

Terms of Reference (ToR): Director – Climate Change

Position Title: Director – Climate Change

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—home to 2 billion population – is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions globally, despite contributing relatively little to global greenhouse gas emissions. The region is experiencing climate and ecological disruptions at record-breaking levels: frequent and intense heatwaves, disrupting monsoon patterns, leading to both devastating floods and droughts, glacial retreat, sea-level rise, air and marine pollution, and biodiversity loss.

While individual countries have made commendable progress, submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and developed national climate strategies, but implementation remains constrained by limited institutional capacity and climate finance gaps. Similarly, regional coordination remains fragmented, under-resourced, and inadequate. Underscoring the critical need for urgent action in the region, the Asian Development Bank recently highlighted that the global fight against climate change could be won or lost in South Asia and the Pacific region, SACEP - the only intergovernmental body in South Asia mandated to coordinate regional environmental and climate actions, stands ready to lead and facilitate regional collaboration for a climate-resilient South Asia, matched with solidarity and commitment from Member States.

2. Objectives of the Position

With regional climate threats escalating in urgency and complexity, and with South Asia seeking stronger collective responses, SACEP's role, structure, and capabilities to convene climate change agenda is growing. SACEP is thus reinvigorating its work on providing sustained technical and thematic leadership, diplomacy, and project delivery on climate change sector. 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 – Climate Change will lead regional programming and cooperation to enhance climate resilience, promote low-carbon development, and support Member States in achieving their climate goals.

3. Scope of Work/Roles and Responsibility

The Director - Climate Change will spearhead regional efforts to address climate change through technical coordination, policy development, strategic partnerships, and knowledge exchange. The position will strengthen South Asia's collective capacity to implement adaptation and mitigation actions and to influence international climate processes as a region. 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 climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience for SACEP to act as a regional convener.
- Represent South Asia's interests in global forums and climate negotiations
- Ensure alignment of organization's climate agenda with broader environmental, health, and development targets.
- Integrate climate resilience across SACEP's thematic areas, including marine affairs, waste management, and air quality, and track climate co-benefits.
- Provide expert advice to climate negotiations and their implications
- Coordinate South Asia's engagement in global climate negotiations and position SACEP as a regional voice.

Technical advisory and support

- Provide expert technical guidance on climate mitigation, adaptation, climate finance, and climate risk management.
- Support Member States in preparing and updating Nationally Determined Contributions, climate policies, and climate-resilient development plans.
- Coordinate regional forums, technical working groups, and advisory panels on climate change issues and concerns.
- Facilitate technical workshops, training sessions, and knowledge exchanges.
- Lead the development of climate-related 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 climate change through partnerships with scientific institutions, Member States, and international organizations.

Resource Mobilization and Programme and Project Oversight

- Identify funding opportunities and lead proposal development to support Low-Carbon emission and climate-resilient development programmes and projects.

- Engage with donors and development partners, Global Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Fund (GEF), Adaptation Fund to secure sustainable financing.
- Oversee the design, implementation, and evaluation of climate change 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 climate change initiatives.

Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

- Develop and implement a regional climate change strategy aligned with national and regional priorities.
- Facilitate regional dialogues and consensus-building on climate issues in coordination with focal ministries and stakeholders.
- Establish and manage technical partnerships with institutions such as UNFCCC, UNEP, ICIMOD, and climate finance 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 climate change.

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

- Master's degree in Environmental Science, Atmospheric Science, Climate Change, Sustainable Development, Geography, Meteorology, Public Policy, or a related discipline.
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in climate change, environmental policy, or related technical fields.
- High-level of scientific and technical knowledge of principles, practices and policies on climate change science, governance and financing.
- 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 – Climate Change 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 – Climate Change.