



REPORT

EIGHTH GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme

**29 SEPTEMBER, 2001
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

**Report of the Eighth Meeting of
the Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
(SACEP)
29 September 2001
Colombo, Sri Lanka**

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

(SACEP)

REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (GC. 8)

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REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

Eighth Meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme was held at Hilton Colombo, Sri Lanka on the 29th September 2001

2. ATTENDANCE

The Meeting of Governing Council (GC 8) was attended by delegates from the member countries viz: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Representatives from the United Nations agencies and International Organisations also attended the meeting as Observers. These included United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Droughts (UNCCD) and Regional Environmental Hub for South Asia, US Embassy, Kathmandu.

List of Participants is in **Annex I**.

3. INAUGURATION

President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka Her Excellency Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in her inaugural message for the meeting said that in today's world environmental concerns of one country has become a major concern for the entire world. It is natural for the world to take note of environmental issues because the environment is the lifeline of our people.

Since both urban and rural poverty is endemic to the South Asian region, she was happy that the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme is making concerted efforts towards the protection and conservation of the environment in the South Asian region. Our socio-economic development has not kept pace with the increasing population. Therefore, we are now saddled with half of our population living below the poverty line and the explosive problem of youth unemployment. Poverty drives people to over exploit their natural surroundings.

The Government of Sri Lanka is mindful of development issues and the need for environmental conservation. All our development plans therefore endeavour to strike a balance between the two. She pledged to continuously work for the implementation of Agenda 21 in unison with SACEP and other countries of South Asia to build a better future for the people of the region.

Complete text of Her Excellency's Message is in **Annex II**.

Hon Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment, Government of Sri Lanka formally inaugurated the Eighth Meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme.

The Welcome Address was given by **Mahboob Elahi, Director General, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme**. In his welcome address he said that despite problems, South Asia is a region of hope. It is one of the fast growing regions in the world with shared environment and resources (mountains, rivers, water basins, air and oceans) huge market demand for goods and services like electricity and attractive tourist destinations thereby making environmental protection a strong component of sustainable development.

He also said that regional approaches for addressing with problems have been recognised and a number of regional programmes are active in the world. Due support of the country governments of SACEP would therefore be necessary if the objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development are to be optimally realised at the individual country, regional and global level.

During its years of existence, SACEP has carried out many projects and programmes in the field of environmental management in the South Asian region. It has acquired the recognition and respect of governments, international organisations and the donor community as the principal inter-governmental implementing organisation in the field of environmental management in the South Asian region. SACEP will continue to strive to win your confidence and support.

Donors may therefore consider regional approaches to addressing the environmental problems and activities relating to their mitigation in support to their individual country programme on the subjects for plausible advantages of regionality like resource efficiency and economies of scale.

The text of his Address is in **Annex III**.

Shafqat S. Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi in his statement on this occasion drew attention of the participants of the meeting to the enormity of environmental problems facing the countries of South Asia. For instance, he mentioned that whereas there is a problem of surplus water in certain areas and the problems associated therewith, such as flooding, on an overall basis the entire region is under water stress and incidents of drought and desertification are on an increase. Likewise, the air quality in most of our cities and towns is highly degraded and at times much higher than the acceptable WHO standards. The situation is not too different in respect of deforestation, loss of biodiversity and marine pollution. Even though in the past few decades rapid rate of development has created some wealth in South Asia, most of the time it has led to environmental degradation.

Nonetheless, we have fairly developed scientific and other institutions in our countries and well-qualified manpower. There is a strong need for regular consultation among the member countries of SACEP at all levels to find common grounds and approaches for their solution. The recently concluded South Asian Consultations as part of preparation for WSSD organised jointly by UNEP and SACEP has been a right step in this direction. He said that we need to meet more frequently for exchange of information and fostering co-operation under the aegis of SACEP. Though SACEP was set up by the country governments, it still lacks political commitment, which must increase to enable the Secretariat to carry out its mandate co-operatively and effectively. South Asia can also learn from similar initiatives in the other regions in Asia and the Pacific and elsewhere for environmental protection and resource conservation with the Secretariat co-ordinating and taking the lead.

He also emphasised the need for rationalisation of relationship between SAARC and SACEP in the area of environment.

He congratulated Mahboob Elahi, Director General, SACEP for assuming leadership of this organisation and hoped that with his background and practical experience at working at the national and international level for environmental issues would be immensely useful to this Programme. He also assured full co-operation of UNEP to SACEP in carrying out its activities and programmes.

The text of his Address is in Annex IV.

In his Address as Chairman, SACEP Governing Council, H.E. Abdul Azeez Yoosuf, High Commissioner of the Republic of Maldives to Sri Lanka said that ten years after Rio, we are at a crossroad towards accomplishing our commitments made in 1992, as we embark on the road to Johannesburg. In less than a year from now, the world leaders will meet in another historic gathering to review the implementation of the outcome of the Earth Summit of Rio, identify the constraints, challenges and success areas. At this critical juncture as regions and sub-regions are preparing to evolve and project the common cause of sustainable development, it is most fitting that we began the process in South Asia two days ago in close collaboration with UNEP and SAARC. We are confident that under the Chairmanship of Sri Lanka, the process we began towards this goal will bear fruits before we arrive at Johannesburg. In this regard, I wish to appeal to all member countries of SACEP to work closely with the new Chairmanship in achieving our common resolve of balanced equitable utilization of resources and sustainability of nature.

The text of his Address is in Annex V.

Hon Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment, Government of Sri Lanka in his Keynote Address said that while he appreciates the progress so far made by the SACEP and all the help from UNEP officers in assisting SACEP activities, there is still a tremendous potential for achieving success and further development in the field of environment duly supported by financial commitments for this purpose. There is a need to pay more focus on issues that are very relevant to our part of the world such as vanishing biodiversity, land degradation, climate change, etc. We all know that Maldives is under threat from sea level rise due to global warming. Even as an island country in the same region we are also experiencing such consequences of global warming and climate change, longer spells of droughts, loss of bio-diversity, land degradation and increased salinity in agricultural soils in marginal areas. All these phenomena can be attributed to the consequences of rapid social and environmental changes such as urbanisation, industrialisation and climate change.

Sri Lankans have had a long tradition of living in harmony with nature while harvesting natural resources to meet their needs. During the last century rapidly expanding human numbers have placed new pressures on resources, infrastructure and society. The challenge today is to achieve higher level of economic development with minimum adverse impacts on the natural environment, cultural norms and society at large and also to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the rights and needs of our children and future generations.

Today we experience various kinds of environmental disasters. Some are man made and others are due to natural causes. The earthquake in Gujarat State, Bhopal Disaster in India,

major oil spills in Sri Lanka, floods and droughts in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are some examples in the region. The Gujarat incident stresses on the need to act instantly after a disaster. It also points to the importance of the use of communication for co-ordination. Although there is no specific reference in the Agenda 21 on disaster management, consequences of disasters have been discussed in general. Since this is the time that we are reviewing the performance of the recommendations of the Rio Summit held in 1992, it is an opportune time to consider a disaster management and communication strategy. In view of the importance of this I would like to propose that the SACEP region will consider development of an Environment Disaster Management and Communication Strategy and also set up a Disaster Relief Fund to assist countries facing grave situations. These recommendations can be part of our recommendations for South Asia for WSSD for adoption.

The text of his Address is in **Annex VI**.

The Vote of Thanks on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka was given by M. Susiriwardena, Secretary, Ministry of Transport & Environment.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

In accordance with the provisions of Articles of Association of SACEP, Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment, Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was elected Chairman of the Eighth Governing Council of SACEP. Hon. P. L. Singh, Minister of Population & Environment, His Majesty's Government of Nepal was elected as Vice Chairman of the Meeting. H.E. Dasho Nado Rinchen, Deputy Minister, National Environment Commission Secretariat, Royal Government of Bhutan was elected as Rapporteur.

5. AGENDA

The Agenda of the Meeting adopted by GC.8 is at **Annex VII**.

6. STATEMENTS OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

The Heads of Delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan & Sri Lanka presented their country statements to GC.8.

These statements covered initiatives taken by the countries in the area of environmental protection and management. The Country Statements clearly highlighted the very crucial and pivotal role played by SACEP in the promotion of environmental management in the South Asian region and noted that it need to be further strengthened.

The Country Statements are in **Annexes VIII to XIV**.

7. OTHER STATEMENTS

Representatives of the UN Agencies and International Organisations attending the Meeting also addressed the Governing Council. UNEP offered to assist SACEP with seed money to develop restructured regional programmes based on the expressed priorities of the region. The statements are in **Annexes XV & XVI**.

8. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

SACEP SECRETARIAT & SUBJECT AREA FOCAL POINTS

The Governing Council considered the relevant section of the Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials (**Annex XVII**) on this item.

The Governing Council was fully appreciative of the fact that there is an urgent need to strengthen the SACEP Secretariat in order that they could fulfil its obligations in serving the member countries.

With respect to Institutional Matters, the Governing Council approved the following decisions:

- a) The present system of Focal Points should remain but mechanisms for intra-country co-ordination needs to be stimulated and strengthened.
- b) The Environment Ministries should remain as SACEP's Focal Points and they should in turn co-ordinate with other relevant ministries to bring in greater participation & synergy.
- c) SACEP Secretariat should take measures to collect, collate and disseminate all information on environment so that it becomes the storehouse of knowledge in the region.
- d) The Secretariat should bring together other line ministries and agencies through the National Focal Points at the National level to SACEP Foras.
- e) The Focal Points may be requested to respond to SACEP's queries in a timely manner.
- f) It was recommended that major donors may be invited as Observers at SACEP Governing Council Meetings and other to recognise their contribution and enhance their role in matters relating to drawing of SACEP work programmes and participate with the Governing Council in the organisation's performance and monitoring.
- g) The need to strengthen the SACEP Secretariat was recognised in terms of staff and other requirements to meet programme needs. Details of these proposals may be discussed and decided in the Consultative Committee Meetings of SACEP.

9. PROGRAMME MATTERS

PROGRESS OF PROGRAMME AND PROJECT ACTIVITIES & REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The SACEP Secretariat presented a Review of Programmes and Projects undertaken by SACEP and South Asia Environment and Natural Resources Information Centre (SENRIC). The significance and the importance of the programmes undertaken by SACEP were highlighted. SACEP's Strategy and Programme 3 (SSP 3) prepared by the Secretariat was

made available to member country delegations. It is presently under consideration of the Norwegian Government for possible support.

The Governing Council was appreciative of the work done by the Secretariat in implementation of programmes despite the constraints they have been facing.

The meeting was especially appreciative of the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), UNEP and UNEP-RRCAAP for their generous programme support both financially and technically. The Governing Council also acknowledged the assistance and support given by ADB, ESCAP and other donors.

