REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

OF SAARC DECLARATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

CANSA

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About CANSA

Climate Action Network South Asia has been a vibrant network of over 90 plus organizations spread across South Asia. CANSA has been at the forefront for representing the Southern perspectives at climate negotiations and undertakes inter-governmental, regional, and national actions. CANSA has been the only Southern Climate Action Network (CAN) node that has continued in existence for more than two decades. With this substantially large membership base CANSA works towards linking the policy work, research and the action based work in the region on climate change to address and set workable solutions to the adverse effects of climate change affecting the region.

Research Support and Coordination Tirthankar Mandal

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADP	Ad hoc Working Group on Durban Platform on Enhanced Actions (AWG-DEPA)
AOSIS	Association of Small Island States
BASIC	Group of countries: Brazil, India, South Africa, and China
CANSA	Climate Action Network South Asia
IPR	Intellectual Property Right
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CMP	Conference of Parties, serving as a meeting of parties
CO2	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of Parties
CPT	Climate Predictability Tool
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DHM	Department of Hydrology and Meteorology
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
G77 & China	Group of 77 Countries and China
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Green House Gas
HDI	Human Development Index
IPCC	Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change
HadRM2	Hadley Centre high-resolution model
LDC	Least Developed Country
MGD	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RCSS	Regional Centre for Strategic Studies
REDD	Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
KM	Knowledge Management
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SACEPS	South Asia Centre for Policy Studies
SAFTA	South Asia Free Trade Agreement
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SARSO	South Asian Regional Standards Organisation
SATIS	South Asian Agreement on Trade in Services
SAWTEE	South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment
INSA	Imagine a New South Asia
SDF	SAARC Development Fund
SFRP	SAARC Fund for Regional Projects
SMRC	SAARC Meteorological Research Centre
SRF	SAARC Regional Fund
TRMM	Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention
WRI	World Resource Institute
WTO	World Trade Organization

PREFACE

In 1985, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) met for the first time to resolve common concerns by evolving a common strategy and approach. The members reiterated that through effective regional cooperation, they could make optimum use of the existing capacities of their respective countries for the benefit of their peoples, accelerate the pace of their economic development, and enhance their national and collective self-reliance.

The issue of the environment first gained its status as a major global concern in 1991 at the Colombo Summit. Collectively, the summit agreed on adopting a two-pronged strategy; to initiate national as well as regional measures for the preservation of the environment; and called on the international community to address the question of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles that lead to environmental degradation.

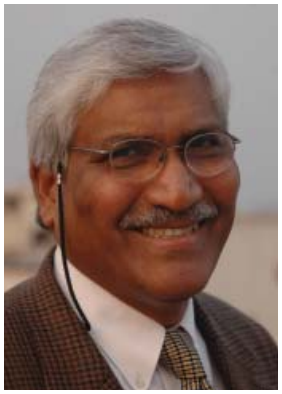
Then, after 10 SAARC summits, the sixteenth meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of SAARC, held in Thimphu, Bhutan, on 28–29 April 2010, concluded with the statement "***Towards a Green and Happy South Asia***". This statement was an attempt to translate the statement into reality, with the SAARC members expressing their intention to pursue common policy directions. It broadened its strategic focus to go beyond only political and trade-related issues to encompass more long-term issues of sustainability and prosperity, such as climate change and development.

However, there were three strategic gaps that needed to be bridged: the SAARC statement articulates the intent to work towards a green and happy South Asia, but does not provide any evidenced-based practical and sustainable solutions for the realization of the intent. Thus, CANSA initiated an assessment on the progress made on achieving the intent stated in the Thimpu Statement in the last two years. The assessment highlights nation-wise progress, discusses the strategies that have worked or have not worked, and analyses their consequences for the people and for the nations at large. The CANSA members provided evidence-based solutions for mitigating the problems and for accelerating the progress.

The intent of the assessment report is to make a case in favour of evidence-based solutions pertaining to programmes, policy directions, and the ways forward for all the SAARC countries. The learnings from the study advocate the strengthening of networking between the partners, to make efforts to meet needs, and to undertake opportunity-based collaborative and cumulative programmes in the future. We are confident that the recommendations of this report will bridge the gap between the goals and help in implementing the sixteen activities agreed to in the Thimphu Climate Declaration by the SAARC members through effective coordination and exchange of knowledge and information. The report is an attempt to project the real picture in terms of materializing political will into action, and NGOs in the region are willing to support the implementation measures as partners.

Sanjay Vashist
CANSA

MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIR



South Asia is a region of great opportunities as well as tremendous contrasts. Most of the countries in South Asia have made significant economic progress in the recent past, even during the global recession in the last decade. Yet South Asia has the largest concentration of global poverty. A region with a long history of great civilizations and learning, international trade and local governance systems, it has also seen some of the worst excesses of colonialism as well as valiant independence struggles for establishing national identities. All South Asian countries have made significant progress in the democratization of their polities, societies, and economies, and these efforts continue.

In the north of this region lie the mighty Himalayan and Hindukush mountain ranges. In the south lies the Indian Ocean. In the east is the Bay of Bengal, and in the west is the Arabian Sea. Three countries with large populations (Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) have long coastlines, two countries are island states (Maldives and Sri Lanka), and three countries are land-locked (Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Nepal). South Asia also contains two of the world's largest river systems: the Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna river system, which flows through Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal; and the Indus river system, which flows through India and Pakistan. One of the most vulnerable major deltas in the world is also located in this region.

Their geographical locations, their exposure to multiple climatic threats, and their large populations of the poor make the South Asian countries particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate variability and change. These are likely to affect basic human needs and securities, including food, water, energy, livelihood, health, and social security. The poorest are always the most vulnerable to climate change, and South Asia is the largest hub of global poverty. Models show that the impacts of climate change will be particularly strong in the deltas, low-lying coastal regions, fragile mountains, small islands, deserts, and drought-prone areas of South Asia. Hundreds of millions of people are likely to be affected. The governance systems, institutions, ecosystems, and human communities of South Asia are likely to suffer considerably under the impacts of uncontrolled climate change. The potential displacement of populations poses a special challenge.

The governments of the SAARC region have made a number of important declarations on climate change. Some initiatives on joint research on meteorological studies, food security, and regional strategies have been undertaken under the aegis of SAARC. The differences in the approaches of the SAARC member countries are reflected in their positions in the global climate-change negotiating fora. These have been discussed in this report.

The civil society of South Asia has played a leading role in the global climate change discourse right from its beginning. Civil society representatives have made significant contributions to scientific studies, policy analyses, strategies and actions, advocacy, and information dissemination in their respective countries, as well as regionally and globally. Areas where South Asian civil society, research and academic institutions, and the media

have made significant contributions include formulating concepts of per capita greenhouse gases (GHG); advancing adaptation science, policies, actions, and concepts; and advocating climate justice-related issues as well as grass-roots actions.

Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA) has been the leading South Asian civil society forum on climate change since 1990. It presents the Southern perspectives at climate negotiations and undertakes inter-governmental, regional, and national actions. CANSA has been the only Southern Climate Action Network (CAN) node that has continued in existence for more than two decades. It has now entered into a phase of engaging in activities on a greater scale, playing an important catalytic role, and in providing services. Its membership has increased significantly. Most of the major civil society players in South Asia are part of CANSA.

Climate-change discourse is entering into a new phase, characterized by more visible extreme events, greater awareness and organizational progress in each country, stronger scientific basis for the need for adaptation, and continued reluctance by many Annex I countries to significantly reduce GHG emissions. At the same time, the early mobilization of resources, both internally and externally, is visible. It is now being increasingly realized that greater climate actions, accountability and transparency in decision making, and mainstreaming climate change into normal development planning have become essential. Further, South Asia is suitably poised to play a major role in climate discourse in the future. It is also qualified to take up the mantle of leadership by engaging in greater cooperation in the arenas of both analysis and demonstrated action.

The communities of South Asia are doing their bit by taking action at the local level to address the impacts of climate variability and change. Community Based Adaptation (CBA) has become the rallying cry for many climate-change practitioners. All actors and stakeholders—including government agencies, civil society organizations, research and academic institutions, NGOs, private sector entities, and local communities—must work together so that South Asian development objectives, including poverty alleviation, are not threatened by the impacts of climate change. Early and meaningful action in the areas of adaptation, mitigation, technology development and exchange, and fund mobilization should allow South Asia to withstand the impacts of climate change and to ensure an effective and fair climate deal in Doha and beyond.

Atiq Rahman
Co-Chair, CANSA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has benefited from the insights and expertise of individuals working with the CANSA member organizations. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Development Alternatives, Oxfam GB, Vasudha Foundation, ActionAid Bangladesh, Clean Energy Nepal, and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies for providing institutional support to the research project. The authors were supported by colleagues based in South Asian countries and would like to acknowledge their contribution by recognizing them publicly—Tanjir Hussain, Ziaul Mukta, Ranga Pallawala, Zeenat Niazi, and Mozaharul Alam (Babu).

The Board of CANSA supported the initiative, which is aimed at assessing the challenges being faced by policy makers in the region and at spreading awareness about the need for collaborative regional solutions. Financial support from the Climate and Development Knowledge Network helped us to engage experienced and qualified researchers to undertake the study. We also would like to thank senior civil society representatives in the region, who have all extended their support by endorsing the report. They found it useful because it is aimed at encouraging ownership of the policy initiatives by a wider section of stakeholders from various sections of society, such as politicians, policy makers, academics, and NGO representatives.

CANSA Secretariat

FOREWORDS FROM EXPERTS IN SOUTH ASIA

The report has been endorsed by senior and well-known civil society experts in the region who work on the issue of climate change and development. The observations made by them reflect various aspects of the report and also the status of climate policymaking in the region and the role that the report can play in the future. We are highly encouraged by the kind words about the report and very happy to share them here.

SAARC and Climate Policymaking in the Region

Dr Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development, Independent University, Bangladesh

The South Asian region has a total population of over 1.5 billion people who account for a very large number of the poor who are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change as well as to the significant amounts of emissions of greenhouse gases. The Thimpu Declaration of the SAARC leaders is a significant step forward for the countries of the region in taking action both at the national as well as the regional levels. However, despite the best of intentions, the actual implementation of the planned actions has lagged behind expectations. This report evaluates the progress and provides both advice and support from civil society in the region in implementing the agreed actions with renewed vigour going forward.

Climate Change: The Region's Challenge

Sunita Narain, Centre for Science and Environment, India

We know today that the threat of climate change is urgent. We also know that combating this threat will require deep and drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. This is when, already, the poor of the world, who are more vulnerable and less able to cope, are feeling the pain of a changing and more variable climate. The question is why the world continues to look for every excuse not to act, even as science has confirmed and reconfirmed that climate change is real; it is human-made and can devastate the world as we know it.

The reason is simple: climate change is related to economic growth. In spite of years of protracted negotiations and targets set under the Kyoto Protocol, no country has been able to de-link economic growth from the growth of emissions. No country has shown how to build a low-carbon economy as yet.

The inconvenient truth is not that climate change is real, but that climate change is about sharing the benefits of that economic growth between nations and people. There is a stock of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, built up over centuries in the process of creating the wealth of nations. This has already made climate unstable. Poorer nations will now add to this stock through their drive for economic growth. But that is not an excuse for the rich world not to take on tough and deep binding emission reduction targets. The principle has to be that they must reduce their emissions so that we can grow. The question is to find low-carbon growth strategies for emerging countries without compromising on our right to develop.

The countries of South Asia are enjoined in this challenge. Climate change does not recognize national boundaries. Climate change is a present and future danger that has to be jointly understood and jointly fought. This requires collaboration in science and in action. It requires coming together to change the ways of the world; to secure our today and the world's tomorrow.

Climate Change and South Asian Climate Policymaking

Asoka Abeygunawardana, Executive Director, Energy Forum - Sri Lanka

After 20 years of climate change talks, we can now say that carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have increased by 44 per cent against the pre-industrial levels, that the temperature has increased by almost 1 degree Centigrade, and that it is not possible to avoid a 2-degree increase in temperature in the near future. Already climate change-related disasters, such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, wildfires, melting ice caps, rises in sea level, increased vector-borne diseases, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other extreme weather events, have had devastating impacts on people, environments, and economies.

