

SACEP 9TH GOVERNING COUNCIL:

FOCUSED WAY FOWARD

The 9th Meeting of the Governing Council (GC) of SACEP was held on 26th August 2005 in Thimphu. This meeting was hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan. The GC reviewed SACEP's work programme and discussed on developing a focus way forward for SACEP.

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DG SACEP receives H.E. Mr. Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, the Prime Minister of Royal Government of Bhutan. Hon. Mr. A.H.M. Fowzie, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka, Dasho Sangay Thinley, Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture and H.E. Dasho Nado Rinchhen, Deputy Minister, National Environmental Commission of Royal Government of Bhutan are also seen in the picture.



SOUTH ASIA TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR MEA NEGOTIATORS

The Chief Guest, Hon. Minister A.H.M. Fowzie, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka, lighting the traditional oil lamp at the inauguration session.

Thirty five participants from nine countries participated at the three day MEA training workshop organized by SACEP with the Division of Environmental Convention (DEC), UNEP and the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD) from 5th to 7th October in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The workshop was inaugurated by Hon. Minister A.H.M. Fowzie, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Government of Sri Lanka. Hon. Minister Fowzie, in his key note address pointed out that Sri Lanka, has become a party to 38 Environmental Agreements and that the country had a proud record of keeping to these international obligations and in most cases have made progress ahead of the targets set by the Agreements.

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SACEP DG greets newly elected President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa on 28 November at the Presidential Secretariat. Dr. Boaz briefed His Excellency on SACEP and its continued role to improve the environmental conditions in Sri Lanka. The President reconfirmed full support from the Sri Lankan Government for SACEP. He also expressed his desire that SACEP should play a more active role for the conservation and development of environment in Sri Lanka and the South Asian region

SACEP JOIN HANDS WITH WMO TO ADDRESS CLIMATE RELATED DISASTER MITIGATION



Exchange of the MoU between Director General, SACEP and Secretary General, WMO, Chair SACEP CC Mr. Ishtaq Andrabi, is in the center

As recommended by the 9th GC and the 3rd IMM, SACEP signed an MoU with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on 22nd November 2005 at the SACEP Secretariat in Colombo. This MoU will pave the way to achieve shared objectives in particular with regard to promotion of sciences of meteorology, climatology and hydrology for the safety of

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FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK . . .

I am happy to report that the 9th Governing Council of SACEP was held in Thimphu, Bhutan, in August, 2005. H.E. Dasho Nado Rinchhen, Deputy Minister, National Environment Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan took over as the new Chairman of the Governing Council of SACEP. The Governing Council took several important and far reaching decisions for revitalizing SACEP.

The 3rd Inter Ministerial Meeting of the South Asian Seas Programme was also held back to back with the 9th Governing Council. While appreciating the good work done by the South Asian Seas Programme in the past, the meeting emphasized on a focused approach by SASP in the future. H.E. Mr Ahamed Abdullah, Minister, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Water was elected as the new Chairman of the South Asian Seas Programme.

I am confident that under the dynamic and able leadership of our new Chairmen, we will be able to steer SACEP and South Asian Seas Programme on the new path of co-operation and success.

The meetings were an ideal forum to identify new paths for the organization and provide innovative solutions to the emerging environmental issues of the region. For the first time in the history of SACEP, the Secretariat proposed that in order to strengthen the programme base of SACEP, funds should be made available from the country contributions for programme development. The proposal was well received and the Governing Council and the Inter Ministerial Meeting agreed to allot funds received from recovery of Country Contributions for programme development.

The key decisions that were taken include matters relating to the programme development, capacity building and improving the institutional linkages and financing. The 9th GC identified two priority areas, Waste Management and Adaptation to Climate Change for focused approach through the next two years. At the meeting, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-RRC.AP) pledged continuous support on financing the South Asia Environment and Natural Resources Information Centre (SENRIC). To support the increasing demands that were placed before the Secretariat, the Indian Government came forward to increase their pledged Country Contribution.

At the 3rd IMM meeting, the programme of work for the period 2005-07 was approved, while identifying two new programmes on Management of Natural Oceanogenic Disasters and Management of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas.

