Customs Privileges

- (a) By arrangement with the Government of Sri Lanka, the Director General is entitled to privileges as contained in Sections 19, 20 and 21 of the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. "First Entry" is interpreted as including the first six months

of their stay for the purpose of importing such durable goods as automobiles and refrigerators, on the understanding that only one of each such article is brought by the Director General.

- (b) Items brought to the country duty free should not be sold to private parties but handed over to the Government Supplies Department on Government valuation.

(Source : GC 4; page 39; Rule 32)

18. Standards of Conduct

The Director General will conduct him/herself at all times with fullest regard for the purpose and principles of SACEP and in a manner befitting his / her relationship with SACEP and shall not engage in any activity that is incompatible with those purposes and principles or the proper discharge of his / her duties with the Programme. He/she will avoid any action and in particular of any kind of public pronouncement, which may adversely reflect on that relationship, or on the integrity, independence and impartiality, which are required by the relationship.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 8 dated 1st Feb 2005)

19. Termination of Service

SACEP reserves the right to terminate the appointment of the Director General, in the event of gross misconduct, default or in some other circumstances, which will render the contract unenforceable. Notice for termination would not be applicable in such cases.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 12 dated 1st February 2005)

20. Sudden Demise

Considering the special circumstances, the family of the late Director General will be compensated with an ex-gratia payment of US \$ 8,000/- as a special gesture.

(Source : 50 CC.SACEP held on 25th May 1993)

21. Rights and Obligations of the Director General, SACEP

The rights and obligations of the Director General, SACEP are strictly limited to the Terms and Conditions of the Service Contract. Accordingly, he / she shall not be entitled to any benefit, payment, subsidy, compensation or pension from SACEP, except as expressly provided in the contract.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

22. Use of Name, Emblem or Official Seal of SACEP or SASP

The Director General shall not use the name, emblem or the official seal of SACEP / SASP or any abbreviation of the name of SACEP and SASP for any purpose except for strict official use.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

23. Title Rights

The title rights, copyrights and all other rights of whatsoever nature in any material product under the provisions of this contract shall be vested exclusively in SACEP.

(Source : 117 CC.SACEP held on 23rd November 2010)

General

24. All disputes arising shall be dealt with in accordance with the relevant laws of Sri Lanka.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 13 dated 1st February 2005)

25. The Organization reserves the right at its discretion to effect changes in the job description and the duties and tasks to be performed as may be deemed necessary.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 9 dated 1st February 2005)

26. The Director General will take reasonable steps to ensure that Programme's assets are adequately safeguarded and optimised.

(Source : Offer of Appointment to the Post of Director General; 10 dated 1st February 2005)

27. The Director General will be governed by the provisions relating to financial and administrative matters of the secretariat and other such rules as applicable during the period of his / her stay at SACEP.

(Source : Detailed Terms of Appointment – Last sentence dated 7th March 2005)

28. The Director General is not expected to give any national sentiments of political and religious convictions, he/she shall at all times bear in mind the reserve and tact required by the reason of his / her relationship with SACEP.

29. The Director General shall not accept any favour, gift or remuneration from any source external to SACEP.

SACEP shall not be responsible for any criminal or civil liabilities, which may be brought by a third party against the Director General in his / her performance of services under this contract; and the Director General will hold SACEP harmless against third-party claims.

Norbu Wangchuk
(E Mail: bcss.research@gmail.com)
norbuwangc@gmail.com)
Mobile No. 77106331

PROFILE

- i. Village : Kanglung, Trashigang, Bhutan
- ii. Date of Birth : 14/11/1969
- iii. Marital Status : Married with three children

POSITIONS HELD

- i. Former Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan
- ii. Former Minister for Education, Royal Government of Bhutan
- iii. Chairperson, SAFTA Trade Ministers of SAARC
- iv. Vice Chairperson, National Environment Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan
- v. Senior Lecturer, Royal Institute for Management Studies, Bhutan
- vi. Professional Speaker on Happiness and Sustainable Development
- vii. Certified global trainer on Neuroscience based Leadership
- viii. Professional speaker on mindfulness and leadership
- ix. Consultant, Researcher and Trainer for Policy development, strategic management and Leadership
- x. Founder :
 - a. Center for Research and Development, Thimphu, Bhutan
 - b. Institute for Management Studies, Thimphu Bhutan

EXPERIENCE RELEVANT TO THE POSITION

1. Provided National Leadership in Bhutan on strategic concerns of Environment and execution of Environment programmes as the Vice Chair of the National Environment Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan
2. As the Chairperson of Empowered board of Hydro Power Development, steered the construction of hydro power projects with environment preservation and sustainability concerns.
3. Oversaw the Risk Mitigation Programme of Glacier lakes in Bhutan
4. Initiated numerous renewable projects such as Bio-Gas energy, windmill and nationwide LED bulb usage.
5. Steered the Climate adaptation projects under the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) throughout the country.
6. As a Cabinet Member of the Royal Government of Bhutan, engaged with several Multilateral stakeholders such as UN, SNV, Save the Children etc.
7. Interacted with Governments of SAARC and Minister colleagues of the SAARC countries promoting Transnational trade, energy cooperation and cross border issues.

WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Senior Lecturer, Royal Institute for Management Studies (2006 – 2012)

Engaged in policy development focused on poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, and local governance. Taught leadership, sustainable development and communications to the Post graduate students.

2. Minister for Education, Royal Government of Bhutan (2013 – 2015)

As a member of the Cabinet, served in the Ministry of Education. Initiated education reform with focus on infrastructure and systemic changes, curriculum and teacher development.

3. Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan (2015 – 2018)

As the Minister of Economic Affairs, initiated numerous economic programs aimed at reviving the economy focusing on generation of employment, enhancing GDP growth and fulfilling sustainable development goals.

4. Researchers / Consultant, Center for Research and Development. (2018 – 2023)

Undertaken research on education and poverty, Voting behavior, Teacher motivation and local governance.

EDUCATION

1. B.Sc. (1988 - 1992) from Sherubtse College, University of Delhi, Kanglung Bhutan majoring in Botany and Zoology.
2. MBA (1995 - 1997) from India.
3. Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (1999 – 2000) from National Institute of Education, Samtse, Bhutan

Publications and Research:

- a) Educating for Gross National Happiness – a Training Manual
- b) Leadership in Cooperatives – Training manual
- c) Editor of the RIM newsletter
- d) Published several articles in the Dzongchong Rigphel, the RIM Institute Journal.
 - i. GNH: practicing it.
 - ii. Privatization in Bhutan, Theory and Practice
 - iii. Globalization, a challenge to GNH
 - iv. Managing your Boss
 - v. The Pygmalion Effect in the private sector organization

- e) Undertaken and completed Research on “Privatization: Theory and Practices”
- f) Supervised research studies of Post Graduate studies.

**Nominee from Government of Bhutan
For the post of Director General
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)**

Mr. Norbu Wangchuk

Comparison of CV with Approved Guideline for Appointment

Criteria as per Guidelines	Details from CV
Age 40 - 55 years	November 14, 1969
Advanced University Degree (Ph.D. or Post Graduate qualification) in a relevant discipline (Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Planning, Engineering, Law, Business Management)	Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (1999 – 2000) from National Institute of Education, Samtse, Bhutan MBA (1995 - 1997) from India. B.Sc. (1988 - 1992) from Sherubtse College, University of Delhi, Kanglung Bhutan majoring in Botany and Zoology.
15 years of professional experience, of which, at least 10 years must be at a senior level with demonstrated planning, managerial and leadership capabilities and sound knowledge of environmental and sustainable development issues at the national, regional, and global levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers / Consultant, Center for Research and Development. (2018 – 2023) • Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan (2015 – 2018) • Minister for Education, Royal Government of Bhutan (2013 – 2015) • Senior Lecturer, Royal Institute for Management Studies (2006 – 2012)
Excellent reading, writing and communicating skills in English	Fulfilled (Based on CV)
Computer literacy of acceptable standards	Not Mentioned
Good interpersonal skills and communication abilities	English

Salary of SACEP Secretariat Staff

I. Salary of the Director General

The salary of the Director General had been increased from USD 4500 to USD 5000 per month by the 14th meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP with effective from March 2018 (Decision 9.1.2 of the 14th GC).

Apart from the salary, the Director General entitled to entertainment allowance, furnished living accommodation allowance, medical expenses and children's education allowance as per the rules and regulations of SACEP.

Regarding the entertainment allowance, as per the Rule 25 of the 4th GC, "The Director General shall be entitled to be reimbursed in respect of expenditure incurred on entertainment in pursuance of the official representational functions. Such expenditure shall not in the total exceed the sum set aside for this purpose in the annual budget".

Based on the proposal submitted by Director General, 134th meeting of the Consultative Committee (CC) of SACEP held in 9th June 2022, made a decision "DG-SACEP shall be getting the entertainment allowance monthly basis and it will be 1100 USD per month. He shall be getting this allowance from the date of his joining 8 August 2021".

Based on the above Decision of the CC, Director General is drawing a monthly salary USD 6100 per month with effective from August 2021.

The 16th meeting of the GC of SACEP requested to consider endorsing the decision of the 134th meeting of the CC Meeting which read as "DG-SACEP shall be getting the entertainment allowance monthly basis and it will be 1100 USD per month. He shall be getting this allowance from the date of his joining 8 August 2021".

2. Salary of the Local Staff

Salary of the local staff is being paid by the local currency (Sri Lankan Rupee). As per the rules, in normal circumstance, salary of the local staff will be reviewed once in every five years. The last salary review was done in October 2022.

Due to the economic crisis of Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR) has been depreciated remarkably and cost of living has been increased rapidly. In January 2020, USD 1 equal to LKR 180 and currently (June 2024) USD 1 equal to LKR 300 (rates are approximate). As per the above facts, from 2020 to date, Sri Lankan Rupee has been depreciated by 40%. Many international agencies and NGOs working in Sri Lanka, increased salaries of their staff to match the local currency depreciation and to meet the increased cost of living. SACEP also had to increase the salaries of staff of projects (contractual persons) in line with the local currency depreciation.

In recent past, SACEP was experiencing a difficulty to retained its local staff and leaving SACEP as they get better offers from other organizations.

SACEP receives funds in terms of USD (except the host facility).

This has been presented and discussed at the 138 meeting of the Consultative Committee held on 4th June 2024 and the meeting recommended SACEP Secretariat to prepare a proposal and submit to the 16th GC for endorsement.

Taking into consideration of the above facts, the 16th meeting of the GC of SACEP requested to consider increasing local staff salary by 40%. **(Annex 1)**

3. Salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)

The salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of SASP had been increased from USD 2500 to USD 3000 per month by the 6th Inter-governmental Meeting of Ministers of the South Asian Seas Programme with effective from 6th November 2019 (Decision 9.1.2 of the 6th IMM).

The 138 meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP held on 4th June 2024, when the agenda of recruitment of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of SASP taken into consideration, of the view that the all-inclusive salary of USD 3000 per month is not enough to attract a qualified person and recommended SACEP Secretariat to make a proposal to the 16th meeting of the GC to increase the all-inclusive salary to USD 3500 per month.

To meet the above requirement, it is necessary to increase the Country Contribution of the member countries of South Asian Seas Programme.

The 16th meeting of the GC requested to consider to increase the salary of the Senior Programme Officer (Regional) of SASP by USD 500 per month and agree to increase the country contributions to meet the expenditure.



**MINUTES OF THE 108TH MEETING OF
THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF SACEP**

1430 hrs SACEP Secretariat
6th October 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. M. A. R. D. Jayathilake, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka and Chairman CC-SACEP

Mr. Mir Akram U. Ahammad, Third Secretary
High Commission of People's Republic of Bangladesh

Mr. Santosh Jha, Counsellor (Eco & Com)
High Commission of India

Ms. Lauza Ali, First Secretary
High Commission of Republic of Maldives

Mr. Suresh Adhikari, Second Secretary
Embassy of Nepal

Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahman Kazi, Deputy High Commissioner
High Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

SACEP

Ms. Jacintha S. Tissera, Administrative Officer

The 108th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP was held on 6th October 2008 at 1430 hrs at the SACEP Secretariat, Colombo.

Agenda Item No. 1 : Adoption of Agenda

The Consultative Committee adopted the proposed meeting agenda.

Mr. M. A. R. D. Jayathilake, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka and Chairman CC-SACEP welcomed the members of the Consultative Committee to the 108th Meeting of the CC-SACEP.

Mr. Santosh Jha, Consultative Committee member, India requested Mr. M. A. R. D. Jayathilake, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka to Chair the Selection Panel as the Chairman of the Consultative Committee or to nominate a representative of a similar level, as India will be represented by an Additional Secretary and Bangladesh will be represented by the High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. Mr. Jayathilake agreed on the point raised by Mr. Santosh Jha and stated that action will be taken accordingly.

Mr. Mir Akram U. Ahammad, Third Secretary, High Commission of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Colombo suggested that other than the Individual Evaluation Form, an Amalgamated Evaluation Form to be developed for the Interview Panel to analysis candidates. The members of the 108 CC-SACEP recommended the proposal and directed the Administrative Officer to prepare the Amalgamated Evaluation Form.

Mrs Jacintha Tissera, Administrative Officer informed the meeting that the Selection Panel will meet at 8.00 am on 9th October 2008, one hour prior to the interviews.

Agenda Item No. 5 : Proceedings of the Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Consultative Committee of SACEP on Revision of the Local Staff Salaries

The 105th CC-SACEP formulated a Sub Committee for Revision of the Local Staff Salaries of SACEP. Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahman Kazi, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was the Chairman of the Sub-committee and Mr. M. A. R. D. Jayathilake, Chairman CC-SACEP and Mr. Mir Akram U. Ahammad, Third Secretary, CC member of Bangladesh were the other two members of the Sub-committee. The Proceedings of the Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Consultative Committee of SACEP on Revision of the Local Staff Salaries was discussed under this Agenda Item.

Decision :

- 1) The 108 CC-SACEP unanimously recommended the 30% Salary Increase for the Local Staff of SACEP with effect from December 2007 and revision of salary to be considered after each 3 – 5 years depending on increase of Cost of Living.
- 2) The 10% Annual Increase proposed by the Sub Committee was discussed at length and agreed to implement the following :

The Increment Slabs of the Approved Structure followed at present by the Secretariat under each designation to be increased by 30% as the Annual Salary Increment to Local Staff (Annex 1)

Any other Matters No 6 :

The meeting concluded with thanks and well wishes to the Chair.


Jacintha S. Tissera
Administrative Officer





REPORT

THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

**22 MAY 2008
JAIPUR, INDIA**

Contribution for SACEP, for smooth functioning of the SACEP Secretariat.

The meeting also appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat in starting the Corpus Fund for SACEP and the contribution of the Government of India to kick start the fund. It requested the member countries to make generous contributions to the fund.

9.3.2 External Funding

The Meeting greatly appreciated the efforts of SACEP in generating external funds from several agencies. It recommended that SACEP should continue to play its role in securing external financing for the benefit of the member countries.

9.3.3 Secretariat Budget (2009-2010)

The Meeting endorsed the existing rate of Country Contribution as the Revenue of SACEP and approved only the increase of the Local Staff Salaries under the estimated Expenditure of the Secretariat against the approved budget of 10.GC-SACEP. **(Annex XIX)**

10. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL AUDITED REPORT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2006

The meeting approved the Audited Report of Accounts for the year 2006.

11. STATEMENT ON COUNTRY COMMITMENTS FOR PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION / CORPUS FUND

This matter was discussed under Agenda Items 9.3.1.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Venue and Date for the 12th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP

The Meetings of the Governing Council are held in alphabetical order. In keeping with the tradition of hosting the Meeting of the Governing

PROGRESS REPORT
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
September 2019- May 2024

1. Biodiversity

1.1 Project Proposal on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) in South Asia beyond 2018.

Background

Based on the working paper submitted by the Secretariat, the 14th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP adopted a decision and agreed in principle to participate in BFN project and recommended SACEP Secretariat to prepare a complete project proposal including possible funding mechanisms on promoting BFN approach in South Asian countries beyond 2018.

SACEP made an effort to consult various possible partners to develop a joint project proposal. An initial discussion in this regard had been taken place among SACEP, Bioersivity International, Italy and UN Environment on ways and means to develop a regional project proposal. A delegation of UN Environment and Bioersivity International visited SACEP on 10 Oct 2018 and had discussions on the subject matter. After a series of discussion, a Draft Project Concept Note has been developed.

After the conclusion of 15th Meeting of the Governing Council, the immediate priority was given to formulate the 'Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia' project which has already secured USD 50 million. Out of the total funding, USD 37 million is from The World Bank and USD 13 million is from Parley as a parallel co-financing partner. The World Bank wanted to develop this project within a short period of time. Hence, SACEP Secretariat decided to allocate all its available resources including human resources towards development of PLEASE project.

Also, during the peak of the COVID 19 Pandemic all international partners diverted their funds to control COVID-19 and it was decided to delay the development of the proposal.

With the limited human resources at the Secretariat, the Senior Programme Officer was asked to devote his full time to develop the PLEASE project.

Current Status

Due to above stated reasons, SACEP could not prepare full proposal. Though SACEP initiated a dialogue with possible partners later on mid-2022, again to develop the project proposal, it has been informed that funding under GEF STAR allocation of member countries might not be possible to implement a regional project and therefore SACEP didn't move the preparation of proposal forward. The concept needs to revise targeting new possible donors.

1.2 The North East Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (NEIOBI)

Background

SACEP expected to be an implementing partner for the proposed North East (NE) Indian Ocean Biodiversity Initiative project. The project was developed by the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI).

The NE Indian Ocean, as represented by the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) is one of the most unique and at-risk ecological systems in the world (Annex 4, CBD/EBSA/WS/2015/1/4). The ocean islands in this region are home to a wealth of marine biodiversity and ecosystems including coral reefs, mangroves, resident and migratory marine turtles, elasmobranchs, marine mammals, and seabirds. These islands are particularly vulnerable to climate change and are increasingly impacted by human activities such as overfishing, coastal development and tourism, and exacerbated by high population density, low income and low development indicators in communities that rely on ocean ecosystem services for sustainable livelihoods. Marine conservation and sustainable use efforts are hampered by lack of data and knowledge as well as limited local/regional capacity to address those gaps.

The project proposal was developed in partnership with Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) with the objective to provide the technical support, capacity development and know-how to assist three NE Indian Ocean countries: Maldives, Sri Lanka and India (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) - all of which are island states or have significant ocean island territory - to strengthen stewardship of marine areas of biological or ecological significance, including addressing knowledge gaps, and taking the appropriate steps towards sustainable management of their marine resources. In doing so, it expected assist those countries to achieve their Aichi targets (and post-2020 actions) and NBSAP commitments, and make tangible contributions to the SDGs.

The initial project concept has been developed in targeting to seek necessary funds from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) which is the German government's international climate finance commitment. The IKI is a funding programme that supports emerging and developing countries in climate change mitigation and conserving biodiversity. The concept was submitted to the IKI in 2019 to consider under the window open for competitive call for proposal.

Current Status

In December 2020, the partner for this proposal, GOBI has informed that their bid to secure necessary funds was not successful with IKI.

1.3 Capacity Building on Indicators as a part of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) updating for South Asia and Development of Clearing House Mechanism (CHM)

Background

As reported to the GC14, South Asia regional biodiversity CHM was developed with the financial assistance from the BoBLME project and was launched in August 2014. Under this project, SACEP was able to establish its own web and mail servers which enabled SACEP to provide free hosting services for National CHMs of the member countries as per the decision adopted by the GC.

As per the Governing Council decision, on request of the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, Government of Sri Lanka which is the National Focal Point of SACEP, assistance was offered to develop their National CHM. Government of Sri Lanka received a Silver Award at the CoP14 of the CBD held in Egypt in November 2018 for their National CHM developed by SACEP.

The 14th Meeting of the Governing Council appreciated the SACEP Secretariat's effort in assisting in developing the Bio-diversity Clearing House Mechanism for Sri Lanka and requested to extend the services to other Member States on request. The Secretariat can avail the technical assistance for any member country if requested in future.

Current Status

As establishing and maintaining of National CHM is no longer obligatory for parties to the CBD, finding donor funds for creating CHM is difficult. Therefore, SACEP will not be able to continue this activity.

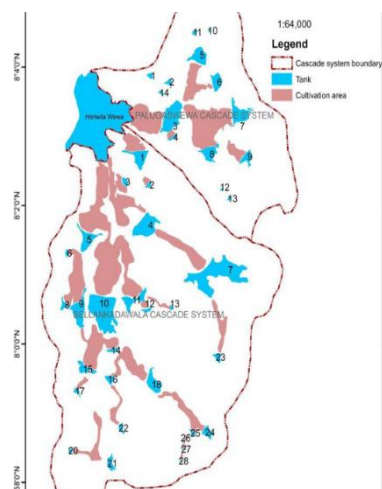
SACEP initiated a dialogue with possible partners in assisting member countries in Capacity Building on Indicators as a part of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) updating process.

1.4 Healthy Landscapes: Managing Agricultural Landscapes in Socio-ecologically Sensitive Areas to Promote Food Security, Well-being and Ecosystem Health in Sri Lanka.

Background

The Project is a national project of Sri Lanka funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) under Sri Lanka's STAR allocation.

The Healthy Landscapes project was developed to showcase management strategies for strengthening the restoration and sustainable management of selected Village Tank Cascade Systems (VTCS) in cascade landscapes for the enhanced provision of ecosystem services and protection of biodiversity.



The project plans to develop and validate a model VTCS management system that can be used for scaling up to other cascade landscapes. The project will deliver global environmental and socio-economic benefits through a package of measures – practices, knowledge management and awareness – that ensure future land use and production sector practices and decisions do not compromise biodiversity and ecosystem functions and recognize the importance of biodiversity, agriculture and health linkages. Measures will include scaling up methods and tools to mobilize Agro-biodiversity at the cascade, farm and community level, knowledge management partnerships, capacity building, cross sectoral policies and planning and enhanced awareness and understanding of biodiversity, agriculture and health linkages so as to better manage future risks and safeguard ecosystem functioning while ensuring that social costs, including health impacts, associated with new measures and strategies do not outweigh potential benefits.

