

6TH COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT NETWORK (CAN) MEETING
UNEP RRC.AP, Bangkok, Thailand
14 November 2005

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

Introduction

The 1972 Stockholm Conference which had drawn the attention of the world to the environmental issues that would change the lifestyles of the people and in many ways threaten their future well being if the wasteful patterns of resource consumption were not changed to more sustainable patterns, the initiative to establish an organisation for the protection, preservation and management of the South Asian environment was taken on by UNEP in the late seventies and the result was the establishment of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP).

The Vision

The vision of SACEP set by the founding members at its inception was based on

- a) Recognition of environmental degradation caused by factors like poverty, over population, over consumption and wasteful production threatening economic development and human survival,
- b) Integration of environment and development as essential prerequisites to Sustainable Development, and
- c) Importance of co-operative action in the South Asian region where many ecological and development problems transcend national and administrative boundaries.

The Mission

Considering a 2-decadal process had gone through following the establishment of the Secretariat, the 8th Governing Council considered the Mission statement at its 3rd Special Session held on 6 November 2003 to read as

“The Mission of SACEP is to promote regional co-operation in South Asia in the field of environment, both natural and human in the context of sustainable development and on issues of economic and social development which also impinge on the environment and vice versa; to support conservation and management of natural resources of the region and to work closely with all national, regional, and international institutions, governmental and non governmental, as well as experts and groups engaged in such co-operation and conservation efforts”

Towards the sustainable development

Throughout the past few years SACEP has made efforts to support and increase exposure of sustainable development and better environmental management concepts to the governments in the region. SACEP is uniquely placed in the region to play a supportive role for South Asian countries in terms of:

- Assisting to increased political commitment to sustainable development at a high level within each country and the region.
- Increasing regional initiatives that promote co-management of natural resources of benefit to the whole region. This expansion of regional objective building and cooperation has been advocated for increasing effective sustainable development initiatives.
- Serving as a central node for coordinating the management of transboundary environmental issues.
- Commissioning or supporting assessments, studies etc that add to the overall knowledge base in the region that can be drawn upon for decision making and policy formulation.
- Building partnerships with a range of organisations in order to increase international cooperation to garner the requisite resources and expertise to foster technical and policy development within the region.
- Networking and information sharing to keep stakeholders up-to-date with the latest international, and national initiatives, new thinking, lessons learnt etc.
- Creating awareness and increasing consciousness to new concepts and approaches to integrating human and natural systems.
- Institutional strengthening through building the capacities and skills of manpower in the region to plan, implement and monitor environmental and sustainable development activities.

Role in achieving the regional focus

Hosting

SACEP hosts two of the UNEP's regional programme activities thereby lending a hand to the South Asian component of UNEP's mandate that has been the major contributors in terms of bringing in expertise to strengthen environmental protection mechanisms in the region.

- Co-ordinating and implementing of the South Asian Seas Programme which is one of the 17 programmes of the UNEP's Regional Seas Programme. This has been a part of SACEP's work since the time SACEP's inception in 1982.
- Host to the information extension arm of UNEP in the Secretariat under the project titled SENRIC since 1994.

Awareness Creation and Capacity Building

SACEP in collaboration with partner organizations has carried out a range of workshops and trainings for awareness creation and capacity building in the region under different project activities. Some significant achievements are given below.