Shafqat S. Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP assured the meeting of their support for efforts towards the re-invigoration of SACEP as an effective mechanism for fostering sub-regional level co-operation.

With respect to Programme Activities, the Governing Council approved the following decisions.

- a) There is a need to simplify mechanisms to ensure timely response to queries from SACEP to the member countries and vice versa.
- b) The State of the Environment Reports prepared by the member countries should become one of the basis of formulating action plans of SACEP and in addressing strategies for sustainable development.
- c) National priorities of each country should be linked to develop common projects and programmes. The present sub-Asian consultation process may be appropriately used as the basis of this exercise in collaboration with the member countries.
- d) Projects identified should be demand-driven. Some supply-driven catalyst projects in support of global initiatives would nevertheless be required.
- e) SACEP to select a set of priority issues that is shared by all member countries and develop a programme of action with a time plan so that tangible results are achieved.

10. FINANCIAL MATTERS

A) COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBER STATES FOR SACEP SECRETARIAT

The Governing Council reviewed the Financial Position of SACEP including the country contributions made by the Member States to the SACEP Secretariat. It was brought to the notice of the meeting that Secretariat was facing severe financial constraints due to the delay in receiving country contributions already approved by GC.7/SACEP and an appeal was made to countries to send in their contributions on time. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the contributions for the years 2001 & 2002 will be at the rate as agreed upon at the 7th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP.

The representative of Bangladesh confirmed that their contribution for 2000 has been authorised and that the Secretariat should receive it soon. The delegate from India informed the meeting that all arrears will be cleared soon. He further informed the meeting that it has been decided that their annual contributions from the year 2001 will be US \$ 20,000. The representative of Pakistan too informed that their arrears would be cleared soon.

B) APPROVAL OF ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR 2000

Under this Agenda Item, taking into consideration the recommendation by the Senior Officials, the Governing Council approved the Annual Audited Report of Accounts of the SACEP Secretariat for 2000.

C) APPROVAL OF PROGRAMME AND SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2001 & 2002

The Governing Council as recommended by the Meeting of Senior Officials approved the Secretariat Budget for the years 2001 & 2002, which is the same as for the year 2000. The approved Budget is given as Annex XVIII of this Report.

11. SUB REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS FOR 2002 WORLD SUMMIT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

The Governing Council expressed their satisfaction with the sub-regional consultation process, including stakeholders and intergovernmental meetings held in conjunction with the GC.8/SACEP on 27 – 28 September 2001 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The collaborative role of SACEP together with the Government of Sri Lanka, SAARC and the Regional Task Force for WSSD in this regard was appreciated. It was also recommended that SACEP may consider the recommendations of these consultations insofar as relevant to its charter.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Surendra Shrestha, Director, UNEP-RRCAAP made a presentation on the Asian Brown Cloud (ABC) comprised of a dense brownish haze about the size of the continent of USA over the Indian Ocean. The Governing Council was informed that the atmospheric environmental issues (air pollution, global warming and ozone depletion) can have serious adverse impacts on health, agriculture and ecosystems. The formation of ABC is attributable to the accumulation of the particulate matters in massive quantities due to burning of biomass and the low quality fuels in the Asian region. Its scale and size therefore could have not only adverse environmental implications at the individual country level but also at regional and global level. Further studies are in hand to confirm more facts about the presence of the ABC over South Asia and their impacts for the region.

The delegates to the meeting showed keen interest on the issue and sought clarifications.

13. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The Governing Council considered and adopted this Report on the 29th September 2001.

14. CONCLUDING SESSION

The Director General of SACEP expressed his gratitude to the Chairman, the other Office Bearers and the Ministry of Transport & Environment, Government of Sri Lanka for their generosity and unstinted co-operation in making this Governing Council a success.

The Chairman, Hon Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment, Government of Sri Lanka in his concluding remarks thanked all delegates and the Director General and the SACEP Secretariat for their wholehearted co-operation in ensuring the success of this meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a press briefing was held. Hon Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport, Government of Sri Lanka and the heads of delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan and India formally launched the State of Environment Reports of their respective countries prepared in collaboration with UNEP, SACEP and NORAD. Hon. Alavi Moulana, Deputy Minister of Media, Government of Sri Lanka was also present at this ceremony.

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**INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF H.E. CHANDRIKA BANDARANAIKE KUMARATUNGA
PRESIDENT
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA**

Honourable Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment,

Visiting Ministers of SACEP Member Countries,

Distinguished Representatives from Islamic Republic of Iran,

Mr. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP,

Mr. Surendra Shrestha, WSSD Task Force for Asia Pacific,

Chairman of the SACEP Governing Council,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, let me warmly welcome all of you to Sri Lanka and to the Eighth Governing Council Meeting of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP).

I deem it an honour to inaugurate the Eighth Governing Council Meeting of the SACEP on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, the host country.

Today, environmental concerns of one country have become a major concern for the entire world. Some years ago, we witnessed how raging forest fires in Indonesia affected countries in South Asia, and oil slicks in the Persian Gulf affected rig countries in the Arabian Sea.

Therefore, it is natural for the world to take note of environmental issues because the environment is the lifeline of our people. Sri Lanka is a small country with limited land area. Our socio-economic development has not kept pace with the increasing population. Therefore, we are now saddled with half of our population living below the poverty line and the explosive problem of youth unemployment.

As you know poverty drives people to over exploit their natural surroundings. Since both urban and rural poverty is endemic to the South Asian Region, I am happy that South Asian Cooperative Environmental Programme is making a concrete effort towards the protection and conservation of the environment in the South Asian Region.

We, in Sri Lanka have a recorded history dating back to over 25000 years during which period Sri Lankans have lived in harmony with the nature. In this context, I must say that the Government is mindful of development issues and the need for environmental conservation. All our development plans therefore take great pains to strike a balance between the two.

Moreover, Sri Lanka is a signatory to the 1992 Earth Summit Agenda 21, the global programme for sustainable development. As members of SACEP, we therefore, have to work in unison with the Agenda 21 to build a better tomorrow for all our people.

Let me conclude by wishing all of you a pleasant stay in Sri Lanka and very successful deliberations at the Governing Council meeting.

**ADDRESS OF WELCOME BY MR. MAHBOOB ELAHI
DIRECTOR GENERAL
SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

Honourable Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment of Sri Lanka

*His Excellency Mr. Abdul Azeez Yusoof, High Commissioner of Republic of Maldives Sri Lanka &
Current Chairman of SACEP Governing Council*

Mr. Shafqat S. Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you all to this inaugural session of the Eighth Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP). It gives me great pleasure, most of all, to welcome Honourable Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment of Sri Lanka.

Honourable Minister, I thank you on behalf of the member countries of SACEP for honouring us with your presence here to inaugurate the Eighth Session of the Governing Council of SACEP which is being held in conjunction with Preparatory Consultations for South Asia for World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD). These Consultations are a part of worldwide preparations for the WSSD to be held next year in Johannesburg, South Africa.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Minister for Transport and Environment and the people of Sri Lanka for the kind hospitality that has been extended to the delegations of SACEP member countries, United Nations agencies, development banks, multi-lateral and bi-lateral organisations.

I must particularly recognise the presence of Mr. Shafqat S. Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Mr. Ahmed Sareer, Director Information and Media representing the Secretary General, South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) to represent their organisation at the highest level. It will always be a pleasant reminder to us all as to how significant is the need for regional co-operation in achieving the goal of environmental protection and sustainable development as do their respective organisations manifest.

Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Exactly 20 years ago in February 1981, Colombo Declaration was adopted in this very city for the establishment of an inter-governmental organisation to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment of the countries of South Asia, individually, collectively and co-operatively.

The spirit of partnership in this region was further cemented with the creation of SAARC in 1985 as a political framework for co-operation amongst the South Asian countries.

Government of Sri Lanka has a pioneering role in the establishment of SACEP and always provided due political and financial support, including host facilities throughout its existence. Although other member countries have also been providing due support to this organisation, the level of commitment and support to this organisation by the Government of Sri Lanka has been paramount. We are sincerely thankful to the Government of Sri Lanka for this continued patronage.

Distinguished Ministers and delegates.

The establishment of SACEP in 1982 was indeed a visionary step by the leadership of South Asia if we look at the history of creation of similar regional environmental organisations that came into being in support of global environmental movement that started with 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, followed by Nairobi Declaration of 1982; re-affirmed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 and now scheduled for review at 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. These among others include South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP, Apia, Samoa 1982, 1993, 1995) ASEAN Committee of Senior Officers of Environment (Jakarta, 1989) European Union's Commissioner of Environment (Brussels, 1995); North American Commission on Environmental Co-operation (Montreal, 1993); Commission on Development of Central Asian States (CODOCA, 1995); Urumqi Declaration on Sustainable Development (China, 1998). The same may be true about the other regional organisations that exist in the Eastern Europe, Caribbean and Latin America.

It is quite possible that we in the SACEP may not have performed as to the expectations of the Governments and peoples of South Asia and several milestones not yet crossed, all the developments referred to by me earlier amply testify that (a) establishment of SACEP in 1982 was a timely action by the countries of South Asia and (b) establishment of a regional entity is somewhat a necessary pre-requisite if the objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development are to be optimally realised at the individual country, regional or global level.

In the course of its short history, SACEP has many ups and downs insofar as its performance is concerned. Partially these could be attributed to the several peculiar factors and circumstances that are endemic to this region: enormity of environmental degradation taking place in this region, rising expectations of masses and at the same time weak and poorly resourced institutions. SACEP is no exception to the milieu of crisis of the South Asian Countries that also are beset with problems such as poverty, income inequalities, debts burden and huge unmet basic needs. All countries in our region are nevertheless not oblivious to the importance of environmental protection as a basis of the life support system of this planet earth we inhabit and so are the efforts at sub-regional/regional and global level.

It is evident from the various legal and institutional developments that have taken place in the countries of our region in the last 10 years or so, including necessary capital outlays as the financial resources permit. It will be worthwhile to mention some of these initiatives: establishment of central and state pollution control boards, hundreds of pollution abatement schemes under Ganga Action Plan and afforestation programme under the aegis of Eco-development Board in India; Flood Action Plan and National Arsenic Mitigation Information Centre in Bangladesh; tax incentive schemes for the phase-out of three wheelers from Kathmandu valley and their replacement with environmentally friendly transport fleet and institutionalisation of the benefit-sharing to resolve conflicts amongst various stakeholders in the national park in Nepal and; establishment of cleaner production centres in leather and oil refining sectors, and bio-diversity conservation with the active involvement of local communities in the Northern areas of Pakistan; upgrading environment of low income communities, urban greenery programme and supply of low sulphur diesel in Sri Lanka and above

all Malé Declaration on the Control of Transboundary Pollution in the SACEP region. It will be noted that there is a great potential of synergy between national action and their replication/adaptation in other countries to maximise benefits at the sub-regional level.

