



FROM : L - R -

MR JOSEPH C WHEELER, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNEP, NAIROBI, MRS A M S KIBRIA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ESCAP, HON. ABDUL GHAFAR LAKANWAL, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL & LAND REFORMS, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN, REAR ADMIRAL SULTAN AHMED, DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, BANGLADESH, MAJOR GENERAL MAHMUDUL HASAN, MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RURAL DEVELOPMENT, CO-OPERATIVES & WORKS, BANGLADESH, MR HUSAIN AHMED, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE, BANGLADESH & MR M A KARIM, MEMBER SECRETARY, NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE, BANGLADESH.

"The biological community of an area and the physical environment in which the community exists depend on each other within the ecosystems. As preservation of ecosystems depends upon the functional relationship that exist between organism and their physical environment, it involves detailed study of the situation and relevant concerted technological approach to the problem. Naturally, therefore, we look forward hopefully to co-operating with member countries to check the forces responsible for decline of environment in these fields.

As the member countries of this co-operative organisation are all in a developing stage, the environmental problems need to be tackled jointly before they become more complicated. This requires, first of all, a cohesiveness in program identification and prescription, and meaningful integration of environmental efforts for achieving economic goals and furthering developmental policies."

*Rear Admiral Sultan Ahmad,
Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator,
Bangladesh.*

Second Governing Council, SACEP

"The establishment of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in 1981 has to be regarded as a historic event and UNEP is very pleased to have had the privilege to be closely involved from its inception. It indicates a deep concern about the state of the environment shared by a group of countries which together constitute a quarter of the world's population. Perhaps the SACEP region has no parallel in terms of the great diversity both between and within member countries in regard to topography, rainfall and water, soils, flora and fauna. Certainly, environmental challenges are pervasive. In our view, SACEP represents a magnificent initiative undertaken in a spirit of self-reliance. It also signifies the co-operative spirit and commitment on the part of the member countries. Only a deep commitment on the part of co-operating countries can ensure the success of SACEP's programmes."

*Mr. Joseph C Wheeler
Deputy Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme,
Nairobi.*

Second Governing Council SACEP

EDITORIAL

Environmental degradation and over exploitation of resources could be considered as the direct result of legitimate and other government blessed activities initiated to fulfil important human needs like Food, Shelter, Clothing and Energy. The present environmental consciousness and concerns are not therefore a call for a stoppage to the utilization of resources, and the application of modern technology, but is merely a call to restore wisely the conflict between "the desirability of not despoiling, degrading or destroying finite environmental resources". This is environmental management.

Environmental Legislation is one of the major tools for effecting environmental management. Its usefulness and importance may even be equal to those of environmental management itself.

In the analysis of decision making in environmental management, two processes are always found to be at work. The consideration of values or subjective judgements such as political and social considerations and the considerations of purely objective judgements or pure scientific data, such as facts of ecology or economics. Thus when environmental decisions are taken and policies established to resolve the dilemma, they ought to be transformed into laws, regulations, standards or guidelines and procedures to enable states and individuals to apply and observe them. This transformation and their enforcement through the various legal systems of the world are among the proper roles of Environmental Legislation.

The effective performance of these roles sums up the importance of Environmental Legislation as a major tool for environmental management.

The translation into law of scientific data and environmental policies has not been smooth or easy. Even when such translation has been effected, the resulting laws have quite often, been unsatisfactory as a genuine solution to the problems concerned, and also in many cases they have not been vigorously applied.

It cannot be concluded however, that the difficulty is evidence of the unimportance of environmental law or any lack of confidence in the role it plays. This difficulty has more to do with the considerations which weigh on the minds of Governments when making laws on environmental issues than on the importance of environmental law per se.

However, despite all these factors which impede the development of environmental laws, Governments still look upon it as one of the best known means of carrying out environmental policies peaceably.



Mr. Mohamad Jafer Kazem, born in Kabul, Afghanistan on 15th October 1947, first graduated in Civil Engineering from the faculty of Engineering, University of Kabul, then proceeded to the Colorado State University USA where he obtained his M.Sc in Hydraulics.

He has served in various capacities in the Afghan Administrative Service since 1969 until he assumed duties as the Director of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme in July 1985.

As a representative of the Afghan Government he has participated in many International conferences including an annual session of ESCAP, two United Nations General Assembly Sessions, the sixth UNCTAD Meeting and the Seventh Summit of the Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Kazem is married and has 3 daughters and a son.

