

Terms of Reference (ToR): Director – Marine and Coastal Affairs

Position Title: Director – Marine and Coastal Affairs

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, with its vast coastline and a maritime population, faces a complex set of challenges and opportunities in managing its marine and coastal ecosystems. The regional seas and coasts are exposed to multiple impacts such as marine debris and plastic pollution, oil and chemical spills, coastal ecosystem degradation due to unsustainable coastal development, biodiversity loss due to habitat loss, overfishing, and coastal vulnerability due to climate-induced sea-level rise, ocean acidification, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events. Amidst challenges, South Asia's coastal and marine ecosystems offer a wealth of opportunities to support a sustainable blue economy—balancing economic growth with ecological health and social equity, and addressing environmental degradation and climate vulnerabilities.

As the only intergovernmental environmental organization mandated to coordinate regional environmental actions for South Asia, SACEP is uniquely positioned to lead and support regional action on transboundary marine issues and coastal governance. SACEP is already working in this line as it hosts the South Asia Seas Programme (SASP), and implements a regional Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE) Project. By continuing to leverage its regional mandate, institutional partnerships, and technical expertise, SACEP can lead a coordinated regional response to safeguard South Asia's marine and coastal ecosystems while supporting resilient livelihoods and blue economy transitions.

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 – Marine and Coastal Affairs will lead and coordinate regional cooperation and initiatives to protect marine and coastal environments.

3. Scope of Work/Roles and Responsibility

The Director – Marine and Coastal Affairs will provide high-level leadership, strategic direction, policy development, and coordination across member states and partners to promote sustainable use and protection of marine and coastal resources, prevention and control of marine

debris and pollution, blue economy, and integrated coastal zone management. 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 marine and coastal affairs for SACEP to act as a regional convener.
- Provide expert advice to senior leadership on emerging trends, risks, and opportunities related to marine pollution and coastal zone management issues.
- Promote the integration of blue economy principles in marine litter reduction strategies across South Asia.
- Align the marine and coastal affairs programme's objectives with broader environmental, health, and climate goals, and development targets.
- Collaborate across thematic areas within SACEP to integrate marine and coastal concerns and resilience into climate, waste, and air quality programming.

Technical advisory and support

- Lead and implement the South Asia Seas programme (SASP) and its activities including Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan, Nutrient Pollution on the coastal and marine systems of South Asia
- Facilitate coordination among the five member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka for the implementation of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan for South Asia under the SASP.
- Provide policy guidance and technical assistance to SACEP Member States on marine litter, ocean pollution, coastal degradation, and sustainable marine resource management.
- Coordinate regional forums, technical working groups, and advisory panels on marine and coastal zone management.
- Facilitate technical workshops, training sessions, and knowledge exchanges
- Develop campaigns, knowledge products, and public outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution.
- Support regional implementation of international conventions and frameworks such as MARPOL, UNCLOS, and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment.
- Promote science-based decision-making by overseeing research, marine pollution assessments, and innovation in monitoring technologies.
- Lead the development of analytical reports, drafting of key policy documents, regional action frameworks, and advocacy materials.
- Establish and strengthen partnerships with regional and international organizations, research institutions, and development partners.

- Establish and maintain marine and coastal data hub through partnerships with scientific institutions, Member States, and data platforms.

Resource Mobilization and Programme and Project Oversight

- Identify funding opportunities and lead proposal development to support marine and coastal programmes and projects, including innovative, scalable blue economy interventions
- Engage with donors and development partners to secure sustainable financing.
- Oversee the design, implementation, and evaluation of marine litter and coastal zone management programs 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 marine and coastal management initiatives.

Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

- Develop and implement a regional strategy and/or regional programme/project for marine and coastal affairs aligned with Member State priorities and international frameworks.
- Facilitate dialogue and coordination among Member States on transboundary marine issues, integrated coastal zone management, and blue economy.
- Strengthen partnerships with regional and global organizations such as UNEP Regional Seas programme, Global Partnership for Marine Litter (GPML), GloLitter Partnerships, International Maritime Organization (IMO), PROBLU umbrella multi-donor trust fund, the World Bank group, Asian Development bank (ADB), IUCN, and others.
- Represent the organization in international forums, negotiations, and technical working groups on marine and coastal pollution, blue economy.

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

- Master's degree in Marine Science, Oceanography, Environmental Science, Environment Management, or a related field.
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in in marine and coastal policy, governance, conservation, or regional cooperation.
- High-level of scientific and technical knowledge of principles, practices and policies in marine ecosystems, conservation and marine pollution issues.
- Familiarity with regional and international marine environmental frameworks and institutions.
- Demonstrated experience in regional cooperation, technical project implementation, or environmental governance.

- Experience with intergovernmental processes or working in an intergovernmental, regional, or multi-country programmes context is an asset.
- Experience in coordinating and participating in missions and high-level meetings.
- 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.
- 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 – Marine and Coastal Affairs 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 – Marine and Coastal Affairs.