The question, however, is whether this desirable exchange of information and experiences is taking place in the region or not. The answer may be 'yes' in certain cases and 'no' in many cases. For instance, when I joined SACEP as Director General a couple of months ago, the staff of SACEP handed over to me rather a long list of their achievements in the areas, such as environmental assessment, preparation of State of Environment Reports of the countries of the region, establishment of South Asia Environment Natural Resources and Information Centre (SENRIC), preparation of an Action Plan to prevent South Asian Seas from land-based sources of pollution, preparation of an Oil Spill Contingency Plan under South Asian Seas Programme, promotion of compliance and enforcement of environmental laws, capacity building and more recently a joint South Asian perspective for the WSSD, 2002. I am told that a list of these activities has also been placed in your conference folder.

Some of these activities were financed by the donors, somewhat on an ad-hoc basis between 1982 and 1991 on a case-by-case basis and then systematically under four-year programmes titled SACEP Strategy and Programme-1 (1992-1996) and SACEP Strategy and Programme- 2 (1996-200).

The later two programmes were entirely financed by NORAD. Based on the satisfactory evaluation report of SSP 1 and 2, NORAD has been requested to support SSP 3 covering two year period at an estimated cost of US\$ 2.5 million. UNEP, ESCAP, Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO) have been equally supportive of the programme activities under SACEP.

While donors have supported some projects and programmes of SACEP, SACEP Secretariat per se is supported by country contributions at the rate decided by the Governing Council. Our Bank Statements show that these contributions have not yet been paid by some countries. It is requested that these arrears may be cleared as soon as possible as it is one of the indications of the support and commitment of the member countries to the work of SACEP. You will agree with me that a strong and well functioning secretariat is an effective leverage for the donors support who are keen to work in this region for environment.

Despite its problems, South Asia is nevertheless a region of hope. It is one of the fast growing regions with shared environment and resources (mountains, rivers, water basins, air and sea) huge market, demand for goods and services and electricity, attractive tourist destinations thereby making environmental protection a strong component of sustainable development.

During its years of existence, SACEP on its part has carried out many projects and programmes in the field of environmental management in the South Asian region. It has acquired the recognition and respect of governments, international organisations and the donor community as the principal inter-governmental implementing organisation in the field of environmental management in the South Asian region. We will continue to strive to win your confidence and support.

We will request the donors to also support regional approach to the environmental problems and activities relating to their solutions in their support to the country governments for advantages like resource efficiency and economies of scale.

Distinguished Ministers,

In conclusion let me also welcome the Honourable Ministers and Senior Officials to this 8th Governing Council of SACEP. The work done at the meeting of the Senior Officials was an unusually gratifying exercise. I would like to thank the senior Officials for the painstaking and diligent approach to the task before them. I am confident that all matters put before them have been considered in the most favourable light and that the Honourable Ministers would be more than satisfied with the outcome. I must specially mention the outcome of Regional Consultations on WSSD, firstly in the stake holder's session and then in an inter- governmental meeting. I hope that the recommendations of these consultations will also find your consideration and formal endorsement.

I welcome you once again to this beautiful country and hope that this visit to the Sri Lanka will be not only fruitful but will also be a memorable occasion which will be remembered by all participants of this Eighth Governing Council of SACEP.

**ADDRESS BY MR. SHAFQAT S. KAKAKHEL
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

Honourable Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment of Sri Lanka

H E Mr. Abdul Azeez Yusoof, High Commissioner of Republic of Maldives to Sri Lanka & Current Chairman of SACEP Governing Council

Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be invited to give few remarks at the 8th SACEP Governing Council Meeting. With your permission, I wish to make a few remarks on global environmental trends and the regional cooperation in South Asia.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT TRENDS:

ATMOSPHERE

Climate change remains a hot issue

- Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have reached their highest levels for at least 420,000 years. The present concentration of around 370 parts per million is more than 30% higher than the 270 ppm of pre-industrial levels.
- The 2001 IPCC assessment projects that these concentrations will cause global warming of between 1.4 and 5.8°C (degrees centigrade) over the coming century.
- Much of the 10-20 cm rise in sea level over the past 100 years has probably been related to global temperature rise.

But in the stratosphere, the Montreal Protocol and its amendments and adjustments are having a positive impact

- Without the Protocol, the amount of ozone depleting substances in the atmosphere would have been five times greater by 2050. Thousands of deaths from skin cancers will be averted as a result.

FRESHWATER

Water quantity and water quality remain very high on the environmental agenda

- About 2.3 billion people are living in conditions of water stress or water scarcity
- Some 80 countries have serious water shortages; in some cases this is seriously affecting their social and economic development.

- **Problems** with water quality are often as severe as problems with water availability, but less attention has been paid to them, particularly in developing regions. More than half of the world's major rivers are being seriously depleted and polluted. This is degrading and poisoning the surrounding ecosystems, and threatening the health and livelihood of people who depend on them

LAND

An immense transformation of land use and land cover has taken place over past years to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding human population. The most widespread change has been the expansion of agricultural land.

- This trend may be altering. From 1996 to 1998 the reported area under agricultural use in developing countries remained stable, while there has been a slight decline in agricultural land area in developed countries. Future years will reveal whether this is a temporary plateau or whether it is due to a shortage of agricultural land or more intensive production methods.

There are encouraging examples of better land use practices in both developed and developing countries but global trends in land degradation, soil loss and desertification persist for many lower income countries and less advantaged groups.

- Human-induced land degradation is estimated to affect around 2 billion hectares, an area the size of Canada and the United States. Soils are being degraded physically and chemically due to erosion, exhaustion (nutrient depletion) and pollution. Degradation has reduced productivity on nearly a quarter of all usable land.
- Each year an additional 20 million hectares of agricultural land becomes too degraded for crop production, or is lost to urban sprawl.

FORESTS

80 per cent of the original forest cover of the earth has already been cleared, fragmented or degraded. Nearly half the world's original forest cover was lost over the past 50 years

- Deforestation was running at approximately 14 million hectares per annum in the 1990s, slightly less than the rate in the previous decade, but still an alarming loss.
- Natural forests, especially in the tropics, are a haven for biodiversity - but remain in dire need of protection. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, where most natural forests remain, 20% of the forest, covering an area eleven times as big as Japan, was cleared during the past 30 years.

BIODIVERSITY

Biological diversity provides the human race with inestimable benefits and services - and is a major insurance policy for the future

- Living organisms provide a wide variety of environmental services. The combined economic value of 17 ecosystem services has recently been estimated at \$16-54 trillion per year.
- Biodiversity constitutes the biological basis for world food security. Human health and well being are directly dependent on biodiversity. 75% of the world's population rely for healthcare

on traditional medicines derived directly from natural sources. 10 of the world's 25 top-selling drugs in 1997 were derived from natural sources. The global market value of pharmaceuticals derived from genetic resources is estimated at \$75-150 billion annually.

- The most pervasive and over-riding threat to biodiversity is habitat loss and degradation. Direct exploitation and invasive species are also having a major impact.

International conventions are a major tool for addressing the global issue of biodiversity and habitat loss. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has emerged as the principal global instrument relevant to attaining biodiversity conservation. One of the most recent concerns to be addressed under the CBD is the issue of biosafety.

- Biotechnology is increasingly being applied to the genetic improvement of crops, but concerns have been raised about potential risks of living modified organisms (LMOs) to biodiversity. In response to this concern, a subsidiary agreement to the CBD, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, was adopted in January 2000 to address the potential risks posed by cross-border trade and accidental releases of LMOs.

MARINE AND COASTAL

About half of the world's population occupies a coastal strip 200 kilometres wide – just 10% of the world's land surface. Half of all coastline ecosystems are now under pressure because of high population densities and development.

Overall, marine degradation not only continues, but has intensified

- Globally, sewage remains the largest source of contamination by volume to the marine and coastal environment. Recent evidence suggests that sewage contamination of marine waters is a health problem of global proportions

The exploitation of living marine resources and loss of habitats is recognised as being at least as threatening to ocean health as marine pollution

- The new World Atlas of Coral Reefs prepared by UNEP-WCMC and released in September 2001 shows that coral reefs occupy a much smaller area than was previously assumed. Reefs are degrading fast in almost every country in which they occur, with some 58% threatened by human activities.

URBAN AREAS

Although rates of urban growth are slowing down, the world's cities are still receiving about 160,000 new residents every day

- Almost one half of humanity now lives in urban areas, with Tokyo the biggest of the world's 19 mega cities.
- The most striking change in the past few decades have been in levels of urbanisation in less-developed nations: rising from about 27 per cent in 1975 to 41 per cent in 2000.

- The health burdens of environmental hazards such as air, water and land pollution fall heavily on the urban poor, particularly in lower income countries where many environmental problems stem from rapid industrialization and urbanization.
- Many urban areas are overburdened with waste. Increases in the volume of urban waste are due principally to increasingly affluent lifestyles, rather than urban growth.

REGIONAL COOPERATION:

- Past few decades of rapid development has created some wealth in South Asia. But at the same time, the environment of the region has been degraded.
- In order to effectively deal with these issues, there is a need of stronger regional cooperation to ensure integration of environmental, economic, and social concerns in policies targeted to poverty eradication, reduction or prevention at national level. There is a need to look into the environmental dimensions of socio-economic development and socio-economic dimensions of environmental degradation.
- There is also a need of effective regional cooperation in order to meet the International Development Goals (IDG), which sets the target for reductions in poverty, improvements in health and education, and protection of environment. There is need to translate IDG goals to regional level actions.
- Some of the good examples of regional cooperation include: GEF project on reducing GHG emissions in South Asia; co-operation with IUCN on biodiversity conservation and protection of ecosystem; cooperation with UNEP on environmental education and law; cooperation with UNEP/UNIDO on industry and environment and cleaner production; and cooperation with UNEP RRC.AP on strengthening environment assessment and monitoring capabilities (SEAMCAP Project) and implementation of Malé Declaration on controlling transboundary air pollution in South Asia.

SACEP

- SACEP was established in 1982 (prior to SAARC).
- SAARC has a mandate to assist the member countries in formulating the environmental action plans.
- Endorsed by all regional governments, SACEP in partnership with UNEP also has "environmental" mandate.
- Both the regional bodies are represented by the same group of Environment Ministries, which has lead to some level duplication of efforts.
- There is a need to address the major understanding, cooperation, linkages between the regional bodies towards sustainable development in the region.