At the global level, climate change negotiation is only a blame game. No firm steps have been taken for tackling climate change and it is about to reach irreversible levels. In demographic terms, with nearly half of the absolute poor people residing in South Asia, the region is the most vulnerable to climate change in the world. In addition, when we factor in the large majority of smallholder farmers and the number of people residing along the coastlines, the vulnerability of people in the region is further exacerbated by the threats of climate change.

On the other hand, scientists suggest that the developing world should aim at achieving a peak of a 75 per cent increase by 2017 against its 1990 level to keep global warming within 2 degrees C. However, South Asia has already increased its carbon emissions by 170 per cent. South Asia's electricity demand is projected to more than triple, from 43 million tons of oil (mtoe) equivalent in 2005 to 165 mtoe in 2030, growing at an annual rate of 5.5 per cent. Most importantly, South Asia's power generation mix will be dominated by coal-fired generation. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that four-fifths of the total energy-related CO_2 emissions permissible by 2035 in the 450 carbon dioxide concentration scenario are already "locked-in" by existing capital stock (power plants, buildings, factories, etc.), leaving no room for additional power plants, factories, and other infrastructure in the developing world unless they are zero-carbon.

The answer to the climate change issue is threefold—frugality, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. In this context, both adaptation and mitigation are mandatory measures that need to be taken by the people living in South Asia. In South Asia, we have all the diversity on earth: the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich; from the Himalayas, which have the largest concentration of glaciers outside the polar caps, to small island nations; biodiversity; and cultural diversity, to name a few. That is our strength. We should be able to resolve our issues on our own and show the path to the rest of the world. SAARC needs to play a key role here.

The solution has to be people-centred sustainable development, where the private sector, the public sector, and civil society will work together. This is neither a top-down approach nor a bottom-up approach, but rather a two-way process. All parties have a role to play, and we are glad that Climate Action Network-South Asia (CANSA) as a civil society network has given due attention to this fact and is playing a role in strengthening SAARC for facing the climate challenge.

Climate Policymaking and the Prospects of Regional Cooperation

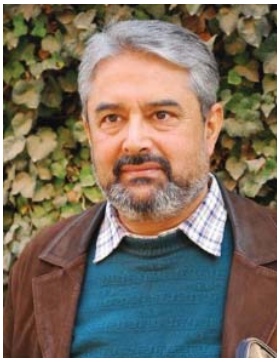
Leena Srivastava, Executive Director, TERI, India

I would like to start by congratulating the Climate Action Network – South Asia for preparing a comprehensive review of the commitments of the SAARC countries towards climate action. What was revealing about the assessment was the very interesting table comparing the Dhaka Declaration of 2008 with the Thimpu Statement of 2010. The response of the SAARC countries in these two years evolved from awareness creation and capacity building to an action-oriented, ownership-based, and policy-driven response to climate change.

The report also points to the differences in the positions of the countries of the region in international negotiations, which, when seen within a country-specific context, are understandable, although not ideal. As such, the discussion on the way forward, highlighting specific actions for overcoming the trust deficit, is a good note on which to end the report. Taking the specific example of energy, the similarities in the energy economies of the SAARC countries are very great. As such, while the countries may not be resource-rich enough to engage in trade in energy on a large scale internationally, there nevertheless exist several opportunities to collaborate on developing markets and skill sets for the emerging renewable energy technologies and services, as also for the decentralized provisioning of energy in rural and poor areas. The role of biomass is extremely important for almost all the countries of the region without exception, and a major initiative around the clean and efficient deployment of this resource would bring rich dividends. In a similar fashion, sharing experiences on energy-efficiency improvement practices and policies would go a long way in enhancing the energy security of the region.

Articulating a Hitherto Missing South Asian Voice

Dipak Gyawali, former Minister of Water Resources, currently Chair of Nepal Water Conservation Foundation, Nepal



In most global forums, South Asia's collective voice is not particularly influential. Because the region includes all the climatic and ecological zones of the world, from tropical to arctic, from deserts to wetlands, the impact of climate change—whether too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, and all this too soon or too late—is bound to be felt by everyone in the region. Why is a fifth of the world's population so marginal, both in articulating its concerns and in contributing solutions to collective global efforts?

An inkling is found in the diagram that maps the positions of the South Asian countries on climate negotiations (page 10) in this review. A wide divergence is seen in the positions between 'India and the rest', on the one hand, and between the 'islands and the hills' or 'LDCs and non-LDCs', on the other hand. This points to a need for South Asia's civil society actors and academics to think less in terms of countries and more in terms of common ecological zones in the region that will separately face the shared impacts of climate change– sea level rise for coastal zones, snow hydrology disruptions for the mountains, and more droughts and floods for everyone, but at unexpected moments.

This review report by a reinvigorated CANSA provides some answers, raises more questions, but also provides some hope. A civil society effort, it complements that of the government agencies of the region by giving a fresh perspective to languishing issues. While the region's per capita emissions are low, they are increasing too fast for comfort, because of the development needs of the largest collection of poor people on this planet. Some ways out of the predicament are found in various proposals, such as generating revenue from internal sources with a cess levied on hydrocarbon consumption that would nudge the overall system towards a faster shift to renewables. The report highlights the need for intensified dialogue between the civic, official, and private sector voices of the region to address this challenge.

Development and Climate Change Policymaking in South Asia

Ali T. Sheikh, Asia Director, CDKN and Chief Executive Officer, LEAD Pakistan, Pakistan

Civil society organizations in South Asia have endeavoured to give a collective vision for the region. It is a joint step forward to engage in collaborative initiatives in various sectors, and to think and act together in responding to the climate change challenge. This preliminary study has challenged SAARC as an organization and its member states to translate its earlier declarations and pronouncements into action.

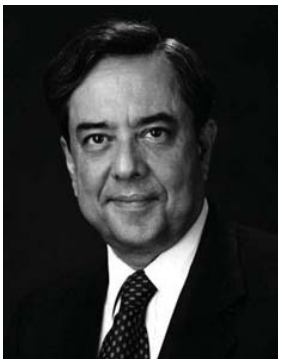
South Asia faces multiple threats from the changing climate. For a region that houses the biggest concentration of the world's poor and marginalized – many of them living in fragile ecosystems – the vulnerability of millions of people is increasing. The climate threat is reflected in increased rural and urban flooding, climate-induced migration and disease, shrinking livelihood options, and, of course, droughts and other disasters that can be plausibly attributed to climate change. South Asia faces threat to its islands and long coastlines, and to its receding glaciers, while the changing patterns of the monsoons result in food and energy insecurity.

The cost of development is increasing. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals is becoming an elusive dream. Increasingly, large segments of the population in all the seven countries of SAARC are being pushed below the poverty line by growth strategies that are not always inclusive and by policies that are rarely equitable. South Asia still has to define the framework of its response to the climate challenge. Climate change still has to be linked to the region's development agenda.

The report, ***Review and Assessment of the SAARC Declarations on Climate Change***, offers an assessment of the possible bottlenecks or barriers to implementing the commitments made by the SAARC countries. Such assessments need to be further debated and deliberated upon not only by civil society but also by the larger stakeholder community, including policy entrepreneurs, researchers, and think tanks, as well as by key institutions in the fourteen areas of broad cooperation identified by SAARC. In this undertaking, CANSA members have an extraordinary responsibility in their respective countries to mainstream the recommendations of this report. We hope that this report will find an audience in the official corridors of power and will serve as the basis for discussions, if not for shared negotiation positions, in global climate negotiations.

Climate-people-development policy making in the region

Dr. Ashok Khosla, president IUCN and Chairman Development Alternatives, India



Few regions of the world are more vulnerable to climate change than South Asia, which is home to over one fifth of humanity and 60 percent of the world's poor. Changes in precipitation patterns increase in extreme weather events, glacier melting and sea level rise are already being observed and all predictions indicate that this will intensify in the future. Climate change is likely to compound existing development problems and to increase pressure on key resources needed to sustain growth.

The CANSA Report covers the high level commitments that are being made by the governments of the region to address the adverse impacts of climate change. However, as pointed out in the Report, changes on the ground will require a substantial amount of additional work. The report also shows that there exist wide differences on the issues of climate change in the respective country positions at the global negotiations. These differences also reflect the variations in importance that countries in the region place on climate change issues. This can weaken the voice of South Asia as a collective at the global level. Therefore, to make an impact, the voices from the region need to reinforce each other in international negotiations. This Report aims to help more towards that goal.

The Assessment Report by CANSA complements the work of governments of the region and hopes to create a space for further deliberations and debate among the wider groups involving public, private and larger civil society groups on climate change policymaking in the region. CANSA therefore a assumes a significant responsibility to ensure that the recommendations from the report are reflected in the future policy documents of the region as a major step towards the larger goal of making this region more climate resilient.

Follow Your People

Ziaul Hoque Mukta, Regional Policy Coordinator, Oxfam Great Britain Asia, Bangladesh

Despite various restrictions imposed by the South Asian state machineries, the peoples of the neighbouring states of the region have been continuing collaborations amongst themselves on different aspects of socio-cultural and economic affairs through private, informal, and unsanctioned ways, as has been observed. Civil society organizations (CSOs), including consortia of academic institutions, interpreted the collaborations and envisaged an enhanced partnership among the states of the region. Consequently, politicians were compelled to act, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in 1985. However, the politico-military dynamics of the region, evading the compulsion to meet the people's needs, have become the key driving force behind the non-successful progress of the above-mentioned regional entity. SAARC has become a big talk show. Nowadays, it is not performing up to the expected level, despite the fact that the propositions and options have increased tremendously because of the continued explorations by CSOs and research and academic institutions.

It is difficult to believe that politicians don't know the benefits of regionalism in a globalized multilateral world. Regionalism allows a group of countries to negotiate and establish commitments, rules, and regulations that go beyond those that are possible at the time multilaterally. Thus, regionalism protects the economies of the member countries from the vast competition that is facilitated under the most favoured nation (MFN) principle and promotes the economic development of the participating countries. It has been proven that in this way regionalism does not block the multilateral system, but rather acts as a building block to strengthen it. South Asian politicians are also familiar with how the European Union and other regional initiatives are performing. So what makes them responsible for their inaction?

The lack of political will is still the key constraint. South Asian politicians perform like the leaders of the respective small sections of their societies, for immediate and short-term benefits only. They could inflate the interests of their own respective sections by enhancing regionalism. They could be the leaders of the nation and of the region, and of the world, if they could only transform their SAARC vision and plan into action. In the era of climate change, it is more than an absolute truth that united we stand, divided we fall.

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Regional cooperation is fast becoming a popular buzzword today, with a number of countries aligning themselves either regionally or economically with each other to form groupings, either as joint economic and negotiating groups at world negotiation forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), or as the UN Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), or as other forums.

For example, country groups that had never existed before have suddenly emerged into prominence, such as BASIC (Brazil, India, South Africa, China) as a negotiating group for the UNFCCC.

Similarly, the African countries have come together to form the African Group, which works as a joint, organized, and cohesive group on a number of issues, with South Africa emerging as their leader.

The European Union has been around for some time and has been a trendsetter in terms of regional cooperation.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was formed in 1985, perhaps along the lines of the European Union (EU), and dedicated itself to economic, technological, social, and cultural development in the region. At a later stage, climate change also emerged as an important agenda for SAARC, as the entire region is threatened by the adverse impact of this change. However, unlike the EU, SAARC never evolved as a negotiating group for the UNFCCC; however, the Secretariat has an observer status.

The SAARC grouping could have functioned as a negotiating group, but the diverse geographies, political systems, and economies of the countries in the region pose certain complications. India is an emerging economy; Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives are developing countries; and Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal are LDCs.

