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South Asia Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production

South Asia Cooperative Environment programme (SACEP) being an intergovernmental agency for eight South Asian countries; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was established in 1982. Five of these eight countries i.e Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are maritime countries. South Asia is a unique region of the world where large proportion of the society still follow traditional norms and mostly rely on sustainable consumption and production in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and other sectors of their livelihood. The fact that South Asia has got strong social institutions, deep rooted social enterprise and inherited religio-cultural respect for environment, the society can easily adapt to the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) paradigm.

South Asia, home to a quarter of the world's middle-class consumers, has experienced a long period of robust economic growth, averaging 6 per cent over the past 20 years. South Asia is a diverse region home to about 1.64 billion people (24% of the world's population) experiencing a demographic dividend. While the sub-region is expected to reach its population peak by 2030, continued population growth, paired with increases in production and household consumption from increasing economic prosperity will also place increased pressure on the environment, making the need to shift towards resource efficiency and SCP an imperative for South Asia's Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda (SADA). As a result of globalization, today, the region is at a crossroads, poised to integrate sustainability to ensure a more resource efficient growth path for its countries.

The concept of sustainable consumption and production was recognized in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). Since then, a number of global, regional, and sub-regional high profile meetings have acknowledged that sustainable consumption and production forms one of the three overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development, together with poverty eradication and the management of natural resources in order to foster economic and social development. It was recognized that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development.

SACEP in partnership with the United Nations Environment programme (UNEP) is currently implementing the Asia Pacific road map of Rio+ and the 10 year framework of programme of Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) in line with the 2013 SACEP Governing Council Decision 10.2.2 to promote SCP within policymaking mechanisms of South Asian countries, SACEP with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), serving as the Secretariat of the Rio+20 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) and the EU funded and UNEP managed SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Support Component organized a "Preparatory Meeting for the Establishment of the South Asia Forum on SCP" on 26 – 27 March 2015 in Negombo, Sri Lanka. Senior government officials nominated by SACEP member countries and Switch-Asia Focal Points together with other partners attending the meeting agreed to establish the South Asia Forum on SCP and asked SACEP to come up with the proposal on modalities of the Forum and possible priority based on the suggestions discussion in the meeting. SACEP, thereafter obtained a decision from its Consultative Committee which represents the Colombo based diplomatic missions of SACEP member countries to establish the South Asia Forum on SCP at its 125th meeting held on held on 17 July 2015 in Colombo. SACEP conveyed the decision of

establishment of the South Asia Forum on SCP to UNEP in early August 2015. Further, SACEP has sent an official communication to all member countries requesting them to nominate their members to the South Asia Forum on SCP.

Objectives of the South Asia Forum on SCP

The broad objectives of the South Asia Forum on SCP is to provide a platform for the sub – regional network and partnership in providing leadership and develop synergies to stimulate the promotion and implementation of sustainable consumption and production policies, strategies and technologies in the region. The specific objectives are:

- a. To provide a platform for policy dialogue and collaboration on SCP for national, sub-regional, and regional strategies, planning, and implementation, increasing the profile of SCP in national development planning and policymaking, in the context of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda;
- b. To meet annually to assess progress towards SCP and resource efficiency in South Asia, and propose policy priorities and address under the specific working groups of the forum in line with an annual prioritization exercise;
- c. To provide a venue for discussion on research and innovation for SCP that can support tailored, effective policy design and actions to effectively embed SCP in national and sub-regional governance and sharing of the experiences;
- d. To develop SCP principles and guidelines for South Asia on the lines of global SCP principles and guidelines
- e. To develop a South Asian resource pool and explore technical support services for governments and other stakeholders at national and regional level in a transition to SCP patterns;
- f. To use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for an enhanced and effective networking and awareness raising tool for reaching to youth, producers, traders and consumers in South Asia using internet, websites, social media, dedicated apps, blogs and similar other emerging tools.
- g. To encourage interactive dialogues and discussion on emerging issues on SCP, including the development of links with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and other regional bodies, to develop a South Asian community of practice on SCP in policymaking;

Broad Principles of the Forum

The Governing Council of SACEP adopted the decision to come up with SCP principles in the region and the South Asia SCP forum will serve as a platform to achieve this task.

The broad principles and mechanisms of the South Asia Forum on SCP are as follows:

- a. The South Asia SCP Forum is a voluntary initiative.
- b. The South Asia SCP Forum consists of government representatives as members of the forum with engagement from relevant non-governmental stakeholders and international institutions as advisers of the forum.
- c. As SACEP Governing Council has mandated SACEP for establishing the South Asia SCP Forum, the Forum will be led by the SACEP Secretariat with the support and participation of SACEP member

countries and with engagement from relevant non-governmental stakeholders. Progress of the forum will be reported to the Governing Council from time to time.

d. UNEP in consultation with SACEP will continue to provide Technical Support and Services to the South Asia SCP Forum.