CONCLUSION

- I wish to assure you that UNEP will continue to assist and collaborate with the regional bodies towards protection of environment and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN GOVERNING COUNCIL 7/SACEP
H.E. MR.ABDUL AZEEZ YOOSUF
HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI LANKA
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES**

Honourable Dinesh Gunawardena, Minister of Transport and Environment,

Mr Mahboob Elahi, Director General of SACEP

Mr. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to address this august gathering on behalf of Hon. Ismail Shafeeu, Minister of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment of the Maldives, as the outgoing chairman of the SACEP Governing Council over the last 4 years (1998- 2001)

Let me at the outset, thank the Government of Sri Lanka for making such excellent arrangements in organizing this meeting of the Governing Council at such a short notice. We are deeply honoured by the patronage of Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga for blessing this meeting with a message, which will inspire our deliberations today. We are also grateful to the Hon. Minister of Transport and Environment, Dinesh Gunawardena for taking time off from his busy schedules in attending this meeting. We are equally happy to see the presence of the Honourable Ministers from Bhutan and Nepal.

On behalf of the members of the Governing Council, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Director General of SACEP, Mr. Mahboob Elahi on assumption of office few months ago. I have no doubt that with his vast experience in the field of Environment, SACEP will achieve high grounds towards a betterment of the state of the environment in the region. At the same time, I wish to place on record our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Dr. Ananda Raj Joshi, for steering the deliberations of SACEP for the last three years.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

Ten years after Rio, we are at crossroads towards accomplishing our commitments made in 1992, as we embark on the road to Johannesburg. In less than a year from now on, the world leaders will meet in another historic gathering to review the implementation of the outcome of the Earth Summit, identify the constraints, challenges and success areas. At this critical juncture as regions and sub-regions are preparing in evolving and projecting the common cause of Sustainable Development, it is most fitting that we began the process in South Asia two days ago in close collaboration with UNEP and SAARC. We are confident that under the chairperson of Sri Lanka, the process we began towards this goal will bear fruits before we arrive at Johannesburg. In this regard, I wish to appeal to all member countries of SACEP to work closely with the new Chairmanship in achieving our common resolve of balanced equitable utilization of resources and sustainability of nature.

I wish to offer our well wishes to the Government of Sri Lanka especially the Hon. Minister of Transport and Environment for success under his stewardship.

Thank You.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF BY HON. DINESH GUNAWARDENA
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA**

Honourable Ministers of SACEP Member Countries, Distinguished Representatives from Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Surendra Shrestha Chief, WSSD Taskforce for Asia and the Pacific, Chairman of the SACEP Governing Council, Mr. Mahboob Elahi, Director General of SACEP, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you, today at the 8th Governing Council Meeting, as the Minister of Transport and Environment in Sri Lanka. The Seventh meeting was held in April, 1998, in Maldives, and I would like to extend my deep appreciation to Hon. Ismail Shafeeu, Chairman of the Governing Council, and the Director General and all the staff of the SACEP Secretariat, for all what they have done since then in the area of Environment for the people in the Region.

The Minister of Transport and Environment is the national focal point for the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, and it was a pleasure for my Ministry to co-operate with SACEP in organising this important meeting.

As the Minister in charge of the subject of Environment, I appreciate the contribution made so far, by the SACEP for the development of the Environmental sector in Sri Lanka, especially through organising and mobilising finances for various environmental projects. Since the last meeting, the contribution that SACEP has made to promote and support the protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region is enormous. It has given training and helped capacity building in various environment related fields; implementation of the SACEP Strategy and related programmes cover and array of environmental issues; South Asian Seas Programme developed by the UNEP, and Regional Programme of Action, all these could be considered as very important outcomes. In addition, SACEP has produced a number of very important publications including legal handbooks, which can be considered as important environmental policy documents. South Asia Environment Natural Resources Information Centre (SENRIC) has helped in disseminating various systems such as GIS, for environmental assessment proposes and in strengthening of certain important government institutions in this aspect.

Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates,

While I appreciate the progress so far made by the SACEP and all the help from UNEP officers in assisting SACEP activities, I wish to mention that there's a tremendous potential for achieving success and further development in the field of environment, especially with substantial channelling of funds for this purpose. We need to pay more focus on issues that are very relevant to our part of the world such as vanishing biodiversity, land degradation, climate change, etc. We all know that Maldives is under threat from sea level rise due to global warming. Even as an island country in the same region we are also experiencing such consequences of global warming and climate change. Longer droughts we experience from time to time, loss of bio-diversity, land degradation, increased salinity in agricultural soils in marginal areas, all these can be attributed to the consequences of climate change mainly as a result of rapid industrialisation.

Today we experience various kinds of environment disasters some are man made and some are due to natural courses. Earthquake in Gujarat State, Bhopal Disaster in India, major oil spills in Sri Lanka, floods and droughts in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are some examples in the Region. Gujarat incident stresses on the need to act instantly after disaster. It also points to the importance of the use of communication for co-ordination. Although there is no specific reference in the Agenda 21 on disaster management, consequences of disasters have been discussed in general. As this is the time that we review the performance of the recommendations of the Rio Summit held in 1992, it is an opportune time to consider a disaster management and communication strategy. In view of the importance of this I would like to propose that SAARC region will consider development of an environment disaster management and communication strategy and set up a Disaster Relief fund to assist countries facing grave situations to be considered by WSSD for adoption.

According to the history, Sri Lankans have had a long tradition of living in harmony with nature while harvesting natural resources to meet their needs. Rapidly expanding human numbers have placed new pressures on resources, infrastructure and civil society during last century. The challenge today is to achieve higher level of economic development with minimum adverse impacts on the natural environment, cultural norms and society at large and also to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the rights and needs of our children who are our future generation.

Being the Minister in charge of the Transport sector, I can responsibly say that the number of vehicles we are using in the country has increased tremendously during the last two decades. It seems that almost every household in the urban areas has a vehicle, and day-by-day, the air pollution, due to increased vehicular emissions, is rising.

My ministry has taken a range of very important measures to mitigate impacts from the environmental problems we are faced with. The Ministry has held a large number of environmental awareness programmes on different environmental issues. The Ministry is working in collaboration with other line ministries though environmental cells established in those line ministries to address these matters further. We also have established Committees on Environmental Policy Management (CEPOMs) with the participation of all-important stakeholders of the environmental sector in the various Ministries to consider environmental concerns at the very beginning of any development activity. In addition, the Ministry has developed a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), and we have taken steps to establish a Biodiversity Secretariat and a climate change Secretariat in the Ministry. We also have developed a solid waste management strategy, and a Central Environmental Authority that comes under the purview of my Ministry is conducting EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment), and issues of licences high polluting industries, etc. These are only a few of the measures taken by my Ministry for the improvement of the environment in the country. We appreciate the co-operation extended to us by SACEP in achieving our environmental goals, and the Government anxious to work closely with SACEP, for the benefit of our people and for the future generations to come.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

As the Minister of Transport and Environment in Sri Lanka, I highly appreciate all your co-operation, and I hope the SACEP activities will help further strengthen our mission and let's work together for a better future.

We know that the Seventh Governing Council Meeting held in 1998 in Malé became a very successful event and I wish all the success for this meeting as well. I wish all of you a very pleasant and fruitful stay in Sri Lanka.

Thank you

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
29 SEPTEMBER 2001**

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of Office Bearers & Country Statements
3. Adoption of Agenda and Organisation of Work
4. Statements by United Nations Agencies, International/Regional Organisations and Aid Consortia
5. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS
 - a) SACEP Secretariat
 - b) Subject Area and Country Focal Points
6. PROGRAMME MATTERS
 - a) Progress of Programme and Project Activities
 - b) Review of International Co-operation
7. FINANCIAL MATTERS
 - a) Country Contributions from Member States for SACEP Secretariat
 - b) Approval of Annual Audited Report of Accounts for 2000
 - c) Approval of Programme and Secretariat Budget for 2001 & 2002
8. Any Other Business
9. Adoption of the Report
10. Closure of Meeting

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION
H.E. MR. ASHRAF-UD-DOULA
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH TO
SRI LANKA**

Honourable Minister of Transport and Environment, Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, Director General of SACEP, Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the People's Republic of Bangladesh I congratulate you being elected Chairman of the SACEP Governing Council. We are confident that under your guidance and leadership, this organization will reach greater heights.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has always supported SACEP and the regional programmes and plans for protection of Environment and promotion of Sustainable Development at the National level and even though Bangladesh does not have a national Agenda 21 as such, but had embarked upon having a national plan of action in the backdrop of the 1992 Earth Summit, Rio. The government of Bangladesh has constituted a high powered National Council headed by the Prime Minister. Under her guidance, the Government of Bangladesh prepared a document as needs assessment and gap analysis for formulation of National Agenda 21.

Currently several plans and sectoral policies have been prepared in areas such as

- Environmental Policy and Action Plan
- Forestry Master Plan
- National Forestry Policy
- Bangladesh Water and Flood Management Strategies
- National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation
- National Water Policy
- National Agriculture Policy
- Land Use Policy
- National Water Plan (Draft 2001)
- National Water Management Plan (Draft 2001)

All these policy documents will be integrated into National Sustainable Human Development Policies and Bangladesh National Agenda 21. All these plans and policies have been prepared with the active involvement of stakeholders, NGOs and Civil Societies.

Currently, national process for preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) has already been started in Bangladesh. We would like that some elements of our State of the Environment Reports and recommendations for the WSSD should be picked up for implementation at the sub-regional level by the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme.

I wish to conclude by assuring my government's fullest co-operation in making SACEP a viable regional institution in making our environment a treasure for the future generations to enjoy.

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE BHUTANESE DELEGATION
H.E. DASHO NADO RINCHHEN
DEPUTY MINISTER, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
SECRETARIAIT
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great privilege for me to be here at the 8th Governing Council Meeting of SACEP. I bring to this meeting the warm greetings of the Government and people of Bhutan.

Although Bhutan is a small country, we are committed to the cause of environment in the region. We are also fully committed to the international environmental conventions such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Under the UNFCCC, Bhutan has already completed the first national communication and this will be presented to the next conference of parties to the convention. Under the CBD, a national biodiversity strategy is already in place and work on both in-situ and ex-situ conservation is underway. Bhutan also strongly supports sub regional environmental initiatives such as SACEP and SAARC Technical Committee on Environment, Forest and Meteorology.

Bhutan has achieved great strides in the field of environment. Bhutan's National Environment Strategy, "The Middle Path" is a policy document based on the principle of Sustainable Development and identifies key areas of development for Bhutan. These are areas that would render Bhutan further in its development goals without compromising the pristine environment. Bhutan has also adopted various legal and policy mechanisms for the protection of its environment. Environmental Impact Assessment is mandatory for any development activity in Bhutan. The Environment Assessment Act 2000 is also in place to give this process a legal basis.