I am happy to say that in a brief period of Four months after the Thimphu meetings, SACEP has already signed two mutually supportive agreements with International Maritime Organization (IMO) and World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). The agreement with the WMO will prove to be another remarkable landmark agreement of cooperation for the region at a time where meteorological analysis has become a concern of utmost importance for South Asia. The MoU with IMO will open vast areas of support to regional issues that SACEP will be able to garner with the help of IMO. Both the agreements become more significant in the light of recent natural disasters such as earth quakes, floods and tsunamis in the region that have not only taken a heavy toll of human lives but also devastated the environment. These efforts which concentrate on improving the partnerships with key institutions of international excellence will strengthen SACEP's capacity to assist the member countries in managing their environmental issues.

SACEP has also entered into a MoU with the UNEP-RRC.AP, Bangkok, for strengthening the SENRIC Programme and develop proposals for the two new priority areas identified by the 9th Governing Council viz., Waste Management and Adaptation to Climate Change.

SACEP will continue to provide leadership in the South Asian Region for improved co-operation on issues concerning environment and natural resources management, while promoting and working towards forming new institutional linkages to develop the capacities in the region.

Dr. A. A. BOAZ

DIRECTOR GENERAL

.....Continued from page 1

SACEP'S 9TH GOVERNING COUNCIL...



Delegates with the Hon. Prime Minister of Royal Government of Bhutan



A Traditional Marchang Ceremony Conducted at the Inauguration of the G C



H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, Prime Minister of Royal Government of Bhutan addressing the Meeting

HEADS OF DELEGATION FOR 9TH SACEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Dost Mohammad Amin

Deputy Director General
National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)

PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Mr. Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury

Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Forest

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

Hon. Dasho Nado Rinchen

Deputy Minister
National Environment Commission Secretariat (NECS)

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Hon. Mr. Namo Narayan Meena

Minister of State for Environment & Forests
Ministry of Environment & Forests

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Hon. Mr. Ahamed Abdullah

Minister
Ministry of Environment, Energy and Water

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

Hon. Mr. A.H.M. Fowzie

Minister
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

3RD INTERGOVERNMENTAL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON SOUTH ASIAN SEAS PROGRAMME

The Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points for the Third Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting was held on 25th of August 2005 in Thimphu, Bhutan. It was convened in order to discuss all substantive issues concerning the Institutional, Programme and Financial Matters of South Asian Seas Programme (SASP). The Report of the Preparatory Meeting of National Focal Points formed the basis of discussion at the Third Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting (IMM), which was held on the following day.

The IMM was attended by representatives from member countries of Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. As observers the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) attended the meeting.

In his inaugural address, Hon. Mr. A. H. M. Fowzie, Minister of Environment & Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka complemented the SASP for making a significant progress in meeting the aspirations of member governments. The Hon. Minister further stated that the December 2004 tsunami has added a new dimension to the environmental programmes of three member countries and therefore, the region has to prepare for such natural calamities in the future.

Hon. Mr. Ahamed Abdullah, Minister of Environment, Energy and Water, Republic of Maldives was elected as the new Chairman.

The Work Programme for 2005 – 2007, was presented and approved at this meeting. Natural disaster management and management of coastal and marine protected areas were identified as priority action areas by the delegations at the meeting. Another area of the work programme focused on developing project proposal related to port reception facilities. SAS secretariat was also directed to pursue the implementation of projects approved by 1st and 2nd IMMs.

The meeting also noted the efforts made by SASP, in implementing the projects especially the workshops and training on oil spill management, control of land based sources of marine pollution and coral reef management.

The 3rd IMM recognized the importance of early operationalization of South Asian Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan and requested the two countries who have yet to agree to signing of the concerned MoU to pursue with relevant authorities to obtain their concurrence.

A decision was taken to fill the post of regional co-ordinator, SAS programme, a position, approved at the 1st IMM. The delegates were of the view that immediate action be taken to fill the position before 31st March.

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MAJOR DECISIONS OF SACEP 9TH GC MEETING