SACEP is participating in this project as a key implementing partner with two objectives:

- 1) Gain experience in implementing GEF project so that SACEP will be able to manage its own GEF funded projects in future,
- 2) To make use of the huge potential for replication of the findings of this project in rest of our member countries.

Current Status

The project Partner, Biodiversity International proposed to have an activity-based agreement to implement the selected project activities. Accordingly,

First LOA was signed between Bioersivity International and SACEP in January 2018 to hold a National Stakeholder Consultation meeting with the financial support from Project Preparatory Grant (PPG). The Stakeholder Consultation workshop was organized successfully on 2nd February 2018.

Second LOA was signed between Bioersivity International and SACEP in August 2019 to organize the Project Inception meeting. The inception meeting was held on 20th September 2019 with the participation of all project partners and stakeholders.

Third LOA was signed between Bioersivity International and SACEP in June 2020 to undertake the baseline study. Two consultants have been contracted by SACEP to undertake Land Degradation Assessment, Landscape Modelling, Geo-spatial Mapping and Socio-Economic aspects and Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services, Bio-cultural Diversity, Food Security and Human Health Assessment. The baseline study completed and the report was submitted to the Bioersivity International.

The fourth LOA was signed between SACEP and Bioersivity International on 22nd September 2021 to implement the rest of project activities. The implementation of the project activities commenced with the establishment of Project Management Unit (PMU) with the recruitment of necessary project staff. As per the LOA, the project supposed to be completed by 31st January 2023. Based on the request made by SACEP together with the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka at the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the project, it was granted one year extension to complete the project implementation.

The Mid-Term Review was carried out during the period of 19 to 27 September 2022 and review the implementation status of each project activities. The MTR concluded that while the HLP

should have been completed by 31 March 2022, an extraordinary range of setbacks in Sri Lanka have meant the project could not be completed by the date. The Project was well conceived and timely, with its emphasis on restoration and sustainable management of tanks in cascade systems. It was creative and original in its effort to link these topics with the broader goals of ecosystem health and cascade ecology. However, a more widespread understanding of the nexus between climate, food, and biodiversity is needed amongst various partners. The MTR recommended the request for no-cost extension.

The new completion date for the project is 30th June 2024 and project team with the supervision of SACEP is continuing the implementation of the project activities as per the amended work plan.

1.5 Regional Cooperation for the Conservation and Wise-use of Internationally Important Wetlands in South Asia

Background

The 13th Meeting of the Governing Council adopted a decision that SACEP Secretariat may sign an MOU with Ramsar Convention for capacity building. The Secretariat in its progress report to the 14GC.SACEP stated that the negotiations were underway to finalize the proposed MoU. The 14GC.SACEP took forward the decision of 13GC.SACEP and requested the Secretariat to finalize the MoU.

Following the GC decision, SACEP communicated with the Ramsar Secretariat and made arrangement for submission of the Draft MoU to the Ramsar Standing Committee. Fifty third Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee suggested revision of the Draft MoU as it contained legalistic language. Also, it recommended, as Ramsar is in the process of reviewing all its existing MoUs with other partners, SACEP's Draft MoU will also be included into that process.

Current Status

Current Status

After exchanging a number of rounds of communication, Ramsar Secretariat informed SACEP following decision.

“Based on guidance from Parties, new MOUs need to meet certain conditions and criteria as highlighted in Annex 2 of this document

https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc54-16rev1_review_cooperative_agreements_e.pdf

It is our view that an MOU with SACEP would not meet the conditions.

Not having an MOU would not preclude SACEP from working together with Ramsar Secretariat on activities that achieve our respective organizational objectives.”

As per the above decision of Ramsar Standing Committee, SACEP could not continue the activity.

1.6 South Asia Regional Briefing Meeting on Outcomes of CBD SBSTTA 24, SBI 3 Virtual Meeting & Preparing for the 3rd Open ended Working Group on post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Background

In preparation for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), the CBD Secretariat convened the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24) and the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-3) in virtual mode during May-June 2021. The outcomes of these meetings have informed the development of the first draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) for the period 2021-2030.

It was expected that these outcomes and draft GBF form the basis of the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OWG 3) as well as in person meetings of SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3 before the Parties to the CBD meet at COP 15, supposed to be held in China in 2022.

Current Status

In order to support SACEP member countries in the preparation for those negotiations, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) organized and co-convened a regional briefing session virtually on 11 August 2021 where representatives from all member countries of SACEP and other interested parties participated.

SACEP participated in the resumed sessions of the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 24) and the 3rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 3) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as the 3rd Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (WG2020-3), 14 - 29 March 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland

SACEP participated in the Fifth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (WG2020 5) Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) Tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 10, Cartagena Protocol) Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (COP-MOP 4, Nagoya Protocol)

2. Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in South Asia

Background

The Governing Council of SACEP at its 13th Meeting adopted a decision to promote SCP within policymaking mechanisms of South Asian countries.

Further, the 14GC-SACEP adopted the second decision on SCP by recommending SACEP Secretariat to take necessary steps to implement following activities apart from other ongoing

and new SCP activities:

1. Convene the South Asia Forum on SCP on regular intervals as stipulated in the approved modalities.
2. Sub-regional policy dialogue on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) to exchange experiences to date, necessary training and industry roundtable.
3. Sustainable buildings policy dialogue, training and industry roundtable.
4. Sustainable Consumption Week in South Asia.

Members of the 14GC-SACEP recommended to invite UNEP to be a partner with SACEP and assist in accessing financial and technical resources in implementing these activities and also to facilitate dialogues with other bilateral and multilateral donors to support these important activities.

As a follow-up to the above decision, South Asia Training and Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) was organized in Bangkok, Thailand, on 17-18 September 2018 to advance the Sustainable Public Procurement in the region. The training provided participants with expert knowledge and tools to initiate and progress on Sustainable Public Procurement policies in their countries. In particular, it aimed to create a pipeline for technical and financial support to countries to initiate or advance their progress on SPP, and agreed on additional sub-regional cooperation activities and work on declaration.

The workshop was attended by high-level officials from both Environment and Finance Ministries of South Asia who design and implement the Sustainable Public Procurement policies in their countries or having a strong interest to embark on the path to Sustainable Public Procurement.

As an outcome of the South Asia Training and Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) held on 17 - 21 September 2018, a draft resolution was developed on the reflections of recommendations of the workshop. The 15th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP adopted the Resolution on Sustainable Public Procurement.

Current Status

As agreed, upon, SACEP in partnership with the SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component (RPAC) funded by European Union, implemented by UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, organized an 'Online workshop on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) for SACEP member countries' on 25th November 2020. This virtual workshop was designed for national authorities from SACEP member countries who are involved in Public Procurement activities. It was aimed to enhance the knowledge and understanding on SPP and its effectiveness as a tool to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) to achieve SDG12, and greener economies and also expected to support the implementation of SPP at the national level through capacity building tools, increased collaboration and strengthened network among SACEP member countries.

3. South Asia Forum on Environment

Background

South Asia Forum on SCP was established with the financial support of SWITCH-Asia I, SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Support Component of UNEP. SACEP Secretariat is currently facing a challenge in mobilizing resources to convene the South Asia Forum on SCP due to the fact that the funding of SWITCH-Asia is not available. Also, 14GC.SACEP Decision No. 9.2.6 adopted on Air Pollution, in which the Secretariat was requested to convene a Regional Forum on it. The matter was discussed at length, at the Secretariat level and as well as with other partners and decided to have a High-Level Environment Forum for South Asia which will have a wider scope, instead of having separate forums on different subjects.

The objective of the South Asia Forum on the Environment is to assess the priority environment challenges and address solutions, including policy, technology, finance and capacity building, towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other Global Environmental Agreements. The outcome of the Forum will contribute to SACEP's Governing Council, UNEP's Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific and United Nations Environment Assembly, and other regional and global processes.

Current Status

The Secretariat was planning to organize the First Meeting of the South Asia Forum on Environment in the First Quarter of Year 2020 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it could not be held as planned. Also securing financial support had not been successful so far.

4. SACEP Strategy

Background

A document called 'Initial thoughts toward SACEP's Strategy 2016 – 2030' was submitted to the 14th meeting of the Governing Council as a none-paper for its consideration. The meeting was of the view that the inclusion to the Progress Report referred to as Agenda Item No 6.1 with reference to sub heading 6.1.18 on the 'Initial thoughts toward SACEP's Strategy 2016 – 2030' would not be discussed at this meeting due to given the limited time for the National Focal Points to review the document. The 14GC-SACEP informed the Secretariat to circulate the updated draft of the document as per the prevailing procedure followed, to all Member States for comments and consent prior to the 15th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP for consideration of the proposal.

Accordingly, SACEP Secretariat reviewed and updated the document and circulated among the member countries as 'Draft SACEP Strategy 2020 – 2030' for comments and suggestions. All comments received were incorporated and updated 'Draft SACEP Strategy 2020 – 2030' was submitted to the 15th meeting of GC for adoption.

Current Status

The strategy was adopted by the 15th Meeting of Governing Council of SACEP. The strategy has been printed and made available for all those interested to refer it. Secretariat is gradually implementing it.

5. Waste Management

Since 2005, Waste Management has been a prominent focus of SACEP's work plan, as per the 9th GC recommendation. Activities in this area have been ongoing. Since 2018, SACEP, in partnership with IGES and UNEP CCET, has engaged with South Asian governments. Their aim is to create a report on regional waste management and a Sub-Regional Roadmap. These efforts align with UNEP's GWMO and the Hanoi 3R Declaration, aiming to enhance cooperation and goal implementation.

5.1 Collaboration with UNEP on Environmental Technologies IGES – CCET

Followed by three sub-regional workshops held in 2019, the 'Roadmap for Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circulation in South Asia, 2019-2030' was adopted by the 15GC-SACEP held on 6th November 2019. This Roadmap was launched at the 9th International Conference on Sustainable Waste Management towards Circular Economy, held on 27-30 November 2019, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

5.2 Webinar on 'Waste Management in Post COVID-19 Scenario in South Asian Countries'

SACEP in collaboration with the International Society of Waste Management, Air and Technologies (CCET) organized a webinar on 'Waste Management in Post COVID-19 Scenario in South Asian Countries' on 02 July 2020 to discuss various issues related to the protection of people and the environment from the effects of COVID-19.

The webinar was attended by the officials and experts nominated from SACEP member countries along with participants from other regions and had a fruitful discussion on the status of the outbreak of COVID-19 in respective countries and the details of the proposed draft of the guidelines developed for the purpose.

5.3 Waste Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic from Response to Recovery

SACEP assisted the IGES Centre in Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET) in circulating the questionnaires prepared under the theme of 'Current practices/response in managing medical waste under the COVID-19 situation in affected countries' among the SACEP Member States to get the country feedback to prepare the publication 'Waste Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic from Response to Recovery' which provides practical information, suggestions, and guidelines on Healthcare Waste Management (HCWM) and Municipal Solid Waste Management (MSWM) given the restrictions and limitations imposed by the ongoing pandemic.

6. Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia

7. Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia

Background

In 1998, the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia was adopted by the Ministers of the Environment at the 7th Governing Council of SACEP in the Republic of Maldives. The main objective of this declaration was to establish a scientific foundation for addressing transboundary air pollution in South Asia and to encourage coordinated efforts among stakeholders at national and regional levels.

Following the adoption of the Malé Declaration, UNEP initiated a project to implement the recommendation of the Male' Declaration and SACEP was a partner of the project. It was agreed that UNEP to manage the project office initially, develop the capacity of SACEP and handover the management to SACEP. Though the request by a number of GC decisions for building capacity of SACEP and handover the management of the project to SACEP, it was not implemented and at the end of the funding from SIDA, UNEP disassociated with the project. From that point, RRC.AP continued the management of the project and many occasions, SACEP requested AIT to transfer the project office and the resources to SACEP. As it was not honoured, SACEP Secretariat made a proposal to the 15th GC to remove activities related to the RRC.AP managed project on the 'Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia' from SACEP's work programme and initiated discussion with possible partners to make amendment to the Male' Declaration in order to incorporate current needs and the 14th GC decision which requested SACEP Secretariat to create a collaborative platform for members to tackle regional air pollution..

Current Status

In the recent past many, few member countries of SACEP, partners and individuals approached SACEP and requested support to reinvigoration of Male' Declaration and work collaboratively to implement the activities identified. It was agreed that Secretariat of Male' Declaration will be established at SACEP and all activities will be implemented through the Secretariat. Also, Based on the clear understanding of above, SACEP agreed to share the Draft Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia and a Think Piece on Revival of the Malé Declaration and also put forward to the GC_SACEP for adoption.

8. Air Quality

As an Intergovernmental organization, SACEP is committed to supporting the member countries to overcome the issue related to environment and air pollution which is treated as a prime issue. The 14th GC-SACEP emphasized creating a collaborative platform for members to tackle regional air pollution. As recommended SACEP developed a Concept Note for 'Establishment of an Air quality programme for South Asia' and the 15th GC of SACEP approved the Concept Note. The concept note was circulated among the Member States and currently looking for other International donor organizations such as UNESCAP, UN Environment, ADB for possible funding support for the prepared detailed project proposal.

8.1 South Asia Regional Workshop on ‘Ambient Air Pollution and Public Health: A World Bank Regional Flagship Study

SACEP in Collaboration with the World Bank organized a South Asia Regional Workshop on ‘Ambient Air Pollution and Public Health: A World Bank Regional Flagship Study’ on 24th March 2021. This workshop was attended by high-level decision-makers and environmental experts, representing the National Focal Points of all the eight member-states of SACEP along with other delegates.

The workshop aimed to comprehensively assess and address air pollution challenges in the South Asia region by evaluating current policies and perspectives on air pollution and its health impacts, analyzing existing institutional arrangements for tackling air pollution, advancing the understanding of air quality monitoring within the context of climate change, and fostering discussions on the implications of transboundary cooperation in managing air pollution.

9. Adaptation to Climate Change

Since 2005, as recommended by the 9GC.SACEP, adaptation to Climate Change has been one of the priority areas of SACEP’s work plan and the secretariat has been carrying out various activities during the period. South Asian countries are also actively participating in the annual meetings of the UNFCCC and other global fora for promoting cooperation to address the multifaceted challenges of climate change.

9.1 Virtual training on the preparation and submission process of new/updated NDCs and the Katowice guidance on NDCs, 15-17 June 2020

SACEP in partnership with UNFCCC secretariat successfully concluded a three-day Virtual training on the preparation and submission process of new/updated NDCs and the Katowice guidance on NDCs’ to its Member States to enhance technical capacities in the preparation of new/updated NDCs in 2020 in line with further guidance relevant for the preparation and communication of NDCs.

The three-day training program aimed to acquaint participants with the pertinent aspects of the Paris Agreement, focusing on the preparation and submission of updated NDCs in 2020. Additionally, participants were introduced to the significance of CMA decision 4/CMA.1, which facilitates clarity, transparency, and understanding (ICTU) of NDCs. The training further involved practical application of the ICTU decision to country-specific NDCs and their preparation processes. Subsequently, discussions revolved around the challenges linked to NDC preparation within Member States, drawing insights from national experts representing SACEP member states actively engaged in the NDC formulation and communication processes.

9.2 Virtual workshop on ‘Leveraging NDCs to Increase Climate Action in the COVID-19 Recovery in South Asian Countries’, 25th February 2021

This regional webinar aimed at enhancing the understanding of the twin challenges of climate change and COVID-19 as well as the opportunities of pursuing a low-carbon and climate-resilient recovery. Experts from UNFCCC Secretariat and the NDC Partnership Programme also joined the above webinar and shared their insights on the above topic with the participants from

member states.

The webinar also provided an ideal platform for the countries to share experiences and learn from each other on how countries in South Asia integrate climate considerations into recovery planning and also the impact COVID-19 has on NDC implementation/updating at the national level. The event was successfully concluded with the participation of more than 20 high-level participants from SACEP member states representing both the Ministry of Environment as well as the Ministry of Health.

9.3 UN climate change Conference 2021, Glasgow, UK

9.3.1 Environment Ministers Meeting of SACEP member States, 04 November 2021

SACEP successfully facilitated and conducted a meeting for the Environment Ministers of its member states. This meeting was a networking platform for the Environment Ministers of SACEP member states to Identify regional perspectives and priorities related to Climate Change and to discuss the way forward.

This high-level meeting was chaired by Hon'ble Minister, Mr. Shahab Uddin, Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Government of Bangladesh who is also the current Chairman of the Governing Council of SACEP. It was attended by the Hon'ble Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, Hon'ble Aminath Shauna, Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, Maldives, Hon'ble Ramsahay Prasad Yadav, Minister of Forests and Environment, Nepal, Hon'ble Malik Amin Aslam Khan, Minister for Climate Change / Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Pakistan and Hon'ble Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Environment, Sri Lanka.



9.3.2 SACEP and Government of Sri Lanka joint side event - "Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) update and Nitrogen-Climate opportunities: From South Asia to

the World”, 03 November 2021

SACEP conducted a joint High-level Side event with the Government of Sri Lanka at COP26 on the theme “Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) update and Nitrogen-Climate opportunities: From South Asia to the World”. This side event provided a platform for SACEP member countries to have a fruitful discussion and thorough dialogue on the NDC update process. The objective of the initiative was to facilitate the exchange of valuable insights acquired during the NDC update process, fostering the dissemination of lessons learned among participating stakeholders. Through candid discussions, both challenges and successful practices encountered in the NDC implementation journey are shared, contributing to an enriched collective understanding. Furthermore, this platform serves as a means to pinpoint potential collaborative opportunities between nations and development partners, enabling concerted efforts aimed at supporting the effective implementation of NDCs across countries.

The side event was attended and participated by the high-level officials from SACEP member states, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, and also officials from UNFCCC Secretariat.

9.4 ADB-SACEP Virtual Training-Workshop on Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation for National Climate and Environmental Programs 02-03 February 2022

SACEP and Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized a ‘Virtual Training-Workshop on Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation for Climate and Environmental Programs on 02nd and 03rd February 2022.

The main objective of the above training workshop was to impart skills on the fundamentals and ways to undertake monitoring and evaluation on climate and environment-related policies, programs, and projects.

The above was attended by 29 participants from seven SACEP member countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It was held remotely on an online platform and used various virtual tools, such as real-time feedback sites and virtual post-it boards.

9.5 UN climate change Conference 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

9.5.1 Environment Ministers Meeting of SACEP member States, 09 November 2022

SACEP successfully facilitated and conducted a meeting titled “One Voice South Asia” for the Environment Ministers of its member states. This meeting was a networking platform for the Environment Ministers of SACEP member states to Identify regional perspectives and priorities related to Climate Change and to discuss the way forward.

This high-level meeting was attended by the Senator Hon’ble Ms. Sherry Rehman, Minister, Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan, Hon’ble Naseer Ahamed, Minister, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, Hon’ble Uma Regmi, Minister, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Nepal, Ms. Habibun Nahar MP, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change, Bangladesh, Dr. Farhina Ahmed, Secretary, Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change, Bangladesh, Dr. Pem Narayan Kandel, Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal, Mr. Sonam representative of Bhutan, Mr. Nitesh Kumar, Representative of India, Mr Donald Cooper, Director, Transparency Division, UNFCCC and other distinguished guests.



9.5.2 SACEP’s joint Side Event – “The prospect and challenges of the Enhanced Transparency Framework as a driver of climate ambition”, 15 November 2022

SACEP in coordination with Wageningen University, Netherlands, Griha Council (TERI), Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), and the University of Cape Town organized a Side event on Tuesday, 15 November 2022 during the UNFCCC, Cop27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt under the theme "The prospects and challenges of the Enhanced Transparency Framework as a driver of climate ambition “.

This side event distinguished itself by bringing together perspectives from academia and practice from on three different continents. It aimed to deepen the understanding of the prospects and challenges of the Enhanced Transparency Framework and was attended by actors involved in global climate transparency including Parties, observers, students, academics, practitioners, and other interested actors both novices and experts in the field of climate transparency.

9.6 UN climate change Conference 2023, Dubai

SACEP successfully facilitated and conducted two panel discussions with the participation of representatives from SACEP Member States, each bringing their unique national experiences and strategies.

1. Tangled Climate: The Hidden Climate Cost of Pollution Caused by Discarded Fishing gear and other Plastic based marine litter in South Asia



2. Coherent Approach to Manage Plastic Pollution on Land and in the Ocean”



10. Sustainable Nitrogen Management Project for South Asia

10.1 1st Sub-Regional Workshop on South Asia Framework Policy on Nitrogen Management 21st July 2020, Online

SACEP and SANH jointly organized the 1st Sub-Regional Workshop on South Asia Framework Policy on Nitrogen Management was held virtually on 21st July 2020 where all the SACEP member shared their national information through their participation and questionnaire shared with countries in advance. SACEP and SANH reviewed information of seven countries independently and shared review report with the respective SACEP country governments for obtaining the remaining information in October 2020. A draft report would be prepared based on the information gathered and be validated by member countries. A draft policy report was prepared based on the information gathered by member countries and Hub partners and shared for validation by member countries in April 2021. The report has been further improved based on comments and new findings from member countries and hub partners. A Nitrogen policy

brief was produced based on that report during COP26 for wider dissemination. South Asia Nitrogen Hub faced delays due to COVID19 restrictions and a 70% budget cut from UKRI. Therefore, many of the in person meetings and many costed activities have been delayed to the next fiscal year (from March 2022 onwards). SACEP/SASP in planning a regional workshop for development of Regional Nitrogen Policy Framework in Q1/Q2 of 2022 subject to travel restrictions and budget availability. SACEP in partnership with SANH intends to complete the Regional Nitrogen Policy Framework by 2024.