SACEP has been involved in Bhutan on two fronts. The project on Strengthening Environmental Assessment and Management Capabilities in the Asia Pacific Region (SEAMCAP) has been active in Bhutan, especially with regard to the preparation of the State of the Environment Report. Under this project, Bhutan received assistance, both in the form of hardware and software and we are grateful to SACEP and all its partners. The State of the Environment Report is finalised and I believe that this will be released at the end of the Governing Council Meeting.

SACEP is also involved in Bhutan with regard to the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its likely Transboundary effects for South Asia. Under this programme, a feasibility study has already been done and baseline data for the establishment of monitoring stations have also been collected by SACEP. I believe that an Action Plan is being drawn up which will be implemented during the second phase of the project. Bhutan supports this project and we will be happy to cooperate with SACEP during the second phase of the project as well.

While the Secretariat of SACEP is doing its best, the performance of SACEP, however, has been in question for a long time. SACEP is a body that we in this region created and we need to promote this body to greater heights. SACEP's failure can only be attributed to SAARC shortcomings since without support and co-operation of member countries it will not be able to function well. Therefore, there should be a closer link between SACEP and SAARC. I would also like to urge member countries to respond and take actions to SACEP initiatives in a timely manner.

In conclusion, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to Mr. Mahboob Elahi, Director General of SACEP for holding this meeting despite recent problems in Colombo. I hope that, under the leadership of the new Director General, SACEP will be able to fulfil its goals and objectives and be an active organisation in the region.

STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION
MR. P. V. JAYAKRISHNAN
SECRETARY TO MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

It is an honour and privilege for me to represent my country at this Eight Meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme and the first of this century.

Environment is at the crossroads today. The world has not chanced upon this moment suddenly. It has reached this stage traversing almost two centuries of exploitation - sometimes necessary, often needless - of what are after all finite resources and capacities of this Earth. As we embark to scale greater heights in this new millennium, environmental conservation has become one of the most critical issues facing the world and specifically this region.

In order to achieve our requirements, we have to face a certain amount of ecological consequences. At the same time, a delicate balance will have to be struck between the claims of environment and those of development.

In India successful actions taken in the recent past include wildlife conservation efforts, particularly of the tiger, elephant and rhinoceros. A forward looking National River Conservation Programme to tackle the most polluted stretches of our rivers and cleansing of lakes has been set into the motion. We are developing indigenous technologies to tap renewable sources of energy including bio fuels in Economically viable ways. In India, there is an elaborate framework of environmental legislation for the conservation of forests, wildlife, control of pollution of water, air, soil and noise. Regulations governing coastal zones and other fragile ecosystems are also in place. There are mandatory requirements of environmental impact assessment for citing and setting up of industrial and infrastructure projects. It has been our constant endeavour to ensure strict compliance of various environmental laws, rules and regulations.

As of now, our forests cover about 76 million hectares. We have ambitious plans to increase this to 109 million hectares by 2010 thereby ensuring tree cover in 33 percent of India's total land area.

Efforts are also on to convert at the earliest the entire public transport system in the national capital to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and other cleaner fuels. Already there is a distinct visible improvement in the air pollution levels in Delhi consequent to the series of measures taken in this regard.

It is gratifying to note that countries in South Asia have taken positive initiatives for conservation of environment. However, the road ahead is arduous. It is our view that the SACEP could work together and blend our respective national efforts into a constructive regional co-operation. We have to identify national and regional initiatives to retard further degradation of the ecosystems of South Asia. For instance, initiatives on information and communication technologies for integrated environment management could be one such initiative. Similarly, there is tremendous potential for sustainable management and utilisation of medicinal plants in the region. SACEP has and can play a crucial role in this regard. It has been recognized world over that people's participation in policy formulation and programme implementation is the cornerstone to sustainable development. SACEP can highlight such initiatives taken in the region for further replication.

While the international community is bracing itself for the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, we the countries of South Asia in particular and developing countries in general have recognized that promises of the Rio Conference - whether relating to provision of new and additional financial resources or co-operation in the field of technology - remain unfulfilled. Discussions were held yesterday with regard to South Asia's approach to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. I look forward to receiving the amended draft of our approach paper at the earliest. We need to further coordinate our efforts in this regard.

Before concluding, I would like to profusely thank the Government of Sri Lanka, Director General, SACEP and all his colleagues for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference and for making our stay here in Colombo pleasant and a memorable one.

Thank you

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE MALDIVIAN DELEGATION
H.E. MR. ABDUL AZEEZ YOOSUF
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES TO SRI LANKA**

Honourable Minister of Transport and Environment, Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, Director General of SACEP, Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the Governing Council of SACEP, and I thank through you the Government of Sri Lanka for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation and me.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the new Director General of SACEP, Mr. Mahboob Elahi.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to brief the Council the achievements we have made since the 7th Governing Council meeting. The Malé' Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia was adopted at the 7th Governing Council of SACEP held in Malé' Maldives on 22nd April 1998.

We have started the implementation of the first phase of the project which was formulated to implement the Malé' Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia with the generous assistance of UNEP and SACEP. Compilation of the State of the Environment Report of Maldives under the Strengthening Environment Assessment and Monitoring Capabilities in the Maldives - State of the Environment, project is near completion.

The draft of the Regional Oil and Chemical Contingency Plan for South Asia prepared by SACEP is now going through the final endorsement process.

Also, we are in the last stages of completing the First National Communication of the Maldives to be presented to the 7th Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Country Report of Maldives will be completed by end of this year. "Conservation and Sustainable use of Biodiversity Associated with Coral Reefs of the Maldives" project is being formulated with assistance from UNDP and GEF.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentleman,

Yesterday at the opening session of the Senior Officials meeting, the Director General of SACEP outlined the new vision of SACEP, which my delegation feels, is the way forward and I give you the assurance that Maldives will support you in your efforts to fulfil the mission that you have undertaken.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE NEPALESE DELEGATION
HONOURABLE MR. P. L. SINGH, MINISTER
MINISTRY OF POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT
HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL**

Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Director General of SACEP, Distinguished Representatives, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen

I am honoured to be invited to give a few remarks at the 8th SACEP Governing Council Meeting. With your permission, I wish to make a few remarks on the situation of the environment in South Asia and on regional co-operation.

SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

Atmosphere:

- Urban air pollution from growing vehicular traffic has become a major problem in the big cities of the South Asian region, although most of the countries have low vehicle ownership in comparison to the world average.
- Studies indicate that the indoor concentration of particulate matter in South Asia is 10-100 times above the WHO guidelines (WRI 1998-99). As a result of these practices, acute respiratory infections are prevalent in India, Nepal, rural Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan, especially in rural and the hilly areas where indoor air pollution is high.

Land

- Land degradation processes of particular concern in the region include erosion, acidification, declining soil organic matter, soil fertility depletion and biological degradation.
- Common to all sub-regions, the most severe water erosion occurs throughout the Himalayas. Several studies indicate that in the South Asian sub region, Iran, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan are worst affected by various degrees of wind erosion.
- Desertification has resulted in an incalculable loss in land productivity and agricultural output in the region.

Forest

- The demand of forest products and services is increasing with the growth in population and economy where as the forest cover in the region is deteriorating.
- Per capita availability of forest area in the South Asian sub-region in 1995 was 0.06 hectares of forest per person, compared with a world average of 0.06 hectares per person.

Freshwater

- In the majority of cities of the region, most water bodies are now heavily polluted with domestic sewage, industrial effluents, chemicals and solid wastes.
- High population densities, unsustainable agricultural practices, rapid urbanisation, increasing industrialisation and a general lack of pollution control facilities are posing growing pressures on the water resources.

Biodiversity

- The diversity of species in South Asia is under stress, with 1100 species, including 228 mammals, 187 birds, 79 reptiles and 553 species of plants classified as threatened in the region (IUCN 2000).
- The largest number of threatened species are in India and Sri Lanka, with threatened plant species comprising 53% of the total number of threatened species in India and as high as 83% of the total in Sri Lanka (IUCN 2000)
- Of 556 threatened animal species in South Asia, 215 are in India, 65 in Bangladesh, 59 in Nepal and 53 in Sri Lanka (IUCN 2000)

Coastal and Marine:

- Growing coastal population, resulting from urbanisation and industrialisation, has increased the pressure on marine resources of the region.
- High sediment load in the coastal zones of South Asia seas region is very high, mainly arising from soil erosion, arising out of poor land use practices, even construction activities. Annually, about 1.6 billion tons of sediment reaches the Indian Ocean from rivers flowing from the Indian sub continent
- The total sediment load of the river system of Bangladesh alone amounts to about 2.5 billion tons, of which the Brahmaputra carries 1.7 billion tons and the Ganges, 0.8 billion tons.

Urban Areas:

- The major urban environmental issues in the region include polluted air and water, proliferation of slums and squatter settlements, inadequate infrastructure services viz, water supply and sanitation, an inadequate waste management.
- Motor vehicles usually concentrate in the urban areas and contribute significantly to various types of air pollution, including carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and particulates. Many cities of the region have experienced tremendous growth in the number of passenger cars over the last 30 years.
- Many cities such as Mumbai, Calcutta, Dhaka, Kathmandu are plagued by garbage problems. Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are grappled with growing protests for pollution caused by both domestic and industrial hazardous wastes.

SACEP

- SACEP was established in 1982 with overall objective to promote and support the protection and management of the environment, both natural and human, of the countries of South Asia, Individually, collectively and co-operatively.
- However, the goals of the regions are far reaching. Despite rapid economic growth, environment has continued to degrade. The problem of poverty is so deep rooted, it has been the blocking stone for all the development paths. There is an expressed need for the enhanced and effective role of SACEP in the region for the betterment of the people and our environment.
- In collaboration with UNEP, SACEP has initiated and implemented various projects and activities such as the Malé Declaration, national and sub regional State of Environment Reports and the South Asian Regional Seas Programme.
- Thanks to the governments, UN agencies, NORAD and other donors for their support to SACEP for carrying out various activities in the region.
- For the betterment of the region, the Governing Council could consider to commission a study to look into the critical needs of the region and formulate an Action Plan to achieve those needs for the region.

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

- The issues of South Asia are very diverse. However, South Asia has got tremendous economic potential and human resources. In order to effectively utilise the resources and exploit the potential of the region, there should be an effective co-operation among the regional institutions, such as SACEP, SAARC and South Asian Regional Seas Programme.
- There is a need for enhanced partnership and co-operation between the regional institutions and the civil society.