Since its formation, SAARC has adopted:

8 agreements:

1. *Agreement on establishment of SAARC Arbitration Council*
2. *Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation*
3. *Final Agreement on Customs Matters*
4. *Charter of SAARC Development Fund (SDF), 31 July 2008*
5. *Agreement on establishment of SAARC Food Bank*
6. *Agreement on establishment of South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)*
7. *Agreement on establishment of South Asian Regional Standards Organisation (SARSO)*

14 broad areas of cooperation:

1. *Agriculture and rural development*
2. *Bio-technology*
3. *Promotion of culture*
4. *Energy*
5. *Environment*
6. *Trade*
7. *Finance*
8. *Poverty alleviation*
9. *Human resource development*
10. *Peace and security*
11. *Information technology and communication*
12. *Science and technology*
13. *People-to-people interaction*
14. *Funding mechanism and joint fund-raising for projects and programmes*

2 major declarations focused on climate change:

1. *SAARC Dhaka Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change in 2008, along with SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008*
2. *Thimpu Statement on Climate Change in 2010*

However, given the socio-economic and political situation in the region, and in light of the historic relations between the countries, it is not surprising that a number of these agreements, cooperation deals, and declarations have yet to see the light of day. With the threat of climate change looming, and with South Asia being particularly vulnerable to climate change, the implementation of enhanced regional cooperation is essential for jointly addressing the impacts of climate change, as well as the sharing of experience and learning among all the countries in the region.

In light of the above generally, and against the backdrop of the two SAARC declarations on climate change specifically, this study critically examines the status of the implementation of the declarations, particularly the Thimpu Statement on Climate Change (2010), as it is deemed to have subsumed the Dhaka Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2008) in line with the SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change (adopted in 2008) to come up with a way forward to provide recommendations and a road map for the necessary actions so as to ensure that these declarations are implemented for the benefit of the region as a whole.

II. OVERVIEW OF SOUTH ASIA

a. Socio-political Landscape

The idea of fostering regional cooperation in the South Asia region was an outcome of an initiative undertaken in 1978 by a consortium of academic organizations, including the Committee for Studies on Cooperation in Development, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Nepal's Centre for Economic Development and Administration, and the Indian Council of World Affairs.

However, this initiative was taken up at the government level, leading to the birth of SAARC only in 1985.

Right from the very beginning, SAARC has had to tread a fairly difficult path. Despite the fact that all the countries in the region (with the exception of Afghanistan, which joined SAARC subsequently) came forward to set up SAARC, there was a great deal of scepticism about its aims and goals, as well as a reluctance to act together within the body. The reasons for this are largely related to the socio-political dynamics of South Asia coupled with the conflicts between the countries of the region.

So in the initial years, SAARC was largely a "talk shop", a platform for organizing seminars and debates.

The decade after the setting up of SAARC was a fairly chaotic period for the countries in the region. Nepal saw the overthrow of the monarchy, with the communists taking over. Sri Lanka witnessed a very difficult period of ethnic and civil war. The 1991 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi marked a shift in the ethnic war in Sri Lanka and also heralded a change in India–Sri Lanka relations. The decade also saw the Kargil War (1999) between Pakistan and India, which led to worsening relations between the two countries. The Kargil War was coupled with an army coup in Pakistan, which further resulted in the halting of dialogue between the two countries. Relations between India and Bangladesh improved to a certain extent following the 1996 signing of the Ganges treaty, although in some quarters of Bangladesh it was still perceived that India had the advantage. Another noteworthy change in the region at this time was the democratization of Bhutan by the ruling monarchy.

However, despite all these animosities and the changing political landscape within these countries, the one common element that had the power to bring them together was trade.

The signing of the agreement on the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in 2004 imparted a new momentum to regional cooperation, heralding the third phase of SAARC's evolution when it first began to seriously focus on the goal of regional economic integration.

During this period, the countries in the region opened up their economies, transforming them into market-driven economies, and adopting globalization and liberalization as the new mantra.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was seen as a "new animal" which needed to be dealt with and handled as a collective, rather than as an individual-country initiative.

Hence, SAFTA played an important role in converting the then "talk shop" SAARC into a regional body.

Further, the increasing influence of China, particularly as it expanded its markets and opened its doors to its neighbours, was an issue of great concern to India. India perhaps felt that China's influence in Nepal and Bhutan could affect its own interest in these countries. India's interest in SAARC became apparent in an interview given by Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, to the magazine "Himal", in which he said, ***"India cannot prosper and progress without its neighbouring countries also prospering, and progressing, in equal measure . . . [and] historically the South Asian region has flourished the most when it has been connected to itself, and to the rest of the world."***

While official engagement between governments under the SAARC umbrella, other than SAFTA, was still sluggish, the period saw a number of regional organizations being set up, such as the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) and the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS). In the trade arena, the South Asia Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established.

In the early 2000s, "SAARC Vision: Beyond the Year 2000", a report brought out by a committee of eminent persons of the region, was released. This report envisaged a South Asia moving towards a free trade zone by 2010, a customs union by 2015, and an economic union by 2020. The report laid out a pathway and identified milestones for the achievement of these set goals. Some of the milestones that the vision document laid down were:

- Adopting special measures for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
- Promoting energy cooperation
- Strengthening transport infrastructure and promoting sustainable transport in the member countries
- Establishing a South Asian Development Fund and allocating USD 10–15 billion to be used by the LDCs to bring them up to the level of developing economies such as India.
- Setting up a South Asia Development Bank

- Identifying South Asian Development Goals for Poverty Alleviation, along the lines of the MDGs
- Setting up the SAARC University.

Unfortunately, many of the recommendations made in the report were not converted into reality. The only exception was the SAARC University, which held its first academic session in August 2010.

In this rapidly changing political landscape, a big difference was made by civil society groups. Many of these regional groups have not only survived but have also proved that they can play a crucial role in pushing governments along the path to collective growth and development.

b. Development Indicators

South Asia, the regional group of eight countries–Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka–is home to well over one-fifth of the world's population. With a total population of 1.57 billion,[1] it is both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. South Asia covers an area of roughly 5.13 million sq km, which is roughly 10 per cent of the Asian continent, and 2.4 per cent of the world's land surface.[2]

South Asia accounts for roughly 34 per cent of Asia's population and for 16.5 per cent[3] of the world's population. It is also home to the largest number of rural poor people in the world, amounting to approximately 500 million.[4] Four-fifths of all extremely poor people in South Asia live in rural areas.

Some of the broad indicators of the countries in South Asia are as follows:

Table 1.

	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
GDP (2009)	USD 11.6 billion (2007)	USD 100.00 billion	USD 1.27 billion	USD 1,430 billion	USD 1.36 billion	USD 12.61 billion	USD 166.52 billion	USD 41.32 billion
GDP per capita (2009)	USD 190 (2004)	USD 551	USD 1,832	USD 1,176	USD 4,388	USD 427	USD 981	USD 2,068
Population	28.15 million (2009)	162.22 million (2009)	0.70 million (2009)	1.12 billion (2011)	0.40 million (2009)	29.33 million (2009)	180.81 million (2009)	20.24 million (2009)
Land area (%)	652,000 sq km	130,000 sq km	47,000 sq km	3,287,000 sq km	300 sq km	147,200 sq km	796,100 sq km	65,600 sq km
Agricultural land (%age of total)	58.3%	69.2%	12.6%	60.6%	47%	29.5%	35.1%	36.5%
Irrigated land (%age of cropped land)	33.8%	56.1%	5.3%	33%	Nil	47%	90.6%	39%
Forest area (%age of land area)	1.3%	6.7%	68%	22.8%	Nil	25.4%	2.5%	29.9%

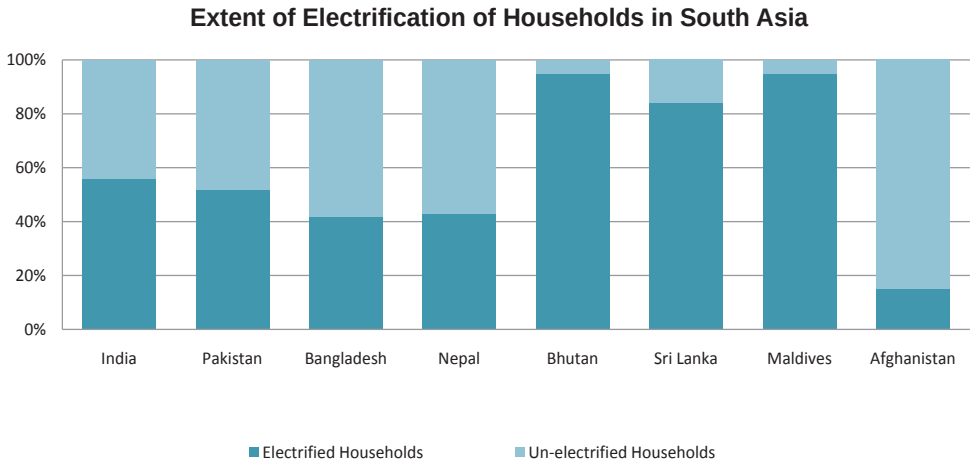
1 World Bank, South Asia databank.
2 Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia
3 Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia
4 United Nations briefing paper on rural poverty. http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/rural-pov/progress.shtml

GHG emissions (million metric tonnes of CO_2)	8.8	143.2	0.4	1,863.4	0.7	40.6	243.7	13.8
Per capita emissions	0.3	0.9	0.6	1.7	2.4	1.5	1.6	0.7
Emission intensity of GDP (metric tonnes of CO_2)	-	874.5	178.1	763.4	605.6	1,558.80	716.1	197.7
No. of motor vehicles per 1,000 persons	**0**	2 (2008)	47 (2008)	23 (2010)	23 (2008)	9 (2008)	11 (2008)	61 (2008)
Source: World Bank, South Asia Report titled "Shared Views on Development and Climate Change"; WRI, Climate Tools; UNDP Human Development Index 2011; Wikipedia.								

c. Energy Access and Emission Profile in South Asia

South Asia is home to one of the largest number of people in the world without access to clean energy or electricity, amounting to roughly 500 million people, or over 45 per cent of the total world population. Even amongst those households that have access to electricity, the quality of electricity (low voltage levels and load shedding) is an issue.

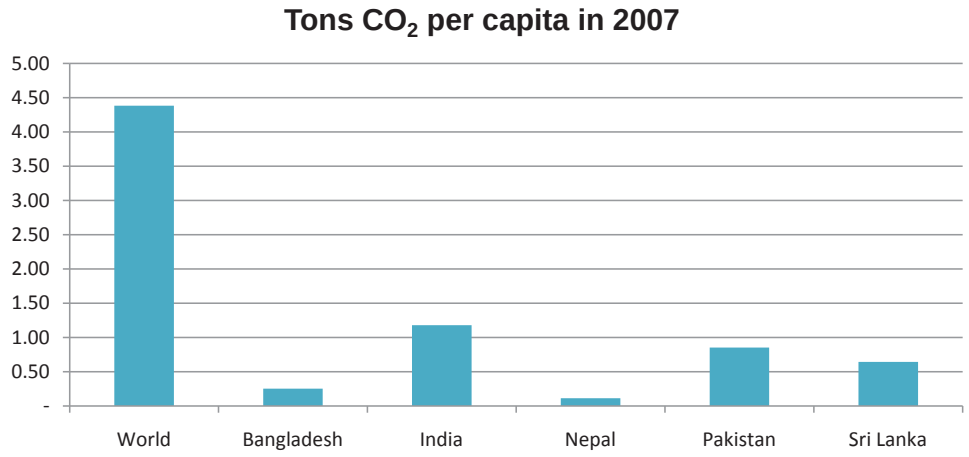
Figure 1: Household Electrification Rate in South Asia



Source: Energy or Power Ministry data from each country.

South Asia has a relatively low carbon footprint despite the fact that it is ranked amongst the top emitters of CO_2 in the world, which is primarily due to the sheer size of its economy and its huge population. However, in terms of per capita CO_2 emissions, South Asian countries rank very low, as seen in Figure 2.