- Over 80 officials in the year 2003 alone, from the region were trained on compliance and enforcement of IMO Conventions (OPRC and MARPOL 73/78) and the Global Programme of Action
- The Asia-Pacific workshop held in September 2003, on Enforcement with and Compliance of Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements hosted with UNEP created an opportunity for countries in the region to share and learn from initiatives taken on this regard while also highlighting issues and areas for further strengthening of better applications in the future.
- Under the project during the period 1998-2002, on Strengthening Environment Assessment Monitoring Capabilities in the region, to the preparation of Global State of the Environment Report 2002, the SENRIC, strengthened the National Focal Points of the South Asian member countries by providing computer hardware and software that allows them to increase data gathering and management activities.
- Environmental Management Seminars held to educate the policy decision makers from the region held in Sri Lanka: 1996 and Pakistan: 1998)
- National level GIS centres at the Ministries and training capacities setup through provision of hardware and software during the period 1994-97. Training programmes were conducted to train the trainers and training lab facilities set up in Sri Lanka and Maldives.
- Provision of training and equipment and setting up of monitoring stations are taking place under the implementation of the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia.
- The Programme on Strengthening of Framework Legislation for Environment Management, can be considered one of SACEP's most successful activities. This led to 4 valuable publications, awareness raising among high levels in the judiciary and prominent media coverage.
- SACEP in cooperation with UNEP/GPA has played a key role to the promotion and dissemination of the concept of ICARM, which links the freshwater and the coastal communities.
- SACEP in collaboration with UNEP and UNU has addressed the issue of inter-linkages among MEAs to get the regional consensus to the Integrated Capacity Development initiative.

Assessment and Reporting

Addressing the most pressing issue to aid the decision making process and policy guidance, under the close guidance from UNEP, SACEP achieved a regional consensus

to the air pollution and related transboundary issues under the Malé Declaration on Transboundary Air Pollution. Some of the major outcomes are as follows:

- The five marine member states of SACEP adopted South Asian Seas Action Plan in New Delhi in March 1995. The South Asian Seas falls under the umbrella of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.
- Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Issues for South Asia at the 7th Governing Council in Maldives held in 1997.
- Baseline data for Air Quality Monitoring in collaboration with SEI, UNEP-RRC.AP, the NIAs and SIDA.
- Country reports and a regional report on oil spill contingency planning in collaboration with IMO, which led to the preparation of an MoU for cooperation on responding to oil spill incidences in the region.
- Status report on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities done with the assistance of the UNEP-GPA office.
- South Asia Environmental Education and Training Action Plan for the period 2003-2007 with collaboration from UNEP-ROAP.
- GIWA Assessment Report region 53 – Bay of Bengal

SACEP collaborated with UNEP in preparing the following reports:

- Synthesis Report for South Asia for the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg.
- Global Environment Outlook –2 and 3, South Asia component during the period 1998-2003.
- Status of Environment Reports for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and the South Asian Regional State of Environment Report. Youth version of the South Asia Report, namely the Children of Monsoon was also part of this series of reports during the project period 1998-2002.

Building partnerships / Networking

Partnerships have been established with international organizations to address several priority environmental concerns in the region:

- UNEP ROAP and RRCAP have been constant collaborators in SACEP's activities and have afforded extension of many activities to the region.
- UNEP-GPA (1997) – Protection of Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
- NORAD – for implementation of SACEP's Strategy and Programme 1 and 2 during 1996-2002
- IMO – Development of South Asian Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan; training activities at regional and national level; development of GLOBALLAST regional action plan

- UNEP-RRCAP / SIDA / SEI-Sweden (1998) – Implementation of Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia.
- GCRMN (1997), CORDIO (1999) and ICRAN (2002) – Management and Protection of Coral Reef and other Coastal Ecosystems
- GBRMPA – Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia for development of ICZM training course for South Asia
- GIWA (2001) – Water Quality Assessment in the Bay of Bengal Region
- WCMC partnership on regional marine ecosystem management.

There is a strong partnership that exists with the ministries of the region in the form of national focal points who remain the primary drivers and owners of SACEP. Other government bodies dealing with environmental issues and also network with SACEP form a far reaching web of government agencies working to put in place better management practices.

Identified Centres of Excellence are designated for each of the Subject Areas from the countries for the technical and research support to the programme activities. Some of the Centres of Excellence which actively participated in SACEP's programme implementation include: Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and Department of Ocean Development (DOD) of India, Marine Research Centre from Maldives, etc.

