

South Asia's Biodiversity: Need your attention

South Asia or Southern Asia is a term used to represent the southern region of the Asian continent, which comprises the sub-Himalayan SAARC countries and, for some authorities, adjoining countries to the west and east. Topographically, it is dominated by the Indian Plate, which rises above sea level as Nepal and northern parts of India situated south of the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush. South Asia is bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean and on land (clockwise, from west) by West Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. The current territories of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka form the countries of South Asia. South Asia is home to well over one fifth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. South Asia covers about 5.1 million km² (1.9 million mi²), which is 11.51% of the Asian continent or 3.4% of the world's land surface area. The population of South Asia is about 1.749 billion.

Occupying a major portion of the Indo-Malayan realm and a smaller portion of the Palearctic realm, this region is representative of five of the fourteen major ecological regions called biomes, which demonstrate the biodiversity and vegetation patterns of the region as determined by climate, water, geology, soil and diverse topography. South Asia's topography consists of an amazing variety of mountains, plateaus, dry regions, intervening structural basins, beaches, etc. It varies from world highest point, the Mount Everest to the world lowest, the sea beach. The diversity in the latitude, altitude, climate and topography has resulted in a variety of vegetation in the region, ranging from the temperate and the tropical to the desert vegetation. About 18.6 percent of the total land area of the region is still under the forest cover and it account for 2.73 percent of the total forest area in the world. About 5 percent of the region's land area is being under protection.

South Asia houses approximately 15.5 and 12 percent of the world's flora and fauna respectively. The faunal diversity of the region comprises of 933 species of mammals, 4,494 birds, 923 reptiles, 332 amphibians and 342 freshwater fishes. The floral diversity accounts for 39,875 species of flowering plants, 66 conifers and cycads, 764 ferns and 6,652 higher plants.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economies of South Asian Countries. Throughout history, agriculture has played a central role in the economies of South Asian countries. Over two-thirds of the population still depends on it for a living, and it accounts for nearly one-third of the region's exports.

Majority of the population of South Asia directly depend on biodiversity for their livelihood. High population levels translate into increased resource demands on an already decreased biological diversity of the region. By 2050, the South Asia's population is likely to exceed 2.2 billion from the current level of 1.5 billion. With an estimated 600 million people subsisting on less than US\$1.25 a day in South Asia, even small loss of current biological diversity can cause irreversible losses and tip a large number of people into destitution. Therefore the conservation of existing biological diversity of the region is an utmost important to provide the livelihood for hundreds of millions people of the region. Successive governments of the region and number of other regional and national institutions have been working tirelessly in this regard.

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is an inter-governmental organization established in 1982 by the Governments of South Asia namely; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is a multilateral organization registered with the UN Secretariat in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations. The prime objective for setting up SACEP was to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region. Since its establishment, Conservation of biodiversity is one of the priority areas of work and implemented number of activities in capacity building and information sharing on biological diversity.

Capacity Building

South Asia Capacity Building Workshop on Indicators as part of NBSAP updating, 16 -19 July 2012, Colombo, Sri Lanka

With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 at CBD COP-10, Parties to the CBD have been requested to update their NBSAPs with the new Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including reporting on their adopted national targets at COP-11 in October 2012 and their adopted strategies at COP-12. To support this process a workshop for South Asian countries on indicator capacity building, as part of updated NBSAPs, is being organised.



The workshop is funded by UNEP and co-convened and co-hosted by UNEP and UNEP-WCMC with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP). The workshop has been designed in co-ordination with the Secretariat of the CBD.

Sub-Regional Capacity-Building Workshop for South Asia on the Clearing-House Mechanism, 12 to 16 December 2011 in Dehradun, India

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Wildlife Institute of India has been organized a Sub-regional capacity-building workshop for South Asia on the Clearing-House Mechanism.



The workshop was held with the generous support of the Governments of Japan and Belgium. The objective of the workshop was to build capacity and provide guidance on how to establish and sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms, in line with decision X/15 and in support of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The workshop also expected to contribute to the establishment of a sub-regional clearing-house mechanism for SACEP member countries and to facilitate cooperation among them.

Sri Lanka National Symposium on Invasive Alien Species, 21-22 May 2009, Browns Beach Hotel, Negombo

SACEP collaborated with Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Sri Lanka to organize a national symposium on Invasive Alien Species.



First Training Workshop for the Sri Lanka BCH Task Force , 28-30, April, 2008, Colombo, Sri Lanka

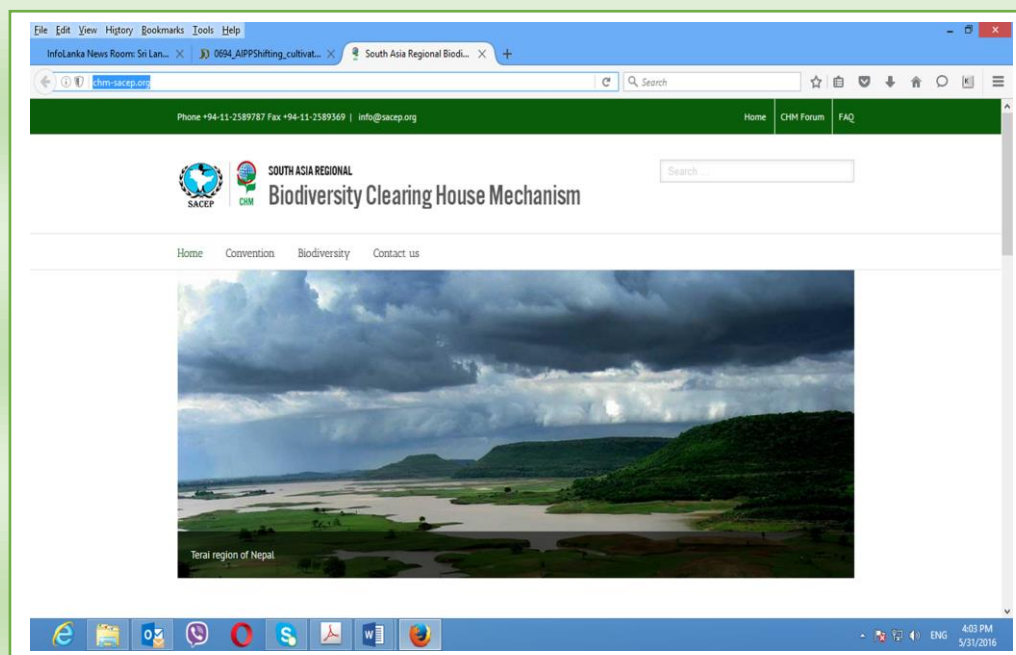
The first Training workshop for the Sri Lanka BCH Task Force was organized in Colombo (Ceylon Continental Hotel) during 28-31 April, 2008 so as to make them understand, inter alia, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Biosafety Clearing House and information sharing among the relevant stakeholders. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources conducted the workshop in collaboration with South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), UNESCO and UNEP-GEF.



Information Sharing

South Asia Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM)

SACEP has developed the South Asia biodiversity clearing house mechanism with the financial assistance of BoBLME project of FAO. The objective of regional CHM is to provide wide range of information related to biodiversity in the South Asia region. The regional CHM can be access on <http://chm-sacep.org/>



Under this activity, SACEP also provides technical assistance for its member countries to develop their nation biodiversity CHMs. Currently, on request of Sri Lanka, SACEP is assisting to develop their national CHM.

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