MESSAGE

The marked deterioration in the quality of environment on our planet Earth, particularly in the recent decades, is indeed a cause of great concern. Today, all countries in the world are facing an environmental crisis. This crisis which is mainly caused by the misuse or overuse of the fragile resources are more striking in the developing countries and particularly in the least developed ones. Deforestation, overgrazing and over-cropping have resulted in increasing desertification. The pollution of atmosphere, inland and oceanic waters has endangered the public health. The uncontrolled urban growth and industrialisation have exacerbated environmental problems and the poverty has forced the people to exploit the resources of the environment excessively.

It is certain that if urgent preventive and remedial measures are not taken, the quality of environment would deteriorate even further.

It is my conviction that common environmental problems whenever feasible should be handled co-operatively and joint efforts should be intensified to protect and prevent the quality of environment from further degradation.

It is heartening to note that the countries of South Asia have taken the initiative to work together in this sphere and create the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in order to deal with their respective sub-regional environmental problems and needs.

The establishment of SACEP is a remarkable achievement in bringing together the countries of the sub region to jointly combat environmental challenges.

Since its inception, SACEP has come a long way and despite its financial and resource constraints, it has contributed significantly to the sharing of knowledge and experience and to the conservation and management of the environment.

SACEP has endeavoured to present a concrete framework of ideas and prescriptions that would help member governments to discuss and analyse meaningfully the integration of environmental concerns with economic goals and policies. The achievements of SACEP during the very short period of its existence have been significant and the programmes and projects developed by this intergovernmental body have been extremely beneficial for the countries of South Asia.

While expressing my appreciations and thanks to all member countries, United Nation's bodies, international organisations and funding agencies for their valuable assistance and co-operation extended to SACEP, I urge them to continue to give their active support in future in order to enable SACEP to implement its programmes and projects effectively and efficiently.

M. J. Kazem
Director - SACEP



Dr. Leslie Herath from Sri Lanka obtained his B.Sc in Geology from the Benares Hindu University, India and also holds a post graduate degree in Photo-Interpretation (Hydrogeology) from Holland. He obtained his Ph.D in Hydrogeology from the University of Paris, France. He also holds Diplomas in Soil Science, Holland, Project Formulation & Evaluation, Bangkok, Food, Nutrition & Policy Planning, Sussex & Animal Husbandry Management for Managers, New Zealand.

Since 1968, he has held many responsible posts in various Ministries of the Sri Lanka Government and also worked as a Consultant to a number of National and International Agencies including the UN System. He assumed duties as the first Director of SACEP in 1981.

He is married and has 3 sons

He is presently Chairman of the Dairy Development Foundation which is a World Bank sponsored project concerned with restructuring of the Dairy Sector in Sri Lanka.

MESSAGE

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) which was established in 1981 by a ministerial body representing the countries of South Asia, was the first attempt by these countries for a co-operative effort in their development activities.

South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), a body with wider dimensions was given birth in August 1983, by a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the respective states, in New Delhi. The development in the other two sub-regions in Asia in this aspect has been rather different. The economic commissions, similar to that of SAARC, namely South Pacific Economic Commission (SPEC) for the Pacific sub region, and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for the South East Asian sub region, were established first, and the environmental arm similar to SACEP namely, South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) under SPEC and the Asian Environmental Programme (ASEP) under ASEAN were established, after the economic commissions had functioned for some time. In South Asia however, the child, for very good reasons, was born before the parent. I have no doubt that SAARC would in time to come, foster this child in a manner deserving of its relevance to the South Asian sub region.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Prime Minister and the Government of Sri Lanka for having given me the opportunity and the privilege of associating myself in the establishment of this historic institution. I also wish to express my gratitude to the member countries and the members of the consultative committee for the kind co-operation that was extended to me during my tenure of office. A special word of thanks is due to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), specially to those officers in the Regional Office in Bangkok, who spared no effort in helping this organisation to find its feet.

*Dr. Leslie Herath
First Director*

**MESSAGE FROM THE
HONOURABLE Z. R. ANSARI**

**MINISTER OF STATE
ENVIRONMENT & FOREST
INDIA**

Environment is the common heritage of all mankind and all nations need to work together for its protection. Environmental concerns have to reflect global perspectives based on shared experiences and knowledge. Effective environmental action areas lie within national domain and need to be supplemented, wherever necessary, through regional co-operation. I am happy that the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme has launched fruitful co-operative endeavours in the field of environment. As neighbouring countries we have similar perceptions and a common stake in the environment. We in India have accorded high priority to environment in our Seventh Five Year Plan.