10.2 Visit to Glencorse Experiment Field Site, Edinburgh and Meetings with SANH- UKRI GCRF Nitrogen management team during the UNFCCC-COP 26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom, November 2021.

The SACEP delegation who attended the UNFCCC Cop 26, in Glasgow, UK was invited by Prof. Mark Sutton, Director, GEF/UNEP International Nitrogen Management System (INMS) to visit the Glencorse Experiment Field Site, in Edinburgh which assesses ammonia effects on biodiversity for the GCRF South Asia Nitrogen Hub on 29th October 2021.

On the same day, a meeting was carried out with the SANH-UKRI GCRF Nitrogen management team headed by Professor David Reay at the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, Edinburgh University where some of the team members were presented and explained their specific roles in the South Asia Nitrogen hub. At the same meeting, Dr.Rahman was presented with a hard copy of the short policy brief done by SACEP-SANH on “Summarizing Scientific Evidence, Current Initiatives, and Policy Landscape”.

10.3 Second Sub-Regional Workshop on South Asia Nitrogen Framework Policy under the South Asia Nitrogen Hub 21st -22nd June 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh

SACEP and SANH jointly organized the 2nd Sub-Regional Workshop on ‘South Asia Nitrogen Framework Policy’ under the South Asia Nitrogen Hub on 21 & 22 June 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

This workshop featured the launch of a major collaborative output by SACEP and SANH of a regional policy report, Nitrogen Pollution in South Asia: Scientific Evidence, Current Initiatives and Policy Landscape and the national policy report of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Nitrogen Policy Report: Scientific Evidence, Current Initiatives and Policy Landscape.





The release of these reports marked a historic moment for South Asian cooperation to develop an evidence-based policy approach to tackle nitrogen pollution. This event aimed to raise awareness and support action in the policy arena for nitrogen in South Asia. By building the evidence base, this workshop aimed to help in catalyzing informed interventions for sustainable management at regional and national levels. This workshop was attended by high-level decision-makers and environmental experts, representing the National Focal Points of the member states of SACEP along with other delegates.

10.4 UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) Annual Meeting 27th November – 01st December 2022, Male’, Maldives

SACEP participated as a project partner in the UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) Annual Meeting from 27th November to 01st December 2022 in Male’, Maldives. This meeting provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the entire Hub community and contribute to understanding policies to improve nitrogen waste. On behalf of SANH, SACEP facilitated the participation of representatives from member states.

10.5 At the Fifth Asia Pacific Ministerial Forum in October 2023,

SACEP, Government of Sri Lanka and the GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) organized a side event on the theme “Grasping Nitrogen! accelerating action on nitrogen for environment, climate and economy”.

10.6 UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) Annual Meeting in October 2023, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

SACEP in collaboration with South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH) organized the UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) Annual Meeting in October 2023, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and successfully facilitated an in-person meeting with the participation of Government Officials from SACEP member states to discuss the Draft South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management”. Following the above three online consultation meetings with the participation of member country official to discuss the **“South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management” were also organized by SACEP on 31 August 2023, 6 September 2023 and 28th May 2024**

Current Status

A significant outcome arising from this cooperation is the development of the "South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management.” Which will be tabled for endorsement at the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP.

11. PLASTIC FREE RIVERS AND SEAS FOR SOUTH ASIA PROJECT (PLEASE)

Project Summary

Project Title	Plastic-Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE)	
Commissioning partners	World Bank	
Implementing agency	SACEP (South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme)	
Implementation support agency	UNOPS	
Project Period	2020-2025	
Geographical area	South Asia Region - Afghanistan*, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, India <i>*Due to the prevailing political situation in Afghanistan since August 2021, project activities have not been rolled out in the country.</i>	
Project Components	Component 1	Supporting Competitive block grant investments to reduce plastic waste
	Component 2	Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions
	Component 3	Strengthening Regional Integration Institutions
Budget	Component 1	USD 22,894,052.00
	Component 2	USD 4,723,957.00
	Component 3	USD 7,777,525.00
Project Development Objectives	The PDO arises from a combination of two medium-term outcomes outlined in the Project's Theory of Change: First, to strengthen the innovation of circular plastic economy approaches across South Asia; Second, to strengthen coordination of circular plastic economy approaches amongst public, private sector, and non-government stakeholders in participating countries	

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)

Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
Bangladesh	Grantee: BRAC Grant title: Towards a comprehensive and human-centered plastic waste management approach in the Cox's Bazar and Affected Regions by Myanmar Refugee Influx	1,494,034	Under municipal leadership, a collaboration hub will be created in Cox's Bazar for effective plastic waste management. Nudge-based interventions will subtly encourage better waste practices. Training, incentives, and support will be provided to waste collectors, fishermen, local plastic recyclers, and youths to enhance their participation and efficiency in the initiative.	Ongoing (released 1st installment of USD 149,403.00)
	Grantee: BPCL Grant title: Formalizing the Plastic Recycling Value Chain to Ensure Steady Collection of recyclable plastic (RP) Removing them from Environment by the Introduction of Recycling Business Unit (RBU)	1,322,000	Seven recycling business units will be established with machinery and a steady raw material supply. Informal waste pickers will be professionalized through capacity development, association formation, and access to health, childcare, and social safeguard facilities.	Ongoing (released 1st installment of USD 130,064.68) 2nd installment to be released in June)
	Comprehensive Training Program on Plastic Waste Reduction and SUP Alternatives, and SUP Value Chain Study, Including Dissemination Workshops and Report Publication	200,000	The comprehensive training program encompasses plastic waste reduction, alternatives to single-use plastics (SUP), value chain analysis of SUP, engagement workshops, and detailed reporting.	ToR approval pending from the National Focal Point
Bhutan	Grantee: Greener Way Grant title: Bhutan Waste Banks (BWB): An innovative way to	1,500,000	Twelve Waste Banks will be established under BWB. The Eco Pole initiative will be relocated to upscale plastic waste into usable poles. A PET Washing and Shredding Plant will divert PET	Ongoing (released 1st installment of USD 150,000.00)

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)				
Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
	reduce, reuse and recycle plastic waste in Bhutan		waste from landfills for export. The BWB Mobile App will offer modules on waste collection, pricing, waste bank locations, and more	
	Grantee: Bhutan Ecological Society Grant title: Reimagining Effective Partnerships for Tackling Plastic Waste and River Pollution	1,040,000	Fourteen plastic waste collection centers will be established in eight target areas, with household-level waste management and segregation. A Recycling Hub will produce UR Bricks and pellets for various facilities. Waste interceptors will be installed along 14 streams joining the Wangchhu river.	Ongoing (released 1st installment of USD 104,000.00)
	Preparation of National Plastic Waste Management Strategy Framework Management and the Circular Economy for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan	290,000	The baseline study establishes a foundation for Bhutan's plastic waste management strategy, while technology review and innovation exploration inform future actions. Sensitization workshops focus on circular economy principles and Extended Producer Responsibility. National waste surveys identify areas for improvement, guiding policy development and stakeholder consultations, alongside community engagement initiatives in waste management	ToR approval stage - procurement of service to start soon
Maldives	Grantee: Maldives Authentic Crafts Cooperative Society (MACCS) Grant title: Proposal for Improving the Wellbeing of H. Dh. Kulhudhuffushi people and ocean through plastic	989,087	Introduce alternative materials like cloth bags and menstrual hygiene products. Establish a Plastic Sorting, Compacting, Baling, and Storage Facility. Implement a Plastic Awareness and Anti-littering Campaign. Provide financial assistance for AIR strategy projects, support no-plastic events, and develop a	Ongoing (released 1st installment of USD 98,908.87)

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)

Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
	pollution prevention		plastic reduction plan for Kulhudhuffushi.	
	Grantee: Small Island Geographic Society Grant title: Remove Plastics from our Coastal Environment (REPLACE)	1,500,000	Produce eco-friendly bags and research new local materials for sustainable production. Host a SUP alternatives expo to inform businesses and promote market adoption. Launch a "Kids vs. Plastics" TV show to inspire and challenge children to innovate solutions to plastic pollution.	Ongoing (1st installment to be released in June)
	Design & Development of end-to-end smart solid waste management system in Maldives	463,360	The development of an IT-based waste tracking system with smart analytics and a cross-platform application aims to enhance waste management. This includes database development, a Citizen App to boost citizen participation, and overall IT interventions for effective implementation, sustainable city development, and reduced littering.	Contract awarded to the Consulting firm on 01 March 2024, Draft Inception Report submitted on 27 May 2024
Nepal	Grantee: Biocomp Nepal Pvt. Ltd Grant title: Reduce and Intercept, Value add through the Establishment of a Recycling plant for low-grade plastics and used beverage cartons in Nepal RIVER+	1,499,480	Conduct a barrier assessment and Social Behaviour Change Campaign. Organize river clean-up campaigns. Support vulnerable IWWs in safe waste collection, fair market prices, and access to social protection and health schemes. Provide Her Safety Training and better WASH facilities for aggregators. Construct a recycling facility for composite board production and market creation.	Ongoing (1 st installment of USD 149,948.00 released and 2nd instalment to be released)
	Grantee: Center for Research and Sustainable Development Nepal (CREASION),	1,480,265	Establish two Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and a PET recycling facility in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Train vulnerable community members for plastic waste collection and	Ongoing (1 st installment of USD 148,026.00 released 2nd installment

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)

Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
	Grant title: CAP: Collaborative Approach for Preventing Plastic Leakages in Rivers		strengthen one HDPE/LDPE recycling facility. Facilitate stakeholder dialogue for recycled plastic standardization, support CSOs of waste workers, create 12 Waste Smart Clubs in public schools, engage youth groups, and develop a plastic waste mapping web portal.	to be released in June)
	Preparation of Plastic waste inventory of Nepal	300,000	A comprehensive study in Nepal will investigate the production, import, use, and life cycle of all seven plastic types, validated through stakeholder consultations. It will also identify plastic pollutant sources to develop comprehensive waste statistics.	ToR approval stage - procurement of service to be started
Pakistan	Grantee: Altas Pak Waste Management Pvt. Ltd. Grant title: From Waste to Credits; Circularity in Plastic Waste Management	1,000,000	Establish a plastic sorting and upcycling facility for converting waste into fences. Implement a plastic waste reduction credits system. Raise awareness through seminars and form seven women-based community organizations (CBOs). Develop seven educational modules on the global plastic waste crisis, recycling, and project development.	Ongoing (1st to be installment released in June)
	Grantee: ISP Environmental Solutions (Private) Limited Grant title: Trash has Value – Recycling plastic waste to Eco green Tiles/Bricks	870,000	Raise waste management awareness at Lahore universities through social media, workshops, and clean-up drives with local partners. Install RVMs, launch an app, and engage influencers for waste collection. Support woman-owned recycling initiatives and secure approval for an eco-brick production plant, while	Ongoing (1 st installment to be released in June)

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)

Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
			establishing policy dialogue networks via webinars.	
	Development of National plastic waste management & IT based monitoring and reporting mechanism for Pakistan	459,486	A diagnostic study will assess plastic pollution and waste management through primary data collection and research. An IT-based database system will be developed for circular economy control. Analysis of policies and stakeholder consultations will inform a national waste management strategy and campaign.	Contract awarded to the Consulting firm on 23 October 2023
Sri Lanka	Grantee: Negombo Recycling Club (PVT) Ltd Grant title: Building a Blue Lanka by Uplifting Communities- BLUECAP	1,485,000	Enhance understanding of the plastic value chain and the role of waste collectors, along with knowledge of plastic pollution impacts. Develop an integrated waste collection system with new and strengthened Material Recovery Facilities, including support for women-owned ones. Operationalize the system with trash barriers and establish a recycling facility.	Ongoing (1st installment of USD 148,500.00 released)
	Public awareness campaign on 3R based plastic waste management -Sri Lanka	187,000	Conduct a public awareness campaign regarding 3R-based plastic waste management	Near completion (USD 157,442.00 released)
	Development of a Master Plan for Controlling Plastic Pollution in Selected Rivers of Sri Lanka		The river pollution database will be updated with new data on plastic types, sources, and impacts. A master plan will address existing issues and gaps in policies, regulations, and enforcement, guiding behavioral change and national engagement. Plastic waste flow assessment and modeling will inform an implementation plan	Amendment made to the original TOR and TOR approval pending from the NFP.

Activities under components one (Supporting competitive block grant investment to reduce plastic waste) and two (Leveraging Public & private sector engagement & Solutions)

Country	Project name and grantee	Grant value (\$)	Key activities	Progress
			validated by stakeholders and decision-makers.	

Activities under components Three - Strengthening Regional Integration Institutions

Subcomponent 3.1: Building SACEP’s Institutional Capacity: Construction of SACEP Head Quarter

The construction of the SACEP HQ building was divided into two sections: substructure work, which involved piling for the structure, has been completed. The next phase, superstructure work, was awarded to Sierra Construction LTD through a competitive procurement process on February 6th, 2024. The contractor mobilized on site two weeks later and commenced physical construction activities. Ground beam, ground floor, and first-floor concreting works have been completed. Currently, the contractor is focusing on the construction of the second floor, which is expected to be finished by May 31st. The project’s deadline is December 5th, 2024.

Activities under components Three (Strengthening Regional Integration Institutions)			
Activity	Amount	Intended facilitation for Strengthening Regional Integration Institutions	Status
Construction of SACEP Headquarters’ Building in Colombo	35,000 00	Four story building as center of excellence for the region with state-of-the-art eco-friendly and energy-efficient, carbon-reduced design. The design of the building is to house work space for SACEP secretariat staff, an auditorium and conference room facilities for regional training events.	Civil works of super structure in Progress
Institutional Capacity Development of SACEP	10,00 000	Identify potential capacity development needs in SACEP’s existing institutional set-up to serve the regional mandate and implement a systematic capacity development program	Under procurement



Ground-floor form and reinforcement work



Ground-floor concreting



First First-floor form and reinforcement work



First-floor concreting

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT UNDER THE SOUTH ASIAN SEAS PROGRAMME (SASP)

12. Endorsement for the Formal Adoption of the Regional Oil and Chemical Pollution Contingency Plan for South Asia

A Regional Oil and Chemical Pollution Contingency Plan and associated MoU were developed in association with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for enhanced cooperation in the event of an Oil or Chemical spill in South Asian Seas region. The final adaptation of the same had been pending since the year 2000. The 4th Inter-governmental Meeting of Ministers (IMM) held in Jaipur, India on 22nd May 2008, requested SACEP to finalize the Regional Plan and MoU as a matter of High Priority and now all member countries viz. Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have signed the MoU.

Maldives	- 13 October 2009
Pakistan	- 22 July 2010
Bangladesh	- 27 September 2010
Sri Lanka	- 17 December 2014
India	- 12 May 2018

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has indicated that the South Asia Region will get much more benefits as all the members of the South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) have signed the MOU for collaborative activities.

Current Status

Since the MOU has entered into force in 2019, two major maritime incidents took place. These include Fire incident on MT New Diamond in November 2020 and Fire incident on MV X- Press Pearl in May 2021. Both off the coast of Sri Lanka. SACEP coordinated with other member states and facilitated assistance from Indian Coast Guard. Both the incidents highlighted some of the shortcomings and challenges faced in handling maritime incidents. SACEP is coordinating with IMO for further activities in SAS region to achieve the following results as soon as possible;

- Key issues of importance regarding co-operation in case of major pollution incidents, such as the use of dispersants, aerial surveillance and liability and compensation addressed and related agreement reflected in the regional contingency plan; and
- A regional exercise conducted to test the communication and the operational procedures

13. SACEP/SASP to develop a Regional Strategy and to set up a Task Force to address Ballast Water Management (BWM)

South Asian Seas region lies within one of the busiest shipping lanes globally as it falls within the oil conveyor belt from the Gulf to East Asia. Therefore, ballast water can pose serious economic and ecological damage through introduction of invasive alien species to our coastal and marine waters. The International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments contains measures to prevent the potentially devastating effects of the spread of harmful aquatic organisms carried by ships' ballast water. It requires all ships in international traffic to implement a Ballast Water and Sediments Management Plan, to carry a Ballast Water Record Book, and an International Ballast Water Management Certificate. All ships will have to undertake Ballast Water Management procedures to a given standard. Existing ships will be required to do the same, but after a phase-in period. The BWM Convention was adopted on 13 February 2004 and entered into force on 8 September 2017. Presently out of five maritime countries of South Asia, only Maldives is signatory to the BWM Convention.

SACEP is in contact with IMO for further activities in SAS region.

14. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Day 2024 theme “Sustainable Indian Ocean for Future Generations”

IORA is an association that focus on sustainable growth and economic cooperation of the region and Sri Lanka holds the current Chairmanship of IORA . Accordingly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with other Ministries and Organizations planning to commemorated the IORA day on 10th March 2024 highlighting "Blue Carbon Ecosystems (Mangrove/ Sea Grass) and Impact of Marine Plastic Pollution" .

The South Asia Co-operative Programme (SACEP) under the PLEASE project implemented by SACEP executed an educational stall demonstrating various educational materials to project the importance of ocean sustainability, especially to the school children.

15. Technical training focusing on the development and analysis of biofouling management plans and record books

In collaboration with International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Marine Environment Protection authority (MEPA), Sri Lanka in 2023 Organized “Technical training focusing on the development and analysis of biofouling management plans and record books” for ship operators and managers, ship officers and other people involved in the operation of

16. GloFouling Project

SACEP has joined the GloFouling Project of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as a Regional Coordinating Organization (RCO). This is a sub- activity of the Ballast Water Management strategy. This strategy played an instrumental role in the establishment of two significant events in the ballast water calendar: the IMO-GloBallast Research and Development (R&D) Forum and the International Conference on Ballast Water Management (ICBWM). These events were well-informed, highly-regarded and attracted multi- stakeholder gatherings on the subject and were pivotal in driving innovations in treatment systems, transparency in testing those systems, sampling and monitoring technologies and contingency-based measures amongst others.

SACEP became the Regional Partnering Organization with IMO since 2018 to address this very critical transboundary marine environmental issue and is confident that the GloFouling Partnerships Project will make a positive contribution to the global effort to protect the marine environment.

SACEP participated and presented updates at the Awareness raising workshop and the First Meeting of the National Task Force of Sri Lanka in February, May and November 2020. As the RCO, SACEP has following activities have been carried out in 2021;

- Initiated National Status Assessment of Sri Lanka
- Conducted Regional Seminar on Biofouling Management and Invasive Aquatic Species on 16 June 2021 which was first step leading to the development of a Regional strategy on Biofouling for South Asia under G 10Fouling Partnership project

- Contributed to the guiding documents on preparation of regional Biofouling Strategy developed by the Glofouling partnership to be applied all regions

SACEP also attended GloFouling Partnerships: 2nd Global Project Task Force meeting (GPTF-2) at IMO Headquarter from 11-13 April 2022 in London. SACEP's Member State Sri Lanka is LPC and SACEP is RCO of this programme.

SACEP in collaboration with IMO GloFouling Partnerships, organized a regional workshop on Establishing a Regional Task Force (RTF) to Develop Regional Strategy for Biofouling Management for South Asia on 14 & 15 September 2022 Malé, Maldives. The regional meeting for the establishment of the Regional Task Force (RTF) was organized with the aim to Provide background on the GloFouling Partnerships project and on the steps taken in the region in relation to biofouling management; endorse the proposed draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the RTF and establish the RTF and to conduct the first RTF meeting, which will discuss and agree on a draft Regional Strategy Template on biofouling management. The regional meeting successfully accomplished the outputs which are; Progress Sharing, endorsement of Terms of Reference (TOR) and RTF Establishment and Drafting of Regional Strategy and Action Plan.

SACEP circulated the Draft Regional Strategy and Action Plan on biofouling management with its member states to review and share their comments. SACEP remains committed to exploring all available options to finalize the regional strategy and action plan, get it endorsed, and implemented by SACEP Member States.

SACEP facilitated the development of a National Rapid Economic Assessment Report on Biofouling Management in Sri Lanka and the development of a National Strategy and Action Plan on Biofouling Management in Sri Lanka. National consultants are in the process of Economic Assessment Report and National Strategy and Action Plan on Biofouling Management in Sri Lanka.

17. Conserving the coastal and marine ecosystem by implementing the regional marine and coastal biodiversity strategy

The regional Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy for SAS region was adopted at the 6IMM-SASP in November 2019 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This strategy provides a framework for coordination and coherence between countries' efforts towards the implementation of NBSAPs, leading to enhanced national and regional interventions for the achievement of the strategic plan. One of the key objectives of the Strategy is to support countries of the region in the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at CBD COP15. The strategy also contributes to strengthening regional coherence in planning for implementing and tracking progress towards the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, particularly SDG14.

UNEP and the European Commission organized the virtual workshop on the Regional Seas Programme and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework on 27-28 October 2020. The workshop focused on regional seas indicators used for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and policy uptake of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by regional seas programmes.

SACEP/SASP participated and contributed to the following activities in 2021;

- In the finalization of Regional Seas Strategic Direction 2022-2025
- Indicators used under the regional seas programme that can be aligned with the future post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework indicators

18. Regional Marine Litter Action Plan for South Asia and Development of National

Marine Litter Action Plans for SAS Member States

As a partner of the UN Environment Project entitled 'Global Partnership on Marine Litter' SACEP agreed to develop National and a Regional Policy/Action Plan on Marine Litter for the South Asian Seas Region. The Regional Marine Litter Action Plan for South Asia was adopted in the 6th IMM of the SASP on 6th November 2019 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Some best management practices (BMP) guidelines have also been developed during the year 2019, supported by UN Environment, that could be used for combating marine litter through reduction and reuse, recycling, composting and fermentation, better management of landfills and land application. The developed BMP also facilitates and supports the development of a National Action Plan/Policy by member countries. The necessary reports have been shared amongst the SAS member states to receive their final consent.