CONCLUSION

- The countries of South Asia should work together and build positive and pragmatic approach to deal with the common and transboundary issues, the capacity building needs of the countries, and make a contribution towards sustainable development in our region.
- The countries should join hands to further strengthen the role of SACEP to meet the needs of the member countries.
- We in the Governing Council must take the ownership and provide necessary guidance and support to SACEP to achieve the targets and goals vested on it.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE PAKISTAN DELEGATION
MR. SHEIKH GHAZANFAR HUSSAIN
ADDITIONAL SECRETARY (IN CHARGE)
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN**

Mr. Chairman. Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for me to represent Pakistan at the Eighth meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), here in Colombo. We are thankful to the Republic of Sri Lanka for hosting this meeting in this beautiful Island State. We are also enjoying the hospitality extended to us by the Government of Sri Lanka since our arrival in this capital city. The SACEP Secretariat has also done an excellent work in preparing documents for this Council meeting and in this regard I must appreciate the leadership and the guidance provided to SACEP by its new Director, General Mr. Mahboob Elahi.

Pakistan has the honour and privilege of being associated with SACEP since its inception. We have been supporting this organization and benefiting from its programme of activities both at the regional and the national level.

Mr. Chairman,

At the national level, Pakistan has taken a number of measures to establish and strengthen its programme activities in the field of environmental management. A comprehensive Pakistan Environmental Protection Act has been enacted. We have recently formulated our National Environmental Action Plan, which is going to be implemented with the help of different International Agencies and our national efforts. We are closely working with the industry for the enforcement of National Environmental Quality Standards, Establishment of Sustainable Development Fund, Designation of Environmental Magistrates and Environmental Tribunals/and an expanded Programme of Mass Awareness and Environmental Education for full involvement of Government and civil society in this common endeavour. We will request SACEP to support all these activities, especially in the collection and dissemination of information, establishment of a network of institutions of environment and sharing experience of best practices on environment.

South Asia is a unique region with a rich history and culture. Its people are hard working and energetic. However, their full potential has not been realised due to financial and institutional constraints. Poverty is still rampant and its environment continues to be degraded despite the natural resource base, namely land, water and vast oceans. Several activities and initiatives at the regional level can meaningfully complement and support our national efforts to prevent degradation of our natural environment and to up-root the scourge of poverty and deprivation from the region. SACEP is an ideal institution to provide leadership in this regard. It should emerge as a critical institution of standing at the regional level to which national and global environmental organizations must look up. The member countries must provide resources and support to enable SACEP to assume this role. We hope that the programme of activities now under consideration of the Governing Council provides a useful framework in the achievement of this objective.

Mr. Chairman

Protection and preservation of environment is our moral duty, not only for the present but the future generations as well. It requires concerted actions at the local, national, regional, and global level. We will continue to work to bring the required synergy at the local level. To this end, we will support SACEP and its Secretariat in whatever way needed to effectively respond to the environmental challenges.

Thank you very much.

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE SRI LANKAN DELEGATION
HONOURABLE MR. DINESH GUNAWARDENA
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA**

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

As our Head of Delegation is on the chair it is a privilege for me to present my country statement on his behalf at this 8th meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme.

At the outset, I would like to thank the outgoing chair, Maldives for the excellent work carried out in his tenure of office. I also congratulate you for your election as the chairman of the GC and with all the best in your future endeavours.

Since, Sri Lanka is hosting this important meeting, I take great pleasure in welcoming Honourable Ministers and distinguished delegates who have come to attend this meeting. I hope that you have an enjoyable and memorable stay in Sri Lanka.

Your Excellencies,

Due to the complex nature of problems that we face today, countries alone cannot find solutions to them. Regional approach is therefore imperative. When we look at the world development trends, it seems globalisation is inevitable. Therefore, the role of the SACEP that has 20 years of experience in practicing regional activities is becoming more and more important for this region. The SACEP should take more proactive role in facilitating member countries to face emerging challenges.

While I appreciate the progress so far made by the SACEP and all the help from UNEP and other agencies in assisting SACEP activities, I wish to mention that there's tremendous potential for achieving success and further development in the field of environment, especially facilitating wide range of activities being implemented by member countries.

Your Excellencies,

Sri Lanka have had a long tradition of living in harmony with nature while harvesting natural resources to meet their needs. However, rapidly expanding human numbers have placed new pressures on resources, infrastructure, and civil society during last century. The challenge today is to achieve higher level of economic development with minimum adverse impacts on the natural environment, cultural norms and society at large.

It is my duty to report some of the important measures that Sri Lanka has taken to face this challenge and to manage both local and global environmental resources.

Water Sector

- Cabinet of Ministers approved the Water Resources Policy and Institutional arrangement on March 28th 2000, by which it also approved the establishment of a Water Resource Authority.
- Concurrently, a new Water Resources Act is being prepared.

- Regulations were gazetted specifying maximum permissible levels of pollutants that could be present in liquid effluents prior to discharging into waterways.
- Standards for potable water as well as for water extracted for public water supplies were gazetted.

Air Resources Sector

- A National Policy on Air Quality Management was adopted with cabinet approval in 2000, followed by the establishment of a National Air Resources Management Centre in 2001
- Regulations were gazetted in 1994 specifying Ambient Air Quality Standards and permissible smoke emissions from diesel vehicles, based on the Clean Air 2000 Action Plan
- Vehicle Emission Standards and Fuel Standards were gazetted in 2000.
- Regulations were also gazetted in 1994 specifying time targets for phasing out Ozone Depleting Substances.
- A Climate Change Secretariat was established at the Ministry of Transport and Environment.
- Two National Clean Development Mechanisms Study Centres were established at two major universities in the country.
- The First National Communication was submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Forestry Sector

- National Forestry Policy 1995
- The Forestry Sector Master Plan was updated and the Forest Ordinance was amended in 1995 to introduce measures for sustainable harvesting of forest resources through Public and Private Sector.

Biodiversity Sector

- National Wildlife Policy 2000
- Publication of a Framework for Action on Biodiversity Conservation in Sri Lanka.
- Code of Ethics for Biodiversity Research
- Drafting of National Bio-safety Guidelines
- Drafting of Biodiversity Legislation on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing.
- Action Plan on Invasive Plants.
- A Network of Biodiversity Parks and Bird Sanctuaries were established.
- An Integrated Resources Management Programme has been launched for the Conservation of Muthurajawela wetland.
- A Biodiversity Secretariat was established to co-ordinate the Biodiversity activities in the country.

Coastal and Marine Sector

- A new Fisheries Act was introduced in 1996 to incorporate environmental concerns more effectively.
- The Coastal 2000 Action Plan was formulated in 1996 to priorities action areas.
- The extraction of corals for lime manufacturing has been prohibited and sand mining allowed only under license based on zoning plans.
- The use of coral based lime in construction of government building has been banned.

Energy Sector

- The Ministry of Power and Energy prepared a policy document on energy in 1997, which called for reduction of dependence on imported fuel, diversification of energy sources including renewable and improving demand side management among others.
- The Ministry implemented two energy related projects with the assistance from GEF, one to undertake a national survey on the availability of commercial biomass, mini-hydro potential and

the wind regimes, and the other to popularise the use of renewable energy such as solar PV systems, micro-hydro systems and wind farms and to strengthen the institutional capacity.

- The Government has allowed private sector participation in the development of grid-connected mini-hydro systems with a guaranteed price for the energy delivered, though not very competitive.

Waste Management Sector

- The Guidelines for the implementation of hazardous waste management regulations were published in 1999.
- National Solid Waste Management Strategy was adopted in 2000.

International Conventions

- In order to effectively implement the 36 International environmental conventions that Sri Lanka has ratified, and meet national commitments to the global community, a separate *Convention Reference Centre* was established within the Ministry of Transport and Environment.

Co-ordination and Institutions

- National Environment Action Plan was updated for the third time.
- Ministry is working in collaboration with other line ministries through environmental cells established in those line ministries.
- We also have established a *national Committee on Environmental Policy Management (CEPOMs)* with the participation of all important stakeholders of the environmental sector in the various Ministries to consider environmental concerns at the very beginning of any development activity.

These are only a few of the measures taken by my Ministry for the improvement of the environment in the country.

Under a joint program of assistance from UNEP, SACEP and NORAD, following activities were carried out.

- The development of regulations, guidelines, criteria to operationalise the draft Environment Law.
- The preparation of model environment statute for the use of provincial councils
- The establishment of a transparent and participatory process for the setting up of environmental standards and support for its work.
- Preparation of State of Environment Report
- Environment Awareness Programme
- Training in environmental Law and Institutional Arrangement.

Excellencies,

We need to pay more focus on issues that are very relevant to our part of the world, such as vanishing biodiversity, land degradation, climate change etc. We all know that Maldives is under threat from sea level rise due to global warming. Even as an island country in the same region we are also experiencing such consequences of global warming and climate change. Longer droughts we experience from time to time, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, increased salinity in agricultural soils in marginal areas, all these can be attributed to the consequences of climate change mainly as a result of rapid industrialization. Therefore, we have to take proactive role to address these challenges through regional approach.

Since it is a major regional body of co-operation I would like to propose the following activities to be considered by SACEP for future action:

- Arrange regional consultations on a regular basis in order to exchange ideas with regard to common problems related to various environmental issues. This will also help us learn on various initiatives taken by the governments in the region.
- Facilitate regional preparatory meetings for preparation for COP meetings, etc.
- Function as an information store house of regional environmental affairs.

Finally, I would like to add that we honestly appreciate the excellent work and cooperation extended to us by the SACEP. The Chairman has already promised that the Government of Sri Lanka will continue to provide assistance for the improvement of the SACEP as in the past.

Thank you.

**MESSAGE FROM H. E. MR. NIHAL RODRIGO
SECRETARY-GENERAL
SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (SAARC)**

1. Ten years ago from today, in 1992, the world leaders had gathered at Rio de Janeiro, the capital city of Brazil, to address what would amount to be perhaps the most important challenge for humanity, the protection of the global environment. The imperative of integrating environmental concerns into the development process and focusing national policy of individual states and entities was the main focus of that global event. The Summit took place against the backdrop of a sombre picture that was being painted of the planet 'earth' facing unprecedented, monumental ecological challenges. Global climate change, tropical deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, among other issues of overriding concern, dominated the global agenda at Rio. Most fittingly, the Conference has now gone down in history as "the Earth Summit".
2. In less than a year from now on, the world leaders - now larger in number than they were in 1992 - would once again meet, in Johannesburg, South Africa to review the implementation of the outcome of the Earth Summit, identify the constraints, challenges and success areas. Leaders need to re-commit themselves to the goal of sustainable development with renewed vigour and zeal. It is, nevertheless, certain that the Johannesburg Summit will be considered an important milestone in global endeavours to protect the environment and to promote awareness and sensitivity on environmental concerns.
3. Benefiting as it would, from the inputs of a number of sub-regional processes taking place around the world, the Johannesburg Summit will be truly global, and be reflective of divergent views and perspectives on the protection of the environment. The environment debate cannot be compartmentalized into North - South, or developed - developing world conflict. Yet, it is possible that it may have to contend with polarized approaches. A firm common cause is the realization that the protection of the environment has emerged to be a greater imperative and perhaps than many other problems which tend to affect all of humanity. The on-going sub-regional preparatory processes, particularly the present South Asian preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development, would prove to be a critical exercise in evolving and projecting that common cause: - the balanced equitable utilization of resources and sustainability of nature.
4. The achievements of the Earth Summit are not easy to quantify. A realistic assessment of the benefit the Summit brought for humanity could be made; following a cardinal principle of natural justice - rule against bias - not by the present inhabitants of the globe, but by the generations to come. The Earth Summit has reaffirmed a principle of special value for human life - inter-generational equity. The Summit reiterated the commitment of the present inhabitants of the planet earth to preserve the globe and its environment from degradation and hand it down to the future generations in no less favourable condition than at present. It broke new ground; invoking a sense of transitory trust in the world community and transforming the global campaign for the protection of the environment into the realm of altruism. The Declaration adopted by the Earth Summit, popularly known as Agenda 21 has incorporated this paramount concern along with other important conceptions of equity. The international conventions, respectively on Climate Change and Bio-diversity signed during the Summit, together stand out as a major turning point in the global pursuit of environmental protection.