The Way Forward

SACEP will concentrate on issues of regional significance that are aimed at complementing and supplementing the work being carried out by the member country governments, with expressed focus in the following work areas:

- 1) Assessment and Strategy Development
- 2) Experience Sharing and Networking and
- 3) Capacity Building

Under the above themes, the primary focus will be towards the issues under

- Waste management
- Adaptation to Climate Change and
- Information / Data Management

SACEP is pursuing a stronger collaboration with the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen its base and development of project proposals for the stated areas through its programme support for SENRIC.

The South Asian Seas programme has the approved programme activities under the support of member governments and related UN agencies towards capacity building issues, strengthening the networking and experience sharing opportunities. (Annex : South Asian Seas Programme)

The Environmental Knowledge Hub (e-KH)

SACEP's Mandate for the next biennium (2006-7)

The 9th Governing Council of SACEP held in Thimphu on 26th August 2005 has mandated the Secretariat to ensure its primary focus on the issues related to

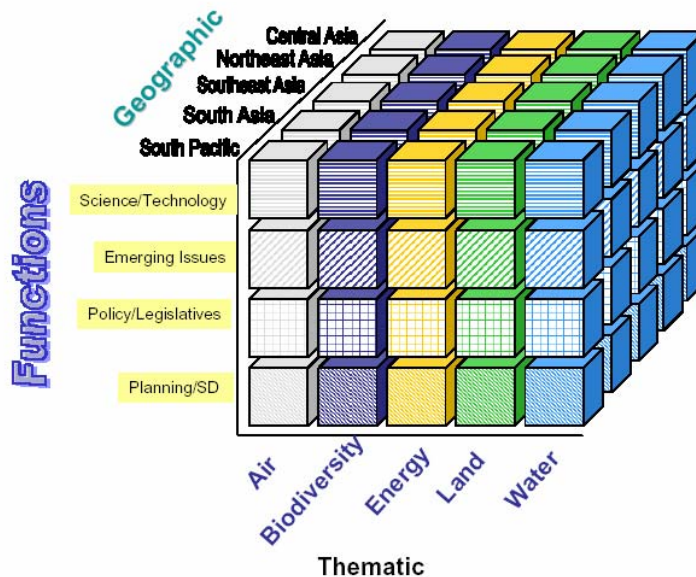
- Waste management
- Adaptation to Climate Change and
- Information / Data Management

with its work programme to address the areas

- 1) Assessment and Strategy Development
- 2) Experience Sharing and Networking and
- 3) Capacity Building

Ensuring an information base and a clearing house mechanism for the region will be the major focus for the period 2006-2010. While the e-KH has the main themes as proposed below, the CHM at the Secretariat will eventually address all, with its initial focus towards Air, Water and Biodiversity.

3 Dimensional Profile of eKH



Inter-linkages between the themes would also be a main issue the CHM will consider to provide necessary details to various stakeholders. The CHM would focus on the emerging issues, policy legislations science & technology and Planning/SD in the order of priority.

Resources for eKH;

While the proposals for the establishment of a data management system and a CHM at the Secretariat are being considered it is envisaged that the Secretariat will be constantly engaged in the database management.

It is envisaged that the Secretariat would establish the initial set up through the year 2006, with necessary staffing and software/hardware, while the process of the building up the knowledge base would be an on-going task.

The South Asian Seas Programme

The Action Plan of the South Asian Seas Programme approved at this Meeting of Plenipotentiaries had certain important elements, which will assist the member countries in protecting the marine environment of the region.

The Action Plan in addition to specifying the needs under the main components of Environmental Assessment, Environmental Management, Environmental Legislation & Institutional and Financial Arrangements, identified the areas where priority activities need to be developed for implementation under the Action Plan. These priority activities are in four specific areas.

