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India for regional cooperation to check pollution in South Asia

New Delhi, Jun 28 : Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, T Chatterjee today called for enhancing regional cooperation in fighting the menace of air pollution in South Asia.

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Addressing the Sixth Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting (RSC6) of Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of air pollution, he said the aim of the platform was to enhance regional cooperation, monitor impact assessment, and strengthen the initiatives which were started in earlier phases and initiating

new ones.

Mr Chatterji emphasised the need of conducting national level public awareness campaign in all member countries. He expressed hope that these deliberations and sharing of experiences during these meetings would further strengthen the implementation of the Male Declaration Programme.

Ms Jacintha S Tissera, Director General, South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) said since its inception, Male declaration had come a long way in terms of building the scientific capacity. "The declaration has initiated activity in all major areas of air pollution research, and this is embedded within national policy structures and forms part of the work plan for the Ministries of Environment involved, she said.

Under the programme, mapping of various emission sources and understanding the complex relation between them and their contributions to ambient air concentrations and effects on human health, crops, buildings in South Asia has been achieved.

Referring to fast dynamic changes taking place in the Region of South Asia every day, she said Air pollution does not stop at national borders and therefore everyone was affected by it.

As a Regional Environmental Secretariat, SACEP has the mandate to take a lead role in addressing the emerging environmental issues.

In 2008 SACEP joined the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s programme on Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) which has now set its sight on reducing the Sulphur content of the Vehicle fuel.

Giving details of various initiatives taken by the participating countries along with other coordinating agencies to control and prevent the air pollution since the implementation of the Male Declaration, Prof S P Gautam, Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board said these initiatives helped in studying the impact of Trans boundary air pollution on human health, cultural heritage, monuments, vegetation and crop yield and incorporating the policies and the strategies that are effective in the reduction of the air pollution and its impacts.

Inter-governmental network assisted the member countries to enhance their regional cooperation. It also conducted the base line studies and the action plans that provide the information on air pollution management programmes and on identifying the gaps in the existing monitoring systems to understand the trans-boundary air pollution.

Capacity building programs has helped to strengthen the monitoring network and training.

This is Phase four of implementation of Male Declaration Programme. Representatives of Bangla Desh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating in the two-day meeting.

--UNI