

Terms of Reference (ToR): Director – Waste and Circular Economy

Position Title: Director – Waste and Circular Economy

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 a lower waste collection rate, witnesses significant littering and leakage of mismanaged plastics into transboundary rivers and oceans. The two major transboundary river basins, Ganges-Brahmaputra Meghna (that includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) and the Indus River basin (including Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan) act like highways to transport mismanaged plastic to oceans. The circular economy (CE) in South Asia is still in a nascent but emerging phase, characterized by increasing awareness, and scattered pilot projects, however, CE is not yet a central policy theme.

To address the complex and transboundary plastic pollution, and enable transitioning to circular economy, SACEP is implementing the World Bank funded Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE) – a regional project - the first and largest project of its kind to combat plastic pollution in the South Asia region.

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 – Waste and Circular Economy will lead SACEP's regional work to promote regionally aligned approaches to reduce, manage, and valorize waste, and assist the transitioning of Member States towards Circular Economy.

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 – Waste and Circular Economy will lead SACEP's work in supporting Member States to transition from linear to circular economies, improve waste governance, promote sustainable consumption and production, and foster innovation in resource management. The position aims to coordinate policy harmonization, knowledge exchange, and cross-border initiatives that advance circularity and sustainable waste systems.

3. Scope of Work/Roles and Responsibility

The Director – Waste and Circular Economy will lead the strategic design, coordination, and implementation of regional initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable waste management and advancing circular economy principles. The role involves high-level engagement with member states, regional and international partners, development agencies, and private sector actors. The Director will provide expert guidance, shape policies, mobilize resources, and strengthen regional cooperation to achieve environmental sustainability, climate mitigation, and resource efficiency. 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 sustainable waste management and circular economy.
- Ensure alignment and cross-thematic integration of waste and circular economy interventions with organization's broader environmental, climate and development targets and marine pollution, air quality, and climate change agendas.
- Lead the development of harmonized policies, guidelines, and standards to support circular economy transitions in member states.
- Coordinate South Asia's engagement in plastic treaty negotiations and position SACEP as a regional voice representing the South Asia Region

Technical advisory and support

- Design and implement a regional work plan on waste management and circular economy aligned with Member States' national frameworks.
- Provide technical assistance to Member States on integrated waste management systems, including plastic, municipal, industrial, and e-waste.
- Advise on circular economy strategies and action plans at local, national, or regional levels.
- Promote circular economy principles across policy, planning, and industry, including resource efficiency, extended producer responsibility (EPR), and material recovery.
- Support the implementation, scaling, and preparation of further phases of regional initiatives such as the PLEASE Project.
- Coordinate regional forums, technical working groups, and advisory panels on waste and circular economy issues and opportunities.
- Facilitate technical workshops, training sessions, and knowledge exchanges.
- Lead the development of analytical reports, policy briefs, good practice compendiums, 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 on waste management and circular economy programmes and projects.
- Engage with donors and development partners to secure sustainable financing.
- Oversee the design, implementation, and evaluation of waste management and circular economy 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 waste and circular economy 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 plastic pollution instruments in coordination with focal ministries and stakeholders.
- Establish and manage technical partnerships with institutions such as UNEP, International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), OECD, Ellen MacArthur Foundation and other relevant entities.
- Foster cooperation among member states, UN agencies, regional bodies, civil society, academia, and the private sector to leverage knowledge, technology, and finance.
- Represent the organization in international forums, negotiations, and technical working groups on climate change.
- Facilitate regional coordination mechanisms, including technical working groups and public-private dialogues.

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

- Master's degree in Environmental Science, Environmental Engineering, Waste Management, Circular Economy, or a related discipline.
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in integrated waste management, resource efficiency, or circular economy programming.
- High-level of scientific and technical knowledge of waste management and circular economy principles, practices and policies.
- Proficiency in tools like material flow analysis (MFA), Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), and circularity indicators will be an asset.

- Familiarity with regional and international policy frameworks on plastic pollution, waste governance, and sustainable development.
- 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, Intergovernmental Negotiation Meetings.
- 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 – Waste and Circular Economy 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 – Waste and Circular Economy.