



Press Release

Pakistan assumed the charge of SACAM Chair on the occasion of 5th meeting of South and Central Asia on MAB (SACAM)

Islamabad, 26 November 2013: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) jointly organized, the 5th meeting of SACAM network in Islamabad.

Officials and representatives of the ministry for science and technology, PSF, UNESCO and representatives from the member states including Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka along with Pakistani conservationists, scientists, and environmentalists participated in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, chief guest, Zahid Hamid, Federal Minister for Science and Technology said that it is a great privilege for him to be attending the meeting. He thanked all the stakeholders including MAB network delegates from other countries, UNESCO and PSF for organizing and supporting biodiversity initiative in the region. He said that local community is playing an important role in protecting the biodiversity. He said the government is preparing a document for the approval of the protection of the Karakoram Pamir Biosphere Reserve in the Northern Pakistan. Referring to the Global Climate Risk Index developed by Germanwatch, he said that since 1992-2011, Thailand, Cambodia, Pakistan, El Salvador and the Philippines were among the most affected countries due to climate change and environmental degradation which he said is a great concern. He said this forum would provide a good opportunity to work together in order to mitigate the risks related to climate change.

The chair of the SACAM has been handed over to Pakistan for the next two years. In this context, the Chairman National MAB Committee and Secretary for Ministry of Science and Technology, Kamran Ali Qureshi, extended his gratitude to Iran, the outgoing chair, for its outstanding contributions. He said that the South and East Asian countries are most vulnerable because of the deteriorating ecosystem and Pakistan in this context is at high risk. He said that the receding of glaciers in the northern areas has resulted in devastating floods in the recent past, which destroyed settlements and agriculture lands causing serious problem in the national economy and revenue collection from agriculture sector.

In her address, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director/Representative UNESCO Islamabad said that SACAM is a remarkable platform of MAB professionals, conservationists, scientists, research students of the member states and that the programme is

progressing well. As a result of these efforts, this year, Ziarat Juniper Forest of Balochistan, the second largest juniper forest in the world, has been declared Biosphere Reserve and included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

She also shared that a dossier has been submitted to MAB Secretariat for the Karakoram Pamir Biosphere Reserve in the Northern Pakistan which is a unique ecosystem containing some of the highest peaks and longest glaciers combined with high altitude fresh water lakes and endangered wildlife like *Markhor and Snow Leopard*.

Speaking on the occasion, Han Qunli, Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences and Secretary, Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme at UNESCO said that UNESCO is grateful to Pakistan for hosting the 5th session of South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) meeting in Islamabad which he said offered an important opportunity for the countries from this region to exchange ideas, experiences and lessons in their respective works on Biosphere Reserves. He said that the World Network of Biosphere Reserves as of today has 621 sites in 117 countries, and the number is continued to increase, with also the new sites from South and Central Asian countries. Biosphere Reserves are designated for conservation of both biological diversity and cultural diversity, and for testing new ways and solutions for local sustainable development agenda. He said while this meeting will focus on the harmonization of livelihood with biodiversity conservation, which is critical issue for all, it will also address other related subjects, such as transboundary cooperation, ecosystem service and climate change impact and ecosystem rehabilitation. The recommendations of this SACAM will be used as input in shaping the new MAB Strategy under UNESCO's new mid-term strategy 2014-2021.

During the two day meeting, participants will discuss about SACAM progress and future plans, harmonization of community livelihoods with biodiversity conservation in the context of biosphere reserves, new trends in Man and Biosphere Reserves (BRs) and progress in member countries, biodiversity and emerging global issues in BRs as well as country presentations, networking session and group discussion on strengthening SACAM Network.

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