Panel: Water and Food Security in South Asia in the Era of Climate Change

Subsistence farming constitutes the main source of food and livelihood for majority of the rural population in South Asia. South Asia which is home to nearly 40% of the global population constitutes some of the poorest people of the world with access to less than 5% freshwater resources of the planet. During the recent past, a variety of changes have emerged in traditional resource use structure primarily in response to population growth, rapid urbanization and economic globalization in the region. As a result, critical natural resources, such as land, water, forests and biodiversity have degraded and depleted steadily consequently stressing traditional agricultural, food and livelihood systems. Moreover, climate change has disrupted hydrological system of South Asia – which houses some of the largest and most densely populated trans-boundary river-basins of the planet – through increased temperature and melting of snow and glaciers, altered precipitation pattern and erratic rainfall. These changes have not only reduced the availability of water, but have also increased frequency, severity and intensity of extreme weather events resulting into the stagnancy in agricultural production, frequent crop failures, loss of rural livelihoods, and consequent food insecurity. This situation is exacerbating region’s already limited capacity to cope with decreasing fresh water supply and consequent food insecurity. In this context, this panel would attempt to address following questions:

- How to observe and monitor impacts of climate change on water resources and food production?
- How to interpret nexus among climate change, water and food security in South Asia?
- How are local communities responding to the changing patterns of climate to ensure their food and livelihood security?
- What is the potential role of institutions at different levels in mitigating the consequences of climate change, water and food insecurity?
- How can water stress affect regional security in South Asia and how can a process of meaningful dialogue be initiated for regional water cooperation in South Asia?
- How can the governments in South Asian countries move ahead with integrated climate change and disaster risk reduction framework in South Asia?
- What are some key recommendations in the light of the above concerns?

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