Recognizing the importance of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan in the region, SACEP/SASP became the regional node under the UNEP-Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) as the host for the South Asia Seas Region in June 2020 and submitted a request to the UNEP-GPML for allocating grants to develop the National Marine Litter Action Plan for the Governments of Bangladesh and India initially. SACEP/SASP has also developed a declaration with the assistance of the Member States on managing the Plastics before entering to Marine Environment and encouraging a circular economy in the SAS region. Both have been well received by the UNEP-ROAP office for necessary action and follow-up. SACEP/SASP as the regional node under the UNEP-Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) hosted a Webinar on Marine Litter Spills and Emergency Response on 29th July 2021, disseminating lessons learnt from the recent MV X-Press Pearl Incident.

Presently SACEP is the implementing partner of the PLEASE Project with the objective of catalyzing actions that reduce flow plastic pollution in South Asian Seas. This project would support regional coordination, cooperation, institutions and policy development that deliver both short and long-term solutions to plastic pollution in the region.

19. International Coastal Clean-up Day

In the International Environment Calendar for each year, Saturday of 3rd week of September marks the International Coastal Clean-up Day, where events are organized to make the public aware of the growing problem of debris accumulated in coastal areas. Since 2006, SACEP has been organizing many activities to commemorate Coastal Clean-up Day.

20. South Asian Seas (SAS) Regional Coral Reef Monitoring for Adaptation and Resilience

South Asia Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF) was launched in July 2007. The establishment of SACRTF was endorsed at the 10th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP held in 2007 and the progress was reported at the 4th IMM-SASP held on 22 May 2008 in Jaipur, India. SACRTF was to facilitate and coordinate the management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems at a national level, and to promote collaborative action at the regional level, encouraging synergies for transboundary responses to shared environmental challenges and raising the political and public profile of coral reef-related issues in the SAS region. The developed initiative was expected to be beneficial among the coastal communities in the SAS participating countries.

SACEP and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) negotiating a collaboration to revitalise the SACRTF by linking to The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), which works through a global network of stakeholders, coordinated, when possible, by regional 'nodes' for the management and conservation of coral reefs.

To meet the objectives ICRI-GCRMN invited SACEP/SASP for their Annual Steering Committee Meeting in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for strengthening the agreed actions. SACEP/SASP also participated and presented the South Asia Coral Reef analysis information to ICRI/GCRMN at the Regional Workshop for SAS Region on Regional Data Analysis of Coral Reef Monitoring during 28-29 January 2020 held in Malé, Maldives and also discussed reactivation of the SACRTF.

The Ecosystems Integration Branch of UNEP invited SACEP/SASP to the Project Steering Committee Meeting of the Global Coral Reef Partnership held on 18 November 2020. The aim of the meeting was to breathe new life into the Partnership to help secure a future with coral reefs for people and the planet. SACEP/SASP presented an analysis of the status of corals in the SAS region and shared the major Gaps, Challenges and Constraints.

In this Project Steering Committee Meeting, a discussion was held to consider the renewal of Terms of Reference, Work plan, Communications Strategy and Collaboration with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). The meeting also recommended reaching out to individual Regional Seas for more, in-depth conversations on collaboration based on the work plan. Under the proposed work plan, the SACRTF will be activated and will revitalize the Global Coral Partnership which will bring the opportunity to engage with multi-lateral partners.

SACEP participated in the 'Monaco Ocean Week 2022' and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) steering committee meeting at the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco and also participated in a workshop on 'the sixth GCRMN status of coral reef of the world' in Monaco organized by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) from 22 - 24 March 2022. As GCRMN has the data and capacity on a regional scale about the Coral Reef, SACEP requested

assistance to set up a platform in the SACEP-SASP secretariat to host the data for SASP member states (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). The Marine and Coastal Unit of UNEP strongly supported the approach raised by SACEP based on the Regional Seas Programme such as SASP. GCRMN management welcomes the proposal to work together with SACEP in the future.

SACEP also participated in the Regional Coordinators meeting of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) on 6th July 2023. The meeting provided ample opportunity for regional coordinators to showcase recent activities, upcoming actions and needs with respect to GCRMN as well as updates from the GCRMN global team on the respective work and next global GCRMN reports. During the meeting, SACEP shared updates from the Node's activities and future plans.

MALE DECLARATION ON CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF AIR POLLUTION AND ITS LIKELY TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS FOR SOUTH ASIA.

To cope with the issue of Transboundary Air Pollution in South Asia the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia was adopted by the Ministers of the Environment at the 7th Governing Council of SACEP in the Republic of Maldives in 1998. The main objective of this declaration was to establish a scientific foundation for addressing transboundary air pollution in South Asia and to encourage coordinated efforts among stakeholders at national and regional levels.

Following the adoption of the Malé Declaration, UNEP initiated a project to implement the recommendation of the Male' Declaration and SACEP was a partner of the project. It was agreed that UNEP to manage the project office initially, develop the capacity of SACEP and handover the management to SACEP. Though the request by a number of GC decisions for building capacity of SACEP and handover the management of the project to SACEP, it was not implemented and at the end of the funding from SIDA, UNEP disassociated with the project. From that point, RRC.AP continued the management of the project and many occasions, SACEP requested AIT to transfer the project office and the resources to SACEP. As it was not honoured, SACEP Secretariat made a proposal to the 15th GC to remove activities related to the RRC.AP managed project on the 'Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia' from SACEP's work programme and initiated discussion with possible partners to make amendment to the Male' Declaration in order to incorporate current needs and the 14th GC decision which requested SACEP Secretariat to create a collaborative platform for members to tackle regional air pollution..

Current Status

Recognizing the critical importance of preserving the essence of the Male Declaration in South Asia, the SACEP Secretariat and concerned parties have held several virtual meetings regarding the revitalization of the Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia. This effort is deemed necessary as the original declaration, signed over two decades ago, is now outdated. During this period, member countries have undergone significant socioeconomic changes, leading to new environmental challenges related to air quality management.

During these discussions, it was agreed that the SACEP Secretariat would host the Male Declaration Programme Secretariat. Consequently, a draft “**Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia**” (Annex 01) and a “**Think Piece on Revival of the Malé Declaration**” (Annex 02) were developed.

1. The SACEP Secretariat requests the Governing Council to:
2. Adopt the amended “Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia” (Malé Declaration).
3. Approve the establishment of the Malé Declaration Secretariat at the SACEP Secretariat.
4. Approve a decision requesting member countries (including those already contributing to the Malé Declaration Project managed by AIT.RRC.AP) to contribute to the SACEP Secretariat for establishing and maintaining the Malé Declaration Secretariat.

Agreement for Strengthening the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia (Malé Declaration)

PREAMBLE

- We, the Environment Ministers of the eight countries in the South Asia region viz. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and members of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, met at Thimphu, Bhutan on June 2024 at the 16th Meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP):
- REFERRING to the Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia, adopted by the 7th Meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme on 22nd April 1998 at Malé, Maldives;
- RECOGNIZING air pollution and its significant effects on human health, the environment, and the economies of the countries of South Asia;
- ALSO, RECOGNIZING the potential transboundary transport of air pollution and subsequent effects in the region;
- REALISING the potential transboundary effects of air pollution in the region will continue in absence of effective and sufficient air pollution emission reduction measures and policies at the national level, as well as a regional framework supporting the engagement of countries of the region;
- NOTING the fact that air pollution has linkages with human health, therefore, reduction of air pollution provides ample opportunities for reducing human health impacts and Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) as co-benefits and cost savings by addressing both the issues through integrated planning;
- EMPHASIZING that integrating planning on the solutions for air pollution and other environmental issues within each country, and also across the region, facilitates the ability to address both these issues effectively while providing local health and development benefits that can drive the ambition to more effectively address international commitments.

- RECALLING that solving air pollution issues also help the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) links to clean air;
- ALSO, RECALLING the Resolutions 1/7 of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-1, 2014) on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in promoting air quality and preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally (UNEA-3, 2017) and (UNEA-6-2024) and Resolution on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally*(UNPE/EA.6/L.13)
- ALSO, RECOGNIZING the potential regional cooperation to achieve existing regional and global commitments related to clean air;
- ALSO, RECALLING the Resolution A68/18 of the World Health Organization (WHO 2015) for addressing the health impacts of air pollution;
- ALSO, RECALLING the Resolution 75/4 of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP 2019) on strengthening regional cooperation to tackle air pollution challenges in Asia and the Pacific;
- RECOGNIZING the need for sharing data on air quality and air pollution effects, information on experience and success stories sharing, capacity building, policy harmonization, etc.;
- ACKNOWLEDGING the significant achievements of the Malé Declaration over the last more than two decades in establishing and promoting regional cooperation on addressing issues of air pollution in South Asia; and
- FURTHER RECOGNIZING the enormous benefits that countries can gain from regional cooperation in South Asia by strengthening data and information sharing, capacity building, policy harmonization, and development & enhancement of national capacity to implement pollution control and abatement strategies.

THE MEMBER COUNTRIES of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) have agreed to amend the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia, adopted by the 7th Meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment programme on 22nd April 1998 at Male', Maldives (hereinafter "Amendment to the Male' Declaration);

Article 1:

DEFINITIONS

- (a) "AIR POLLUTION" means the introduction by man, directly or indirectly, of substances or energy into the air resulting in deleterious effects of such a nature as to endanger human health, harm living resources and ecosystems and material property and impair or interfere with amenities and other legitimate uses of the environment, and "air pollutants" shall be construed accordingly;
- (b) "AIR QUALITY" means the characteristics of the ambient air, referring to the concentration of pollutants, as indicated by the national ambient air quality standards adopted by the member countries;
- (c) "TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLUTION" means air pollution whose physical origin is situated wholly or in part within the area under the national jurisdiction of one State and which has adverse effects in the area under the jurisdiction of another State; and

Article 2:

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

- 1. The prime objective of the Malé Declaration is to undertake joint regional efforts to improve air quality in the region, as well as minimize environmental impacts as one of the multiple benefits of taking action, and also contribute to international commitments. Other benefits include improved well-being and increased economic development.
- 2. Strengthen regional cooperation among member countries on decision-making and policy formulation on transboundary air pollution in the region.
- 3. Strengthen air quality monitoring and enable efficient sharing of data and information among member countries.
- 4. Facilitate the development of sectoral emission inventories of air pollutants and emission mitigation scenarios at the national level.
- 5. Promote joint research and development studies on air quality modelling and impact assessment of air pollution.
- 6. Promote clean air technologies and related policies.
- 7. Build national and regional capacities of member countries on air quality management and best practices.

8. Awareness-raising, while promoting and enhancing collaboration and cooperation with scientists and policymakers for interfacing science and policy.
9. Promote harmonizing air quality measurement procedures and air quality standards.
10. Enhance collaboration with UN bodies and international agencies for better recognition and resource mobilization.

Article 3:

MEMBER COUNTRIES AND NEW MEMBERSHIP

1. SACEP member countries viz. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are the member countries of the Malé Declaration.
2. Membership to other countries can be extended, if the member countries agree on it, unanimously.

Article 4:

PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

1. The member countries will, in the spirit of solidarity and partnership and in accordance with their respective needs, available capabilities and resources, strengthen the cooperation to address air pollution in the region including its transboundary effects.
2. The member countries will be encouraged to take necessary and appropriate measures to address air pollution to minimize its impacts on health and the environment.
3. The member countries will promote active participation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, for effective implementation of activities of the Malé Declaration including mobilization of technical and financial resources.
4. The member countries, at the national level, shall designate the National Focal Point (hereinafter “NFP”) and the National Implementing Agency (hereinafter “NIA”). The NFPs and NIAs of the member countries will be responsible for the overall implementation of activities of the Malé Declaration.

Article 5:

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

1. The organizational structure of the Malé Declaration will include a SACEP Governing Council, an Inter-Governmental Body, a Steering Committee, a Scientific Advisory Panel, Technical Working Groups. The SACEP Secretariat will function as the “Secretariat” of Malé Declaration and the Asian Institute of Technology – Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific (AIT RRC.AP) as the “Technical Partner” to the Male’ Declaration. It will also be supported through advice by regional and international experts and will link to different relevant regional and global processes and regional stakeholders, including civil society.
2. SACEP Governing Council (hereinafter SACEP “GC”) constituted from the Ministers of Environment of the SACEP member countries will be the main decision making body on policy issues of the Male’ Declaration.
3. An Inter-governmental body (hereinafter Malé Declaration “IG”) made up of national focal points will be constituted with the nominated representatives of the member countries. The IG will be the executing body overseeing the implementation for the Malé Declaration reporting to the Governing Council of SACEP.
4. The IG will meet once in a year to review the progress of the Malé Declaration and provide guidance, on all matters related to the Malé Declaration. SACEP as the Malé Declaration Secretariat will organize biennial meetings of the Ministers of Environment (Ministerial Meeting) of the Malé Declaration member countries to review progress, provide a vision for further developments and sign protocols.
5. A Steering Committee (hereinafter “SC”) will be formed from the National Focal Points of the member countries together with nominated representatives of the United Nations Organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); In addition, it will include Intergovernmental Organizations, namely, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Gessellschaft fur Internationale Zussamararbeit (GIZ).

6. The SC will meet biennially and advise/guide the Malé Declaration, in the context of regional and global issues and scenarios pertaining to the scope and activities of the Malé Declaration.
7. A Scientific Advisory Panel (hereinafter the Malé Declaration “SAP”) will be formed from air pollution experts from member countries together with internationally renowned scientists. Member countries may nominate ONE or TWO scientists as members of SAP. Globally renowned scientists, having research work focused on air pollution issues in South Asia, may also be invited as guest members to the SAP. The SAP will meet annually to discuss air pollution issues of the region, brainstorm on solutions, and provide recommendations to the IG.
8. On the recommendations of the SC and the SAP or even otherwise the IG can establish, Technical Working Groups (TWG) for specific purposes as and when required. The TWGs will meet as required to discuss, brainstorm solutions, and provide recommendations to the IG. Temporary Technical Working Groups may be convened for a specific purpose, such as the development of a renewed “Strategy and Work Plan” for the Malé Declaration, or any other purpose related to the scope, objectives, and activities of the Malé Declaration.
9. SACEP will establish a “Secretariat for the Malé Declaration”.. The Secretariat will be responsible for providing overall secretariat services to the Malé Declaration including organizing meetings of GC, IG, SC, SAP, TWGs, capacity building, and awareness forums, development of documents for meeting and logistic arrangement, website, and outreach materials, and represent the Malé Declaration at regional and international forums, etc.

Article 6:

STRATEGY, WORK PLAN, AND ACTIVITIES

1. The activities of the Malé Declaration will be implemented in Phases. A detailed document on the Strategy, Workplan, and Activities will be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with relevant Technical Working Groups, following the recommendations of the SC and SAP. The strategy, work plan and activities document shall be recommended by the IG for approval by the GC SACEP.
2. The Phase of implementation of the Strategy, Workplan, and Activities of the Malé Declaration may be for a period of 5 years.

3. The GC SACEP will review the implementation and outcomes of the Strategy, Workplan, and Activities of the Malé Declaration periodically, every 2 years, and may recommend changes in the Strategy, Workplan, and Activities if required. The member countries shall implement the activities of the Malé Declaration, mentioned in detail in the “Strategy and Workplan document for a particular Phase” which is agreed at the GC SACEP meetings.

Article 7:

SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL MECHANISM

1. The Secretariat will prepare the budget in advance for the activities of the Malé Declaration to be implemented in the forthcoming 5-year period.
2. The proposed budget will be approved by the GC SACEP based on the recommendations of the Malé Declaration IG.
3. The member countries will mobilize their financial contribution voluntarily to the Secretariat to cover their activities, and will cover national costs to implement agreed actions,
4. In addition, international financial support will be mobilized.

Article 8:

REVISION OR MODIFICATION

1. Any change in the Agreement will be submitted to the Governing Council of SACEP for adoption.

Article 9:

END OF PARTICIPATION

1. If any member country(ies) would like to end its participation in the Malé Declaration, the country could send an official letter to the Secretariat addressing the SACEP GC Chair.

Article 10:

LEGALITY OF THE AGREEMENT

1. Participation of the member countries in the Malé Declaration is purely on a voluntary basis and hence carries no legal binding of this Agreement to the member(s) whatsoever.

According to the laws and regulations of the member countries, this Agreement is signed by the designated or authorized representative hereunder:

For the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Name:
Designation:
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
Dhaka

For the Kingdom of Bhutan

Name:
Designation:
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources Thimphu

For the Republic of India

Name:
Designation:
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
New Delhi

For the Republic of Maldives

Name:

Designation:

Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology

Male'

For the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Name:

Designation:

Ministry of Forests and Environment

Kathmandu

For the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Name:

Designation:

Ministry of Climate Change and Environment Coordination

Islamabad

For the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Name:

Designation:

Ministry of Environment

Battaramulla



Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effect for South Asia (Malé Declaration)

Think Piece – Revival of the Malé Declaration on Air Pollution Mitigation

(Final Draft)

1. BACKGROUND

The development of the Malé Declaration on the Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effect in South Asia was discussed by the representatives of the Governments of South Asian countries at a meeting in Bangkok organized by the UNEP/RRC.AP during 19-20 March 1998. The meeting recognized the transboundary effects of air pollution in the South Asian region and agreed on the need for action and developed a draft Declaration. Later, the agreed text of what became known as the Malé Declaration was then adopted and signed by all the countries of South Asia namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka at a meeting of ministers at the Governing Council of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) on 22 April 1998.

The objectives of the initial development of the Malé Declaration responded to the obvious regional nature of air pollution – with the impact of the forest fires in Indonesia disrupting life in the Maldives, or the clear spreading of air pollution across South Asia. The countries recognised that such issues could only be solved through regional cooperation. They also saw the benefits of pooling knowledge as countries in the region faced the same issues and were keen to learn from each other.

The Malé Declaration, the first Regional Agreement on pollution in South Asia, and over the past two-decades, a community of government representatives and scientists developed and implemented many activities, such as conducting baseline studies, formulating action plans, strengthening air quality monitoring network, developing emission inventories, monitoring of air pollutant levels, and conducting assessment studies on impacts on corrosion of materials, human health, and crop yields. By sharing data, information, and experiences, the countries learned a lot through their participation in the Malé Declaration activities and acknowledged the contribution to national capacity building and policy formulations.

For about a decade, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) supported the Malé Declaration. However, once the SIDA funding had finished, the countries agreed to continue the Malé Declaration with allocations from national budgets, but the level of national funding did not prove sufficient to continue and expand the activities of the Malé Declaration. The additional funding from country budgets was not enough to support the activities required.

Despite a period of low activity, all countries engaged in the Malé Declaration, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have expressed their desire that the Malé Declaration should be relaunched and for it to become a focus for the reduction of emissions in South Asia. This has been confirmed by Inter-Governmental Meetings of the countries in 2021 and 2022 as well as at bilateral meetings between the Secretariat, Regional Facilitator, and the country representatives.

2. RATIONALE

The Sixteenth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting of the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effect for South Asia (Malé Declaration), held on 12 January 2022, agreed to relaunch the Malé Declaration by revamping its objectives, activities and structure. IG16 recognized the linkages of air pollution with human health. However, the core focus of the “relaunched Malé Declaration” shall remain the emission reduction of air pollution in the region, and by doing so reduction in impacts on human health and climate change will be reaped as co-benefits.

The representatives of the member countries, recognising the importance of regional cooperation in combating air pollution in South Asia and achieving related co-benefits, agreed to the necessity of reviving the Malé Declaration for a number of key reasons:

- Progress on abatement and control of air pollution can be significantly enhanced through better cooperation amongst countries, allowing them to pool knowledge to solve shared problems of air pollution, which are severe across the whole of South Asia; Regional cooperation is the only way to address transboundary and regionally shared problems;
- Reducing air pollution is an effective way to increase co-benefits, such as mitigation (of SLCP) and climate change and local health benefits, and
- The measures to reduce air pollution can help to achieve other international and national commitments and targets linked to air pollution and SDGs.

The regional cooperation offers tangible co-benefits to the people of South Asia that can be harnessed by the Malé Declaration by improving the air quality in South Asia and reducing health-related impacts. For example, common approaches and tools for the development of emission inventories, and modelling software for projections, can be agreed and a capacity building programme conducted for scientists/engineers on the use of these to enhance their skills/capacity for conducting emission inventories. The same is true for adopting common approaches to develop baseline scenarios and estimate the impact of different scenarios in modelling frameworks.

Some countries are already running their models, but a common training programme will help build capacity across the entire region as a joint effort and data generated, being on the same level of accuracy and reliability, can be shared for its interpretation and policy formulation. Countries can agree to maintain monitoring stations and send data into a central server to share knowledge of the state of air pollution. Often countries in the region have been hesitant to share data, but agreement on sharing this type of data would be a big step forward and improve transparency and lead to innovation. The Asian assessment of air pollution mitigation (UNEP 2019)¹ has shown that there are immense potential co-benefits from taking action if there is a concerted effort across the region – for health, for the economy and well-being. Methods to link the air pollution mitigation planning can identify win-win scenarios and save costs by assessing the multiple co-benefits of different actions and with a choice to implement those that provide the largest overall development benefit. Countries can share their experience of

¹ UNEP (2019); Air Pollution in Asia and the Pacific: Science-based Solutions;
<https://www.ccacoalition.org/en/resources/air-pollution-asia-and-pacific-science-based-solutions-summary-full-report>

mitigating emissions using different strategies to implement key effective measures and can be trained in the methods and approaches to assess multiple benefits.

This vision paper aims to outline the objectives, tentative structure, and implementation strategy of the ‘relaunched’ Malé Declaration. The aim of the relaunch is to increase the importance and relevance of the Malé Declaration to the member countries, becoming an agreement requiring regular attention at a higher level and making it more effective at addressing air pollution in South Asia. The revamped Malé Declaration can move towards formulating/developing agreements such as protocols (or any such other mechanism) to bring uniformity in monitoring methodology, developing emission inventories, preparing mitigation plans, etc; that the countries have to agree and approve. Malé Declaration ‘Protocols’ can be related to the different requirements of the air quality management, for example, as shown in Figure 1.

