

GEF Biennial International Waters Conference, 2016



The eight GEF Biennial International Waters Conference, 2016 (IWC-8) kick started here at coastal city of Negombo in Sri Lanka on the 9th of May 2016 and will continue till 15 May 2016. The conference play an important role in not only bringing together related stakeholders but also help in highlighting the important dimensions of water resources for renewed actions world wide. The IWC convenes about 300 participants, comprising GEF IW project managers, representatives of beneficiary countries, non-governmental organizations, transboundary management institutions, UN Agencies and the private sector. Collectively, the participants will represent about 90 active GEF IW projects, 80 countries and the various GEF Agencies. Participants are invited by the GEF Agencies implementing GEF IW projects.

This time it is taking place in Sri Lanka, a South Asian and SACEP member country and therefore, the sub-region attaches great importance to this event and expect something more in the form of capacity and financial resources from the world leading funding agency in environment sector. As South Asian sub-region as a whole and countries in their individual capacity could not harness even optimum level potential in accessing GEF resources, it is hoped that holding this event in South Asia will help pave the way for accessing these resources to the maximum possible capacity. The available GEF resources are tremendous but given the limited capacity of countries and sub-regional organizations, and the fact that accessing GEF resources are highly complex, only few global partners driven projects could get access to these resources.

The GEF Biennial International Waters Conference (IWC) is the signature learning event for the GEF IW portfolio. The IWC objectives are to facilitate cross-sectoral and portfolio-wide learning and experience sharing. They strive to solicit advice from the existing GEF IW portfolio on burning issues, and to assist in building participant capacity in key management and technical areas. Participants sum up progress achieved and also look to the future of programming within and beyond the GEF IW focal area.

The United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has set a new development agenda for the 2015 to 2030 period. While GEF IW investments directly or indirectly tie into each of the 17 SDGs and 168 targets, two SDGs—Ensure access to water and sanitation for all and Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources—are of particular relevance to the GEF's IW investments. With the new global development commitments in mind, IWC8 is organized under the theme ***Scaling Up GEF IW Investments from Source to Sea and Beyond in the Context of Achieving the SDGs***, with learning tracks devoted to catalyzing transformation and scaling up investments; strengthening governance processes to sustain project interventions; and data to policy.

With a view to get benefit from the opportunities offered through IWC-8 in accessing GEF resources by sub-regional organizations like SACEP, it is proposed to arrange a sub-regional GEF portfolio window especially for the governance and sustainable management of trans-boundary waters, which the South Asian Seas Programme (SASP) can also benefit. SACEP being an inter-governmental organization is hosting the SASP, which is one of the few oldest regional seas programme of the world has got a wonderful institutional arrangement of working with the member countries in controlling marine pollution of the Indian Ocean with limited financial resources.

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