I am also particularly happy to mention that in connection with the Year of Trees in South Asia, we have launched a massive programme of raising of fuel and fodder plantations in 5 million hectares of wastelands every year.

We look forward to continued exchange of knowledge and experience with our neighbouring countries. I take this opportunity of extending my best wishes to SACEP for its co-operative endeavours for environmental improvement in the region.

“The energies and efforts of all our countries, during the last few decades have been increasingly directed towards the achievement of the goal of development. Our populations almost doubled during the last quarter century and the rate of food production and economic growth could not keep up with it. Therefore, all of us became pre-concerned with the achievement of a higher Gross National Product. Developmental strategies continued to concentrate on quantitative growth while environmental concerns and developmental goals were generally seen as incompatible. But in all our countries, with the new recognition given to the importance of the environment, the concepts and issues involved in the environmental developmental inter-face have become clearer. The launching of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme also resulted from this new recognition – the recognition that global economic and political security lies in restoring the delicate balance between people, resources, environment and development.”

*Hon. Festus Perera, Minister of Fisheries,
Republic of Sri Lanka.*

SACEP'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION PROGRAMME

The 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment marked a Watershed in the development of policies and legislations for environmental protection. During the course of the decade many countries all over the world have enacted new laws and constituted institutions for dealing with environmental problems.

Most countries in South Asia, have legislation dealing with the environment but in most cases the laws are outdated and are incapable of tackling the complex multidisciplinary environmental problems that have come to afflict man. Generally speaking the aim has been to prevent and penalise deterioration. Positive environmental protection and improvements are rarely achieved through legislation. Though many of the existing laws have been updated, they appear to be only revisions of earlier ones with limited changes. Existing laws relating to the management of environmental resources do not clearly state the social objectives they aim to achieve. Some of the laws in force, particularly with regard to land use and management of environmental resources appear at times to be accomplishing mutually defeating social objectives.

In some cases, the implementations and monitoring machinery of many of these legislations are deficient in the scientific and technical expertise, as well as other infrastructural resources required to assess and prevent the possibility of adverse environmental impacts.

Apart from reviewing and updating existing laws, there is also the need to enact new laws. Such needs of the countries in the sub region particularly appear to arise more or less suddenly and timely availability of technical expertise in responding to these needs is of great value. This expertise can be created only through training.

Enactment of environmental laws will not by itself be sufficient. Their effective application has to be ensured. All concerned personnel involved in the formulation and implementation of the laws, need to be oriented in the intricacies of environmental legislation.

Unfortunately, most of these people have had little exposure to the environmental legislation in the past. There is thus a clear need for orienting these personnel in the evidentiary and forensic requirements, principles, approaches and practices for the prevention and control of pollution, monitoring, evaluation and standard setting and other technical details.

Bearing all these factors carefully in mind, SACEP has drawn up its project proposal on Environmental Legislation for its member countries. This proposal formulated by the SACEP/UNDP mission has been adopted by UNDP New York and is at present working in close collaboration with SACEP.

Based on a suggested outline, the participating countries have appointed their own country consultants to prepare a status report on the Environmental Legislation and Institutional framework in their country.

All the reports are expected to be completed by December 1985 after which a workshop will be held at a suitable location in conjunction with UNDP to discuss these reports and to draw up a plan of action as designed by the countries concerned.

SECOND GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING OF SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME – DHAKA, APRIL 1985

The Second Governing Council Meeting of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on the 17th & 18th of April 1985.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the following member countries namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan & Sri Lanka. Representatives from the following United Nations Agencies & bodies also participated. Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the Austrian South Asian Institute.

Rear Admiral Sultan Ahmed, Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator & Chief of the Naval Staff & Minister for Communications, Ports, Shipping, IWT Irrigation, Water Resources & Flood Control inaugurating the meeting stated that although sub regional programmes had been launched in other parts of this region even before the establishment of SACEP, this organisation is unique in the sense that for the first time in South Asia a Co-operative system based on & surcharged with environmental concept was set up.