- The core programs to be focused on areas of waste management, adaptation to climate change, data and information management.
- The Director General, SACEP to prepare a work programme by December 2005 and circulate it to member countries for endorsement.
- On the initiative of the DG, for the first time in SACEP's history, 30% of recovered arrears from CC earmarked for programme development.
- UNEP to provide assistance to complete the work programme and also extend financial and technical assistance for programme development.
- Creation of posts of one Director of Programmes, one Programme officer, one Personal Secretary to the DG, and one Secretary. The cost of the posts will be met from the country contributions.
- The meeting noted that Government of India will be revisiting their original offer to support the post of Director of Programmes.
- The secretariat to propose modalities for the strengthening of the subject areas and country focal points.
- One Programme Assistant post shall be based in Thimphu to assist the Chairman of the 9th GC.
- The databases of the environmental natural resources be updated regularly by SENRIC to assist the region in the State of the Environment (SoE) reporting.
- The support from UNEP to the ongoing activities be recognized and UNEP requested to continue its support to SACEP through the SENRIC project implementation.
- The DG shall make efforts to mobilize additional resources in close consultation with UNEP and other development partners.
- The meeting of the Governing Council should be held annually as required by the Articles of Association, to strengthen the activities of SACEP.
- The national focal points to meet twice a year; once, back to back prior to the GC meeting and once half-yearly. The related costs to the delegations attending these meetings will be borne by the respective countries.
- Agreed that SACEP's Articles of Association may be reviewed keeping in mind the changes that had taken place in the institution over the years and the decisions at various Governing Councils.
- The DG to provide regular progress reports to the NFPs.

Extracts from the Country Statements at the 9th GC Meeting

The Heads of Delegations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka presented statements at the GC meeting. These statements covered the assurances from the member states to the SACEP Secretariat .



Mr. Dost Mohammad Amin
Deputy Director General
National Environmental
Protection Agency

“.....Most of the South Asian Nations share similar environmental problems, stemming from poverty and its consequences on natural resources. Afghanistan struggles to recover from decades of war and deprivation, many urgent needs are competing for the attention of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and donor communities. While at first thought it might seem that environmental issues are not a top priority, in fact they lie at the heart of current efforts to reestablish the basis for sustainable livelihoods for the country people and sound economic footing for broad based development. Only by working together we can all meet the challenges of environment for development, people, planet and prosperity.....”



Mr. Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury
Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Forests

“.....Bangladesh has made quite a good progress in the implementation of the project entitled “Male’ Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its likely Trans-boundary Effects for South Asia” and “Bangladesh National Programme of Action for Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities” under joint initiative of UNEP and SACEP...”

“.....hope future initiatives, such as Promoting South Asia Co-operation on Efficient Use of Water Resources, Disaster management including Tsunami, Experience sharing in Sustainable Urban Settlements, Preparation of Regional Guidelines on Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals and other Hazardous Wastes, Assessment of Areas Vulnerable to Sea Level Rise, Role of Traditional Practice in Sustainable Forest Management and Participatory Forestry, Promotion of Ecotourism, Capacity Building in the Region related to International Conventions and other projects & programmes would significantly contribute to addressing the major environmental issues of our region.....”



H.E. Dasho Nado Rinchen
Deputy Minister
National Environmental Commission

“.....Hopeful that all the member states will extend their full support and cooperation to transform SACEP into an effective institution that can fulfill the objectives with which it was established. A strong, vibrant and re-vitalized SACEP with full ownership and political support of the Member States is in the interest of the member government and the peoples of our region.....”

“....My delegation fully support the recommendation to strengthen the focal points to implement the programme areas identified. We fully understand pivotal role played by subject area and country focal points in realizing the mission and goals of SACEP....”



Hon. Mr. Namo Narain Meena
Minister of State for Environment and Forest

“.....Over-exploitation of natural resources, changing monsoon patterns, desertification of vast tracts of land, droughts and floods - sometimes in geographical proximity, rise in sea levels, alarming depletion of atmospheric ozone, rapid urbanization, increase in populations, to name a few, are some of the challenges that we are faced with. As a developing region with a large population living below the poverty line, we also face tensions between the priorities of environment and those of development while trying to strike the right balance between them. Several of our countries share a common past. The challenges of the future require that we cooperate with one another. This is particularly relevant for environmental protection, since we share substantially our oceans, rivers and eco-systems.....”

“.....The success of any organization and its work programme will, however, depend on the support received from the Members. To ensure that the vision of SACEP is achieved and the trust that its member countries have reposed in it for so long is fulfilled, let us work towards making this regional forum effective.....”



Hon. Ahamed Abdullah
Minister of Environment, Energy and Water

“.... Maldives is committed to the objectives and for the strengthening of the SACEP. We hope our collective will and partnership would help to improve the environment conservation work of the region.....”

“..... We believe, all of us have a responsibility in helping to strengthen the SACEP. After all, SACEP is an institution which belongs to us. Hence I suggest to the Governing Council, as a measure to strengthen the SACEP and to build our confidence that we start allocating some amount of our contribution to the programme development at the SACEP.....”



