

International experts focus Pakistan for protection of ecosystems, environment

As Pakistan is extremely becoming vulnerable to climate change and its gruesome impacts on the all sectors especially weather, economies, agriculture, wetlands, biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystems, experts from international organizations at a three-day meeting have stressed for bringing urgent and serious attention to climate change mitigation as it would contribute towards life Earth and its inhabitants.

They expressed these views at the sixth International Meeting of the South and Central Asia Man and Biosphere Network (SACAM) recently held in Islamabad.

The event was organized by UNESCO Islamabad in collaboration with Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and UNDP.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Ministry for Science and Technology, PSF and representatives of UNESCO, UNDP and member states including Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka along with leading Pakistani conservationists, scientists, and environmentalists.

The SACAM platform provided an opportunity to develop collaboration among scientists and government officials to develop better strategies to cope with the burning issue of climate change and its adverse impact on almost all the physical and biological components of planet Earth.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, who was the chief guest, said that there is a serious need to give proper attention to climate change. He said the meeting has proved to be instrumental in providing guidelines for the Government to come up with a plan of action and future measures.

The chair of SACAM was handed over to Pakistan in 2013 on the occasion of the its fifth meeting. In this context, the Chairman, National Man and Biosphere (MAB) Committee and Federal Secretary for the Ministry of S&T, Kamran Ali Qureshi, said the conference would be important for coming up with a plan of action for government implementation. He mentioned that risks from Atta Abad Lake in Gilgit, drought in district Tharparker in Sindh and frequent floods were major examples of climate change issue and its adverse impact on the country's economy.

To overcome these challenges, it was the duty of planners, scientists and experts to develop effective strategies and learn from experiences from the network countries to mitigate climate change impact.

In her remarks, Vibeke Jensen, Director UNESCO, highlighted that SACAM was a remarkable platform of MAB professionals, conservationists, scientists and research students of the member states.

She mentioned that the Man and Biosphere Programme was started by UNESCO to focus on sustainable development issues and plan conservation and management projects for protected areas. She highlighted that biosphere reserves were unique in catering to the needs of local communities through implementing nature conservation initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Shahbaz Khan, Deputy Director UNESCO Regional Science Bureau, Jakarta, said the training was important in offering opportunities for the network countries to exchange ideas, experiences and lessons in their respective work on biosphere reserves. He mentioned that Pakistan was confronting many challenges including the deforestation, environmental degradation, melting of glaciers and massive floods. He called for urgent and more proactive regional cooperation, measures and management plans across the countries, to overcome the impact of climate change.

During the three-day meeting, the participants shared experiences such as on the harmonization of community livelihoods with biodiversity conservation, new trends in biosphere reserves and their future plans. The event also included a networking session and group discussions on how to strengthen the SACAM network.

The country focal person said that SACAM encourages countries to focus on climate change and sensitize the policy makers, researchers and planners to focus on the climate change of the region. He said that the meeting aims at minimizing the impact of climate change on the natural resources and livelihoods.

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