

SOUTH ASIAN SEAS PROGRAMME

Agenda Item 5 (j)

PROGRAMME AREA: School Environment Awareness Programme

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Introduction

Adaptation to Climate Change and Waste Management were identified as priority issues in the work programme of SACEP by the 9th Governing council meeting held in August 2005 at Thimphu, Bhutan and also at the 10th Governing Council of SACEP held in January 2007 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

An important component of this priority area is the development of a regional strategy for Solid Waste Management in particular to municipal, medical, industrial, hazardous and e-waste and to facilitate South Asian Countries to address these waste issues.

The lack of awareness among the general public on proper waste separation and handling leads to large scale accumulation of waste. This is a common phenomenon in almost all the urban areas of the South Asian Region.

The Slogan for the world environmental day, year 2007 was 'Melting ice – Hot Topic?'

Sea Level rise due to increasing temperature greatly affects the island countries like Sri Lanka and Maldives. So far no adaptation strategy to minimise the environmental damage by such issues were designed in these countries. Awareness should be created among the countries for a better understanding on adverse impacts of climate change.

SACEP decided to conduct a School Environment Awareness Programme giving special attention to the younger generation.

SACEP with Centre for Environment Education in India and with both Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Sri Lanka and with the assistance of South Asia Youth Network organized a series of School Competitions (Essay, Drawing and Painting, Posters and Photography) from January to July 2007 for different age categories. The main theme of these competitions was Adaptation to Climate Change and Waste Management.

A total of 35 schools from Colombo Zone were participated and a total of 3522 entries were submitted.

On 16th July 2007, Soba Sankalpana programme was organized. Chief Guest for the occasion was Hon Mr Mahanth Thakur, Chairman of SACEP Governing Council and Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal. Mr Laxman Prasad Mainali, Secretary, from the same Ministry of Nepal and Mr Udaya Gammanpila, Chairman, Central Environment Authority of Sri Lanka was also present. Winners of the School Competitions, Parents, School Teachers, University Lectures and the delegates from both the Government and non government organizations were present.

The programme started with a video presentation on sea level rise.

Panel Discussion on Adaptation Strategies for the Sea Level Rise in South Asia was the next item of the programme. The panel represented experts from National Aquatic Resources Research and Development

Agency, Sri Lanka, Department of Meteorology, Sri Lanka, Centre for Environment Education, India and Local University Lecturers. Prof. Sarath Kotagama, Department of Zoology, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka was the Moderator for the discussion.

Following recommendations were gathered during the discussion.

Adaptation Methods to be improved by,

- Raising awareness of adaptation
- Facilitating the strengthening capacity for coordinated action on adaptation
- Incorporating adaptation into policy and operations
- Promoting and coordinating research on impacts and adaptation
- Support knowledge – sharing networks
- Mainstreaming adaptation to sea level rise into policies and programmes in different sectors vulnerable to climate change impacts and need to include such potential impacts in their sectoral design and investments.
- Development of eco-specific adaptive knowledge on adaptation to climate change variability and sea level rise to enhance adaptive capacity for future climate change and sea level rise.

Award ceremony was held for the winners of school competitions. First, Second and Third places were selected for each age category. Awards were presented by the Chief Guest Hon Mr Mahanth Thakur, Chairman of SACEP and Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal.

Taking into consideration the total winning entries and the environmental related activities carried out in the school, the best school was selected to award a representative from the school with a scholarship to attend in the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education which was held in November 2007, in India. This award was sponsored by South Asia Youth Network.

All the participants were also presented with a certificate of participation.

Poster and Painting Exhibition was held on the same day where all the winning entries and 150 selected posters and drawings were exhibited. Exhibition was opened by Hon Mr Mahanth Thakur, Chairman of SACEP and Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal.

SACEP intend to develop and conduct more environmental educational programmes within the region, in collaboration with partners to raise awareness among school children on issues of concern in the field of Environment in this region.