Hon. A.H.M. Fowzie
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

“.....Sri Lanka believes that SACEP is one of the important vehicles through which the regional environmental concerns can be addressed. It is gratifying to note that countries in the South Asia have taken positive initiatives for the conservation of the environment through the involvement of SACEP and also through national initiatives.

“.....We have to identify national and regional priorities to retard further degradation of the ecosystems of South Asia....”

“.... Three of our countries in the region are now faced with much greater challenges resulted due to the recent tsunami catastrophe. The environmental consequences of the tsunami will be of very greater scale if the reconstruction and recovery programmes are not undertaken systematically. ”

“.....We strongly believe that, intergovernmental agencies such as the SACEP could play a vital role in developing regional partnership for sharing experiences and information....”

7TH GLOBAL MEETING OF THE REGIONAL SEAS PROGRAMME

SACEP Director General, Dr. A.A. Boaz and SAS Interim Coordinator Mr. Prasantha Dias Abeyegunawardene participated at the 7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) held in Helsinki, Finland from 18th to 20th October 2005. The meeting focused on the long term financial sustainability of the RSCAPs and it addressed challenges and processes involved in financing Regional Seas Secretariats and programme implementation. It also aimed at enabling the RSCAPs to better determine their role in assisting and facilitating countries in implementing their actions in the future and how to secure financing and financial commitment of member countries to implement the respective programme of work under the RSCAPs.

During the meeting, the DG and the Interim Coordinator met with Ms. Veerle Vandweerd, Head, Regional Seas and other relevant officials to discuss possible work areas for mutual cooperation.

First Meeting of the Seoul Initiative Network on Green Growth



Dr. A.A. Boaz representing SACEP at the meeting

The meeting organized by the UNESCAP was held from 10 to 11 November in Seoul, Korea.

Green growth is an initiative adopted at the 2005 ministerial conference on environment and development in Asia and the Pacific, as a priority implementation mechanism for sustainable development. This meeting discussed approaches to promote “green growth” through improving the eco-efficiency of economic development patterns including consumption and production patterns.

ICRI General Meeting, Palau

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) general meeting was held in Palau from 31st October to 2nd November. Dr. A.A. Boaz and Prasantha Dias Abeyegunawardene represented SACEP at the meeting. Post tsunami follow up discussions focused on coral and mangrove ecosystems were held during the meeting. SACEP representatives had discussions with officials representing several international initiatives for future collaborative activities.

The DG also visited ADB headquarter in Manila to pursue implementation of joint environmental related activities in South Asia

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South Asia Training Workshop.....



Participants with the chief guest and other invitees to the inauguration of the Workshop

The objective of workshop was to strengthen and enhance the skills of the participants to better participate and effectively negotiate MEAs.

Therefore this training was designed to expand the knowledge base and negotiation skills of the current and future negotiators.

The deliberations of the workshop were based on a draft manual prepared by UNEP on the guidelines for compliance with and enforcement of MEAs. This manual which is expected to be completed by the end of this year seeks to promote, improve and enhance the implementation of MEAs as well as facilitate the use and application of the guidelines. These guidelines which are advisory in nature serve as a toolbox or checklist of issues intended to remind MEA negotiators on the various steps they ought take into consideration during the negotiation process. These include how they prepare themselves at national level for pre negotiation, how they would actually conduct themselves during negotiations and finally how they would follow-up on national implementation of either a new MEA or COP decisions or resolutions or any other agreement which may be adopted after such negotiations.

Taking Forward Activities Under Male' Declaration

To implement the activities under the Malé Declaration on 'Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia', three meetings were held in Delhi from 11 to 15 October 2005. The meeting was attended by the Ministries of Environment and National Implementing Agencies (NIA) of the participating countries, members of Monitoring Committee (MoC), South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and an independent facilitator.

The Annual Network Meeting reviewed the progress of the implementation of the Male' Declaration and discussed the activities under phase III of the process. The meeting noted the delay in obtaining sufficient monitoring data for impact assessments and the urgency to bring out policy options for decision makers.

Dr. Boaz in his statement stressed the need for effective institutional mechanism and networking to address transboundary air pollution problem.

At the Second Regional Stakeholder meeting of Malé Declaration presentations were made on issues such as air pollution modelling, ambient air monitoring, emission inventory and the application of passive samplers.

The first regional coordination meeting encouraged the coordination of ongoing activities within countries.