1. Integrated Coastal Zone Management
2. Development and Implementation of National and Regional Oil and Chemical Spill Contingency Planning
3. Human Resources Development through Strengthening Regional Centres of Excellence
4. Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

Main Programme Activities

Within the reporting period the secretariat has carried out a variety of activities ranging from awareness creation, capacity building, networking for better collaborative efforts and commissioning or participating in assessments. Following are some key highlights:

A. INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT

The various aspects of Coastal and Marine Environmental Management is presently being covered in three of SACEP's fifteen Priority Subject Matter Areas, namely Conservation of Corals, Mangroves, Deltas, Coastal Areas, Conservation of Island Ecosystems and Regional Seas Programme, which were identified by experts of the region at its formative stages. Throughout the year the secretariat has undertaken several activities on this issue:

- **Promoting the ICARM Concept: The new concept of Integrated Coastal Area and River Basin Management (ICARM) was introduced to the region through a workshop for coastal and river basin managers from Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.**
- **Coral Reef Activities:** The Secretariat has worked with a number of coral reef initiatives to promote the better management of the regions' coral reefs.

A report on “Alternative Livelihoods through Income Diversification as a Management Option for Sustainable Coral Reef and Associated Ecosystem Management in Sri Lanka” has been published.

In connection with the above there have been discussions with UNEP’s Coral Reef Unit, ICRAN. And presently there are 2 activities under consideration as below

✚ **Medium-sized Project proposal REQUEST FOR GEF FUNDING PROJECT TITLE: Improving the viability and Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) in South Asia**

✚ EC Proposal on Institutional strengthening and capacity development for the long-term management and conservation of MCPAs encompassing coral reef resources in South Asia

- **Conservation and Integrated Management of Marine Turtles:** A project proposal entitled Conservation and Integrated Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats in the South Asian Seas Region, through implementation of the IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding was developed by SACEP and IOSEA Secretariat. The aims and objectives of the project proposal developed by SACEP and the IOSEA include: 1) Information gathering and sharing on the status of marine turtles in the region, 2) Reviewing and strengthening national legislation; 3) Making recommendations for designation of critical sites for marine turtles; and 4) Developing standardised research techniques. This proposal has been circulated to the relevant authorities in the 5 maritime countries of South Asia.

B. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL OIL AND CHEMICAL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Due to the strong ties that have been established with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), a major share of the work carried out has been to assist in aspects of maritime conventions such as OPRC and MARPOL 73/78. Towards this, efforts were made to put in place a Regional Oil Spill Contingency plan. The need for a Contingency plan, having available well prepared human and physical resources and timely regional support to carry out the responses proved to be useful in July 2003 when an Oil Spill disaster occurred close to the Karachi Port in Pakistan. (The MT TASMAR Spirit carrying 67,000 tonnes of light crude oil was grounded 1.5 nautical miles off Karachi Port with over 27,000 tonnes of oil spill.

Skills and capacity development for officials involved in oil spill management issues have taken place both regionally and locally. During 2003 alone over 100 officials from the region were trained on compliance and enforcement of IMO Conventions. Within this year the following training courses were carried out in collaboration with IMO:

C. PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT FROM LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES (GPA)

Given that land based sources are the main culprits of seas and ocean pollution, protecting the seas also requires addressing land based issues. The SAS secretariat functions as the regional node for GPA programming activities and has engaged in facilitating activities to achieve the objectives minimizing land based pollution. Major initiatives undertaken under these areas of work are given below:

- **Formulation of the Regional Plan of Action for GPA 2003-2006**
- **National Action Programme (NPA):** The development and implementation of Pilot National Programme of Action (NPA) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities in Sri Lanka
- **“Strategic Planning and Developing Market Based Instruments for the Medium to Long Term Strategic Planning of the Implementation of the Sri Lanka National Program of Action (MBI/NPA)”**
... to assist the government of Sri Lanka to further develop their NPA in order to facilitate fully resourced, transparent and politically endorsed national programmes that incorporate appropriate public spending programmes, pollution command and control regimes, market and/or fiscal incentives for pollution prevention and capacity building initiatives. The main focus is on land based sources of pollution, however, all environmentally related issues may be considered – with the potential in general to strengthen the GPA programme area through a holistic approach to environment. This project is currently under implementation
- Under consideration: **“Planning and implementation of Coastal Reconstruction in Tsunami affected countries according to the Cairo Guiding Principles within the context of the UNEP GPA in the South Asian Region”.**