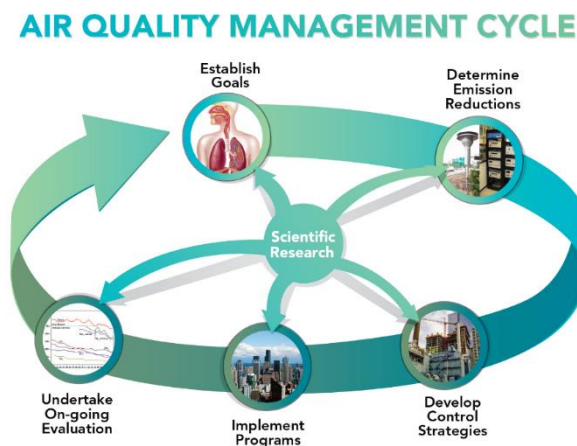


Figure 1. Aspects of the process of air quality management (Source US EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/air-quality-management-process/air-quality-management-process-cycle>)

There could be protocols for air quality monitoring – setting up standard methods and citing criteria for the stations. There could be protocols on emission inventories, scenario generation and strategies to reduce air pollution. – with agreement on common methods and regular reporting. Other Protocols could be agreements to share information on solutions to key problems and established best practices relevant for South Asia. Later, countries may choose to develop agreements limiting emissions of air pollutants. The main change from the past is to formalise the activities of the Malé Declaration and by signing these protocols, countries will show their willingness/commitment for taking certain actions, allocate resources for them or find guaranteed support for them, and share knowledge with partner countries in the Declaration.

3. NEW VISION

The relaunch and reinvigoration of the Malé Declaration will contribute to the effective management of emissions to reduce air pollution in South Asia. This will be achieved through different developments:

- Make the Malé Declaration more relevant to the key issues of air pollution South Asia is facing at the moment and use the opportunity to promote ambition and achieve air

quality improvements, while reaping co-benefits of reducing human health impacts and climate change.

- Make the Malé Declaration into a more prominent regional agreement where countries agree on the actions that promote effective mitigation of air pollution in South Asia. This is proposed to be in the form of different Protocols that can be agreed upon as commitments between the countries on joint activities that will help the region solve its air pollution problem.
- By leveraging appropriate national and international funding to develop activities under the Malé Declaration that help countries to achieve their ambitions. The activities envisaged include training on developing emission scenarios, besides sharing knowledge on mitigation options and modelling the potential benefits they would provide if implemented.
- Development of pilot projects to test policies, actions and measures that have been successful in one place to assess their suitability to work optimally in other environmental conditions. It can develop regional campaigns with linkage to other international activities.
- By developing a structure to support the Malé Declaration acceptable to all countries, linked in scale to the level of funding available which is most effective at promoting progress on these important issues in South Asia.
- The Malé Declaration activities could be framed in a way that these activities could also help the countries in fulfilling their commitments to the regional and global agenda pertaining to air pollution reduction.

Malé Declaration: an inter-governmental forum where agreements can be signed

The regional cooperation under the Malé Declaration will be enhanced through the development of the Malé Declaration Secretariat as a ‘Centre of Excellence’ where information on experts, techniques, models, methods, technologies, policies, etc. can be compiled and stored and shared. This will help countries of the region access relevant information – derived from the region and also internationally – facilitated through the close linkages that the Malé Declaration can build with different international bodies (e.g. UN bodies) as well as international institutions that have specific knowledge to provide experts in the region.

The Malé Declaration needs to be relevant to the day-to-day activities of the governments of member countries that enable them to address their serious air pollution problems and achieve multiple goals linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to clean air. This can be achieved by developing a number of agreements or protocols within the Malé Declaration that countries would agree to implement.

Initially, considering the varying levels of industrialisation different environmental norms, economic growth and technological advancements, and available expertise, creating agreements acceptable to all is not easy, and therefore the Malé Declaration will focus on agreements that are easier to agree to, but which still require commitment from countries. This could initially be in the form of Protocols on parts of the practices and data that are essential for air quality management.

This includes developing ‘Protocols’, i.e., agreements on undertaking monitoring – at urban and regional scales – where specific sites can be designated as Malé Declaration monitoring stations, building on existing stations, which the countries will need to agree to fund and maintain, with data reported annually to a central location (e.g., Secretariat), use agreed methods, quality control procedures, etc. Other Protocols could be developed covering key areas of information needed for effective air quality management, which can be decided upon after mutual consultations. This can include Protocols to develop historical emission inventories and develop baseline and mitigation emission scenarios to support decision making and the identification of priority mitigation measures by each country. Countries can agree to collaborate on defining the common methods and tools to develop these essential instruments for national decision-making.

The Malé Declaration will need to compile information to support each protocol – e.g., for monitoring. Once countries have agreed to develop such a protocol, the details would be developed by a Technical Working Group, formed at the request of the countries at the IG meetings and tasked with developing the Monitoring Protocol, compiling the details ready for the countries to agree to and sign. This Protocol would outline activities that countries would undertake and could also include agreements to undertake joint training activities, and develop plans for use of the data collected including visualization, etc.

The countries can also sign agreements to develop scientific understanding, models, and tools to understand how the measures that can be taken will, together, help solve the air pollution problems in the region and develop activities to assess the impacts of air pollution and its benefits of mitigation, as well as economic assessments.

There could also be protocols focussing on mitigation measures, where countries can agree to collaborate to spread good practices, appropriate technology and effective policies that can work to reduce pollution and also achieve other development benefits of importance to each country.

Sharing knowledge by engaging leading scientists from member countries and internationally

Engaging scientists from the region is important, as scientists are the primary source of new information and innovative solutions. Scientists from different countries can become part of the technical working groups to determine what can be done to support the Male Declaration. Scientists can also help to undertake periodic assessments of air quality in South Asia. Apart from the technical groups, a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) may be established from the national scientists and foreign scientists with research focused on South Asia.

Proposed structure for the renewed Malé Declaration

1. The Malé Declaration always has and always will be ‘owned’ by the National Governments of participating South Asian countries. The organizational structure of the Malé Declaration will include a SACEP Governing Council, an Inter-Governmental Body, a Steering Committee, a Scientific Advisory Panel, Technical Working Groups. The SACEP Secretariat will function as the “Secretariat” and the Asian Institute of Technology – Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific as the “Technical Partner” to the Male’ Declaration. It will also be supported through

advice by regional and international experts and will link to different relevant regional and global processes and regional stakeholders, including civil society.

The countries must decide on the Malé Declaration, what it will focus on, how it will operate and what structure they want it to have, that will support it. Figure 1 presents a suggested framework on how this *could* work and be structured.

To enhance the outreach Malé Declaration can also be linked to Regional and Global Conventions and Initiatives (such as UNESCAP, UNEP, WHO, WMO, CCAC, etc.) related to emission reduction, a focus of the Declaration also. The Malé Declaration will also establish cooperative and collaborative relationships with the relevant Regional Initiatives, namely, Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP), Asian Co-benefits Partnership (ACP), and other relevant regional initiatives.

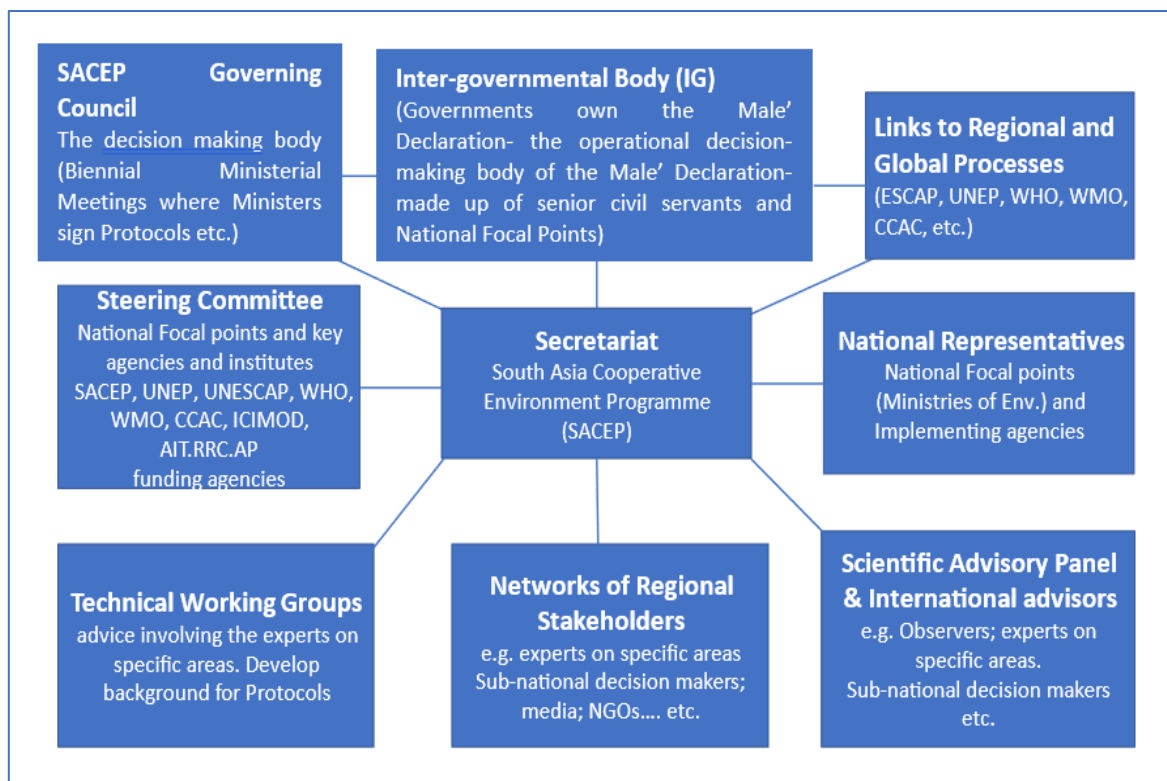


Figure 2. Structure of the Malé Declaration

Malé Declaration Inter-Governmental Body (IG)

2. The reviewing body is made up of the government representatives in what could be called an “Intergovernmental Body”. The IG will be the body overseeing the implementation for the Malé Declaration reporting to the Governing Council of SACEP. This IG would prepare the action plan run the Declaration and prepare any agreements. Agreements can be signed at the SACEP Governing Council meetings.

Linkages to the international community

The Malé Declaration can also be linked to regional and global conventions and initiatives (such as UNESCAP, UNEP, WHO, WMO, CCAC, etc.) related to the emission reduction a focus of the Declaration also.

The Malé Declaration will also be able to establish cooperative and collaborative relationships with the relevant regional initiatives, namely, the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), the North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP), Asian Co-benefits Partnership (ACP), and other relevant regional initiatives.

Malé Declaration Secretariat

A Secretariat to organize the activities of the Malé Declaration is required. SACEP Secretariat will be the Male' Declaration Secretariat, AIT RRC.AP could assist SACEP Secretariat with technical knowledge.

Financing

It is important that sufficient funding is allocated to make the Malé Declaration a success. For this to be sustainable in the long term, there needs to be a commitment from the countries to support the Male Declaration financially. The Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting (IG12) of the Malé Declaration, held in Delhi, India on 30 June 2011, established and approved a financial mechanism for the sustainable operation of the Malé Declaration Network. As per the approved mechanism, member countries of the Malé Declaration will have to make voluntary contributions of financial resources every year to the Core Budget at the Secretariat, following the UN scale of assessments.

However, there is room for acquiring international funding to initiate additional programmes and abatement & control measures within the member countries and speed up progress to reduce emissions. Donor organizations can be invited to Inter-Governmental Meetings to explore opportunities for them to fund different activities that can enhance the Malé Declaration.

Timeline for reviving the Malé Declaration

Once the Male Declaration has been signed by the member countries, then decisions need to be made on the agreements that the Male Declaration will promote and develop.

Sustainable Nitrogen Management in South Asia

During the last two decades, a number of initiatives have been taken in South Asia to tackle nitrogen pollution. Early actions include the establishment of the South Asian Nitrogen Centre (SANC) of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) in New Delhi in 2008, followed by the INI's 5th International Nitrogen Conference in New Delhi in 2010. The Conference adopted the Delhi Declaration on Reactive Nitrogen Management for Sustainable Development.

In 2013, SACEP commissioned a study on the nutrient pollution of the coastal and marine systems in South Asia. This scoping study outlined the nitrogen losses to freshwater, coastal and marine environments, identified the critical marine habitats affected, and recommended technological, managerial and policy measures through regional coordination. The acceptance of this scoping study, titled "Nutrient loading and eutrophication of coastal waters of the South Asian seas" by the SACEP Governing Council was a key milestone in the intergovernmental recognition of reactive nitrogen as an important aspect of nutrient loading at the South Asian level. It also revealed the knowledge gaps and laid the foundation for a South Asian nitrogen assessment.

Following the above regional initiative, South Asia has recently provided global leadership on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, including leading Resolutions 14/4 and 5/2 at the United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019 and 2022, and leadership of the Colombo Declaration (UN Day, 24 October 2019). Since 2019, SACEP has been working with the GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH), which is in collaboration with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and many other organizations across the UK and South Asia. The Hub is funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and has provided research advances and supported capacity building on the environmental threats of nitrogen pollution (air, soil and water, climate, ecosystems and health). In the light of the global fertilizer price crisis of 2021-2023, the work has emphasized how a goal to halve nitrogen waste would save around USD 150-300 billion per year globally, illustrating how sustainable nitrogen management can be simultaneously good for environment, food security and economy.

At the 14th Governing Council of SACEP (26-28 March 2018), Member States endorsed a draft resolution on 'Sustainable Nitrogen Management' for the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). The draft text was developed by the joint SACEP/INMS Regional Workshop, Malé (12-14 September 2017). Following submission by SACEP Member States under the lead of India, the resolution was adopted at UNEA-4 (March 2019). Among other provisions, Resolution 4/14 highlighted the needs for improved coordination of nitrogen policies, for assessment of available evidence and for capacity building.

In partnership, UNEP and the Government of Sri Lanka, launched the UN Global Campaign on Sustainable Nitrogen Management and the Colombo Declaration on UN Day, 24 October 2019. The Colombo Declaration adopted an ambition to halve nitrogen waste by 2030 and for this purpose calls on the Member States to develop and implement comprehensive policies and roadmaps on Sustainable Nitrogen Management. This was followed up by adoption of a second resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management at UNEA-5 in March 2022 under the lead of Sri Lanka. Resolution 5/2 emphasized the need for Member States "to accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste globally by 2030 and beyond" and to share information on national action plans for sustainable nitrogen management

Background and the Process for Developing the Roadmap

The South Asia region is currently facing severe environmental pressures due to the ineffective management of nitrogen emissions. This pollution has significant public health effects and ecological impacts, necessitating urgent policy measures and actions to alleviate these environmental pressures. However, the existing fragmentation of nitrogen policies among multiple ministries has hindered coordinated action, leading to considerable barriers to change.

To address this challenge, it is crucial to establish a more coherent policy framework for sustainable nitrogen management at national, regional, and international levels. This initiative aligns with UNEA resolutions, such as UNEA 4/14 and 5/24, which underscore the importance of effective nitrogen management. Therefore, SACEP and SANH have cooperated in preparing the draft **“South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management”** which will serve as an initial step towards promoting policy coherence and coordinated actions within the region.

SACEP with the assistance of SANH successfully conducted an in-person meeting with the participation of Government Officials from SACEP member countries as part of the meeting of the South Asian Nitrogen Hub Annual forum in October 2023 towards finalization of the "South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management" followed by three online consultation meetings with the participation of member country official to discuss the **“South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management”**. (31 August 2023, 6 September 2023 and 28th May 2024).

SACEP Secretariat requests the 16th meeting of the Governing Council to adopt the **“South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management”**. (Annex 01)



DRAFT South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management, 2024-2030

DRAFT (Version VII) (5 June 2024)

**South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management,
2024-2030**

Draft report under preparation for anticipated adoption at the 16th Meeting of Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), Spring 2024.

Draft in Confidence

Foreword

From SACEP Director General

(To be drafted)

Draft in Confidence

Acknowledgements

(To be drafted)

Draft in Confidence

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South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management

(Clean Version 5 June 2024, incorporating changes from SACEP Zoom Meetings 31 August 6th September and the 3-4 October, 2023 meeting in Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, together with changes from the science discussion 5 September 2023. Additional written comments received from SACEP member countries (up to 10 April 2024) and further changes made during from the online-meeting 28 May 2024 are included in blue font.

1. Introduction

Nitrogen is the most abundant element in Earth's atmosphere. Approximately 78% of the atmosphere is nitrogen. It is everywhere. It is in the soil, in the water we drink, and in the air we breathe. Nitrogen is a critical element for the survival of all living things, including human beings.

The use of various nitrogen compounds by humans has increased manifold. Its use in agriculture has increased food production, providing around half of the humans alive today with the food they need. It is rightly said if new plant varieties were the engine of the Green Revolution, then nitrogen used in chemical fertilizers was its fuel.

As humans, we need nitrogen to survive. But the way we use it today, nitrogen causes pollution that threatening health, climate, ecosystems and livelihoods. Scientific studies show that the fraction of human produced nitrogen that reaches final products is extremely low. Globally, full-chain nitrogen use efficiency is 20% and the remaining 80% is wasted and lost in the environment (Sutton *et al.*, 2013). This is not only an economic loss, but also contributes to many environmental problems such as pollution of water and marine systems; air pollution; greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, depletion of stratospheric ozone and degradation of soil quality and ecosystem services, and thereby threatening public health and food security

Increased N_r pollution is responsible for serious human health effects via different pathways (Wolfe and Patz, 2002) such as methemoglobinemia ("blue baby syndrome") (Brender, 2020), stroke, heart disease, lung disease and cancer (WHO, 2016). It may also cause chronic lung disease, inflammation of human airways and irritation of eyes, sinuses and skin. N_r also affects human health via global warming, depletion of stratospheric ozone layer resulting in greater intensity of Ultra Violet B rays (UVB) on the Earth's surface and creation of ground-level ozone, and thereby causing the spread of vector-borne pathogens, increased incidence of skin cancer, development of cataracts and serious respiratory diseases (Nieder and Benbi, 2021). In addition, N_r pollution is one of the most influential causes of biodiversity decline globally (UNEP, 2023). It also affects soil quality through soil acidification and thus the very capacity of the soil to sustain plant and animal productivity (UNECE, 2022).

In response, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) adopted resolutions 4/14 and 5/2 (UNEP/EA.4/14, UNEP/EA.5/2), in 2019 and 2022 respectively. These resolutions are the first global efforts in addressing nitrogen pollution that specifically address nitrogen pollution. Resolution 5/2 encourages countries to accelerate actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste globally by 2030 and beyond, through the improvement of sustainable nitrogen management. The resolutions introduce the need for improved coordination of policies across the global nitrogen cycle at the national, regional and global levels, including consideration of the case for establishing an intergovernmental mechanism for coordination of nitrogen policies.

In October 2019, Member States of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), adopted the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (UNEP, 2019). The Colombo Declaration calls on the Member States to halve nitrogen waste by 2030 and for this purpose develop and implement comprehensive national policies and roadmaps on Sustainable Nitrogen Management; conduct comprehensive assessments on quantitative and qualitative nitrogen cycling covering scientific aspects, policy, regulation and implementation; and promote innovation on anthropogenic nitrogen use and recycling, emphasizing the opportunities for the circular economy.

All of the above initiatives were initiated under the South Asian leadership, which represent work-in-progress and require countries to initiate actions at the regional and national levels.

2. Status of Nitrogen Pollution in South Asia

In economic terms, South Asia is one of the fastest growing sub-regions in the world, coupled with increased pressure on natural resources and the environment (UNEP, 2021). Rapid urbanization associated with rising industrial production and levels of consumption have worsened the situation. South Asia has a population of around 1.9 billion, with an annual growth rate of 1.0%. This is about 25% of the world's population, in spite of covering only 4.8% of the world's total land area. South Asia shows the largest growth rate of the urban population globally, at 2.7% per year. It has been estimated that by 2050, at least 50% of South Asians will be residing in urban areas, which means that the urban population of this region will be over 1.2 billion (SACEP, 2014; World Bank, 2023).

Together these make for a major challenge where environment and ecosystem services are under severe pressure due to climate change, air pollution, depletion of water quality and quantity, dwindling forests and coastal resources, and soil degradation (SACEP, 2019), with nitrogen contributing to all of these threats. All of these effects are at least partially caused or exacerbated by N_r pollution. Growing demands of agriculture, transport, industry and energy, for example, have all resulted in sharp increases in the levels of nitrogen pollution and related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As a major economic activity in the region, agricultural use of chemical N fertilizer is extensive and has grown by 90 times since the 1960s when commercial application of chemical N-fertilizer began (FAO, 2020)

As a result, South Asia is a hotspot for N_r pollution in the global context (Bodirsky et al. 2014). The region has several several global hotspots for N_r pollution, both in its larger cities and across the Indo-Gangetic Plain. The Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGARv5.0) as analyzed by the South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH), reveals that nitrogen pollution in South Asia is high and rising, highlighting the importance of sustainable nitrogen management in the region. Degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems in South Asia due to nutrient pollution are evident at various locations (SACEP, 2019).

Alongside a plethora of organic nitrogen compounds, the main causes of concern are NO_x , NH_3 and N_2O in air, and NO_3^- in water. Their accumulation over several decades, has affected our health and local environment, in addition to their contributions to climate change.

Emissions of NO_x from South Asia make up a major proportion of global emissions. Relative to the rest of the world, South Asian emission levels have risen between 1970 and 2015. The SANH-SACEP Policy Report (2021) shows the hotspots of NO_x emissions, with major concentrations coming from urban centres in the Indo-Gangetic plain and in south India. It also reveals that in all South Asian countries, NO_x emissions have been rising rapidly, approximately doubling since 2000 in the region, with a 107% increase in NO_x emission observed in 2015 as compared with 2000.

