

Terms of Reference (ToR): Director – Biodiversity

Position Title: Director – Biodiversity

Duty Station: South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Contract Duration: Until 30 June 2026 (subject to availability of project funding and performance review)

Reporting To: Director General, SACEP

1. Background

South Asia is a biodiversity hotspot, encompassing a variety of ecosystems—ranging from the Himalayas and Indo-Gangetic plains to coastal mangroves, coral reefs, and tropical forests. The region's geographical expanse and topography contains several diverse marine and terrestrial ecosystems that harbour a rich variety of faunal and floral species. However, this biological wealth is under severe threat due to various human-induced pressures such as overexploitation of resources, habitat destruction and fragmentation, illegal poaching, pollution and climate change.

As biodiversity has no geopolitical boundaries and it is connected among all member countries of South Asia region by land or sea, the regional approach is necessary for conservation of biodiversity in a holistic manner. It is understood that the regional cooperation will help build harmonization, facilitate to mitigate adverse impact on biodiversity in the region, built capacity through exchange of information, technology and knowledge. SACEP being the regional intergovernmental environment body for South Asia is fulfilling the above need. Biodiversity conservation is one of the priority areas of SACEP since its establishment in 1982. SACEP developed a Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) for South Asia, with the aim of providing a wide range of information related to biodiversity in the region. The South Asia CHM is part of the broader global effort led by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which aims to facilitate information exchange and cooperation on biodiversity conservation. The CHM was established with the financial assistance of BoBLME project of FAO.

2. Objectives of the Position

As part of its institutional strengthening under the World Bank-supported Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE) Project, SACEP is recruiting thematic Directors to provide leadership in key environmental domains. The Director – Biodiversity will lead regional programming and cooperation, extend support to Member States to enhance biodiversity conservation.

3. Scope of Work/Roles and Responsibility

The Director - Biodiversity will spearhead regional efforts to address biodiversity conservation through technical coordination, policy development, strategic partnerships, and knowledge exchange. S/he will also undertake any other tasks or responsibilities assigned by the Director General to support SACEP's broader mission.

Strategic Leadership and Direction

- Develop and lead the implementation of the organization's strategic framework, plans, and initiatives on biodiversity affairs.
- Develop and implement regional biodiversity strategies aligned with global frameworks (e.g., Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, SDGs, Paris Agreement, etc.).
- Represent South Asia's interests in global forums, negotiations and meetings
- Ensure alignment of organization's biodiversity agenda with broader environmental, health, and development targets.
- Integrate biodiversity conservation across SACEP's thematic areas, including marine affairs, waste management, and air quality, ecosystem services and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Technical advisory and support

- Provide expert technical guidance on biodiversity conservation and management.
- Provide technical and policy guidance to member states on mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, infrastructure, and urban development.
- Support countries in reporting obligations to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).
- Coordinate regional forums, technical working groups, and advisory panels on biodiversity issues and concerns.
- Facilitate technical workshops, training sessions, and knowledge exchanges.
- Lead the development of analytical reports, tools, drafting of key policy documents, regional action frameworks, and advocacy materials.
- Document progress and lessons learned to inform future programming and regional policy dialogues.
- Establish and oversee regional/national capacity-building initiatives and knowledge-sharing and data platforms on biodiversity (e.g. revival of Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism, Regional Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy) for the South Asian Seas Region) through partnerships with scientific institutions, Member States, and international organizations.

Resource Mobilization and Programme and Project Oversight

- Identify funding opportunities and lead proposal development (e.g. One Health approach, Zoonotic diseases, Anti-microbial resistance etc.).
- Engage with donors and development partners, Global Biodiversity Framework Fund to secure sustainable financing.
- Oversee the design, implementation, and evaluation biodiversity programmes and projects, ensuring alignment with the Intergovernmental organization's mandate.
- Create, lead and manage inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing multidisciplinary team of experts, analysts, and support staff to ensure smooth implementation of programmes and projects.
- Monitor progress, document results, and contribute to SACEP's institutional learning and reporting of biodiversity initiatives.

Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

- Develop and implement a regional biodiversity strategy aligned with national and regional priorities.
- Facilitate regional dialogues and consensus-building on biodiversity issues in coordination with focal ministries and stakeholders.
- Establish and manage technical partnerships with institutions such as IUCN, WWF, UNEP, and other entities.
- Foster cooperation among member states, UN agencies, regional bodies, civil society, academia, and the private sector.
- Represent the organization in international forums, negotiations, and technical working groups on Biodiversity.

4. Qualifications and Experience Required Qualifications, Expertise, and Competencies

- Master's degree in natural Resource Management, Biodiversity Conservation, Environmental Science, Biology, Ecology or a related discipline.
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in biodiversity conservation, environmental policy, or related technical fields.
- High-level of scientific and technical knowledge of both terrestrial and marine biodiversity.
- Demonstrated experience in regional cooperation, technical project implementation, or environmental governance.
- Experience with intergovernmental processes or working in a multi-country context is an asset.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to effectively engage with stakeholders at all levels, including government officials, international organizations
- Excellent analytical and demonstrated ability to draft clear and concise technical and policy papers; and proposal and project reports.
- Experience in coordinating and participating in missions and high-level meetings, and familiar with Conference of Parties meeting
- Fluency in English is required; knowledge of regional languages is an advantage.

- Proficiency in using MS Office suite (e.g. Word, Excel, PowerPoint) for report preparation, and use of digital collaboration tools (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google docs) for team coordination and stakeholder engagement is necessary.

5. Employment Terms

- This is a full-time position based at the SACEP Secretariat in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- Contract duration is until 30 June 2026, subject to availability of funds and satisfactory performance.
- A monthly salary of USD 4,500 will be paid, along with a USD 500 monthly allowance for fuel and communications.
- Medical insurance will be provided as per SACEP's service regulations.
- SACEP will bear the cost of onboarding including airfare, visa, and other admissible incidental costs.
- The selected candidate shall not receive a home country salary during the period of employment with SACEP.

6. Supervision and Performance Evaluation

- The Director – Biodiversity will report to the Director General of SACEP.
- The Director General will monitor the performance and take final decisions on continuation based on periodic evaluations.

7. Nomination and Selection Process

- SACEP Member countries are invited to nominate qualified candidates for the position. *Nomination of qualified female candidates are encouraged.*
- SACEP will review all nominations and conduct interviews to finalize one candidate for appointment.
- Only one expert will be appointed as Director – Biodiversity.