In accordance with Articles of Association of SACEP, Major General Mahmudul Hasan, Minister for Local Government Rural Development, Co-operative & Works, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh took over the chairmanship from Hon. Abdul Ghafar Lakanwal, Minister for Agriculture & Land Reforms of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

The highlights of the Governing Council Meeting were the decision to establish a Liaison Office in Vienna for SACEP, The adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Governing Council & Modalities of Focal Points of SACEP and the appointment of a New Director. Also, all member countries appreciating the need for enhanced Country Contributions, indicated that an increased Country Contribution will be considered by their Governments in order to make the functioning of SACEP more effective.

The meeting endorsed the appointment of Mr. M. Jafer Kazem, the nominee from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to the post of Director of SACEP.

Likewise all the member countries expressed their deep appreciation for the efforts put in by the outgoing Director Dr. Leslie Herath of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in nurturing this nascent organisation through its formative years.



REAR ADMIRAL SULTAN AHMAD, DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH, DELIVERING THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS AT THE 2ND GOVERNING COUNCIL OF SACEP.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SACEP VIENNA LIAISON OFFICE

Under the authorisation of its Consultative Committee, The SACEP Secretariat wrote to prospective donor countries/agencies for the establishment of a Trust Fund and also a mechanism to obtain support for its institutional infrastructure. Following discussions, the Government of Austria expressed its willingness to assist SACEP and offer its good offices to solicit funds for its activities from the European Community.

The Consultative Committee of SACEP at a subsequent meeting whilst thanking the Government of Austria for its kind offer of assistance, felt that it could best be facilitated by establishing an Office in Vienna International Centre (VIC), that could look after the interests of SACEP and which could act as a Focal Point window for soliciting and co-ordinating assistance from the European Community provided that the entire funding of such an office be borne by the Government of Austria.

This decision was conveyed and the Chancellor of the Republic of Austria in a letter addressed to the Director, reiterated the support of His Government to SACEP in the establishment of such an office in Vienna to liase and channel assistance to the activities of SACEP.

At the Second Governing Council Meeting of SACEP held in April, 1985, at Dhaka, Bangladesh, this offer was discussed in detail. The delegates thanked the Austrian Government for their kind offer of support and agreed to the establishment of a Liaison Office for SACEP in Vienna. The Governing Council also approved the Modalities of Operation of the proposed SACEP Office in Vienna.

The SACEP Vienna Liaison Office has already commenced its functioning and is now in the process of establishing contacts with other International Organisations. A preparatory Committee Meeting was held in November, 1985 in Vienna and it is tentatively programmed that the First Meeting of the Management Committee of the SACEP Vienna Liaison Office would take place in April, 1986 at Vienna.

The establishment of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) has been a positive step forward in bringing together the countries of South Asia to jointly combat environmental challenges. A promising beginning has already been made in developing comprehensive and coherent environmental programmes and projects. It may be a little premature still to assess the tangible impact of these activities, nevertheless, it is most heartening to note that as a result of SACEP's initiatives there is increased consciousness of the seriousness of environmental problems and support for undertaking remedial measures.

*Dasho (Dr.) T. Tobgyel, Foreign Secretary,
Royal Government of Bhutan.*

NEWS OF SACEP ACTIVITIES

South Asian Regional Seas Programme

Due to the initiative taken by SACEP, a resolution was adopted at the 11th Governing Council Meeting of UNEP in May 1983, which designated the South Asian Seas as a region to be included in the Regional Seas Programme of UNEP. A meeting of National Focal Points of the Marine Member States of SACEP was held in March 1984 in Bangkok, on the development of an Action Plan.

At this Meeting, eight 'Priority Areas of Regional Concern' were defined. The Meeting also decided upon the preparatory activities for the implementation of the Action Plan for the South Asian Seas. These included initially, the preparation of country reports reviewing the environmental problems in the eight priority areas, outlining the possible solutions & describing available institutional & human resources. The SACEP Secretariat is happy to note that with the assistance from UNEP's Oceans & Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) & the Member Countries concerned, all country reports have been completed.

OCA/PAC in co-operation with SACEP is now in the process of preparing a regional overview on the basis of these reports & also a draft Action Plan. UNEP will also in the meantime prepare a document on the legislative aspects of the Action Plan.

A Meeting of National Experts will be convened in early 1986 to review & revise these documents. At this time, a recommendation could also be made concerning the development of a regional convention & protocol allied with the Action Plan.