Nitrous oxide emissions from South Asia is another major proportion of global emissions, with the share increasing between 1970 and 2015 (SACEP & SANH, 2021). The report shows that, in 2015, India was the major contributor to N_2O emissions in the region, but as with NO_x , on a per capita basis, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan show higher figures.

Trends of N_2O emissions in South Asian countries are also observed in the report. Within South Asia, emissions of N_2O have grown at very different rates between 2000 and 2015. A 36% increase in N_2O emission was observed in the whole South Asia region in 2015 as compared to 2000. The greatest increase in N_2O emissions, on a per capita basis, was observed in Maldives.

The SANH-SACEP report shows the distribution of NH_3 emissions across the region, with highest estimated emissions across the Indo-Gangetic plain. There was an estimated 36% increase in NH_3 emission in the South Asia region from 2000 to 2015. The highest relative increases in NH_3 emissions were in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Maldives, with the lowest increase in Sri Lanka.

Trends in water pollution from reactive nitrogen in different forms are currently being investigated as part of the continuing work of the GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub. In principle, the same activity data that underlie atmospheric emissions (fertilizer use, animal manures, human excreta, combustion sources) also affect levels of nitrogen pollution in water. As a consequence, N_r pollution of water bodies is expected to have increased substantially across South Asia over the last two decades.

3. South Asia Initiatives, Gaps and Challenges

As mentioned in section 1, South Asia has been proactive in recognizing nitrogen issues. In this section South Asia initiatives on nitrogen management and major gaps and challenges are further elaborated.

3.1. South Asia initiatives on nitrogen management

During the last two decades, a number of initiatives have been taken in South Asia to tackle nitrogen pollution. Early actions include the establishment of the South Asian Nitrogen Centre (SANC) of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) in New Delhi in 2008 (SANH-SACEP, 2021). Together with the Indian Nitrogen Group established under the Society for Conservation of Nature (ING-SCON), it reviewed the status of nitrogen at many levels (SANH-SACEP, 2021) and hosted the INI's 5th International Nitrogen Conference in New Delhi in 2010. The Conference adopted the Delhi Declaration on Reactive Nitrogen Management for Sustainable Development (SANH-SACEP, 2021). It was followed by two national brainstorming workshops held by ING-SCON in New Delhi, India, in February and March 2012 and then a special side event was organized by INI-SANC in association with the UNEP-Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) during the Conference of Parties (COP11) to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) at Hyderabad, India, in October 2012.

In 2013, SACEP commissioned a study on the nutrient pollution of the coastal and marine systems in South Asia. This scoping study outlined the nitrogen losses to freshwater, coastal and marine environments, identified the critical marine habitats affected, and recommended technological, managerial and policy measures through regional coordination (SACEP, 2014). The acceptance of this scoping study, titled "Nutrient loading and eutrophication of coastal waters of the South Asian seas" by the SACEP Governing Council was a key milestone in the intergovernmental recognition of N_r as an important aspect of nutrient loading at the South Asian level. It also revealed the knowledge gaps and laid the foundation for a South Asian nitrogen assessment.

Over the ~~next 3 years~~ period 2014 to 2017, South Asia contributed to the development of the GEF/UNEP project "Towards the International Nitrogen Management System (INMS)". Emerging from this, the "SACEP-INMS Workshop on Demonstration of the Full Nitrogen Approach" at Malé, Maldives, in September 2017 reviewed emerging evidence from the region leading to a draft resolution on 'sustainable nitrogen management' (SACEP, 2017), subsequently adopted by the SACEP Governing Council in March 2018.

In 2018, SACEP mobilized the support of its member countries for leading this resolution in the UN. It was formally submitted by the governments of India and Bangladesh for the 4th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) in 2018 and adopted in March 2019 (UNEP/EA.4/14). This was a historic moment for regional cooperation through SACEP and overall South Asian leadership on the global stage.

To enhance research and policy coordination in South Asia, the Malé workshop of September 2017 agreed to develop a proposal to establish a South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) (SACEP, 2017). The partnership, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI-GCRF), has brought together 40 institutions from all eight South Asia countries, coordinated by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. SANH along with the INMS facilitated further consultations and workshops throughout 2019 in South Asia, including support for the UNEA-4 resolution.

Based on these developments, UNEP agreed to launch a global campaign on Sustainable Nitrogen Management at the “Nitrogen for Life” conference in Sri Lanka, leading to adoption of the “Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management” on United Nations Day, 24 October 2019 (UNEP, 2019). The Conference endorsed a proposed roadmap for action to halve nitrogen waste by 2030. Sri Lanka was the first country to announce its commitment to halving nitrogen waste, in accordance with the Colombo Declaration and as part of its updates to its nationally determined contributions (NDC’s) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This has been matched by mobilizing action through the joint Sri Lanka-UK workshops on “Nitrogen, Climate and Green Recovery” and “Rediscovering Nitrogen”, leading into the Glasgow Climate Conference COP26. Further action by South Asia has included Pakistan’s leadership of World Environment Day 2021, hosting a special workshop on “Sustainable Nitrogen Management for Ecosystem Restoration”.

One of the agreements of the Colombo Declaration was to bring the ideas forward for a further resolution to the UN Environment Assembly. Accordingly, Sri Lanka proposed the second resolution on sustainable nitrogen management, co-sponsored by Pakistan and the Maldives, which was subsequently adopted in February 2022 (UNEP/EA.5/2).

3.2. Major gaps and challenges

To understand the status of nitrogen relevant policies in South Asia, an assessment of nitrogen policy at national and regional levels was conducted by SANH and SACEP. The resulting assessment report (SANH & SACEP, 2021) highlights several gaps and challenges facing sustainable nitrogen management.

3.2.1. Lack of awareness and engagement

Public awareness and engagement at all levels are critical to nitrogen management. Despite its importance for the future of the global environment, there is still little awareness of the nitrogen threat among the public, as well as among legislators and other policymakers, affecting the coherency and progress in developing and implementing nitrogen policies in an integrated manner.

This experience points to the need for increased awareness of the nitrogen issue, which may change the behaviour across society and affect public acceptability of policy change. Food

production and consumption practices represent a key area where education and public awareness may have major implications for nitrogen emission. Strengthening capacities of stakeholders, particularly farmers, is crucial to nitrogen management and emission reduction. An improved management requires a level of information and training that many farmers do not have. Acquiring the skills necessary to conduct soil tests and to apply fertilizers more carefully is of paramount importance. Just the same issues apply when it comes to nitrogen management in the wastewater, combustion and other sectors.

3.2.2. Lack of data and research

South Asian countries do not possess any consolidated database on nitrogen flows and threats while there is a need for reliable scientific assessment that can be used to enhance public and policy-maker awareness of these threats. While a start is being made through SANH, very few data exist on the quantities, trends, sources and sinks of nitrogen in the region. Although available data show that levels of atmospheric nitrogen pollution in South Asia are among the highest in the world (including from satellite data), there is a need to provide more comprehensive evidence that can help mobilize action.

The effectiveness of management strategies can be ensured only if consolidated data are available. Improving understanding the status of nitrogen pollution through time at temporal and spatial scale as well as its management across all eight South Asian countries is therefore a necessary step towards sustainable nitrogen management. At the same time, the SANH-SACEP report (2021) indicates that there is a need to improve research to better understand the impacts of products, tools and machinery for sustainable nitrogen management across all sectors and settings.

3.2.3. Policy fragmentation

Nitrogen pollution crosses multiple policy domains, such as air pollution, climate change, freshwater and marine environment, soil, biodiversity, health and food security. As a result, nitrogen policies have become fragmented between different environmental compartments. This fragmentation is widely seen in the domestic policies of many countries. All South Asian countries have, to varying degrees, enacted legislation and policy on agriculture, wastewater management, aquaculture, fertilizers and agrochemicals, which are relevant to the nitrogen challenge (SANH&SACEP, 2021). These regulatory instruments, however, are mainly considered separately and divided among the different administrative bodies.

At an international level, this challenge becomes even greater. For instance, biodiversity issues are addressed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the pollution of water and marine ecosystems by the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), the air pollution by the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), while climate change and depletion of ozone in the stratosphere, by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Montreal Protocol (Sutton *et al.* , 2019).

In addition, it is also believed that this fragmentation across nitrogen forms, institutions and policies has resulted in similar challenges faced by farmers, industries, conservation managers and other stakeholders. Researchers agree that this fragmentation has contributed substantially to the barriers to change respectively (Sutton et al. 2019). This has also been recognized by UN member states in the UNEA 4/14 and 5/2 resolutions which request consideration of the case to establish an intergovernmental coordination mechanism for nitrogen policies.

3.2.4. Lack of coordination

One of the major gaps in nitrogen management in South Asia is the lack of, or poor, coordination mechanisms between ministries or departments for building an integrated response to the nitrogen challenge. As mentioned earlier, a response to address nitrogen threats tends to be split across multiple ministries, making it difficult to coordinate action.

Coordination among countries across South Asia to minimize cross border effects and improve coordinated efforts for sustainable nitrogen management is also lacking.

There is also insufficient understanding on how scientific communities interact with policy mechanisms in the region. This leads to further challenge of linking nitrogen forms, expert communities and policy mechanisms. Bridging efforts across these areas at national and regional levels will be fundamental to advance efforts in sustainable nitrogen management.

Given the increasing threats of nitrogen pollution and considering the transboundary nature of nitrogen pollution there is an urgent need for a coherent and science-based policy responses supported by regional and global coordination and cooperation. Nitrogen science and policies need to come together across multiple threats.

3.2.5. Lack of regionally appropriate guidance for better management of nitrogen

The SACEP-SANH report (2021) also outlines that the South Asian region lacks an appropriate guidance for better management of nitrogen. Appropriate guidelines play a key role in directing management decisions in nitrogen use efficiency and controlling nitrogen emission from its different sources. There is a need to develop guidance to maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs within the different forms of nitrogen. This would also assist the management system to apply, where appropriate, the best available techniques for preventing and reducing nitrogen emissions.

Currently, there is no uniform methodology and protocol for nitrogen use in the region for any sector. An integrated approach for nitrogen management requires a guidance that covers all forms of nitrogen and other sectors.

3.2.6. Lack of economic incentives and marketing mechanism for nutrient recovery and recycling

South Asian countries lack sufficient economic incentives for sustainable nitrogen management. They also lack technologies that make nutrient recovery in a form and a price which is attractive

for both producers and farmers. This situation, however, is changing as new technologies are developed, especially given the recent tripling of fertilizer prices between autumn 2021 and early 2023. To accelerate the transition to recover valuable nitrogen resources and reduce nitrogen waste, significant investment is needed, which will ultimately pay for itself, by saving nitrogen resources.

Emissions markets, such as those for greenhouse gases, could be a source of financial support for improving sustainable nitrogen management, while finance options for sustainable nitrogen management projects with development banks, “NitroFinance”, need to be developed. While emissions markets have received much interest in efforts to reduce greenhouse gases emissions, they currently receive less interest in improving nutrient management through nitrogen recovery and use in South Asia.

Unless there is a market interest in the recovered nitrogen products, motivation for recovery may be low. This also points to the need for regulatory incentives, such as to require that synthetic nitrogen fertilizers include a minimum percentage of recycled nitrogen compounds, as has already been done for petrol in some countries (e.g., minimum 10% bioethanol in petrol).

One of the approaches under the market mechanism is to introduce taxes on the sources of leaking nutrients, to raise their price and motivate more careful use. International environmental law allows such a restriction to be imposed on polluters. In the context of current unprecedented high fertilizer prices, especially given current use of widespread fertilizer subsidies, a more nuanced approach, may be to use differential subsidies, with the best subsidies for the mobilization of nitrogen recovery and for products containing a sufficient percentage of nitrogen recovered from existing organic sources.

4. Rationale, Background and the Process for Developing the Roadmap

As stated above, the South Asia region is faced with and experiencing severe environmental pressures compounded with ineffective management of nitrogen. The public health effects and ecological impacts of the pollution caused by nitrogen emissions provide clear justification for policy measures and actions to decrease such environmental pressures. Policies at all levels, whether they are national, regional or international, have a key role in promoting adequate nutrient management.

The fragmentation of nitrogen policies between multiple ministries, described above, makes it difficult to coordinate action. This has contributed substantially to the barriers to change. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a more coherent policy framework for sustainable nitrogen management, which is also required by the UNEA resolutions relevant to nitrogen including UNEA 4/14 and 5/24 resolutions. This South Asia Roadmap on Sustainable Nitrogen Management is an

initial step towards policy coherence and coordinated actions at national and regional level in South Asia region.

In addition, this Roadmap has been developed in 2022-2023 following two years of high prices of nitrogen fertilizer. At the time that the UNEA 4/14 resolution was adopted, the global fertilizer price was around 1 USD per kg nitrogen. As a result of global instability, including the war in Ukraine, fertilizer prices have reached around 3 USD per kg nitrogen. Nitrogen prices are closely coupled to energy markets, and increased prices of natural gas has been reflected in increased prices of nitrogen compounds. The present document is therefore very timely, as the economic value of wasted nitrogen resources was in late 2023 about three times in the prices 2020, while farmers and others struggle to afford sufficient nitrogen and other fertilizers. It means that the motivation for sustainable nitrogen management is even stronger than it was before.

Furthermore, as a result of decarbonization activities for climate mitigation, there is increased interest in up-scaling NH₃ as a nitrogen-based fuel. Transporting of hydrogen is difficult, and NH₃ becomes an attractive option where burning produces N₂ plus water. Apart from the substantial risks for additional nitrogen pollution due to leakage of NH₃, the use of NH₃ as a fuel is likely to increase nitrogen prices further, as markets are ready to pay more for NH₃ as a fuel than as a fertilizer. This expectation may imply further struggles ahead for governments subsidizing fertilizer supply and farmers fertilizing their fields, as fertilizers become increasingly expensive. This emerging change trends highlight the necessity of a roadmap in promoting sustainable nitrogen management with a focus on accelerating action to reduce nitrogen waste by 2030.

Development of this roadmap is a result of an intensive consultation process facilitated by the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the South Asia Nitrogen Hub (SANH). It was supported by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI-GCRF) and has aimed to tackle the nitrogen challenge by promoting science-policy partnership and developing policy dialogue on nitrogen management in the region. The roadmap involves the participation of all eight-member countries in South Asia.

The starting point for developing the roadmap was the preparation of the joint report by SACEP and SANH on South Asia nitrogen policy landscape (SANH-SACEP, 2021). That report outlines the impacts, trends, and drivers of nitrogen pollution/waste in south Asia, providing a thorough overview of available nitrogen related policies in the region and their characteristics. It highlights potential gaps and opportunities and makes recommendations for a South Asia roadmap that will position South Asia as a global leader in sustainable nitrogen management.

5. Way Forward: Framework for Action on Sustainable Nitrogen Management

5.1. Vision

The vision of the roadmap is To ensure a sustainable nitrogen future for South Asia where the environment is healthy, the society is climate resilient and the benefits of nitrogen essential for all people are delivered in an economically effective way.

5.2. Mission

The mission of the roadmap is To promote national coordination and regional cooperation in South Asia in the field of nitrogen management, to catalyse, enable and galvanize coordinated actions by Governments, involving all stakeholders including the scientific community, and to support evidence-based policy and decision making in the protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources through efficient use of nitrogen.

5.3. Objectives

This roadmap aims to set the regional policy framework for actions with clear and measurable targets to promote sustainable nitrogen management in South Asia and for this purpose motivate the necessary change by national actions, networking, knowledge and technology sharing, as well as by mutual learning among member countries in the region. The key objectives of the roadmap are to:

- 1. Reduce adverse effects of nitrogen pollution** to the levels that are not harmful to the environment and human health by promoting circularity with a much higher level of nitrogen recovery and reuse than at present (Base year is to be determined by the country).
- 2. Enhance the efficiency of nitrogen use** to harness multiple environmental benefits, including for clean air, clean water, climate resilience, healthy lives, and flourishing biodiversity, **noting that baseline is to be determined by each country.**
- 3. Improve sustainable food supply and quality, reduce food loss/waste and save money** by making better use of nitrogen, reducing nitrogen waste while enhancing food waste management, and promoting recovery and reuse of existing nitrogen resources.
- 4. Promote innovation in sustainable nitrogen management** that can contribute to economic development while building smart connections across the nitrogen cycle, including **investment on research and development to enhance** technological and policy innovation.

5. **Secure adequate means of implementation**, including capacity building, financial resources, [access to and transfer of technology](#), technical and scientific cooperation, equitably available to all members of the South Asia region.

6. **Enhance public awareness** on impacts of inefficient nitrogen use among all relevant stakeholders, including capacity building and technical assistance programmes, to encourage behavioral change. [Suggestion to move this to be the first objective]

6.4. Principles

The roadmap is developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. **Human rights based-targets and actions:** The roadmap acknowledges the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and therefore the implementation of the roadmap will follow a human right based approach.

2. **Gender equity:** Successful implementation of the roadmap will depend on ensuring gender equity and empowerment of women and girls and reducing inequities.

3. **Sovereign equality:** Under the roadmap the sovereign equality and prominence of all member states will be respected and preserved.

4. **National circumstances, priorities, and capabilities:** The targets and actions identified by the roadmap are regional in nature. Each Party would contribute to attaining the targets of the roadmap in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and capabilities.

5. **Science-based approach:** Recognizing the role of science and technology, the roadmap follows the science-based approach, using the best available science, data and information, leveraging science, technology and innovation including cooperation between scientists and policymakers.

6. **Indigenous knowledge and local wisdom:** Acknowledging the important roles that Indigenous knowledge and local wisdom have in sustainable nitrogen management, policies will ensure that the traditional knowledge and local wisdom of the local communities in sustainable nutrient management, their values and best practices are respected, documented and improved.

7. **Sustainability:** Maximizing the positive effects of reactive nitrogen (N_r) and, at the same time, mitigating the negative impacts of its use on the environment and human health, including the co-benefits for carbon neutrality, climate mitigation and adaptation.

8. **Integrated approach:** Synergies between multiple policy domains, such as air pollution, climate change, freshwater and marine environment, soil, biodiversity, health and food security would contribute to and promote sustainable nitrogen management and help in the implementation of the roadmap in a more efficient and effective manner.

9. **Partnerships and coordination:** To promote sustainable nitrogen management in the region, partnerships and coordination among South Asian countries, regional and international players, private sector, academia, civil society organizations, informal sectors and the public are encouraged at the national, regional and international levels.

10. **Cost effective:** Costs will be proportional to the value of the objective to be achieved including affordability and environmental dimensions.

11. **Fair to users:** measures to reduce nitrogen loss need to take into account the practical constraints and opportunities available in the region.

12. **Track progress:** Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the roadmap implementation and follow-up actions would enhance the implementation of the roadmap.

6.5. Targets

6.5.1. Shared Targets Across Society

The shared targets of this roadmap build on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF, Targets 7 and 18, CBD, 2023a), and the Colombo Declaration, with a focus on at least halving wasteful nitrogen pollution, while simultaneously recognizing the multiple co-benefits that go beyond biodiversity to include the multiple benefits for food security, climate, human health and economy through reductions in air pollution, water pollution, tropospheric ozone, human health and economy. The reference period is taken as 2011-2020, where data are available, unless otherwise indicated, consistent with the Monitoring Framework for the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD, 2023b). Concerning the proposed targets, all need to be determined by the governments.

Successful achievement of the targets will depend on active contributions from international partners, including for appropriate financing and technical assistance in capacity building, as described in section 7.

This roadmap has therefore the following shared targets across society:

Target 1

Reduced nitrogen pollution from all sources: Reduce the negative impact of nitrogen pollution from all sources [by 2030], to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative negative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment as a contribution to halving pollution globally according to country's own context, including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use (based on GBF Target 7),¹ while seeking to harness and quantify the simultaneous co-benefits of working toward this target for food security, human health and economy through mitigation of climate change, air pollution, water pollution and tropospheric ozone.

¹ CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 GBF: „TARGET 7: Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: (a) by reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half, including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use.“

Target 2

Incentivize sustainable nitrogen management: Identify by 2025, and reform incentives, including **nitrogen related** subsidies, **harmful for environment** ~~related to nitrogen~~, in a proportionate, just, fair, effective and equitable way, while, as far as possible and as appropriate, substantially and progressively reducing **harmful incentives** ~~them~~ by 2030, starting with the most harmful ones, and scale up positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (based on GBF Target 18)², seeking to continually review existing fertilizer subsidies and possible alternatives that offer simultaneous benefits for food security, environment and health through sustainable nitrogen management.

Target 3

Benefit of actions identified: With assistance of international partners, Identify by 2030 the net economic benefit of national actions for sustainable nitrogen management including for strengthening food security and climate resilience, maintaining and restoring biodiversity and reducing air pollution, water pollution and tropospheric ozone reduction, as a basis to review progress and to inform the reform of subsidies, incentives and other policies for the period 2030 to 2040.

Target 4

Improved public awareness: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on sustainable nitrogen management as a continuous effort and by 2030, ensure that in the South Asia region the relevant knowledge and awareness on sustainable nitrogen management and living in harmony with nature, is increased.

6.5.2. Sector based targets

As mentioned in previous sections, agriculture, transport and industry, energy and organic residues are the major source of nitrogen and should play a pivotal role in reducing such emissions. The following targets are identified as relevant for these sectors:

6.5.3. Agriculture

Target 5

² CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 GBF: „TARGET 18 Identify by 2025, and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies, harmful for biodiversity, in a proportionate, just, fair, effective and equitable way, while substantially and progressively reducing them by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030, starting with the most harmful incentives, and scale up positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.“

Reduced nitrogen pollution from agriculture sector: By 2027, potential environmental risks associated with the wasteful or excessive use of nitrogen fertilizer,³³ particularly in high risk areas, are identified and countries adopt nationally coherent policies and good practices to reduce nitrogen pollution from agriculture sector.