IMO/SACEP REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE CONVENTION ON ANTIFOULING SYSTEMS



Participants of the workshop

A regional workshop addressing issues pertaining to the implementation of the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Antifouling System on ships, (AFS Convention) was held in Chennai, India from the 3rd to the 6th October 2005. The workshop was attended by 32 participants representing fourteen Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Dr. A.A. Boaz Director General SACEP participated from the SACEP secretariat at the workshop with Interim Coordinator SASP, Mr. Prasantha Dias Abeyegunawardene.

The objective of the workshop was to promote the acceptance of the AFS

convention and to impart the practical knowledge on implementation of the relevant requirements of the conventions in Asia.

Additionally the workshop focused on emerging environmental issues on the usage of harmful substances within these Anti Fouling Systems and their subsequent dangers to human life and marine ecosystem. There are short and long term risks to marine resources and ecosystems from some anti-fouling products although they are impotrant for the smooth running of the ships. By limiting these harmful impacts, from ships passing by South Asian coasts and from the shipyards where they are used, the marine ecosystem would be protected from further depredation.

The participants at the workshop were briefed on IMO guidelines such as survey and certification, sampling and inspection of Anti-fouling Systems on ships

Speaking at the inaugural session of the workshop Mr Edward Kleverlaan, Technical Programme Officer of IMO pointed out that the South Asia is a region undergoing strong economic growth, demonstrating a high commitment to protecting the marine environment, particularly from the pollution from ships. Pointing out that this exercise would inevitably promote the understanding, the urgency and seriousness of the need to ratify the Convention in turn allowing greater access to international technical co-operation and assistance from other Parties to the Convention. He further stated that, ratifying the AFS Convention would accelerate the entry into force of the Convention and thereby improve the situation for the maritime water of the globe.

UNEP RRC.AP COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT NETWORK (CAN) MEETING

Dr. A.A. Boaz, Director General, SACEP and Mr. Pradyumna Kumar Kotta, Project Coordinator, SENRIC participated at the 6th Annual Meeting of UNEP RRC.AP Collaborative Assessment Network (CAN) Meeting from 13th to 14th November at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand. The meeting discussed the establishment of a data management system and the clearing house mechanism (e-KH) with a focus towards information sharing on issues related to air, water, energy, land and biodiversity. SACEP will participate in the implementation of the e-KH through providing best practices and knowledge tools from the South Asian region.

A brief report on the related activities of SACEP specially policies that produced best practices was presented by SACEP's Director General.

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human life and property, disaster reduction and mitigation. Secretary General, Mr. Michel Jarraud on behalf of WMO and Director General, Dr. Arvind Boaz on behalf of SACEP signed the MOU.

WMO provides the framework for international cooperation at a global scale for the development of meteorology and operational hydrology. It is an Intergovernmental Organization with a membership of 187 Member States and Territories. The organization promotes the rapid exchange of meteorological information, the standardization of meteorological observation and the uniform publication of observations and statistics. It also promotes the application of meteorology to water problems such as in agriculture, drought monitoring, natural disaster reduction and mitigation, and monitoring of climate change.

The signing of the MoU was a land mark event, as it provides the opportunity to merge the separate strengths of the two organizations, both political and technical to address climate related environmental issues in the region.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Boaz stated that this agreement is important for SACEP member countries in terms of pursuing goals of information sharing and capacity building with the assistance of WMO.

UP COMING EVENTS

- Bangladesh National OPRC Level 3 (Contingency Planning Workshop, 19 - 21 December 2005 at Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Regional Seminar/Workshop on Ratification and Implementation of the OPRC-HNS Protocol, the AFS Convention and Identification and Establishment of PSSAs, 16 - 20 January 2006 at Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Maldives National OPRC Level 3 (Contingency Planning Workshop), 23 - 27 January 2006 at Male', Maldives



Director General, SACEP presenting awards at the SUNFO Award Ceremony

Sri Lanka United Nations Friendship Organization (SUNFO) working towards peace, harmony and well-being of mankind based on the principles of UN, invited Dr. A.A. Boaz, DG, SACEP to present environmental awards to the individuals and NGOs in Sri Lanka with outstanding contribution in the field of coastal management.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

SACEP would like to highlight in its newsletter, regional and national initiatives and emerging environmental issues. We welcome articles or information from outside contributors.

We are currently in the process of compiling a database of experts, case studies of best management practices and initiatives in the areas of environmental protection, sustainable resource management and community-based participatory resource management. Any persons/institutions who are interested in being included in our database, please send details with their field of speciality to SACEP.

For details on obtaining this publication, please contact the SACEP Secretariat.



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