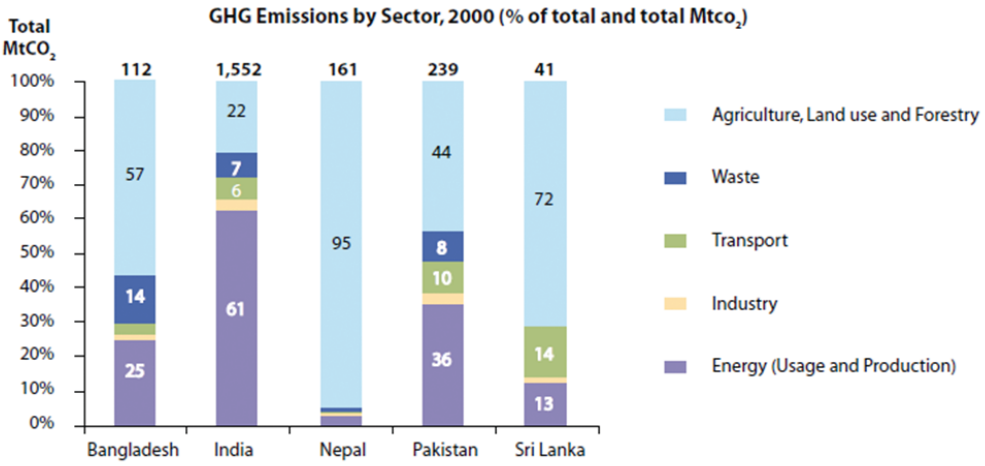
Figure 2: GHG Emission Profiles of Countries in South Asia



Source: WRI/CAIT Tools, 2005.

The bulk of South Asia's emissions come from the energy sector, agriculture, land use, and forestry, with industry, transport, and waste agriculture also contributing. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: High Carbon-emitting Sectors in South Asia



Source: WRI/CAIT Tools, 2005 Data.

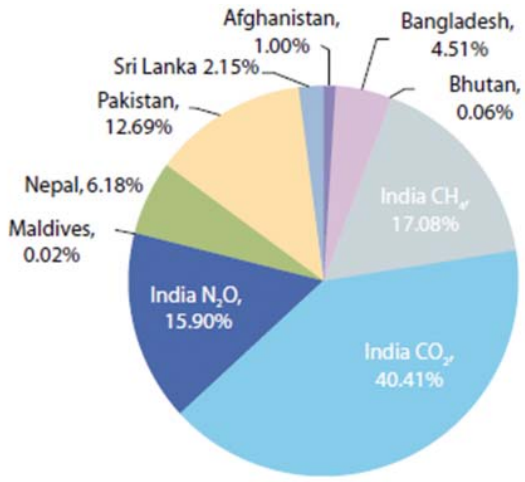
The transport sector is usually one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions worldwide. In the case of South Asia, although the 2009 profile of GHG emissions was low, the growing number of vehicles will soon become a major emitting sector. The table below (Table 2) gives an overview of the current emissions from the transport sector in the major countries of South Asia.

Table 2. Transport Sector Emissions In South Asia

Countries	Per Capita CO_2 Emissions (in kg)	CO_2 Emission per USD of GDP (in grams of CO_2)
Bangladesh	31	17
India	89	29
Nepal	31	22
Pakistan	170	81
Sri Lanka	279	68

Source: South Asia: Shared Views and Development and CC, South Asia Development Region CC, 2009.

Figure 4: Profile of South Asian Countries by Emission

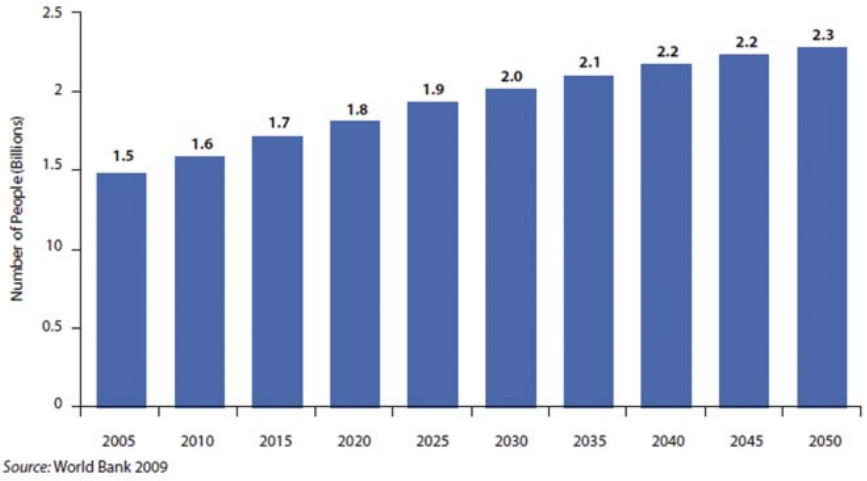


Source: WRI 2009.

It is not surprising that the country with the highest levels of emissions from all sectors right now is India, which accounts for almost 73 per cent of the total emissions from the region. All the other countries collectively contribute about 27.15 per cent of the remaining emissions from the region.

With an already massive population that is growing rapidly (it is expected to touch 2.3 billion by 2050 at a very conservative estimate), the region, which is already vulnerable to climate change, is expected to experience substantial adverse impacts if global emissions continue in a "business as usual" scenario, with the rise in temperature expected to go beyond 2.0°C.

Figure 5: Population Projection of the Region



Source: World Bank 2009

d. Climate Change Vulnerability in the SAARC Region

Given the geographic diversity of South Asia, it is not surprising that the countries in the region face different risks. Some of the key risks faced by each country are as follows:

Table 3. Potential Risks From Different Sources

	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Sea level rise	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Glacier retreat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Increase in intensity of floods	Not so far	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not so far
Increase in intensity of droughts	Yes	In some parts	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Temperature rise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: IPCC AR4.

The Third and Fourth Assessment Reports of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change identify and predict some of the impacts in the region as follows:

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has experienced a rise in temperature and an increase in the frequency of hot days and nights since 1960. The average temperature increased by 0.6°C, and there were 25 more hot days and nights than usual.[1]

A shortfall in precipitation of 2 per cent per decade has led to prolonged drought conditions in the country. Rainfall has become scarcer, particularly during the months of March, April, and May, declining by 6.6 per cent per decade since 1960.[2]

Afghanistan is also at risk from cyclones and floods. Global climate models predict that the country will experience a warming of 1.4°C to 4.0°C by the 2060s, and an increase of 2.0°C to 6.2°C by the 2090s. Projections indicate a substantial increase in the frequency of days and nights that are considered "hot" by current climate standards. Days considered "hot" will occur on 14–25 per cent of days by the 2060s, and on 16–32 per cent of days by the 2090s. Cold days and nights, on the other hand, will become rarer, occurring on 0.0–6.0 per cent of days by the 2090s.[3]

The increase in temperature will be accompanied by a reduction in annual rainfall, particularly in the wettest season. Mean annual precipitation will decline by 10 per cent in 2030–2049 compared to the 1980–1999 level. The changes in temperature and rainfall will reduce annual runoff by 24 per cent by mid-century.[4]

Bangladesh

The available data indicate that the temperature has increased in the summer monsoon. The annual mean maximum temperature showed a significant increase in the 1961–1990 period (at 0.05°C per year). Likewise, cyclone frequency over the Bay of Bengal increased significantly in the months of November and May (Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Environment and Forests 2005). Rainfall also increased and became more irregular. Serious and recurring floods take place regularly.

Data from the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre indicate that the sea level rose at a rate many times higher than the mean rate of the global sea level rise over the last 100 years (Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Environment and Forests 2005). This has led to coastal inundation, erosion, saline intrusion, loss of biodiversity, loss of agricultural land, and migration.

Global climate model projections indicate a significant increase in temperature and rainfall in Bangladesh in the coming decades in both the monsoon and winter seasons. Annual mean temperature is expected to increase by 1.0°C by 2030 and by up to 2.4°C by 2100, and precipitation by 5 per cent by 2030 and by 10 per cent by 2100, with the increase being more pronounced during the summer monsoon (Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Environment and Forests 2005). A significant increase in runoff

1 UNDP 2008 and IPCC 4AR.
2 UNDP 2008 and IPCC 4AR.
3 UNDP 2008 and IPCC 4 AR.
4 UNDP 2008 and IPCC 4 AR.

is expected in the order of 20 to 30 per cent by mid-century (Milly, Dunne and Vecchia 2005), leading to more flooding.

Bangladesh will become vulnerable to more intense storm surges and cyclones. The rise in sea level in the future will further exacerbate storm surge damage and riverbank erosion (Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Environment and Forests 2005).

Bhutan

Weather stations were established in Bhutan only in 1973. Hence, no long-term climate data have been gathered. In the period from 1990 to 2002, the available data point to an increase in precipitation variability across the country. In the period from 1998 to 2003, the mean monthly temperature recorded was higher than the mean temperature recorded for the 1990–2003 period, pointing to an overall warming trend (National Environment Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan 2000).

The increase in temperature in recent decades has led to a reduction in Bhutan's glacial cover. Some glaciers in Bhutan have been receding at a rate of 30–60 metres per year (ICIMOD 2001 in National Environment Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan 2000). In addition to the increased risk of floods resulting from glacial lake outbursts, the country has become increasingly vulnerable to floods, cyclones, landslides, and drought.

A significant increase in temperature is predicted through the early to the middle of the twenty-first century, ranging from 0.2°C to 4.0°C, depending on the season. The highest increase is predicted for the winter months, when increases of 1.5°C to 4.0°C may occur by the 2050s. Precipitation will become more intense and erratic, while some glaciers will continue to melt. Both will exacerbate the risk of floods. Runoff will also increase as a result of the changes in rainfall intensity.

India

Over the course of the twentieth century, the overall temperature rose by around 0.4°C, primarily due to an increase in maximum temperatures, mainly in the post-monsoon and winter seasons. The trend towards warmer temperatures has been most marked along the west coast, in central India, in the interior peninsula, and in northeast India. On the other hand, northwest India and a small region in the south have experienced a cooling trend.

The monsoons exhibited considerable variability in the past, but with a stable core. Average monsoon rainfall across the country varies by region, with an increase of 10 to 12 per cent in seasonal monsoon rainfall recorded along the west coast, northern Andhra Pradesh, and the northwest, and a reduction in eastern Madhya Pradesh, the northeast, and in parts of Gujarat and Kerala.

Using the Hadley Centre high-resolution model (HadRM2), a general increase in temperature is expected through the 2050s, with a significant warming of more than 4.0°C ex-

pected by 2050 in the north. In the south, warming will range between 2.0°C and 4.0°C. Insignificant changes in monsoon rainfall are projected up to the 2050s, but an overall decrease in the number of rainy days over a major part of the country is expected.

The reduction in rainfall days will be greater in the western and central parts (by more than 15 days). The Himalayan foothills and the northeast may experience increases of 5 to 10 rainfall days. Rainfall intensity will also vary geographically, increasing by 1–4 mm/day in most areas of the country and declining by 1 mm/day in small areas of the northwest. While changes in precipitation will be less certain, the El Nino southern oscillation will remain a key driver of variability. All climate models (global and regional), although varying in magnitude and spatial results, predict an increase in overall temperature in the twenty-first century, and most agree that precipitation will increase during the monsoon season (Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests 2004).

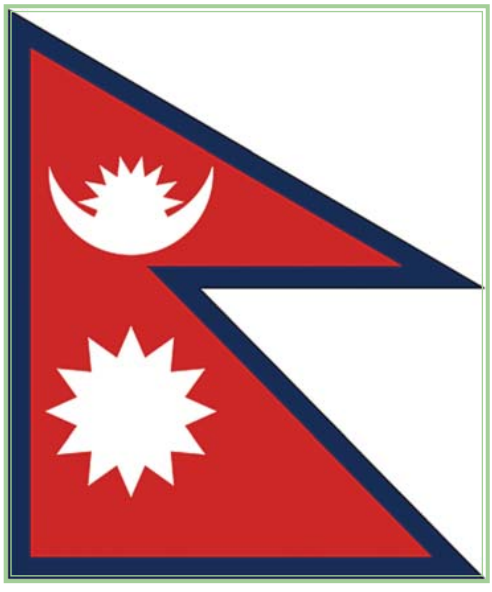
Maldives

No significant long-term trends were observed in daily, monthly, or annual rainfall in Maldives over the period 1989 to 2005. However, an increase in sea surface temperature has been observed near the Maldives coast at South Gan and Male. Increases in annual sea surface temperature at Male and Gan are about 0.2°C and 1.1°C to 1.60C, respectively, per decade. Sea surface temperature and mean tide level at the Hulhule weather station, which provide a general indication of the current climate risks for Maldives, have consistently increased during all seasons.

