



Plenary:

Strengthening Climate Diplomacy in South Asia: Together for Implementation

South Asia is at the forefront of confronting the effects of climate change and dealing with its security repercussions. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 6th Assessment Report, this region is one of the most vulnerable and indicated that it will experience increase in the severity and frequency of intense and prolonged heat waves. Moreover, annual monsoon and summer precipitation and the occurrence of extreme hydro-meteorological disasters will increase. Many countries in the region lack the means and capacity to deal with the escalating effects of climate change.

At the same time, climate change is increasingly interacting with socioeconomic, demographic and political factors to exacerbate fragility risks. This indicates that the climate crises not only undermine human security, but could also heighten conflict risks in South Asia. The IPCC's warning has come true in the form of heatwaves which Pakistan and India experienced earlier this year during spring season which caused severe damage to crops, exacerbated water scarcity and also resulted in forest fires in both countries. This was followed by early and intense monsoon season in Pakistan which inundated one-third of the country, affecting 33 million people and causing an estimated loss of USD 40 billion collectively to infrastructure and people. The rest of the South Asian region is no different in terms of vulnerability to climate change. According to the German Watch Global Climate Risk Index 2021 report, Pakistan ranked 8th in the list of Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI) ranking of extreme weather events between 2000-2019. The same report ranked India 7th in the list of ten most affected countries in 2019 due to climate change.

Since the region shares the same topographical features, hence, the ripple effects of disasters in any one country are also felt by others. These vulnerabilities could become drivers of cooperation between South Asian countries. Regional cooperation opens up opportunities to explore multi-track diplomatic processes which can help in consensus building among these countries for collective adaptation measures. Learning from the European Union Climate Diplomacy model, developed post-Glasgow COP26, is a useful guide in this regard. Keeping in view the context above, the panel will address following key questions:

1. What options of multi-track diplomacy (e.g., Track 1.5 and 2) can help in achieving climate adaptation and resilience in South Asia?
2. How can climate diplomacy lead to activities in the region that address common challenges in the food, energy, and water sector?
3. As South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has remained inactive, sub-regional groupings have come forward. Can these sub-groups develop a forward looking Climate Diplomacy Agenda which ultimately converges with the spirit of SAARC? How can international partners help this process?



EUROPEAN UNION



This session will benefit from takeaways from COP27 in which the Sustainable Development Policy Institute is also participating. SDPI will prepare a policy recommendations document which will then be circulated across all relevant stakeholders.

Plenary Organiser

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