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³³ This includes agricultural practices where nitrogen resources are wasted through losses to the atmosphere and water, which can also be exacerbated by excessive use of nitrogen resources (including fertilizers, manures and other organic residues) beyond the needs of crop production. Higher levels of nitrogen input tend to increase the fraction that is wasted to the environment.

Target 6

Nitrogen Use Efficiency: Improve nitrogen (nutrient) use efficiency in crop production by at least 20% by 2030 (in relative terms)⁴ compared with values for a reference period⁵ and thereby reducing the nitrogen waste and improve the crop productivity.

Target 7

Smart livestock farming: Improved nutrient management in livestock farming and thereby reducing wasteful nitrogen losses⁶ to the environment from livestock farms, including feed management, manure handling and storing at farm, processing and spreading in the fields, including adoption of regional guidance for South Asia to be agreed and published by 2030.

Target 8

More areas under sustainable cropping systems: By 2030, increase the area under sustainable cropping systems, such as 'integrated crop-livestock systems'⁷, conservation agriculture (add a footnote), and agro forestry to enhance soil health, increase productivity and reduce environmental impact (link to the sub-indicator of SDG 2.4.1).

6.5.4. Transport, Industry and Energy

Target 9

Reduced nitrogen oxide emissions from transport and industry sector: By 2050, reduce NO_x emissions from transport and industry sector by 50% (consistency with GBF Target 7,⁸ but allowing more time) through enforcement and monitoring of current and new vehicles emissions

⁴ The change is specified as a relative change, e.g. 25% becomes 30% (i.e., a relative increase of 20%). For specific indicators, see section 6.

⁵ In accordance with the Global Biodiversity Framework improvements for 2030 compared with a reference period of 2011-2020 (CBD, 2023b).

⁶ Losses of N_r and N₂ compounds to the environment are considered as a waste of nitrogen resources, which is the case in livestock farming. *A specific exception applies in the energy sector where combustion of ammonia (or other processing) recovers and uses the stored energy, so that such N₂ losses are not considered wasteful. Emissions of reactive nitrogen associated with use of ammonia as a fuel are however considered a waste of resources.*

⁷ Integrated crop-livestock systems are those that seek to link the benefits of both crop and livestock systems in a coupled way, especially so as to maximize the recovery of nitrogen and other nutrients from livestock manures for crop production, while minimizing the wasteful loss of nitrogen resources to the environment.

⁸ GBF Target 7 refers to all nutrients, which include nitrogen compounds, including nitrogen oxides, ammonia, nitrates and other nitrogen forms.

standards and by adapting various innovative technologies like use of alternative/cleaner fuels, and low emission vehicles such as electric or hybrid vehicles.

Target 10

Increase the share of clean energy: By 2040, Increase the share of clean fuels (Footnote for clarification) and renewable energy (to at least 15% of consumption) across the different sectors of the economy.

Target 11

Reducing energy related nitrogen emissions: By 2050, ensure reduction of nitrogen emissions by **at least** 50% (consistency with GBF target 7)⁹ across energy supply chains, **including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use**, moving towards a carbon-neutral economy, while aiming to avoid increased nitrogen emissions associated with the use of ammonia as an emerging fuel.

Target 12

Regional cooperation on research and technology: By 2030, enhance regional cooperation through SACEP and other available mechanisms to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promoting investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology.

6.5.5. Wastewater

Target 13

Improved wastewater management: By 2030, ~~minimize~~ **reduce** the wasteful loss of nitrogen and other nutrients from untreated wastewater **to the level that is not harmful to the environment** (Linked to SACEP Roadmap for Sustainable Waste Management **Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy for the South Asia Seas Region, target 5**)¹⁰, ~~halving~~ **minimize** the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse of nitrogen resources in wastewater from all source sectors, including operation of wastewater nitrogen recovery facilities to supplement fertilizer supply (linked to SDG 6.3.).

⁹ See note 9. Check the number. GBF Target 7 calls for reduction of excess nutrient loss to the environment by at least half.

¹⁰ <http://www.sacep.org/pdf/Reports-Technical/2019.11.06-Marine-and-Coastal-Biodiversity-Strategy-for-the-South-Asian-Seas-Region.pdf> <http://www.sacep.org/pdf/Reports-Technical/2019.11.06-Roadmap-for-Sustainable-Waste-Management-and-Resource-Circulation-in-South-Asia,-2019-2030.pdf> : „Targets to be achieved by 2030 to please check the text“.

Target 14

Established standards for nutrients: By 2030, establish criteria and guidelines of nitrogen and other nutrients for all industrial and domestic sewage discharges including commercial facilities, small industries, hotels and households.

Target 15

Reduced nitrogen pollution from coastal and marine sources and activities: By 2030, prevent and significantly reduce nitrogen pollution from coastal and marine sources and activities including shipping and fisheries to the levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health.

6.5.6. Consumption

Target 16

Dietary change and reduction of food waste: By 2030, achieve 50% reduction of food-losses and food-waste to reduce nitrogen emission¹¹ and make efforts to reduce the share of animal based protein while meeting dietary requirements.

6.5.7. Municipal Solid Waste and Recycling

Target 17

Increase the useful recovery of nitrogen and other nutrients from organic residues including from municipal solid waste, providing an opportunity to reduce the Nr and N₂ release to the environment, (with the ambition to reduce losses to the environment by X% by 2050).

6.6. Key Actions

To meet the above targets, it is agreed to conduct the following activities:

¹¹ A reduction in animal product consumption as well as food losses and food waste bring reduction in emissions of Nr and GHGs, as well as health benefits.

6.6.1. Shared Actions across society

a) Innovative Policies: Explore and identify policies and practices across sectors that reduce N_r waste to the environment from all sources, taking account of NH_3 , N_2O , NO and di-nitrogen emissions to air and of NO_3^- , NH_4^+ and other nitrogen losses to water, recognizing the substantial environmental, food-security and wider economic benefit of reducing these losses.

b) Inter-ministerial nitrogen coordination mechanism: Establish an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to coordinate actions and enhance synergies between multiple nitrogen policy domains, taking note of the linkages between environment, climate, agriculture, livestock, fisheries/aquaculture and food security, wastewater, municipal solid waste and other residue management, transport, industry, finance, circular economy and other ministries as necessary.

c) National nitrogen budgets: Develop national nitrogen budgets, which can be helpful in assessing nitrogen use efficiencies across the economy and identifying the scale of nitrogen resources available for recovery, to help prioritize investment.

d) Nitro-Finance: Explore the opportunities for development finance for sustainable nitrogen management as an investment approach to mobilize projects that can ultimately save billions of USD annually and increase economic resilience from halving nitrogen waste, simultaneously improving environmental quality and food security, while reducing dependence on new fixation and import of nitrogen fertilizers.

e) Integrated national nitrogen action plans: Develop cross-sectoral national action plans for sustainable nitrogen management by 2027¹², that address the targets identified in this roadmap (Colombo Declaration, para. 3.2; building on UNEP/EA.5/Res.2 and consistent with GBF).¹³ The national action plan for each SACEP member country to be subsequently updated as deemed necessary. The national action plan and its updated versions will be shared with the SACEP and its member countries, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme as a contribution to implementing Resolution 2 of the Fifth UN Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.5/Res.2).

f) Fertilizer subsidies: Review national nitrogen and other fertilizer subsidies by 2027 with a view to accelerating reduction in nitrogen waste and improving nitrogen use efficiency with simultaneous benefits for environment, food security, climate and economic resilience.

g) Innovative options for nitrogen subsidies and regulation: explore innovative options for subsidizing and regulating nitrogen and other fertilizers, as a basis to inform the 2027 review noted in paragraph (b), including the opportunity for:

¹² This roadmap can inform the development of National Action Plans.

¹³ “nitrogen waste” is taken as the sum of all wasteful losses of nitrogen to the environment, including denitrification to di-nitrogen which is equally a waste of valuable nitrogen resources (ECE/EB.AIR/149), and excepting innovation where storage of nitrogen compounds as fuels and their conversion to di-nitrogen harnesses energy as part of decarbonization strategies.

- i. **economic incentives to increase the amounts of nitrogen recovered** from organic residues/wastes in fertilizers, fostering innovation in the nitrogen circular economy.
- ii. **incentives and or regulation to promote or require nitrogen recovery in urban wastewater treatment**, accelerating the reduction of pollution while stimulating innovative fertilizer production.
- iii. **enhanced infrastructure and logistics to distribute nitrogen** and other fertilizer produced from organic materials including wastewater, municipal solid waste, manure and other organic residues.
- iv. **regulations that require a minimum fraction of nitrogen from recovered organic residues** to be included in all traded synthetic fertilizer, where this is otherwise mainly made from newly fixed atmospheric nitrogen.
- v. **regulations that require the use of enhanced efficiency fertilizers (EEFs) and fertilizer additives demonstrated to reduce nitrogen pollution**, including natural and manufactured urease and nitrification inhibitors.
- vi. **incentives and training for farmers in the economical use of synthetic and natural fertilizer sources**, including provision of tools such as nitrogen balance calculators, leaf colour sensing (including colour charts and electronic applications), and methods for reducing wasteful nitrogen losses and increasing nitrogen use efficiency, including fertilizer deep placement.
- vii. **incentives and training for farmers wishing to avoid synthetic fertilizers**, including natural, agro-ecological and organic farming systems.
- viii. **education on the relationships between nitrogen and other nutrients**, promoting understanding of the importance of balanced plant, animal and human nutrition.

h) Measurement and data collection: Establish a harmonized and long-term measurement network with wide spatial coverage for monitoring emissions, concentrations and atmospheric deposition of individual components of N_r.¹⁴ To establish and sustain such multi-media, multi-pollutant monitoring programs, especially within regulatory bodies, there is a need for capacity building. Such efforts also require to be additionally supported with further research and development for improved analytical techniques and low-cost and readily deployable sensors.

6.6.2. Sector based Initiatives

6.6.2.1. Agriculture

¹⁴ This includes NH_x (gaseous NH₃ and PM-NH₄⁺ in particulate matter), NO_y (nitrogen oxides, nitric acid and nitrate), nitrous oxide in air, and of N_r levels in water bodies, including nitrate, ammonium, dissolved and particulate organic nitrogen, in order to be able to collect relevant data, with the objectives of characterizing baselines, detecting trends, and informing adaptive management and appropriate policy responses including decisions on future investment opportunities.

- a) Reform and enforce the fertilizer regulations:** Understanding that the fertilizer regulations are pivotal instruments for reducing nitrogen emissions from agriculture, review and strictly enforce the fertilizer regulation based on environmental protection and nature conservation. Reform should be informed by the review mentioned at paragraph 5.6.1 f.
- b) Promote innovative technologies and practices to improve fertilizer use efficiency:** Explore policy options and promote innovative technologies and practices to improve nitrogen use efficiency like using urea super granules, enhanced efficiency fertilizers, site specific fertilizer guidelines, fertilizer sources, deep placement of urea, leaf colour charts, fertilizer applications etc
- c) Limiting or avoiding fertilizer application in high-risk areas:** Reduce nitrogen pollution by avoiding or limiting fertilizer application areas, *or by encouraging site specific (precision) fertilizer application on areas of the farms* classified as higher risk in terms of nitrogen losses, particularly in the vicinity of ditches and streams and on steeply sloping areas.
- d) Livestock housing:** Encourage livestock housing with regularly cleaned surfaces, which provides an opportunity to collect and use manure and urine as valuable nutrients, reducing wasteful nitrogen losses to the environment and supporting food security.
- e) Cover the livestock excreta during storage:** all storage of livestock excreta should be covered prior to land application to reduce substantial nitrogen being wasted as ammonia emissions to air, and to establish awareness programmes to encourage covered manure storage.
- f) Livestock feed management:** Improve livestock feed management such as reducing feed waste, using more efficient feed conversion technologies, and supplementing feed with natural protein sources.
- g) Make better use of on-farm nutrient resources:** Establish an appropriate mix of policies, regulations and incentives that value on-farm nutrient resources and stimulate the effective use of both plant- and animal-based nutrient residues (including mulches, manures and other residue), as a means to maximize nutrient recovery and reduce dependence on fertilizers produced from fresh nitrogen fixation.
- h) Reduce burning of manures (crop residues):** Encourage practices that reduce burning of manures (crop residues), allowing them to instead be incorporated in the soil. Practices such as anaerobic digestion provide an alternative to dung burning as an energy source, while leaving a wet bioslurry residue which cannot be burnt and so is more likely to be incorporated in the soil. Combining bioslurry with compost or biochar will also help to avoid losses of NH_4^+ by NH_3 volatilisation.
- i) Use of N₂ fixing crops (e.g. legumes) in crop rotation:** Encourage the inclusion of N fixing plants (e.g., legumes) as part of a crop rotation or by including legumes as a source of BNF

within a mixed crop. Legume-inclusive production systems will help in reducing the emission of different N_r species from the agricultural nitrogen cycle, especially ammonia and nitrous oxide.

j) Adoption of methods and policies to reduce nutrient losses from aquaculture: Nitrogen and other nutrient losses to water from aquaculture can be substantial and there is a need to invest in methods and policies to reduce this wasted nitrogen, including guidance to optimize nitrogen inputs, avoidance of dumping and run-off, and exploration of options to recover nitrogen as a source of fertilizers.

k) Research and evidence gathering: Mobilize further research and evidence gathering on how sustainable nitrogen management in food and bioenergy production systems can simultaneously provide environmental, economic and food security benefits.

l) Assessment of barriers: Assess the barriers to sustainable nitrogen management, to inform the development of policies, regulations, incentives and communication programmes, as appropriate, as a means to overcome such barriers.

6.6.2.2. Transport and Industry

a) **Develop sustainable transportation systems:** Enhance development of sustainable transportation systems and low emission vehicles, such as public transportation both within and between cities, bicycles and more eco-friendly ship engine. A move toward electrification of vehicles provides opportunities to reduce nitrogen oxide and other nitrogen emissions, but that this may be offset by increased emissions from the electricity generating sector until a sufficient increase in non-combustion renewable energy sources can be achieved.

b) **Strengthen emissions standards:** Further improve and strengthen emission regulations and standards for industrial nitrogen emissions, including emission limits, monitoring and reporting requirements.

c) **Improve wastewater management strategies:** review/adopt wastewater management strategies based on the concept of minimizing generation, adequately treating and reusing wastewater on a collective or individual basis.

d) **Develop nutrient recovery technologies:** Devise, promote investment, scale-up and deploy nitrogen capture and recovery technologies. As appropriate, available wastewater treatment technologies should be assessed and incorporated into existing and new treatment plants, with an emphasis on nutrient recovery.

e) **Improve marine and coastal water quality standard and pollution reduction strategies:** Develop and implement regional and national marine and coastal water quality standards and adopt nitrogen and nutrient pollution reduction strategies, building on international agreements covering pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes, including the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL).

f) Develop best management practices to restore and maintain coastal water quality: Adopt ecosystem-based approaches such as integrated watershed and coastal area management and integrated coastal zone management to protect coastal waters from nitrogen and other nutrient discharges from land-based sources and activities¹⁵. Restoration and protection of coastal vegetation will be essential in reducing inputs of nutrients to coastal waters from land-based sources and activities.

6.6.2.3. Energy

a) Phaseout coal power plants: Move away from a reliance on coal toward an energy mix largely based on clean fuels and renewable energy sources, in accordance with the pledges given at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences of Parties (COPs), to stop new coal builds, end international coal financing, phase down and phase out unabated coal use, and transition to clean energy. Understanding that coal builds are one of the main sources of NO_x emissions, a phaseout strategy with gradual reduction of fossil fuel based power generation will reduce NO_x emissions in the long term.

b) Assess pollution risks associated with ammonia as a fuel: Promote investment in efforts to assess the pollution risks associated with NH₃ as an emerging fuel and to contribute, as appropriate, to accelerating the development of technologies that can reduce NH₃, N₂O and NO_x emissions from NH₃ combustion practices. Scientific studies shows that the use of NH₃ as an emerging fuel, associated with efforts to decarbonize energy systems, comes with major risks, both for pollution and future fertilizer prices.

c) Assess pollution risks associated with the shipping transport of ammonia: Assess, as appropriate the pollution risks of substantially upscaling shipping transport of NH₃, especially in relation to the impact of possible shipping accidents.

d) Assess the economic risk associated with using ammonia as a fuel: Investigate, as appropriate the possible economic risks associated with a rapid emergence of NH₃ as a fuel, which could distort market prices of nitrogen fertilizers, increasing costs to farmers and to governments subsidizing fertilizer supply, both of which would make more urgent the need to transition toward sustainable nitrogen management.

e) Nutrient recovery: Invest in methods that look to maximize nitrogen and other nutrients recovery associated with anaerobic digestion for biogas production, including the production of fertilizers from recovered nitrogen as a contribution to stimulating a more circular economy.

f) Promote renewable energy in agricultural farms: Promote renewable energy in rural areas particularly for agricultural production, which will help in reducing GHG emissions from energy carriers. Energy use associated with agriculture is a source of nitrogen emission, since it relies on the use of fossil fuels for tillage, transportation and grain drying, for the manufacture of fertilizers, pesticides and equipment used as agricultural inputs, and for generating electricity used on farms. Different types of renewable energies are available in agricultural farms including biomass, solar energy and wind farms.

¹⁵ More explanation of coastal zones and coastal area management.

6.6.2.4. Resources/Residues/Waste and Recycling

Past language has tended to describe organic residues as ‘wastes’ to be disposed of, such as municipal solid waste, wastewater and animal wastes (manures). In the context of the circular economy, it is agreed that these residues should be recognized as resources for recovery of their carbon, nitrogen and other nutrient value. In this context, “nitrogen waste” represents that which is ultimately lost to the environment, including NH₃, N₂O, di-nitrogen, NO₃⁻ and organic nitrogen compounds, making their recovery difficult or impossible. To reduce the nitrogen waste from organic residues and use it as resource, the following actions should be taken:

- a) **Assess the value of nitrogen wasted:** Assess the extent of nitrogen wasted by dumping and point-source release and estimate the national value of resource waste according to current fertilizer prices, as a basis to mobilize investment in nutrient recovery approaches.
- b) **Reduce burning of forestry and crop biomass:** Noting that burning of biomass can release NO_x to the atmosphere, therefore work to adopt specific measures to reduce in the burning of forestry and crop biomass.
- c) **Implement recovery of organic residues/waste to drive the circular economy:** Work to review available approaches for the recovery of nitrogen from organic residues/wastes, including by anaerobic digestion combined with NH₃ stripping, the production of nitrogen containing salts such as struvite and ammonium sulphate. One option is the use of biochar produced from crop residues that are currently wasted (e.g. burnt in the fields) to capture NO_x and produce a slow-release fertiliser. Support also organic residue/waste recycling through biogas and composting.
- d) **Understand the fate of nitrogen in composting organic residues:** As appropriate, assess the fate of nitrogen in composting of organic residues, including quantifying the loss of carbon and nitrogen and other nutrients.
- e) **Implement pilot projects for nitrogen recovery:** Subject to the availability of capital investment, establish pilot demonstration projects at scale for the recovery of nitrogen from wastewater, digestate and other organic residues, demonstrating the financial and environmental case for further investment and upscaling of such nutrient recovery facilities.
- f) **Conduct pilot demonstrations of the logistics:** Subject to the availability of capital investment, to establish pilot demonstrations of the logistics of collecting recovered nitrogen and other nutrients from waste/residue recovery facilities for incorporation as a minimum percentage share of synthetic fertilizers otherwise made with newly fixed nitrogen.
- g) **Assess performance:** Subject to the availability of investment, assess the performance of fertilizer products that combine newly fixed and recovered nitrogen resources, including the combination of manufactured urea and a minimum share of recovered ammonium sulfate or other fertilizer products.

- h) **Other opportunities:** Explore other opportunities to increase rates of nitrogen recovery and re-use, including systems that enhance the nitrogen value of organic residues, especially where nitrogen is fixed locally using renewable energy sources.

6.6.3. Consumption

a) **Understand the value of nitrogen loss through food production and consumption:** Food production and consumption is a major source of nitrogen emissions. Therefore, there is an urgent need to assess the potential value of nitrogen loss through food production and consumption and its impacts on environment and human health in South Asia.

b) **Develop integrated food policy for diet change:** Develop an integrated food policy to encourage diet change favoring the increase share of plant based proteins considering the dietary requirements. Shifting people's current dietary intakes to environmentally sustainable dietary patterns requires considerable behavioral change through policy initiatives and public awareness. There are different types of intervention possible, ranging from banning certain products, to imposing taxes on certain products or working with stakeholders to enable consumers to make better choices, labeling the food products for their environmental impacts, and education campaigns to reduce demand for food production.

c) **Reduce of food waste:** Understanding that food is wasted during production, distribution, processing and consumption, reduction of these losses will improve NUE of food supply chain and fewer nutrients would be needed to produce the same amount of food consumed. UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target seeks to halve global food waste at consumer and retail levels by 2030. Based on these commitments governments may set broader ambitions including the elimination of avoidable waste and work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030. Governments may develop national and sub-regional roadmaps for food waste management with mandatory targets and measures, including recycling of food waste and imposing tax on food wastage.

6.6.4. Exchange of knowledge and best practices

Possible actions related to the exchange of knowledge and best practices include:

- a) Share information on approaches and tools to reduce wasteful losses of reactive nitrogen to the environment across multiple nitrogen domains and various sectors of economy.
- b) Facilitate the exchange of best practices and solutions through partnerships or multilateral activities aimed at accelerating action on nitrogen management, including by addressing trans-boundary nitrogen pollution;
- c) Facilitate academic exchanges, **access to** and **transfer sharing** of innovative technologies and **experiences** **promote technical and scientific cooperation** on matters related to nitrogen pollution in member countries and beyond.