Data from Hulhule also indicate a sea level increase of 1.7 mm per year from 1989 to 2005. The maximum hourly sea level rise was 7 mm per year, far in excess of local and global trends in mean sea level rise. The maximum storm surge height was 1.32 metres, which, coupled with a high tide, could generate a storm surge of 2.3 metres. The northern part of the country is vulnerable to severe weather events, particularly storms generated by cyclones in other regions.

Nepal

An analysis of observed temperatures over a period of about 30 years in Nepal has shown that maximum temperatures in the country are increasing at an alarming rate (Shrestha et al. 1999). A study carried out by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) shows that the all-Nepal maximum temperature increased by 1.8°C in 32 years between 1975 and 2006, which is equal to about 0.06°C per year. There has been a small but significant increase in the frequency of hot nights and a significant decline in the annual frequency of cold days and cold nights, by 19 days and 32 nights respectively. Hot nights have also increased by 2.5 per cent (UNDP 2008b).



Nepal's initial communication to the UNFCCC (Government of Nepal, Ministry of Population and Environment 2004) states that between 1981 and 1998, overall temperature increased at the rate of 0.41°C per decade and that annual precipitation decreased by 9.8

mm per decade. Nepal has become more exposed to the risk of flooding, with resulting mortality outcomes increasing significantly since 1970 (EM-DAT: The OFDA/ CRED International Disaster Database).

Global climate models predict that Nepal will become warmer and wetter, with more frequent heat waves and less frost. Average temperature is predicted to rise significantly by 1.3°C to 3.8°C by 2060, and by 1.8°C to 5.8°C by 2090. Winter months have a more rapid projected rate of warming than summer months. The number of days and nights considered hot by current climate standards is projected to increase, occurring on 11 to 28 per cent of days and on 18 to 28 per cent of nights by the 2060s. The greatest increase is projected to occur during the months from June to August (UNDP 2008b).

Projected changes in annual precipitation range from –13 mm (–27 per cent) to +32 mm (31 per cent). These changes in precipitation and the rapid decline in glacial cover will increase runoff by 10–20 per cent by mid-century (Milly, Dunne, and Vecchia 2005). Total rainfall during the monsoons is projected to increase (UNDP 2008b).

Pakistan

Mean annual temperature has increased by 0.35°C since 1960, particularly during the months of October to December, when temperatures rose by 0.19°C per decade. The annual frequency of hot days and hot nights has also increased significantly since 1960, by 20 days and 23 nights, respectively. The annual frequency of cold days and cold nights has decreased in the same time period; the former has declined by an average of 9.7 days and the latter by an average of 13 days (UNDP 2008c).

There have been no discernible changes, however, in the annual rainfall over Pakistan since 1960 or in the extremes observed for daily rainfall (UNDP 2008c).

Based on recorded data at Karachi for the twentieth century, the rise in sea level was estimated to be occurring at a rate of 1.1 mm per year (Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Ministry of Environment 2003).

Pakistan has been exposed to high risks of flooding, cyclone events, and drought, which have been associated with elevated mortality outcomes since the 1980s. The number of floods in particular increased five-fold between the 1980s and the 2000s (EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database).

Global climate change models predict a significant increase in annual temperature, which could induce biodiversity loss, change in land use, and crop failure. The increase would be in the order of 1.4°C to 3.7°C by the 2060s, and in the order of 1.9°C to 6°C by the 2090s.

Warming will be greater in the northern and high-altitude regions. The frequency of hot days and hot nights will also rise considerably (UNDP 2008c). Global climate model projections for rainfall are highly inconsistent. Nevertheless, overall, projections for precipitation changes are within the range of –7 to +15 mm per month by the 2060s. There is greater consistency for projections of rainfall occurring in a monsoon season; models

tend to predict a moderate increase, particularly during the period from July to September (UNDP 2008c). The frequency and severity of cyclones are also likely to increase (Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Ministry of Environment 2003).

Sri Lanka

The island experienced a warming of 0.48°C during the 1960–1990 period, accompanied by an increase in thunder activity and a decline in precipitation, except in some isolated areas in the northwest. There has been an increase in variability in precipitation during the 1960–1990 period compared to the 1930–1960 period. It has been estimated that 45 to 55 per cent of Sri Lanka's coastline has experienced an erosion rate of 0.30–0.35 metres per year (Government of Sri Lanka 2000).

Sri Lanka is also prone to natural disasters, particularly cyclones and floods. In the period 1961–2004, cyclones and floods affected about 2 million and 9 million people, respectively (EM-DAT: The OFDA/ CRED International Disaster Database). Changes in sea temperature have led to coral bleaching and loss of marine biodiversity.

Using the United Kingdom Hadley Centre for Climate Projection and Research Model (HadCM3) projections, average annual rainfall is projected to increase by 5 per cent (B2) to 14 per cent (A2) by 2050. The trend in spatial and seasonal precipitation, however, will vary, with dry zones expected to experience a reduction of 9 per cent (B2) to 17 per cent (A2) during the wet season (October–February). The wet season is also projected to come to an end earlier since there will be less rainfall in January and February. The average wet season temperature (that is, the average of minimum and maximum air temperature) is projected to rise by as much as 1.6°C (A2) and 1.3°C (B2) (De Silva et al. 2007).

In 1998, it was estimated that an increase in sea level of 0.3 metres on the southwest coast could inundate as much as 41 sq km and result in the loss of 6 sq km of land (Government of Sri Lanka 2000).

Additional Issues of Priority to the Region

Inclusive Growth and the Creation of Quality Jobs

The high growth is increasingly concentrated in some regions, the leading regions, while poverty is concentrated in other regions, the lagging regions. The lagging regions are located in the border areas of the Northwest (Afghanistan and Pakistan) and the Northeast (Bangladesh, India, and Nepal). This phenomenon is manifested both at the country level and at the regional level. The concentration of the poor in the lagging regions of South Asia is generating considerable social and political concern. There is a broad consensus that South Asia must continue to grow rapidly to tackle poverty more comprehensively than it did in the past.

There is also an emerging consensus that this growth must be more inclusive to address the two faces of South Asia resulting from the growing gap between the leading and the lagging regions. It is therefore important for the countries to turn their attention to the need to spread the benefits of growth to larger segments of the population.

The key link between growth and inclusiveness is the creation of more and better jobs. Job creation is good for growth and for equity. South Asia is already undergoing a major structural transformation based on the rapid growth of the services and manufacturing sectors. The GDP share of agriculture is shrinking rapidly. South Asia has so far seen a rapid increase in the contribution of the services sector to employment generation. However, there is a concern that job creation has been mostly concentrated in the informal sector, characterized by low skills and low earnings. At the same time, the reduction in the share of agriculture in GDP is not matched by a commensurate reduction in the share of employment.

Food Crises

The South Asia region has also witnessed a rather steep fall in agricultural productivity, particularly in the last five years. This is largely due to a combination of changes in rainfall pattern, rise in temperature, changes in land use patterns, and large areas in the region coming under "conflict zones".

While South Asia navigated the global financial crisis better than most regions, it nevertheless suffered the worst in terms of deterioration in trade during previous food and fuel crises. With global food and fuel prices rising again, South Asia will be affected disproportionately. Regional inflation is already high, and countries have limited fiscal space to manoeuvre.

The rise in global food prices was highest for cereals, which remain relatively expensive. Between 2005 and 2008, the international price of wheat more than doubled, and the prices of rice and maize tripled. As of June 2009, wheat and maize prices remained substantially higher than they had four years previously (by 55 per cent and 87 per cent respectively) while rice prices were about double.

In 2007–08, food inflation ranged from relatively moderate in India (about 7 per cent), to high in Nepal and Bangladesh (about 15 per cent), to very high in Pakistan (around 20 per cent) and in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan (more than 30 per cent).

Besides negatively affecting macroeconomic stability, food price inflation decreases the welfare of households, which are net buyers of food. In particular, it threatens the welfare of poorer households, for whom food accounts for a large share of their expenditure.

Regional Cooperation

The region is the least integrated of global regions, and barriers to trade and investment as well as to the movement of people are very high. Regional cooperation can be a powerful tool for increasing growth, for reducing the gap between the leading and the lagging regions, and for reducing the vulnerabilities of the poor. By focusing on raising and

securing the income of the poor both through the growth mechanism and by reducing their vulnerability, regional cooperation can be helpful in lowering income inequality.

South Asia has the potential to accelerate growth and to reduce poverty if the region could only exploit four of its underutilized spatial features: geography, transportation, mobility, and scale economies.

First, South Asia is densely populated, with a significant proportion of the population living close to the borders between countries. Regional integration initiatives will unlock the growth benefits and support income convergence across regions and countries. Regional trade is more sensitive to transport costs, scale economies, and factor mobility than global trade.

Second, South Asia suffers from high trade and transportation costs compared to other regions because of border restrictions and poor transport infrastructure. The cost of trading across borders is high compared to other regions. The quality of transport infrastructure, especially the highway networks, is poor.

Third, factor mobility, and in particular the migration rate, is low in South Asia. At the official level, the restrictions on labour mobility between countries are huge. Within countries, labour mobility is also limited. Increased agricultural productivity will help to reallocate labour and capital from the lower-value activities (agriculture) to the higher-value activities (manufacturing and services sectors) and support growth.

Fourth, South Asian companies are disproportionately small. They are unable to reap the benefits of scale economies because of labour and regulatory restrictions, which prevent them from growing. The policy changes aimed at taking advantage of the interactions between geography, transportation, factor mobility, and scale economies will lift growth not only in the lagging regions but also support higher growth rates at the country level and also across South Asia.

The lagging regions share a number of common vulnerabilities, apart from being poor. Foremost is the vulnerability to natural disasters. Over the years, South Asia has lost a significant amount of its GDP because of natural disasters, and this impact is particularly harmful because of the region's high population density. It is also the poor who are affected the most.

A second and related vulnerability is limited access to water. An estimated 400 million people, many of whom are poor, depend directly or indirectly on the water flows of the three major rivers of the region—the Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra—for their livelihood. Frequent water shortages and intermittent floods pose serious challenges to efforts aimed at maintaining the income level of these large numbers of poor people.

A third vulnerability is exposure to conflict and violence. It is no accident that border regions are more prone to conflict and violence than other parts of South Asian countries. Indeed, cross-border conflicts in South Asia are both a cause and an effect of the lack of regional cooperation. Again, the poor suffer the consequences of these conflicts the most.

South Asia's poor would probably gain the most from regional cooperation in the areas of water security and climate change. The melting of Himalayan glaciers raises the disastrous prospects of reduced water availability in some South Asian rivers, increased

frequency of floods and cyclones, and rising sea levels. This situation has prompted the countries of South Asia to take collective action for managing the effects of climate change to reduce vulnerability and poverty over the longer term.

e. Possible Responses

The following table (Table 4) outlines some of the possible impacts of climate change in the region and the possible regional responses that could perhaps address the issue and mitigate the effects to a certain extent.

Table 4. Impacts On The Region

Sectors that Could be Impacted by Climate Change	Possible Impacts/Current Issues of Concerns	Possible Response
Water sector	• Melting and retreat of glaciers could lead to severe water shortage in the medium and long terms in some parts of South Asia. • This could lead to increased intensity of flooding due to glacier lake outbursts. • Increase in intensity of droughts • Increase in water salinity due to sea level rise and intrusions into aquifers	• Creating a database of all glaciers • Holding joint hydrological exercises to measure water outflow • Adopting regional water resources management, since there are many river-sharing agreements between the countries of the region • Fostering regional cooperation between international river basin and water management systems • Conducting research on water-based adaptation options
Agriculture	• Decline in agricultural yield • Crop destruction due to floods and droughts	• Promoting climate-resilient crops • Sharing knowledge and information as cropping patterns and crops cultivated in the region are similar • Adopting joint schemes for climate insurance, such as crop insurance
Climate-induced disasters	• High probability of sea level rise • High probability of droughts and floods	• Adopting regional and national disaster risk management and promoting climate-smart (locally feasible and climate- responsive) infrastructure
Social sector	• Increased poverty levels due to livelihood destruction • Increased migration between countries • Increased incidence of health impacts, such as water-borne diseases, heat stroke, etc.	• Increasing awareness on climate change and its impacts • Documenting and disseminating traditional and indigenous knowledge and scientific findings • Implementing adaptation measures taking into account income-generation opportunities • Improving access to health care facilities • Mapping areas for safe internal migration
Energy sector	• Decrease in hydro potential – the region currently has huge hydro potential, which is also driving some of the economies • Increase in demand for energy	• Adopting regional initiative on energy sharing and promoting investment • Conducting joint research and development on alternative technologies, such as energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy, etc.