5. One of the first Ministerial Meetings of SAARC on a specific theme was triggered by the Earth Summit preparatory process. The SAARC Environment Ministers Conference held in New Delhi in 1992 was devoted exclusively to addressing sustainable development issues and to developing a collective SAARC position for the Earth Summit. This was the first SAARC Ministerial effort to evolve a common position in respect of a global event. Many of the issues that the Meeting had addressed continue to remain valid even today. One of the most pertinent issues then raised was the flexibility of policy options in the area of economic development of developing countries, in particular, SAARC member states. Decrying the conditionalities attached to development assistance, the lack of technological cooperation on equitable terms, and the overall denial of global social justice and fairness, SAARC then reiterated the overriding need for balancing development policies with equity through a non-intrusive process. The flexibility of determining individual development needs was stressed: particularly relevant today when the increased drive for globalisation and trade liberalization has become more pronounced, posing serious challenges for the developing countries.
6. Since 1992, SAARC has held four Ministerial Conferences on Environment. The second, in 1997 in New Delhi, agreed on initiating common programmes among SAARC countries, through exchange of expertise, training and holding of environmental awareness camps. The Third Ministerial Conference in Male' in 1997 issued a common SAARC position for the Conference of parties to the Framework Convention for the Climate Change, which then convened to adopt the Kyoto Protocol. The Ministers had also agreed on a SAARC Plan of Action on Environment for the future. The Plan of Action incorporates some pertinent recommendations of the two studies commissioned by SAARC earlier on, respectively on greenhouse effect, and causes and consequences of natural disasters, developing a common framework for access to genetic resources, adopting common positions for all major environment-related activities, hazardous waste management, prevention of deforestation, among others. The Fourth Ministerial Conference in Colombo in 1998 reviewed the progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action on Environment. Among the several important decisions taken at these meetings remains the proposal for undertaking a feasibility study for the establishment of a coastal zone management centre and the possibility of evolving a Regional Treaty on Environment.
7. Noting the positive outcome of the Ministerial Meetings on Environment, the Ninth and Tenth SAARC Summits held in 1997 and 1998 respectively directed that the Environment Ministers meet annually though this has not been possible. At the first meeting of the reconstituted Technical Committee on Environment, Meteorology and Forestry held in Thimphu in February 2001, the Government of Bhutan announced that consultations were already underway with the Member States on the convening of the Fifth Environment Ministers Meeting in Bhutan. This Meeting is likely to be held in the first half of 2002.
8. Conceptual and institutional framework already exist in the region to implement regional and international obligations of SAARC countries in the environmental field. SAARC countries see common ground with other developing countries for pursuing a concerted global process to achieve sustainable development. An underlying deeper concern exists that the principles of sustainable development could be used, as an intrusive instrument to hamper and hinder the levels of economic development they seek. There is emphasis on globalisation and trade liberalization, without in-built equity considerations for developing countries. There is also the perception in certain quarters that the World Trade Organisation, a driving force of that twin process, would include in its future agenda environmental standards and norms extraneous to trade. It is essential that focus of the World Summit and the preparatory process should focus on the imperative of protecting the environment and facilitating the economic development of developing countries.

9. The sub-regional preparations that convene today needs to fully reflect on this development paradigm, if it is to make practical and meaningful inputs for the World Summit. It should take stock of national measures already in place within the SAARC region to implement the agreed programmes and agendas on the environment, and the genuine constraints faced in transforming them into practical actions. It should identify the extent and scope of further measures that may need to be launched individually and collectively within the region to intensify the efforts towards global environmental protection.
10. At its recently concluded Third Special Session, the SAARC Standing Committee directed that consultations with UNEP should be continued in the areas of (i) Sharing of Expertise for the Development of Collective Approaches for the Protection of Bio-resources and (ii) Capacity Building and Training to Facilitate Implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs). These proposals, when finalised may form part of the regional programme UNEP and SAARC may undertake jointly.

**STATEMENT FROM MR. M. A. KHAN
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Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

ESCAP feels that sub regional organisations such as SACEP are playing very important role in promoting sustainable development. It is for the same reason that ESCAP's work programme seeks to promote cooperation with the sub regional inter-governmental organizations particularly in the implementation of Regional Action Programme (RAP) for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development 2001-2005, adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2000 held at Kitakyushu, Japan.

In the past ESCAP and SACEP have closely cooperated on the preparation of the State of Environment Reports in Asia and the Pacific, organisation of the Ministerial Conferences, implementation of the project on indicators of sustainable development and formulation of South Asian Seas Action Plan. We hope that this cooperation will be strengthened in future by undertaking other initiatives of mutual interest.

ESCAP also helps promote cooperation between sub regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific by facilitating exchange of information particularly on best practices. We feel that such experiences particularly in formulating sub regional conventions on nature and natural resources could be of interest to SACEP.

APPROVED SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2001 - 2002

		INCOME US \$	EXPENDITURE US \$
1.	ANTICIPATED INCOME		
	1.1 Pledged Country Contributions		
	BANGLADESH	21,300	
	BHUTAN	3,555	
	INDIA	31,850	
	MALDIVES	14,575	
	NEPAL	8,050	
	PAKISTAN	31,850	
	SRI LANKA	16,220	
		127,400	
	1.2 Interest Earned (FCBU A/C)	1,130	
	1.3 Secretariat Costs from Sri Lanka	30,120	
	TOTAL INCOME	158,650	
2.	ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE		
	2.1 Salary of Director		34,920
	2.2 Salaries of Other International Officers		19,200
	2.3 Salaries of Local Staff		15,000
	2.4 International Travel		20,000
	2.5 Secretariat Costs		58,000
	SUB TOTAL		147,120
	Capital Costs		17,500
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		164,620
3.	INCOME/EXPENDITURE		(5,970)

SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS FOR 8TH GC MEETING 28 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2001 COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials to the Eighth Governing Council Meeting was held on 28th and 29th September 2001
2. It was convened to discuss all substantive issues concerning the Administrative, Programme and Financial Matters of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP). It was also agreed that the Report of the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials on the various Agenda items would be the basis of discussion of the Eighth Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP.

II. ATTENDANCE

3. The Meeting was attended by representatives from the following member Countries: - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
4. Representatives from the United Nations agencies and International Organisations also attended the meeting as Observers. These included United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Droughts (UNCCD) and Regional Environmental Hub for South Asia, US Embassy, Kathmandu.

The List of Participants is in **SACEP/GC.8/MSO/Annex 1**.

III. OPENING OF MEETING

5. In their opening addresses Mr. Mahboob Elahi, Director General SACEP & Mr. M. Susiriwardena Secretary, Ministry of Transport & Environment, Government of Sri Lanka welcomed the delegates and outlined the tasks to be accomplished. Director General SACEP explained the rationale for convening this meeting and also thanked the Government of Sri Lanka for the excellent arrangements and generous host facilities provided to the delegates.

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

6. In conformity with the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council of SACEP, the following Office Bearers were elected.

Chairman	-	Mr. M. Susiriwardena	-	Sri Lanka
Vice Chairman	-	Dr. Mukti Narayan Shrestha	-	Nepal
Rapporteur	-	Mr. Karma Rapten	-	Bhutan

V. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND ORGANISATION OF WORK

7. The draft Agenda prepared by the Secretariat for this Meeting was adopted. The adopted Agenda is contained in **SACEP/GC.8/MSO/Annex 2**. The delegates also agreed on the working hours of the meeting.

VI. REPORT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL SACEP

8. The Director General of SACEP broadly reviewed the progress of SACEP since the last Governing Council Meeting and presented the "SACEP's Way Forward" for the coming years. The text of his statement is contained in **SACEP/GC.8/MSO/Annex 3**.

There was a detailed discussions on the "SACEP's Way Forward" and the decisions to be presented to the Governing Council for endorsement will be reflected in this report under the relevant items in the adopted agenda.

The meeting was very appreciative of the vision for SACEP envisaged by the Director General and considered it as a very positive measure to revitalise SACEP to give it greater visibility and effective functioning. The need for working out specific details of the co-operative activities under the aegis of SACEP in consultation with the member governments was stressed.

VII. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

SACEP Secretariat & Subject Area Focal Points

9. Under this Agenda item Secretariat outlined its role in relation to its objectives in the implementation of the programme activities of SACEP. It was mentioned that the effective functioning of National Focal Points and Subject Area Focal Points is critical to the performance of SACEP. The Secretariat was of the view that the meeting should critically look into this aspect and advise the Secretariat accordingly.
10. The meeting appreciated the fact that there is an urgent need to strengthen the SACEP Secretariat in order that it could fulfil its obligations in serving the member countries.
11. After submissions from member Governments and UN/International Agencies, the meeting agreed to submit to the Eighth Governing Council the following recommendations for its consideration and endorsement.
 - a) The present system of Focal Points should remain but mechanisms for intra-country co-ordination need to be stimulated and strengthened.
 - b) The Environment Ministries should remain as SACEP's Focal Points and they should in turn co-ordinate with other relevant ministries to bring in greater participation & synergy.
 - c) SACEP Secretariat should collect and collate all information on environment so that becomes the storehouse of knowledge in the region.
 - d) The Secretariat should to bring together other line ministries and agencies through the National Focal Points at the National level to SACEP Foras.

- e) The Focal Points to be requested to respond in a timely manner to SACEP's queries
- f) It was recommended that major donors be invited as Observers at SACEP Governing Council Meetings and other to recognise their contribution and enhance their role in matters relating to drawing of SACEP work programmes and participate with the Governing Council in the organisation's performance and monitoring.
- g) The need to strengthen the SACEP Secretariat was recognised in terms of staff and other requirements to meet programme needs.