6.6.5. Public awareness/capacity building and technical support

To garner support and buy-in for the roadmap, public awareness and education programmes directed at key stakeholders and the wider public are necessary. Key actions related to public awareness/capacity building and technical support include the following:

a) **Education programmes:** Integrating nitrogen into school and university curricula and providing professional training to the farmers and other relevant actors on the impacts of agriculture and inefficient fertilizer use on the environment, which are essential to encourage behavioral change.

b) **Technical assistance programmes** for farmers, which are necessary, not only for managing nutrients but to demonstrate how they stand to benefit from improved soil quality, increased yields, and cost savings. Providing greater technical assistance around nitrogen management is an excellent way to cost-effectively manage nutrients while also supporting improved livelihoods including for women. Technical assistance programmes should include demonstration projects as well as a strategy for replication and upscaling and associated financial plans that enable sustainability. In developing education and technical assistance programmes for farmers, it must be ensured that women and indigenous groups are adequately represented.

c) **Capacity building programmes** for and among relevant management professionals, government agencies, and other stakeholders, which are important conditions for the implementation of a successful nitrogen and other nutrient reduction strategy and should be based on an assessment of capacity needs at the local, national and regional levels. They should include training programmes on best management practices; technology transfer and information exchange; environmental and socio-economic monitoring and data management; assessments; strengthening laboratory capability; use of satellite remote sensing data; and strengthening country capacity to access funding. Of critical importance will be capacity for planning and scenario assessment of implementation of practices to control nitrogen pollution, and the forecasted desired outcomes to guide decision making.

6.6.6. Partnership

Successful implementation of the roadmap requires sound partnerships to be established with collaborating agencies both within and between countries. This should involve participation by stakeholders representing all stages of the policy cycle at all levels from local/national to sub-regional and regional to global and may include relevant government ministries and agencies, private sector, national, sub-regional technical institutions, academia, civil society organizations, sub regional political integration bodies, transboundary basin governance arrangements, and regional and international organizations, among others. The roadmap should draw on the work and support of these partner organizations, as they will be instrumental in implementing the

roadmap. They can contribute to development of an enabling conditions for implementation of the roadmap.

The development of public-private partnerships will be critical to support implementation of the roadmap in the targeted areas. Establishing science-policy partnership is also key to sustainable nitrogen management. This partnership can bring together the science community and policy makers to adopt and implement evidence-based policies, which would strengthen the capability of countries in implementing their work programmes.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

An appropriate system for **Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting** needs to be established at the national level, not only to make sure that the interventions towards achieving the targets are on track, but also for capturing and sharing lessons learned. Appropriate indicators also need to be further refined and agreed. Possible actions by countries may include:

- a) Develop national and sub-national inventories of nitrogen pollution as an input to prioritize sectors and activities to further promote measures to improve nitrogen management;
- b) Develop digital platforms for sharing open nitrogen data, building capacity and providing technical support;
- c) Share data collected, as appropriate, by collaborating with scientific entities, to support the analysis of nitrogen pollution and their sources at the regional level;
- d) Upon request from other member countries, share good practices on nitrogen monitoring, building upon the information provided by members, as appropriate.
- e) Upon request from other member countries, provide support to improving national capacities regarding nitrogen pollution and nitrogen pollution monitoring.
- f) Report on the status of nitrogen pollution to the SACEP Governing Council for further discussion and decisions. The report should outline the progress towards defined targets, improvements in management and effectiveness, improvements in enforcement and compliance of laws and regulations, information on planned additional national policies and measures to meet commitments beyond those in the roadmap, gaps and needs analyses.

6.1. Indicators

Assessment of progress in implementing the roadmap goals and targets will be made using a suite of appropriate indicators according to the nature of each target. A comprehensive set of harmonized indicators to be agreed by 2027, recognizing the need for flexibility in relation to country needs. Progress in the indicators in relation to reduction of nitrogen pollution and

improvement in efficiency may draw on agreed national, regional and international estimates, as available, with an emphasis on promoting consistency and coherency across South Asia. Where available, use of measured and monitored datasets is encouraged as independent validation of inventory and modelled estimates based on national and spatial datasets.

Capacity building and technical support are required for estimation and calculations of various indicators, for which international cooperation and assistance will be needed.

The following indicators are proposed for further testing as part of implementing the Roadmap. In each case, the availability of indicator estimates are noted, where future estimates may also depend on further financing. The goal is to include estimates at both national and South Asia scales.

- Total nitrogen pollution (sum of all nitrogen pollution forms) (mass of N per year) (excludes N₂ emissions)
- Total nitrogen waste (sum of all nitrogen pollution forms plus wasteful denitrification to N₂) (mass of N per year)¹⁶
- Component nitrogen emissions include ammonia (NH₃), di-nitrogen (N₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), leaching and run off of nitrate (NO₃⁻) and other reactive nitrogen forms. (all as mass of N per year)¹⁷.
- Nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) of crop systems may be expressed in several ways including the nitrogen in harvested grain divided by the total nitrogen inputs (fertilizer, manures, biological nitrogen fixation and atmospheric deposition). Tracking the relative progress of other variant NUE indicators is also of interest.

Further key indicators to be considered include:

- 1) Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE):
 - % of applied nitrogen effectively taken up by crops (in harvested product).
 - Nitrogen losses to the environment (leaching, runoff, and emissions).
- 2) Fertilizer use:
 - Total nitrogen fertilizer use per hectare of agricultural land
 - Adoption of precision agriculture techniques to optimize nitrogen application
- 3) Land Use and Nitrogen Management:
 - Proportion of agricultural land under sustainable nitrogen management practices
 - Conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use and its impact on nitrogen levels

¹⁶ Given the uncertainty in estimating di-nitrogen losses directly, this may also be estimated as the different between total N_r inputs and production of N in human food and other durable products. Denitrification of ammonia (NH₃) to N₂ by combustion is not considered wasteful where the energy is recovered and used.

¹⁷ Estimates of these flows are being made by the GCRF South Asia Nitrogen Hub for all South Asia countries for 2015 and for 2030 scenarios.

- 4) Environmental Impact:
 - Nitrate levels in groundwater and surface water
 - Emissions of N₂O, NH₃ and NO_x from agricultural and industrial sources
- 5) Eutrophication and Water Quality:
 - Frequency and severity of HABs in water bodies.
 - Concentrations of ammonia, nitrate in water bodies.
- 6) Human Health:
 - Nitrate levels in drinking water sources.
 - Incidence of health issues related to excessive nitrate consumption.
- 7) Biodiversity and Ecological Impact:
 - Nitrogen deposition in natural ecosystems.
 - Changes in plant and animal species diversity and abundance due to nitrogen pollution.
- 8) Policy and Regulation:
 - Existence and enforcement of regulations and policies related to nitrogen management
 - Government and industry investments in nitrogen reduction technologies and practices
- 9) Public Awareness and Education:
 - Participation in nitrogen reduction initiatives and campaigns.
- 10) Technological Advancements:
 - Adoption of nitrogen-efficient crop varieties.
 - Development and use of nitrogen sensors and real-time monitoring systems.
- 11) Economic Impact:
 - Cost-effectiveness of nitrogen management practices.
 - Economic benefits or losses associated with nitrogen-related environmental damage.
- 12) International / Regional Collaboration:
 - Participation in international agreements or initiatives addressing nitrogen pollution.
 - Collaboration on research and technology transfer related to nitrogen management.

Some of these key indicators should be tailored to the specific targets outlined in the roadmap and should be regularly monitored and evaluated to assess progress in nitrogen management and reduction efforts.

8. Options for Financial Support

The implementation of the roadmap will also be dependent on the availability of funds to implement activities and carry out assessments, and partnerships created, contributing in different ways. This may be greatly aided by the development of a framing around the concept of 'Nitro-Finance' (Section 5.6.1 d). There are different options for financial supports including, but not limited to, the following:

- a) **National funds:** National governments and other institutions will have to commit funds and incorporate the agreed plans into their national budgets.
- b) **Economic instruments** such as taxes, fees, bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, etc.

c) **Private sector investment:** Private sector investments can play an important role in implementing the roadmap if the enabling conditions are established. Enabling environment involves infrastructure issues, regulatory frameworks and financial access.

d) **Market-based solutions:** Markets can deliver pollution reduction targets at lower cost than traditional uniform command-and control approaches.

e) **Development banks investment:** There are national and international investment banks that can support sustainable nitrogen management through investment.

f) **External funds:** Leveraging funds from international donors and mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, trust funds and investment banks in the form of grants, soft loans, commercial loans or equity investments may supplement domestic resources available for pollution abatement financing.

The development of an innovative and affordable financial mechanism to assist in addressing nitrogen pollution is therefore a high priority. Each country may develop an investment plan that outlines and costs the priority actions to reduce nitrogen pollution. This investment plan may include, but is not limited to, economic and non-economic incentive programmes and innovative market-based solutions, economic instruments such as taxes, fees, bonds, debt-for-nature swaps, etc, potential investment opportunities and quantification of economic losses caused by nitrogen pollution.

9. Functions of South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) in Support of the Roadmap Implementation

Based on its mandate identified by the 1981 Colombo Declaration on the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and being the Secretariat for the South Asian Seas Programme, SACEP will function as the secretariat for the implementation of the Roadmap. It will be the agency to lead and coordinate the implementation and promotion of the roadmap and make it operative. This does not mean that SACEP will be in charge of implementing each one of the actions outlined by the roadmap, but rather, SACEP would work in coordination and collaboration between member countries, regional and global partners to support the implementation of the roadmap in South Asia and will endeavor to facilitate the following :

1. **Resource mobilization:** SACEP will utilize its capacity to secure new and additional financial and technical resources to enhance the implementation of the roadmap.
2. **Monitoring , evaluation and reporting:** SACEP will establish a **Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting** system to make sure that the interventions towards achieving the targets are on track.

SACEP will report to the Governing Council and as appropriate will publish the report for the public use.

3. Capacity building programmes: SACEP will facilitate technical assistance and capacity building to the member countries with a view to support the implementation of the roadmap.

4. Exchange of knowledge and best practices: As appropriate, SACEP will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices between member countries as well as scientific communities.

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[to be checked and finalized]

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Appendix: SANH-SACEP Policy Report



DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME OF SACEP

YEAR 2024 - 2025

		Annex XIII
		GC 16.SACEP/ NFP
		Funding Source
5.2.1	Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) in South Asia beyond 2020: Mainstreaming biodiversity for improved diets and nutrition	GEF, GBFF or other donors
5.2.2	Strengthening Sustainable Consumption and Production in South Asia	
	South Asia Forum on SCP	On-going (partners)
	Now linked to South Asia Forum on Environment	
	Sustainable Public Procurement	Funds expected from Donors and partners to carryout activities
	Sustainable buildings policy dialogue	
5.2.3	South Asia Forum on Environment	Donors and other partners
5.2.4	Waste Management	
	Implementation of Sub-regional Roadmap for Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circulation in South Asia and implementing pilot projects on sustainable waste management in the member countries	Funding to be secured from donor agencies such as IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET), UNEP
5.2.5	Environmental Data and Information Management System for South Asia	
	Revitalized SACEP website, enrichment of Data and Information System of SACEP with regular updates in the database	Managed in-house
5.2.6	Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia	Country contributions and donor funding

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME OF SACEP

YEAR 2024 - 2025

		Funding Source
5.2.7	Air Quality Concept Note developed by SACEP to establish a Regional Platform on Air Quality Management in South Asia (Could be implemented in conjunction with activities outlined in the Malé Declaration.)	India/Pakistan/Other possible donors such as UN Environment
5.2.8	Sustainable Nitrogen Management for South Asia As a partner of the South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) SACEP in consultation with the member countries developed the "South Asia Roadmap for Sustainable Nitrogen Management". Subject to adoption by 16GC-SACEP	UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) - Period of 5 Years
5.2.9	Adaptation to Climate Change Regional Capacity building and Knowledge sharing workshops to be convened	ADB/UNFCCC/NDCP
5.2.10	Explore possibilities of Accreditation to Global Funding Mechanisms	
5.2.11	South Asian Seas Programme (SASP)	IMO, OCPP
5.2.12	Plastic Management Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia Project (PLEASE)	World Bank

Annex XIII
GC 16.SACEP/ NFP

6 Financial Matters :

The status of recovery of Country Contribution arrears of SACEP todate is as follows :

Country	Arrears upto 1 Jan 2019	Agreed CC 2019	Received CC 2019	Arrears upto Dec 2019	Agreed CC 2020	Received CC 2020	Arrears upto Dec 2020
		US \$	US \$		US \$	US \$	US \$
Afghanistan	16,100.00	8,050.00	-	24,150.00	8,050.00	32,200.00	-
Bangladesh	67,054.24	23,430.00	46,835.00	43,649.24	23,430.00	67,079.24	-
Bhutan	-	3,555.00	3,555.00	-	3,555.00	3,555.00	-
India	63,700.00	31,850.00	31,850.00	63,700.00	31,850.00	95,550.00	-
Maldives	-	14,575.00	14,575.00	-	14,575.00	14,575.00	-
Nepal	56,350.00	8,050.00	-	64,400.00	8,050.00	-	72,450.00
Pakistan	48,932.79	31,850.00	31,850.00	48,932.79	31,850.00	31,777.81	49,004.98
Sri Lanka	17,842.00	17,842.00	16,220.00	19,464.00	17,842.00	16,220.00	21,086.00
TOTAL	269,979.03	139,202.00	144,885.00	264,296.03	139,202.00	260,957.05	142,540.98

Country	Arrears upto Dec 2020	Agreed CC 2021	Received CC 2021	Arrears upto Dec 2021	Agreed CC 2022	Received CC 2022	Arrears upto Dec 2022
	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$
Afghanistan	-	8,050.00	-	8,050.00	8,050.00	-	16,100.00
Bangladesh	-	23,430.00	-	23,430.00	23,430.00	46,254.00	606.00
Bhutan	-	3,555.00	-	3,555.00	3,555.00	-	7,110.00
India	-	31,850.00	-	31,850.00	31,850.00	-	63,700.00
Maldives	-	14,575.00	-	14,575.00	14,575.00	-	29,150.00
Nepal	72,450.00	8,050.00	80,500.00	-	8,050.00	8,050.00	-
Pakistan	49,004.98	31,850.00	31,537.20	49,317.78	31,850.00	31,756.25	49,411.53
Sri Lanka	21,086.00	17,842.00	32,440.00	6,488.00	17,842.00	-	24,330.00
TOTAL	142,540.98	139,202.00	144,477.20	137,265.78	139,202.00	86,060.25	190,407.53

Country	Arrears upto Dec 2022	Agreed CC 2023	Received CC 2023	Arrears upto Dec 2023	Agreed CC 2024	Received CC 31 May 2024	Arrears upto 31 May 2024
	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$	US \$
Afghanistan	16,100.00	8,050.00	-	24,150.00	8,050.00	-	32,200.00
Bangladesh	606.00	23,430.00	24,036.00	-	23,430.00	23,430.00	-
Bhutan	7,110.00	3,555.00	10,665.00	-	3,555.00	3,555.00	-
India	63,700.00	31,850.00	-	95,550.00	31,850.00	-	127,400.00
Maldives	29,150.00	14,575.00	-	43,725.00	14,575.00	29,150.00	29,150.00
Nepal	-	8,050.00	8,050.00	-	8,050.00	-	8,050.00
Pakistan	49,411.53	31,850.00	-	81,261.53	31,850.00	-	113,111.53
Sri Lanka	24,330.00	17,842.00	-	42,172.00	17,842.00	-	60,014.00
TOTAL	190,407.53	139,202.00	42,751.00	286,858.53	139,202.00	56,135.00	369,925.53

Status of Contribution to the SACEP Trust / Corpus Fund

The establishment of the Corpus Fund was proposed by the External Review of SACEP, which was accepted at the Third Special Session of the Governing Council of SACEP held on 6 November 2003 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Contributions to the SACEP Corpus / Trust Fund is voluntary, and the member countries have been requested to contribute to this fund which will strengthen the financial and project base of the organization and enhance SACEP to be a pro-active regional environment organization.

Periodical reminders are sent to the Member States of SACEP for this purpose.

Country	Receipts as at date
	US \$
Afghanistan	-
Bangladesh	-
Bhutan	-
India	200,000.00
Maldives	-
Nepal	-
Pakistan	-
Sri Lanka	-
SACEP	120,000.00
TOTAL	320,000.00

The Member States of SACEP are requested to consider contributing to the SACEP Corpus Fund to strengthen the financial and project base of the organization and enhance SACEP to be a pro-active regional environment organization.

Annex XV
GC 16.SACEP / NFP

PROJECTS SANCTIONED FROM SEPTEMBER 2019 TO MAY 2024

Activity	Donor	Budget US \$
For preparation of a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter for the South Asian Seas region based on national information collection.	UNEP Ecosystems Division, Nairobi, Kenya,	10,000.00
To contribute to strengthening local and regional enabling environments to foster the uptake and adoption of innovative approaches in reducing threats to coral reefs from nutrient and wastewater and other land-based pollution in Sri Lanka .	UNEP Ecosystems Division, Nairobi, Kenya,	5,000.00
For Preparation of Status Report on Waste Management and Sub-Regional Roadmap for improving waste management in South Asia towards achieving SDGs and NDCs - Activity 2	IGES, Japan	5,466.78
For Preparation of Status Report on Waste Management and Sub-Regional Roadmap for improving waste management in South Asia towards achieving SDGs and NDCs - Activity 3	IGES, Japan	32,398.25
MoU Between SACEP and International Maritime Organization (IMO) for effective implementation of IMO's Global Maritime Standards and the Marine Environment Strategies adopted by SACEP under the South Asian Seas Programme (SASP).	IMO, London	76,860.00
To undertake the activities in relation to GEF Project on Healthy Landscapes: Managing agricultural landscapes in social-ecologically sensitive areas to promote food security, wellbeing and ecosystem health on the terms and conditions set out and to organize and facilitate activities linked to the preparation of the Full Project Proposal for the Healthy Landscapes project. - Activity 2	Bioversity International, Italy	9,130.14
To undertake the activities in relation to GEF Project on Healthy Landscapes: Managing agricultural landscapes in social-ecologically sensitive areas to promote food security, wellbeing and ecosystem health on the terms and conditions set out and to organize and facilitate activities linked to the preparation of the Full Project Proposal for the Healthy Landscapes project. - Activity 3	Bioversity International, Italy	85,383.00

PROJECTS SANCTIONED FROM SEPTEMBER 2019 TO MAY 2024

Activity	Donor	Budget US \$
To undertake the activities in relation to GEF Project on Healthy Landscapes: Managing agricultural landscapes in social-ecologically sensitive areas to promote food security, wellbeing and ecosystem health on the terms and conditions set out and to organize and facilitate activities linked to the preparation of the Full Project Proposal for the Healthy Landscapes project. - Activity 4	Bioversity International, Italy	1,193,965.20
The objective of the Project is to strengthen innovation and coordination of circular economy solutions to plastic pollution flowing into South Asian seas. IDA Grant D648-8S (Plastic free Rivers and Seas for South Asia Project) Part 1. Supporting Competitive Block Grant Investments to Reduce Plastic Waste Part 2. Leveraging Public and Private Sector Engagement and Solutions Part 3. Strengthening Regional Integration Institutions	International Development Association (IDA) and SACEP	2,026,399.46
SACEP & United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI-GCRF) Collaboration Agreement on South Asian Nitrogen Hub	UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub Collaboration	120,123.23
To provide a total grant, not to exceed USD 138,097 spread over 5 years to support local SACEP staff, to raise their capacity and better serve the needs of all aspects of the Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia regional project.	Mr. Cyrill Gutsch, The Philanthropist and/or Co-Founder, Friends of SACEP	47,495.00
South Asian Nitrogen Hub Work-Package 3.2 2nd Sub-Regional Workshop on 'South Asia Nitrogen Framework Policy' – South Asia Nitrogen Hub, Dhaka, Bangladesh (22- 25 Jun 2022)	GCRF Funds Physically not transferred	16,999.11
Fund Received for Meeting Participation	Meeting Organizers	4,020.52
TOTAL		3,633,240.69

PROPOSED SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2024 - 2025

	PRESENT AGREED INCOME	EXPENDITURE
	US \$	US \$
1 ANTICIPATED INCOME		
1.1 AFGHANISTAN	8,050.00	
BANGLADESH	23,430.00	
BHUTAN	3,555.00	
INDIA	31,850.00	
MALDIVES	14,575.00	
NEPAL	8,050.00	
PAKISTAN	31,850.00	
SRI LANKA	17,842.00	
TOTAL COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS	139,202.00	
1.2 Interest earned	67,000.00	
1.3 Secretariat Cost from Sri Lanka	25,000.00	
TOTAL INCOME	231,202.00	
2 ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE		
2.1 Salary Director General		60,000.00
2.2 Entertainment Allowance - Director General		13,200.00
2.3 Salaries of Local Staff		116,470.00
2.4 International Travel		20,000.00
2.5 Secretariat Cost		102,000.00
SUB TOTAL		311,670.00
3 Capital Costs		17,500.00
4 TOTAL EXPENDITURE		329,170.00
5 INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		(97,968.00)

PROPOSED SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2024 - 2025

	ANTICIPATED INCOME WITH 15% INCREASE US \$	EXPENDITURE US \$
1 ANTICIPATED INCOME		
1.1 AFGHANISTAN	10,183.00	
BANGLADESH	26,945.00	
BHUTAN	4,497.00	
INDIA	40,290.00	
MALDIVES	18,438.00	
NEPAL	10,183.00	
PAKISTAN	40,290.00	
SRI LANKA	20,518.00	
TOTAL COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS	171,344.00	
1.2 Interest earned	67,000.00	
1.3 Secretariat Cost from Sri Lanka	25,000.00	
TOTAL INCOME	263,344.00	
2 ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE		
2.1 Salary Director General		60,000.00
2.2 Entertainment Allowance - Director General		13,200.00
2.3 Salaries of Local Staff		116,470.00
2.4 International Travel		20,000.00
2.5 Secretariat Cost		102,000.00
SUB TOTAL		311,670.00
3 Capital Costs		17,500.00
4 TOTAL EXPENDITURE		329,170.00
5 INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE		(65,826.00)