Eco systems and biodiversity	• Possible huge damage to coastal, marine, and terrestrial ecosystems • Loss of habitats • Shift in vegetation patterns	• Expanding protected areas in the region that are managed by communities and/or the state • Understanding and integrating ecosystem-based adaptation and community-based adaptation measures
Regional and sectoral	• Limited coordination between countries and sectors • Huge funding gaps • Huge information gaps • Lack of regional cooperation in developing and deploying new and environment-friendly technologies	• Creating knowledge platforms and knowledge products • Documenting and disseminating knowledge generated from and by different CSOs • Enhancing institutional coordination and strengthening mechanisms –Encouraging resource mobilization and expert exchange for regional cooperation on research with government institutions and CSOs

In addition to the above, a briefing paper submitted in 2008 by the Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA), an umbrella network of civil society organizations (CSOs) in South Asia, to the SAARC Secretariat had the following excerpts on some of the common demands of civil society groups from the region:

Shared Vision on Climate Control

1. A Sustainable Agriculture Protocol with the following provisions should be designed and adopted by SAARC:
    - Monitoring soil health in the region and initiating measures to address the problem of nutrient deficiency
    - Monitoring groundwater resources and initiating measures to augment groundwater recharge
    - Initiating a system of incentives to promote low-input technologies
    - Taking regional initiatives for establishing community-based seed banks to conserve the agro biodiversity of the region and placing these seed banks in the hands of farmers
    - Ensuring knowledge exchange and seed sharing without any intellectual property rights (IPR) restrictions or barriers
    - Taking a coordinated set of fiscal measures to enhance investment in agriculture
2. South Asian countries should aim for an increase in global average temperature by 1.5°C so that temperature increase in this region can be limited by 2.0°C. Even an increase of 2.0°C in South Asia would cost 5 per cent of the region's GDP. SAARC leaders should make a joint call at the 16th SAARC Summit.
3. Water will be the most important sector in South Asia to be affected by climate change. This is the right time to introduce an initiative for 'Regional Equitable Water Management Systems across Basins'. SAARC should address this matter in the Climate Change Action Plan.

Building a Climate-resilient Society in South Asia

- Establish a Regional Knowledge-sharing Platform on Community-based Adaptation
- Ensure financial cooperation and political commitment in SAARC countries to address climate change
- Revisit the SAARC Climate Change Action Plan to address the adaptation needs of the region, backed by effective implementation and institutional mechanisms. De-

velop strategies for people who can not adapt to climate change due to huge loss of livelihood and habitat. Governments need to formulate policies and strategies to compensate those who are forced to relocate and become climate refugees.

  - » In a world of uncertainty, adaptation should not be seen as an outcome, but rather as a process to build resilience to climate variability and change.
  - » Adaptation strategies should focus not just on the specific impacts of climate change, but also on the processes that are necessary for achieving sustainable adjustment to all factors contributing to risk.
  - » Adaptation should not become merely a set of prescriptive interventions but rather a process for investing in people's knowledge, resources (natural, financial, human, material, etc.), skills, and institutions to build their resilience.
- Governments should not wait for international funding to make a start on their regional adaptation frameworks and strategies. The SAARC Climate Change Fund must be established with clear sources of funding to implement the SAARC Action Plan.
- SAARC must agree on a common (adaptation) position to negotiate internationally to benefit the entire SAARC region, keeping in mind the impact of permanent and irreversible loss and damage caused by climate change. SAARC countries should develop regional sectoral adaptation strategies and clearly identify areas of cooperation and convergence.

Building a Low-carbon Society in South Asia

- Adopt a long-term emission-limitation strategy for the entire South Asia region
- Collectively prepare and implement a regional programme for the sharing of green energy resources, that is, A South Asia Regional Initiative for Renewable Energy.
- Set up a centre for technology development in South Asia to jointly develop and deploy clean technologies to meet the adaptation and mitigations needs of the region.
- South Asia as a region should start a Green Fund, by introducing a cess on coal and other fossil fuels. The Green Fund should be used for funding technology development for the adaptation and mitigation needs of the SAARC countries and also for demonstrating green projects in the region.
- The construction of all large dams proposed to be built in any border area or on rivers that flow through multiple countries should be undertaken in consultation with all the countries involved and after completing the due Environment Impact Assessment involving civil society representatives from all the countries involved.
- Despite the fact that civil society groups, by and large, do not support the manner in which the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is currently being implemented, we do recognize that CDM is here to stay. Hence, we strongly urge the governments of all SAARC countries to come out with strong people-centric parameters for CDM projects wherein only new and green technology-related projects are given priority, and also to ensure that sufficient capacities for implementing CDM projects are built in all the countries of the region.

III. THE SAARC DECLARATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

a. Overview of the SAARC Declarations on Climate Change

The SAARC Environment Ministers' Dhaka Declaration on Climate Change (2008) and the Thimpu Statement on Climate Change (2010), based on the SAARC Plan of Action on Climate Change adopted in July 2008, has three broad thematic areas covering adaptation, mitigation, technology development and deployment, and joint mobilization of resources. The broad thematic areas are primarily spreading education and awareness in the region, joint research and capacity building, and joint programme implementation.

The following table (Table 5) lists the broad elements of the regional cooperation declarations.

Table 5. Broad Elements of the SAARC Declerations

Thematic Areas *(based on SAARC Action Plan on CC)*	Dhaka Declaration: July 2008	Thimpu Statement: April 2010
Education and awareness	Promote advocacy programmes and mass awareness campaigns on climate change	Launch advocacy and awareness programmes on climate change, among others, to promote the use of green technology and best practices to promote low-carbon, sustainable, and inclusive development of the region Incorporate science-based materials in educational curricula to promote better understanding of science and the adverse effects of climate change
Regional capacity building inclusive of CDM development and joint research and investigation	Cooperate in capacity building, including the development of CDM projects and Designated National Authorities, and on incentives for removal of GHG by sinks	Establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group on Climate Change to develop clear policy direction and guidance for regional cooperation as envisaged in the SAARC Plan of Action on Climate Change

Regional joint research and development, sharing of knowledge and information, and south–south cooperation for technology development and deployment	Exchange information on best practices, share results of research and development for mitigating the effects of climate change, and undertake adaptation measures	Set up a Low-carbon Research and Development Institute in South Asian University Establish institutional linkages among national institutions in the region to, among others, facilitate sharing of knowledge, information, and capacity-building programmes in climate change-related areas Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Marine Initiative to strengthen the understanding of shared oceans and water bodies in the region, and of the critical roles they play in sustainable living, to be supported by the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Mountain Initiative on mountain ecosystems, particularly glaciers and their contribution to sustainable development and livelihoods, to be supported by the SAARC Forestry Centre Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Monsoon Initiative on the evolving pattern of the monsoons to assess vulnerability due to climate change, to be supported by the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Climate-related Disasters Initiative on the integration of Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), to be supported by the SAARC Disaster Management Centre Commission a study for presentation to the Seventeenth SAARC Summit on Climate Risks in the Region: Ways to comprehensively address related social, economic, and environmental challenges
Regional cooperation on raising of financial resources for programmes on adaptation and mitigation		Commission a study to explore the feasibility of establishing a SAARC mechanism that would provide capital for projects that promote low-carbon technology and renewable energy
Joint implementation of projects	Initiate and implement programmes and measures as per SAARC practice for adaptation for dealing with the onslaught of climate change to protect the lives and livelihood of the people	Plant ten million trees over the next five years (2010–2015) as part of a regional afforestation and reforestation campaign, in accordance with national priorities and programmes of member states Evolve national plans and, where appropriate, regional projects on protecting and safeguarding the archeological and historical infrastructure of South Asia from the adverse effects of climate change

Many of the elements of the SAARC declarations resonate well with some of the actions required in the region as whole, although these could definitely be more ambitious. However, what is noteworthy here is that the two declarations have not necessarily taken into account some of the recommendations made in the past, including the "Vision document", which was put together by the Group of Eminent Persons in 2000.

The current mandates for action under the two declarations are largely skewed in the direction of developing a research database, which is one of the key recommendations for bridging the knowledge gap on various issues in the region.

Table 6. Various Events And Programmes Undertaken Through SAARC Declerations

Thematic Areas	Nature of Event/Programme
Capacity building and bridging of knowledge gap	• An experience-sharing workshop was organized to bridge information gaps related to a) Coastal fisheries resources – monitoring and conservation b) Oceanographic observations • A study tour was organized in Sri Lanka and in the Sunderbans area by India • A workshop on coastal zones and environmental issues was organized in 2010 • A meeting of experts was organized to discuss the impacts of climate change on coastal resources in 2010 • A training workshop on rainwater harvesting was organized in Maldives in 2010 • A training workshop on energy audits was organized in Sri Lanka in 2011 • A symposium on wind power development in South Asia was organized in 2011 • A training programme on institutional capacity development for regional energy efficiency was organized in 2011 • A training programme on understanding issues related to cross-border electricity interconnection was organized in Bangladesh in 2011 • A training programme on rural electrification through renewable energy was organized by Bangladesh in 2011
Creation of joint tools and projects	• Vertical properties of convective systems in and around Bangladesh derived from TRMM perception radar data were studied • SAARC STORM pilot field experiment in 2009 • Structure and movement of tropical cyclones over the North Indian Ocean simulated by the WRF-ARW model were studied • Seasonal weather forecasting in Bangladesh using the Climate Predictability Tool (CPT) was begun • A tool to simulate the climatology of thunderstorms over the SAARC region was created
Joint projects	• A conference on the Action Plan on Energy Conservation for the region was organized – with the intention of embarking on a joint programme • An exercise on the selection of regional hydropower plants – criteria and geographic areas – was organized, particularly aimed at identifying sites in Bhutan and Nepal • An Integrated Energy Potential Vision 2020 for South Asia was prepared • Legal frameworks required for regional electricity trade were prepared • A report on "smart grids" for South Asia was prepared
Joint research establishments	• SAARC Metrological Research Centre (SMRC), Dhaka • SAARC University, Delhi, commenced operations in 2010 (the low-carbon research centre to be housed in this university has yet to be established) • SAARC Forestry Centre, Bhutan, 2008 • SAARC Energy Centre, Islamabad, 2006 • peration srsity commneced tsying sites in Bhutan and Nepalriteria as organised ised ty interconnection was organisaed in Bangla • SARRC Disaster Management Centre, Delhi, 2006
Funds and fund management	The SAARC Secretariat receives the following funds in addition to the country contributions. The funds are primarily: • South Asian Development Fund (SADF): It has a corpus of USD 300 million of which India has earmarked USD 100 million for this. • SAARC Japan Special Fund • SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) • SAARC Regional Fund (SRF) The country contributions are on a pro rata basis, with the Indian government currently contributing on an average Rs 100 million per year.

Some of the other initiatives taken were:

- A meeting of SAARC Transport Ministers was organized in August 2007 in Delhi, which helped in creating a draft Motor Vehicles and Railways Agreement for movement amongst SAARC countries. If this draft is finalized and implemented, it could possibly result in the reduction of a lot of GHG emissions resulting from air travel. For instance, because of restrictions on travel between India and Pakistan, one has to go via Dubai or a Gulf port, and if this agreement were to come through, it could possibly reduce not only GHG emissions but also travel time.
- A tele-education project linking the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to other open universities in the region has commenced. This is a good opportunity for building awareness and imparting education on a number of climate-related issues.
- A tele-medicine project connecting super-specialty hospitals in the SAARC member states has commenced.

b. Analysis of the SAARC Declarations on Climate Change

While on paper a number of initiatives agreed on both in the Dhaka Declaration and the Thimpu Statement and in earlier declarations as well, particularly those related to "capacity building", "training", and "addressing the knowledge gap", have been carried out, it is not known whether these exercises have actually addressed the objectives of capacity building and of implementing projects on the basis of these learnings.

