

UNESCO, PSF launch int'l meeting

ISLAMABAD: To enhance knowledge sharing and best practices for the projected impact of climate change on weather, economies, agriculture, wetlands, biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystems, UNESCO Islamabad, in collaboration with Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and UNDP jointly launched the sixth International meeting of the South and Central Asia Man and Biosphere Network (SACAM) in capital.

The Chief Guest on the occasion, Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, extended his gratitude to all the participants, UNESCO, PSF and representatives of SACAM network delegates from other countries for organizing the meeting, adding that there is a serious need to give proper attention to climate change. He said the meeting would be instrumental in providing guidelines for the Government to come up with a plan of action and future measures.

In her remarks, Vibeke Jensen, Representative/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 were 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. 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 Science and Technology, 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.

The meeting would focus on bringing urgent and serious attention to climate change mitigation and response. The SACAM platform would provide 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.

Speaking on the occasion, Shahbaz Khan, Deputy Director UNESCO Regional Science Bureau, Jakarta, extended his gratitude to the Government of Pakistan for hosting the Sixth session of the SACAM meeting. He 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. 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 participated in the meeting.

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

Source: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/04-Dec-2014/unesco-psf-launch-int-l-meeting>