It is expected that an inter-governmental meeting will be convened towards the end of 1986 to adopt the Action Plan.

The SACEP Secretariat has been informed of the resignation of the Director of OCA/PAC, Dr. Stjepan Keckes & wish to place on record our grateful thanks to him for all the assistance and the personal interest taken by him in guiding the South Asian Seas Programme through its initial phase of formation. The SACEP Secretariat wishes him the very best of luck in his future endeavours.

Conservation of Mangrove, Coral & Island Eco-systems

SACEP in association with the Economic & Social Commission for Asia & Pacific (ESCAP) held a symposium on the Environmental Management of Mangroves, Coral & Island Eco-systems in Dhaka, in August 1983 which was attended by the Coastal Member States and a number of UN & other International Agencies.

Based on the findings of this symposium, the SACEP Secretariat has prepared a draft action programme. Many of the recommendations of this action programme is expected to form an integral part of the proposed action plan for the South Asian Seas.

Since the United Nations Educational, & Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has on going programmes in this subject matter area, the draft action programme has been forwarded to them for their comments and possible collaboration.

Environmental Impact Assessment and Cost/Benefit Analysis

The Government of Sri Lanka, which is SACEP's Focal Point for this Subject Matter Area, kindly agreed to accommodate five participants from SACEP Member Countries at a National Workshop they conducted in collaboration with USAID, in August 1985. In response to this invitation, participants from Nepal & Pakistan attended this informative workshop. Funding for the SACEP participants was provided by the East West Environmental & Policy Institute, Hawaii, (EAPI).

Following discussions with the Regional Office of UNEP, Bangkok, it has been envisaged that SACEP in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme & the Government of Sri Lanka will conduct a Regional Workshop for participants from SACEP member countries on this subject matter area in early 1986.

Integrated Energy Saving Domestic Stoves & Fuelwood Systems Project

This was one of the 3 projects formulated by the UNDP/SACEP Mission of 1982 which the United Nations Development Programme decided to adopt. They provided funds for a feasibility study of the project and a senior consultant from the Wood Burning Stoves Group, University of Eindhoven, Netherlands visited some of the member countries. His report has been submitted to UNDP and the Secretariat now awaits the outcome of this report and also for the future commitment of UNDP towards this project.

Meanwhile the Dutch Government too had been showing considerable interest in this project. The Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has made known to us their ongoing Regional Wood Stoves Project, whilst the Economic & Social Commission for Asia & Pacific (ESCAP) have also formulated a similar project for Asia & Pacific. The SACEP Secretariat is in close contact with both these organisations for possible integration of the projects.

Year of the Trees

A resolution was unanimously adopted at the First Governing Council Meeting of SACEP in 1983, declaring the year 1988 as the Year of Trees for South Asia. This resolution was commended by the United Nations Environment Programme, who agreed to provide funds for the formulation of projects & Programmes, after deciding on the modalities of operation.

Whilst countries have been advised to draw up their own programmes, in order to draw up a Regional Action Plan, the Secretariat is at present compiling information of country requirements.

Of the countries that have already commenced activities, special mention should be made of the Government of Sri Lanka, who have launched on a very ambitious project under the direct supervision of the Hon. Prime Minister, titled "100 Million Trees Programme".

With the assistance of UNEP, a consultant will be visiting member countries in order to ascertain the needs of these countries in respect of this programme. This consultancy is scheduled for February - March 1986 and it is expected that by mid 1986, a Regional Action Plan will be drawn up.

Co-ordinated Environmental Education Programme

This programme was drafted on the recommendation of UNDP/SACEP mission of 1982 & was designed as a package programme for sensitizing people in all spheres of life, from small children in rural areas to high level decision makers. Subsequently UNEP decided to adopt this programme in their Environmental Education Programme for Asia & Pacific.

At the 2nd Governing Council of SACEP held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in April 1985 the UNEP delegate responding to the suggestion requesting that South Asia be considered as a "bloc" in the implementation of the project for Environmental Education for Asia & Pacific said that SACEP can consider this in the implementation of the action plan once it has been formulated & adopted.

At the invitation of UNEP, the Director of SACEP attended a Meeting of Experts on Environmental Education & Training held in Bangkok in November 1985. At this meeting, the programme of action for Environmental Education was finalised & approved.

In the light of this Programme of Action & the discussions held with UNEP & UNESCO, the SACEP Secretariat has revised its project document & has submitted it to UNESCO for possible collaboration.