Currently, there is no monitoring or evaluation of the projects. There is no clarity as to whether the people who underwent trainings are practising their learnings from these projects and whether these trainings have led to actual policy changes.

For instance, while an "Energy Vision 2020" has been prepared for the region, there are no signs of it being implemented as a regional initiative. While a number of initiatives have been taken at the country level, there are no signs of joint energy-efficiency programmes being taken at the regional level.

Hence, it seems that right now the SAARC Secretariat is functioning more in the capacity of an organizer of events and workshops, with very little joint programme implementation in place.

Some key areas where joint projects are required are:

- Adoption of special measure for the LDCs
- Energy cooperation
- Strengthening transportation and promoting sustainable transport in the member countries

However, there are no special projects aimed at addressing any of the above issues, apart from issuing joint reports.

Further, on the financial front, it was agreed to set up a South Asian Development Fund of at least USD 10–15 billion. However, what we now have in place is a small fund of just around USD 100–300 million, which is nowhere near sufficient for joint project implementation or for joint collaborative research, development, and deployment.

Further, it is necessary to build the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change, to encourage climate-smart development, and to come up with a set of goals for South Asia to address the issues of development and poverty alleviation, along the lines of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals have yet to be achieved.

In the field of agriculture, too, there needs to be a lot more cooperation between the countries, as many of these nations face similar problems, such as fall in agricultural yield and saline intrusion into agricultural fields. While there are efforts to develop climate- and saline-resilient crops in the respective countries, there have been no attempts to follow a collaborative approach in dealing with the situation.

Other areas that need to be implemented on a war footing, and as agreed to in the declarations, are:

- Establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group on Climate Change to develop clear policy direction and guidance for regional cooperation as envisaged in the SAARC Plan of Action on Climate Change. This will also facilitate an integrated response to related social, economic, and environmental challenges.
- Commission a study to explore the feasibility of establishing a SAARC mechanism that would provide capital for projects that promote low-carbon technology and renewable energy, and of setting up a Low-carbon Research and Development Institute in South Asian University.
- Establish institutional linkages among national institutions in the region for facilitating the sharing of knowledge, information, and capacity-building programmes in climate change-related areas.
- Set up a mechanism of coordination between sector agencies in the respective governments on managing regional common resources, identifying and implementing thematic programmes, sharing knowledge and experience, and, most importantly, ensuring that the objectives of the training programmes are achieved.

In short, as of now, it seems that SAARC is not functioning as optimally as it ideally should and is nowhere near the objective of being either a customs union by 2015 or an economic union by 2020, as was envisioned by the Group of Eminent People from the region.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE SAARC COUNTRY POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

a. SAARC Countries in International Negotiations

The UN climate change negotiations have been ongoing since 1995. The Bali Action Plan set a deadline of two years for the parties to agree on how they would multilaterally deal with climate change, but the end of the two-year period saw a controversial outcome in the form of the Copenhagen Accord. The Copenhagen Accord, despite its pros and cons, laid a foundation, and the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (**COP 16**) to the UNFCC in 2010 produced a positive outcome in the form of the Cancun Agreement. Given the pulls and pressures characteristic of the multilateral process, the COP17/CMP7 meetings concluded. Some important and some controversial decisions were made at the following meetings:

1997 - Kyoto Protocol

2005 - Montreal Protocol

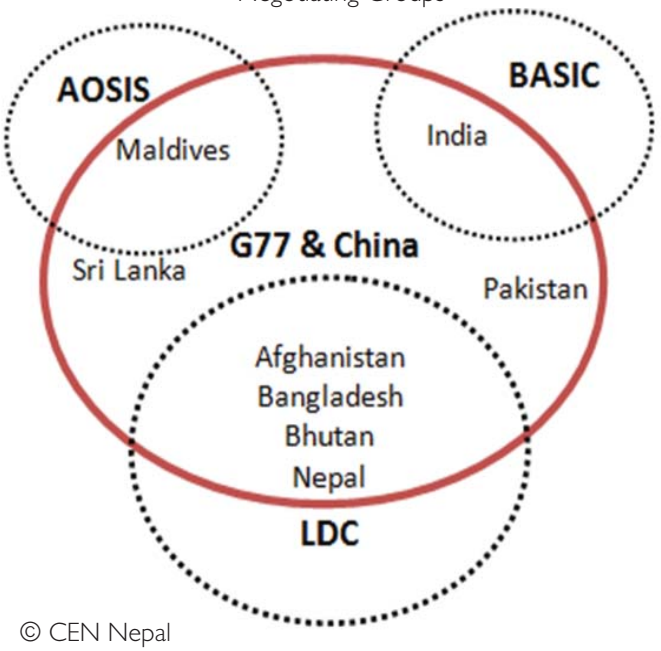
2007 - Bali Action Plan

2009 - Copenhagen Accord

2010 - Cancun Agreement

2011 - Durban Platform for Enhanced Action

Figure 6: Current Membership of SAARC Countries as Different Negotiating Groups



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All of the SAARC countries except Afghanistan have ratified the Kyoto Protocol All the countries of South Asia are part of the large negotiating bloc in the UN climate change negotiations, which consists of the G-77 countries and China. However, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh are also members of the LDC Negotiating Bloc, while Maldives is aligned with the Association of Small Island States. India is aligned with the BASIC group, which consists primarily of Brazil, South Africa, India, and China; although it is not a negotiating group per se, it is definitely a powerful bloc in the climate change negotiations.

In the last year, SAARC was also recognized as a regional bloc by the UNFCCC. Although it is not a negotiating bloc, it has an observer status.

b. Priorities of SAARC Countries in International Negotiations

Given the differences between the countries in South Asia in terms of their varying size, their diverse economies, and the different levels of their socio-economic development, it is not surprising that their priorities are also different.

For countries like Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, and Bangladesh, the priority is to access the "adaptation fund", while for Pakistan and India, it is primarily to access the CDM fund. India has categorically stated that it is not interested in accessing the adaptation fund, but instead would not be averse to contributing to it.

Given these differences in priorities, the vision of each country would therefore also be different.

In line with the Bali Action Plan, all the countries in the region, with the exception of India, have a vision of pushing the temperature rise to as far below 1.5°C as possible, with a peaking year by 2015. India maintains that it is for pushing for a temperature rise of 2.0°C and is opposed to a discussion on having a peaking year by 2015, with the caveat that unless the developed countries act first, a binding decision on having a peaking year would be detrimental to India's growth and development.

On other issues related to climate negotiations, India again stands isolated from the rest of the countries of South Asia with respect to a "legally binding instrument" for all countries. India is opposed to having a "legally binding instrument" that would cover all countries, as it feels that this would entail having to take on binding mitigation commitments at some point of time, which is likely to be sooner rather than later, and which India feels would affect its growth and development.

The third area where India again stands isolated is with regard to financial flows and the sources of financing. Bangladesh had proposed "passenger aviation levies" as a means of raising funds for the Climate Fund. This suggestion was tacitly supported by all the other countries in the region, with the exception of India. India believes that such a move, which would cover all passengers and all airlines, would be against the principles of the UN Convention.

The fourth area where India's position differs from that of the other countries is with regard to mitigation targets. The other countries of the region, although they do not state it explicitly, also believe that rapidly developing economies such as China, Brazil, South Africa, and India should take on legally binding emission-reduction commitments

at some point of time, while India's argument is that it is too early to talk of such commitments.

Yet another area where the countries differ is with respect to the definition of "vulnerable countries". India and Pakistan believe that other countries, including the LDCs and African countries, are as much vulnerable to climate change as other countries, due to their geographical location and their huge populations of poor people amongst other factors. Maldives, Bangladesh, and Nepal contend that India cannot be considered a "vulnerable country" to climate change. However, this difference in opinion does not really have much of a bearing on country dynamics, largely because India has declared itself not to be in the race for accessing "adaptation funds".

The table below (Table 7) shows the number of projects accessed by the South Asian countries.

Table 7. Number of Projects Accessed by South Asia Countries

Country	Number of projects funded on			Total
	Adaptation	Mitigation	REDD+	
Afghanistan	-	1	-	1
Bangladesh	4	3	1	8
Bhutan	-	-	-	0
India	4	6	-	10
Maldives	2	3	1	6
Nepal	5	3	-	8
Pakistan	1	1	-	2
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	0

Source: www.faststartfinance.org (as of February, 2012).

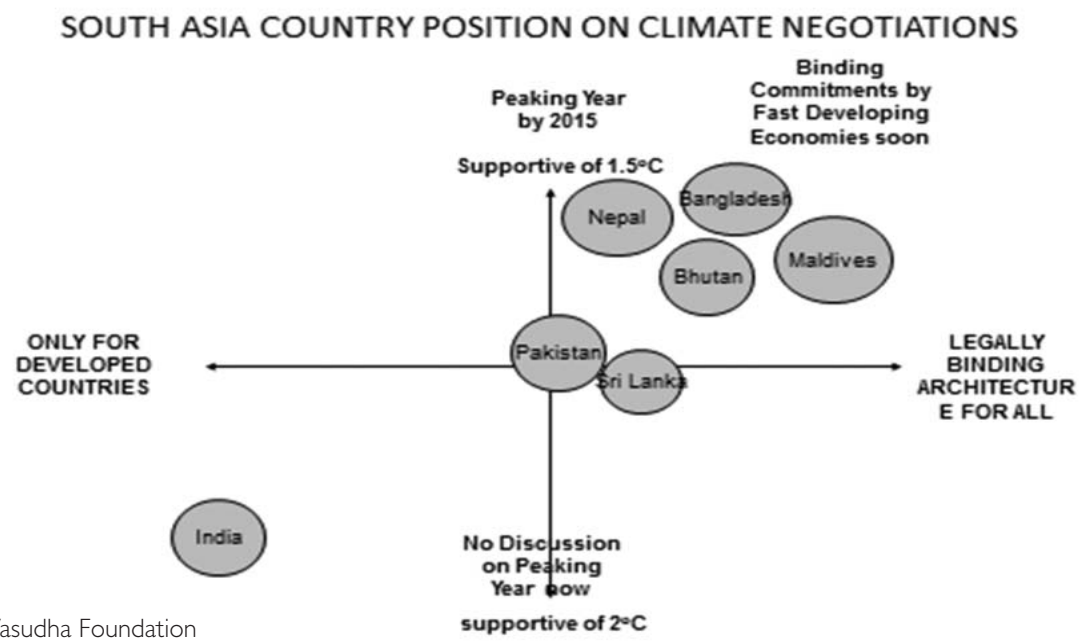
c. SAARC countries' positions and areas of convergence

The areas of convergence between these countries are limited to the extension of the Kyoto Protocol to the second commitment period, which was agreed to in Durban, and to the extension of plans for deeper mitigation amongst the developing countries.

In addition, with the commencement of **COP17** to the UNFCCC in Durban, all these countries agree that there should be a strong regime for technology development and deployment and that the promised USD 100 billion for climate finance by industrialized countries must come in soon.

The COP17/CMP7 outcomes have been useful in extending the protocol for another period, but the outcomes are still not binding. What is required at this stage is a legally binding commitment that is just and fair and that can, in the immediate period, check the threats of rising temperature that have been projected in several reports. The establishment of the DPEA–Durban Platform on Enhanced Actions is yet another opportunity for the SAARC countries to come together and formulate a common position that ensures a fair, equitable, just, ambitious, and binding deal.

The country position on climate change is given below:



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***Note**:These are the positions of countries/groups as expressed in their submissions to the UNFCCC in December 2011.These positions could possibly be grandstanding and posturing adopted by these countries in climate-change negotiations.*

While these countries are from the same region, there are vast differences in their socio-economic conditions. These differences also influence the positions of the respective countries in various international negotiations, including the UNFCCC. It is therefore natural that these differences in perspectives and priorities are also reflected in the SAARC declarations.

An area in which the approach has been rather tardy is financing. Since most of the countries look to India for financing and India is unwilling to commit huge funds, keeping in view the international dynamics of climate-control negotiations, the funding for SAARC is rather slow, and, indeed, not forthcoming.