VIII. PROGRAMME MATTERS

PROGRESS OF PROGRAMME AND PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- 12. Introducing this Agenda Item, the SACEP Secretariat presented a Review of Programmes and Projects undertaken by SACEP and SENRIC. The significance and the importance of the programmes undertaken by SACEP were highlighted. SACEP's Strategy and Programme 3 (SSP 3) prepared by the Secretariat was made available to member country delegations. It has been presently under consideration of the Norwegian Government for possible support.
- 13. The delegates expressed their satisfaction that despite constraints in manpower and finances. They were appreciative of the work done by the Secretariat in implementation of programmes despite the constraints they have been facing.
- 14. The meeting was specially appreciative of the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), UNEP and UNEP-RRCAAP for their generous programme support both financially and technically. The Secretariat acknowledged the assistance and support given by UNEP, ADB, ESCAP and other donors.
- 15. As a part of "SACEP's Way Forward" under Programme Activities, the following are the recommendations for endorsement by the Eighth Governing Council of SACEP.
 - a) The need to simplify operations to achieve timely response to queries
 - b) The State of the Environment Reports prepared by the member countries to be the basis in formulating action plans keeping in view to address strategies for sustainable development
 - c) National priorities of each country should be linked to develop common projects and programmes. The present sub Asian consultation process may be appropriately used as the basis of this exercise in collaboration with the member countries.
 - d) SACEP Secretariat should collect and collate all information on environment so that becomes the storehouse of knowledge in the region.
 - e) Projects identified should be demand-driven. Some supply-driven catalyst projects in support of global initiatives would nevertheless be required.
 - f) Select a few priority issues that are common to all member countries and develop programme of action with time plan and implemented in order to achieve tangible results.

IX. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBER STATES FOR SACEP SECRETARIAT & SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2001 & 2002

16. The Meeting reviewed the Financial Position of SACEP including the Country Contributions made by the Member States to the SACEP Secretariat. It was brought to the notice of the meeting that Secretariat was facing severe financial constraints due to the delay in receiving pledged country contributions and an appeal was made to countries to send in their contributions on time. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the contributions expected for the years 2001 & 2002 will be at the rate as agreed upon at the 7th Governing Council Meeting and that the budget for the years 2001 & 2002 will be also be same as for the year 2000.
17. The representative of Bangladesh confirmed that their contribution for 2000 has been authorised and that the Secretariat should receive it soon. The delegate from India informed the meeting that all arrears will be cleared soon and their annual contributions from the year 2001 will be US \$ 20,000. The representative of Pakistan also informed that their arrears would be cleared soon.

b) APPROVAL OF ANNUAL AUDITED REPORT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2000

18. The Annual Audit Report of the Secretariat for 2000 was reviewed by the Meeting. It was agreed that the Report be recommended to the Governing Council for approval.

c) APPROVAL OF PROGRAMME AND SECRETARIAT BUDGETS FOR YEAR 2001 AND YEAR 2002

19. The Secretariat proposed that the budget for the years 2001 & 2002 will be also be same as for year 2000 and the Meeting recommended that this be formally approved at the Governing Council Meeting.
20. The Secretariat Budget for 2001 & 2002 for approval by the Governing Council is attached as SACEP/GC.8/MSO/Annex 4.

X. SUB-REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON FOR 2002 WORLD SUMMIT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

22. The Meeting of Senior Officials expressed their satisfaction with the sub-regional consultation process, including stakeholders and intergovernmental meetings held in conjunction with the GC.8/SACEP on 27 - 28 September 2001 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The collaborative role of SACEP with Government of Sri Lanka, SAARC and the Regional Task Force for WSSD Force to this end was appreciated. It was recommended that SACEP may consider the recommendations of these consultations insofar as relevant to its charter.

XI. ADOPTION OF REPORT

23. The Meeting considered and adopted the Report on 29th September 2001.

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SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS FOR 8th GC MEETING
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
28-29 SEPTEMBER 2001**

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of Office Bearers
3. Adoption of Agenda and Organisation of Work
4. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS
 - c) SACEP Secretariat
 - d) Subject Area and Country Focal Points
5. PROGRAMME MATTERS
 - a) Progress of Programme and Project Activities
 - b) Review of International Co-operation
6. FINANCIAL MATTERS
 - a) Country Contributions from Member States for SACEP Secretariat
 - b) Approval of Annual Audited Report of Accounts for 2000
 - c) Approval of Programme and Secretariat Budget for 2001 & 2002
7. Any Other Business
8. Adoption of the Report
9. Closure of Meeting

REPORT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL SACEP TO THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS

Honourable Chairman,

Delegates to the Preparatory Meeting of Senior Officials for the 8th Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP

I was appointed as the Director General of SACEP, in July 2001. The subject of environment is not entirely new to me as prior to this assignment, I was working as a Director General (Environment) in the Ministry of Environment, Rural Development and Local Government, Government of Pakistan.

The Meeting of the Governing Council of SACEP was long over-due as that the Meeting of the Governing Council was last held more than three years ago in April, 1998. During this period, however, Consultative Committee of the Governing Council of SACEP have been meeting regularly and several meetings were held since the last meeting of the Governing Council. I was told that the reason for this delay has been initially lack of response from the Government of Nepal to host the meeting and later due to tragic incidence of massacre of the royal family of Nepal.

I was naturally concerned about this delay and wanted to convene this meeting at the earliest. I therefore, started consulting my senior colleagues from the region, like Mr. Rajamani of India, Dr. Bhatta from Nepal, Mr. Surendra Shrestha from UNEP and Dr. Atique Rahman from Bangladesh.

The advice was, that it should be held as soon as possible.

I was therefore, on a lookout for an appropriate time for this event, specially a low cost solution.

Extensive consultation took place between the Senior Officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Environment and Forest, now Transport and Environment, for their agreement to the hosting of this meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

I am grateful to the Government of Sri Lanka, who despite some disturbing events of attack at Colombo Airport, solemnly stood by their commitment to host this meeting in Colombo, during the time frame of WSSD consultation meetings being held jointly by UNEP, ADB, and ESCAP in collaboration with SACEP and Government of Sri Lanka.

In this meeting SAARC is also on board and in this regard, I must acknowledge the persistent follow-up of request by Mr. Surendra Shrestha, UNEP with the Mr. Nihal Rodrigo, Secretary General, SAARC, Mr. G. Wijayasiri, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr. N. Pathmanathan, then Secretary, Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Shafqat S. Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, decided to represent UNEP in these meetings. We are indeed thankful to the UNEP for their high-level large delegation to these meetings.

We are also thankful to the Honourable Minister of Transport and Environment Government of Sri Lanka, Mr. Dinesh Gunewardena who soon after assuming office sent an official invitation at his level to all Ministers of Environment, in SACEP member countries, including Vice President of Islamic Republic of Iran. It was in fact the first ever communication the Minister has signed after assuming the office.

We are thankful to the member countries of SACEP for sending high/ministerial level delegations to the meeting of Governing Council of SACEP on a rather short notice.

As you know SACEP is one of the pioneer sub-regional environmental programme established by the Governments of South Asia about 20 years ago, UNEP was one of the key supporter of this programme. It is, however, your own programme and you are the best custodian.

Its core budget is provided by the Country Governments through annual contributions and the host facility contribution of Sri Lanka Rs 2.5 million by the Sri Lanka Government. For programme support we have either to rely on UNEP, ADB, World Bank or other bi-lateral donors.

During the period 1992-2000, NORAD provided financial support of five hundred thousand Kroners & the activities undertaken will be discussed under separate agenda items. Based on evaluation results of this programme, a request for US\$ 2.5 million (2000-2002) has been placed with NORAD.

The web site of SACEP, which was under construction for quite sometime, is now functional. It will help to increase its visibility. It is my assessment that full potential of SACEP and its sub-regional programmes has not yet been fully realised.

I have written a letter to all member countries and donors for the identification of key priorities for this region so that a reasonable size programme could be sponsored by SACEP in support of the national government initiatives in consult with global/regional programme for the environmental protection and sustainable development. It is evidently clear that SACEP in its present form is solely dependent on resources of a few organisations like UNEP and NORAD, with a weak financial and institutional base. Some of SACEP's weakness/short coming under my opinion are as follows:

Lack of programme or output could be due to:

- Low Budget
- Inadequate/motivated staff
- Weak level of support at political level
- No firm legal basis of co-operation such as legal instruments/conventions
- Lack of assessment about the perceived needs of member countries and matters related thereto.
- Lack of participation and communication gap at various levels

To this end the following options and opportunities may be considered.

A. Involving less cost:

- a) Networking and linkages
- b) Exchange of information of the experiences
- c) Representation of major supporters of SACEP's programmes on Governing Council/CC of SACEP
- d) Mapping, GIS, Database
- e) Environment Award

B. Modest Cost:

- i. Catalyst to National Actions
- ii. Joint Activities Planning, Programming at Regional Level
- iii. Environmental Education and Training/Capacity Building
- iv. Inventory of Environmental Friendly Technologies and their Transfer Mechanisms
- v. Meeting, Workshops, Visits
- vi. Series of nationally identified activities with similar focus

C. Medium Range:

- i. Development of Regional Legal Instruments as Basis of Co-operation
- ii. Joint Thematic Reviews
- iii. Common Position on the Negotiation and Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agencies.
- iv. Effective Committees/Taskforces

The member countries may consider the above recommendations for agreement in principle. Based on this, detailed priority programmes may be worked out for SACEP in consultation with the SACEP member countries. It will involve personal contact with the member country Governments. The details of the programmes and priorities may be finalised in association with Consultative Committee of SACEP based in Colombo.

DRAFT SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR 2001 - 2002

			INCOME	EXPENDITURE
			US \$	US \$
1.	ANTICIPATED INCOME			
	1.1	Pledged Country Contributions		
		BANGLADESH	21,300	
		BHUTAN	3,555	
		INDIA	31,850	
		MALDIVES	14,575	
		NEPAL	8,050	
		PAKISTAN	31,850	
		SRI LANKA	16,220	
			127,400	
	1.2	Interest Earned (FCBU A/C)	1,130	
	1.3	Secretariat Costs from Sri Lanka	30,120	
		TOTAL INCOME	158,650	
2.	ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE			
	2.1	Salary of Director		34,920
	2.2	Salaries of Other International Officers		19,200
	2.3	Salaries of Local Staff		15,000
	2.4	International Travel		20,000
	2.5	Secretariat Costs		58,000
		SUB TOTAL		147,120
		Capital Costs		17,500
		TOTAL EXPENDITURE		164,620
3.	INCOME/EXPENDITURE			(5,970)