Technology for Development of Renewable & Reusable Resources

The Economic & Social Commission for Asia & Pacific Regional Centre for Technology Transfer (ESCAP/RCTT) which is SACEP's Focal Point for this subject matter area formulated 3 country pilot projects using Agricultural & Industrial wastes. These projects were adopted by UNEP as suitable for assistance.

Whilst the Government of Netherlands have shown interest in 2 of these projects, discussions are on at present with a well established International Organisation for the possible implementation of all three pilot projects.

A Pilot Study on Vector-Borne Disease Problems in Small Scale Water Resources Development Projects in Sri Lanka

This pilot study funded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is in its final stages. The field work which commenced in January 1985 has been completed & the personnel from the various local institutions involved are at present writing the final report for submission to WHO. Meanwhile the SACEP Secretariat has submitted an inventory of this project.

SACEP has also requested WHO to examine the possibility of launching similar studies in other member countries of SACEP.

General Information

The SACEP Secretariat is pleased to announce that the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) & the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) have established working relationships with SACEP & have granted SACEP permanent observer status. Negotiations are on with other International Organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the International Union for Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources (IUCN), the World Bank & the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for similar working relationship.

It is also a matter of great satisfaction that the East-West Environment & Policy Institute, Hawaii, (EAPI) has become SACEP's Focal Point for the United States.

I would like to state that the launching of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme becomes an initiative of indisputable significance. Since the countries of the South Asia Region agreed in 1981 to establish SACEP as an organisation or machinery for co-operation, we not only initiated and launched this co-operative action, but also agreed to make financial contribution towards strengthening SACEP so that it would be able to render successful services in the South Asia region.

The importance of SACEP not only lies in its being the first step towards co-operative action in South Asia, it also stems from the spirit and commitments that some least developed countries undertook to render financial support and came forward to provide financial contributions to ensure such co-operation.

*Hon. Dr. Abdul Ghafar Lakanwal,
Minister for Agriculture and Land Reform,
Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.*

NEWS ABOUT NEXT ISSUE

CORALS, MANGROVES AND ISLAND ECO-SYSTEMS IN SOUTH ASIA

The protection of the marine environment and related eco-systems has been identified as a major problem among most countries of Asia and even in the Pacific, the degree of severity of the problems varying from country to country. Studies undertaken have revealed that the marine environment of the South Asia Region is seriously threatened due to discharge of settlements from both on shore and off shore activities. From it also revealed, the ecological importance of specialised marine eco-systems such as Mangroves, Corals and Island Eco-systems.

The maritime countries of the South Asian Region have extensive mangrove areas which act as a major spawning, breeding and nursery grounds for commercially important coastal organisms on which the small scale fisherman in these countries depend upon for their livelihood and on which the coastal population utilize as a cheap source of animal protein.

The Sunderban forest, extending over six thousand square kilometers in Bangladesh and an equally large area in India, is the largest such Mangrove forest in the world and quite unique in its ecological characteristics. In Bangladesh, it constitutes one eighth of the total forest cover in the country and its environmental and economic importance could be measured from the fact that one third of the country's population one way or the other depend upon the Sunderban for their livelihood. Similarly, the Andaman Islands possess some of the most virginal mangrove forests in the world.

The Maldives and Laccadive (Lakshadwip) island chains are of exclusive coral origin and form the largest coral atoll in the world. The South Asian Region is also unique in its diverse island types of different geological origins, eco-systems structure and ecological balances, to which the natives have adapted in a unique traditional manner.

All these eco-systems are, at present, facing various forms of destruction. The Mangrove environment is today in various stages of degradation due to extensive deforestation, reclamation mainly for Urban development, sedimentations and domestic pollution. The coral and island ecosystems are suffering from extensive Coral mining, sedimentations, unmanaged fishery by destructive methods and serious developmental stress particularly from the development of Tourism.

Thus the objectives of SACEP's programmes are most opportune in trying, initially to evaluate the carrying capacity of these fragile ecosystems in order to restore them to their former potential and then to sustain the long range development of its resources.

The printing of this Newsletter, from its inception in January 1984, has been solely due to the assistance received from the UNEP Regional Office, Bangkok. The SACEP Secretariat wishes to place on record its deep appreciation for this very kind gesture, especially to the Regional Director Dr Nay Htun.