It is possible that the thinking among Indian policy makers is that if they were to make available huge funds to SAARC for climate-related projects and programmes, this would possibly act as a counter to the country's current approach, which is that it needs to put aside all its monies for growth and development and to not take on legally binding mitigation actions, although domestic action in this regard is prevalent.

Further, India is perhaps also aware of the fact that most of the countries in the region expect it to take on binding emission-reduction targets. This assumption may well be valid, since, for example, South Africa's position on climate change took a complete U-turn after it aligned itself with the African Union, which has a position that is similar to the one held by the countries in South Asia, with the exception of India.

The points of convergence that can be seen in the SAARC declarations are primarily with regard to the need for conducting joint research and scoping studies, a point on which almost all of the developing countries agree.

Nevertheless, the SAARC countries of the region also have made joint statements at different forums. This shows that these countries share some issues of convergence and some common positions. One among them is the statement made by a representative of Bhutan on behalf of SAARC at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. The statement highlighted the importance of the principles of equity, and of the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities of the South Asian countries in conducting global negotiations on climate change. Also, the SAARC nations called for negotiations to be conducted in an open, transparent, and inclusive manner, so that the outcome could enjoy the support and ownership of the international community, particularly of those who are most affected by climate change.

Likewise, paragraph 7 of the statement clearly highlights the agreed common position of the SAARC nations, as follows:

Any effort at addressing climate change must take into account historical responsibility and must be in accordance with the principles of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan. SAARC believes that the way forward must include the international community's commitment to:

(i) Provide adequate, new and additional resources easily accessible to address the full incremental cost of tackling climate change, under the authority of the Conference of the Parties (COP)/Conference of the Meeting of the Parties (CMP), that do not divert funds for development;

(ii) Allocate at least 1.5% of the GDP of Annex-I countries to meet the adaptation needs of all developing countries;

(iii) Urgently adopt operational guidelines for facilitating flows of short-term funds for undertaking climate change activities. Similar guidelines need to be developed for subsequent funds in due course;

(iv) Ensure balanced and separate financing for both adaptation and mitigation;

(v) Ensure access to adaptation finance for all developing countries that are vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change, with special focus on LDCs and SIDS;

(vi) Ensure effective access to and funding assistance for the transfer of climate-friendly technologies;

(vii) Set up technology innovation centres and networks in SAARC region and globally to promote development and transfer of technologies addressing adaptation and mitigation issues;

(viii) Establish an International Centre for Adaptation, Research and Training in SAARC region, as a medium for sharing experience in adaptation;

(ix) Provide adequate and full support for conservation of forests as an integral part of the REDD Plus mechanism;

(x) Deep and legally binding greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments by all developed countries with effective timeframes as recommended by the IPCC; and

(xi) Immediate action by all nations on the basis of the Bali Action Plan

V. ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE BOTTLENECKS OR BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENTS

A major bottleneck or barrier in the implementation of an integrated approach amongst the SAARC countries is a possible "trust deficit" between the countries in the region, given that there are a number of contentious issues between them, which range from territorial conflicts to disputes over the sharing of resources such as water. Further, even 30 years after the creation of SAARC, there is no clear or convincing answer to the basic question as to whether all of these countries in the region are genuinely interested in pursuing the goal of an integrated approach to solving issues – whether it is trade or climate change or any other issue.

Some major bottlenecks in the implementation of ambitious programmes in the region are:

a. Lack of political or institutional will to take up programmes and policies at a regional level

b. Lack of a proper institutional or coordination mechanism between various sector agencies in the respective countries leads to a lack of proper implementation and, more importantly, to a lack of a monitoring mechanism

c. Lack of adequate funding or mobilization of resources, which hinders the implementation of projects

d. The diverse priorities of each country make it difficult to opt for a set of actions that can be implemented collectively.

e. The vast diversity that characterizes each country, in terms of topography or culture, also makes it difficult to come up with a joint programme that has common deliverables and objectives.

f. Perhaps related to the huge "trust deficit" between the countries in the region, there tends to be an apprehension amongst the smaller countries that an integrated South Asia would expose them to domination by India. Similarly, from India's side, there is a fear that an integrated approach would mean a great financial burden on the country.

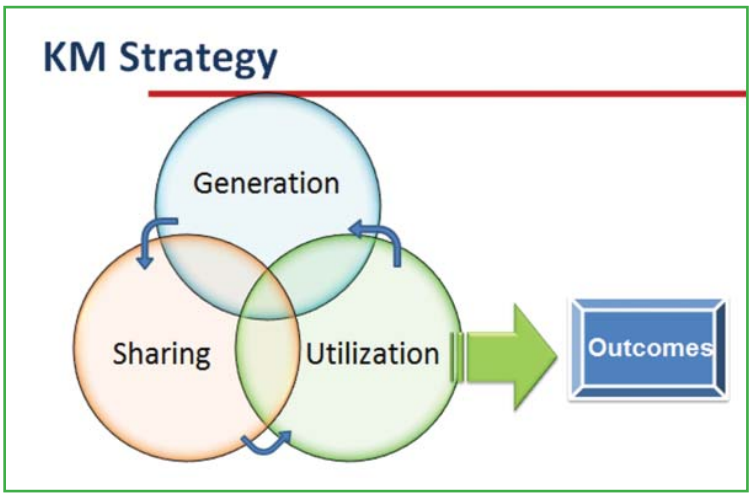
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

a. Addressing the barriers

Some of the key requisites to addressing the barriers are to ensure that there is a strong political will amongst the countries of the region and that the "trust deficit" factor is reduced to the maximum extent possible.

Thus, SAARC should look into strengthening the Secretariat so that it can play a more productive role in enhancing and deepening cooperation on the issues agreed upon. A strong and robust coordination mechanism is essential for the effective implementation of policies and programmes. This might also help in minimizing the "trust deficit".

Role of CSOs at Regional Level



Civil society groups could play a major role in mobilizing the political leadership in each country to take up the cause, particularly given that the impacts of climate change will affect not just one country, but also all the countries of the region. CANSA and the various CSOs affiliated with it should also give importance to making submissions to the SAARC Secretariat on issues related to climate change and on determining what is and what is not being implemented in SAARC as agreed. It should also conduct interactions on climate change with the political leaders of SAARC to establish a platform for engendering a strong political will to deal with the issue in the region.

CANSA and the various CSOs affiliated with it should also create links with the SAARC University and with other South Asian networks (SAWTEE, INSA, etc.) and groups, so as to share findings and exchange knowledge of government and non-government work.

The studies conducted by various CSOs and networks should also be disseminated to the SAARC Secretariat so as to assist the latter in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities and in avoiding duplication of work and effort. For instance, a flooding Ganges create immense hardship not only in India, but also in Bangladesh, and a glacier lake outburst may cause not only tremendous destruction in the Himalayan regions of India, but also in those of Nepal. Indeed, situations such as these require the coordinated handling of crises, and thus the sharing of any information or research findings will help neighbouring countries.

An integrated approach would also ensure that one country's action on the short-term mitigation of the impacts of climate change does not affect other countries.

Further, given that the countries of the region share a number of similar concerns, a unified approach could help address these common issues in a holistic and more effective manner. For instance, the entire region is energy starved. However, the countries in South Asia possess enough potential to harness clean energy if they were to join hands and adopt a regional initiative for energy development.

Hence, some recommendations for strengthening programme implementation are:

- Establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group on Climate Change to develop clear policy direction and guidance for regional cooperation as envisaged in the SAARC Plan of Action on Climate Change. This will also facilitate an integrated response to related social, economic, and environmental challenges. The terms of reference of such an expert group should ensure that the group meets regularly, with a clarity on the issues to be discussed and with a status report on the follow-up decisions taken. The group should have adequate representation from NGOs, selected through an open voting process. The expert group report should be presented at the SAARC Summit as part of its accountability to the SAARC member countries.
- Commission a study to explore the feasibility of establishing a SAARC mechanism that would provide capital for projects that promote low-carbon technology and renewable energy, and establish a Low-carbon Research and Development Institute in South Asian University.
- Establish institutional linkages among national institutions in the region for facilitating the sharing of knowledge, information, and capacity-building programmes in climate change-related areas. Although the discussions are ongoing on raising and channelizing climate funds from international mechanisms like Green Climate Fund, CDM, Adaptation Fund, and other bilateral source of funds, in order to ensure sustainability in the long run, the South Asian countries should also identify innovative sources of funding and create a South Asian Climate Fund within the SAARC Development Fund to support climate-related actions in South Asia.
- Set up a mechanism of coordination between the sector agencies in the respective governments on managing regional common resources, on identifying and implementing thematic programmes, on sharing knowledge and experience, and, most importantly, on ensuring that the objectives of the training programmes are achieved.
- The Secretariat should initiate a strong monitoring and evaluation system to track the activities carried out within and/or by the countries under the various commitments made in regard to the declarations. Likewise, as mentioned in the SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change (2007), the review of the action plan should be undertaken periodically by the appropriate institutional mechanism in SAARC at the technical level. The national reports on implementation should be submitted to the SAARC Secretariat for subsequent consideration by the ministers.

b. Sector-specific Recommendations

a. Key steps required to operationalize energy-related issues in the SAARC Declaration:

- Undertaking a detailed mapping exercise of the potential energy resources, knowledge, information, and areas of expertise that exist in the region.
- Exploring areas of trading of energy resources, with the focus being on clean and green technologies that are environment friendly and safe.

- Setting up of a Joint Technology and Promotion Council in South Asia to promote and conduct collaborative research and development and to provide a platform for facilitating the handling of cross-border energy-related challenges and opportunities amongst and by clean-energy developers and practitioners.
- Establishing a Clean Development Fund under SDF that could fund some of the projects mentioned above and also promote the joint development of technologies. Resources could come from both internal revenue-generation mechanisms such as "cess on coal" and "cess on CDM revenues", and from other innovative financing methods, along with receiving a share from the UNFCCC Clean Development Fund, as soon as it is operationalized.

b. Key steps required to operationalize agricultural issues in the SAARC Declaration:

- SAARC should develop a programme for the governments of the region that will incorporate adaptation strategies into agriculture and food policies and programmes at national and regional levels. This should be achieved through a mechanism that ensures the participation of stakeholders such as vulnerable communities, particularly women.

- SAARC should immediately operationalize the SAARC Food Bank. Such a bank is a significant support to, and for, many poor people in the region who face food insecurity due to droughts, floods, and price volatility.
- SAARC should develop an institutional framework for capacity building, knowledge management, and support mechanisms (such as food banks and regional and national seed reserves) that will help increase the resilience of smallholder farmers and develop safety nets for climate risk management.
- SAARC should ensure that agriculture is not linked to carbon market trading systems.

c. Key steps required to operationalize disaster management in the SAARC Declaration:

- Make firm commitments to enhance cross-border cooperation on knowledge sharing, such as weather forecasting. The SAARC states should commission collective research studies on the future impacts and scenarios of climate change and on downscaling in the region, and also evolve strategies for dealing with climate refugees in the future.
- SAARC should commit to undertake an integrated strategy for disaster management, climate-change adaptation, and disaster-risk reduction.

d. Key steps required to operationalize knowledge management in the SAARC Declaration:

- Strengthen intermediary institutions and networks to promote and disseminate climate-related studies and information to foster engagement across state and civil society.
- Develop an interactive Climate Change Knowledge Exchange and Communication Hub that supports decision makers and practitioners in designing and delivering climate-resilient development programmes with the help of existing formal and semi-formal knowledge through listening, reporting, and multilogue.
- Link current available research and science-based materials on climate change in the curricula of educational institutions and administrative colleges.

e. Key steps required to operationalize trade issues in the SAARC Declaration:

- Assess the potential of the liberalization of trade in environmental goods under the Agreement on SAFTA, and also study the potential of incorporating the liberalization of environmental services under the South Asian Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS). Concurrently, develop common understandings and positions on the liberalization of trade in environmental goods and services at the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Identify, develop, and implement regional and sub-regional projects on value addition, product diversification, and market promotion of environmental goods, including organic agricultural products and bio-products.
- Set a timeline for pruning sensitive lists under SAFTA with an emphasis on bio-products and environmental goods; removing non- and para-tariff barriers to boost intra-regional trade; and institutionalizing the harmonization of standards, including sanitary and phytosanitary measures regarding these goods.

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Note

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