

Marine and Coastal Biodiversity in South Asian Region: a future intervention for sustainable management.

Marine and coastal ecosystems in South Asian Seas (SAS) region has paramount importance for the social and economic wellbeing of the region. This region belongs 12,000 km long coastline and the large marine area harbors some of the most extensive and diverse tropical marine ecosystems in the world. The five maritime countries in the SAS region, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, host rich biodiversity in coastal and marine ecosystems, including mangroves, coastal wetlands, seagrass meadows, coral reefs and sand dunes. Millions of people are involved with activities such as fishing, shrimp farming, tourism, shipping which are contributing to income, food security and the livelihoods. However, these ecosystems are facing serious threats and being rapidly degraded due to marine pollution, coastal development, unsustainable use of ecosystem services, over population of coastal areas, land-based pollution and habitat modification including climate change. An urgent regional response is needed to restore and maintain healthy coastal and marine habitats and species, ensuring coastal protection and the provision of ecosystem services. Of all the initiatives that have been launched at national at international levels with the aim of addressing these issues, the most relevant for our region is the South Asian Seas Action Plan (SASAP), which was developed under the umbrella of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme and adopted in 1995 by the five South Asian maritime countries, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The objective of SASAP is to protect and manage the marine environment and related coastal ecosystems of the South Asian Seas (SAS) region, through the promotion of sustainable development. The SASAP emphasizes the need for establishing a regional cooperative network of activities concerning concrete subjects of mutual interest for the whole region. South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is on the way to finalize the **Regional Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy (MCBS) for the South Asian Seas Region**. The aim of the MCBS is to address the issues threatening marine biodiversity, by supporting the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in marine and coastal habitats through strengthening implementation of and coherence of actions under National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) for 2011-2020 period.



Fig: South Asian Seas (SAS) Region.