

**Oneworld South Asia  
Annual Regional Meeting 2008**

**CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR REALISATION OF THE MDGS:  
SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVES AND VOICES**

**Concept Note**

*Balancing the claims of climate change mitigation and meeting development goals has become the new core of the Southern dilemma. OneWorld South Asia's Seventh Annual Regional Meeting (to be held on 8-9 February 2008) intends to establish the relevance of both claims for the South (using the South Asian region as representative), identify the contentions between the two in the light of current climate change negotiations, underline the need for continuing and enhanced Southern participation and activism, and explore new avenues for engagement.*

**I. Climate Change**

South Asia has been identified as a potential hotspot for global warming. According to the latest reports by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, by the year 2100 millions of people in the region will find their lands and homes inundated; the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Indus would become seasonal rivers; and the Himalayan glaciers will continue to retreat and will disappear by the year 2035.

Water tables will continue to decline, with rising levels of salinity leading to water shortages; water-borne diseases such as cholera, and other diseases such as dengue and malaria will continue to climb; crop productivity will fall and incidence of starvation will be on the rise; and there will be increasing instances of heat-related mortality.

**II. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals**

Pursuit of the development goals remains a priority in South Asia, given that most countries of the region lag far behind. A recent report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia and the Pacific, the Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme states that India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan are unlikely to meet most of the eight identified goals.

For instance, referring to the prevalence of poverty and hunger in the region, India with its poverty rate of 34 per cent has traveled less than half the distance to its 2015 target and nearly half of its children under the age of five remain underweight. Sri Lanka with the lowest poverty rate in South Asia has witnessed an upward trend in poverty levels; and the already high levels of poverty in Bangladesh continue to rise matched with high prevalence of hunger. Meanwhile nearly half and a third of the under-five population of Nepal and Pakistan respectively remains underweight.

In the area of ensuring environmental sustainability and reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (towards mitigating climate change) all South Asian countries have either not made any progress, or have regressed.

### **III. Climate Justice and Development**

Vulnerability to climate change, high levels of poverty and slow progress towards the achievement of development targets places the South Asian region in an extremely delicate situation. This state is rendered far more complex in the light of the contentious relationship between climate change and prevailing development paths on the one hand, and the trends in climate change negotiations on the other.

Industrial growth that is strongly linked with pollution emanating from the use of fossil fuels serves as the traditional path to development and is regarded as an essential for the progress of the developing world, including the countries of South Asia. It is understood that the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases contributing to global warming will continue to rise in the developing countries through the next few decades.

The approach to mitigating the effects of climate change and stabilising climatic conditions has focused upon curbing the emissions and moving towards more environmentally sustainable practices. Under the present framework for mitigation, the industrialised countries are required to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to below their 1990 levels, or trade in emission credits, or invest in conservation. Some of the developed countries (members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) are also required to provide financial resources and technologies to the developing countries to deal with adverse effects of climate change.

Negotiations under the framework conventions and elsewhere have been marred by the perceived divide between the interests and obligations of the developed and the developing countries and in reality are now being driven by systemic inequalities in global resources allocation and use.

Developed countries are accused of using climate change negotiations to further economic globalisation at the expense of communities and the environment. Powerful vested interests including oil, coal, gas industries and automotive and utility industries (energy producers, consumers/polluters) also influence the climate change dialogue. Demonstrated unwillingness to be bound by multilateral environmental agreements by many countries, dilution of existing provisions by way of greater flexibility in trading of emission credits, broadening the coverage of such credits and allowing for alternative investments are just some of the recent outcomes.

The primary focus of the regime to mitigate climate change then has become the management of global carbon trading and meeting short-term targets, distracting due attention from the long-term goal of climate stabilisation.

The principles of equity and shared responsibility have been thus impacted, and focus has been skewed towards minimising the burden of implementation on polluter industries and countries instead of giving priority to the vulnerabilities of communities and countries at greatest risk and disadvantage. More importantly, the complexity of pressures upon the developing countries, pertaining to their development choices, continues to grow.

#### **IV. Need for enhanced Southern Country Participation and Activism**

At the very outset, it is important for communities and countries of the South to take a closer look at the implications of the climate change dialogue and need for climate justice beyond the environmental paradigm, and identify the impact on development and growth.

There is a need for enhanced participation and activism for realigning climate negotiations and for striking new bargains that help meet the long-term goals of poverty alleviation, environmental stability and sustainability, and the Millennium Development Goals. Information, analyses, advocacy, continued engagement and dialogue, the setting of effective standards and implementation procedures, capacity building, etc. are constant, if not growing requirements.

#### **V. Conference on 'Climate Justice and the Realisation of the MDGs: Southern Perspectives and Voices'**

It is in this context that OneWorld South Asia intends to take the climate justice and development debate further, in its *Seventh Annual Regional Meeting* during **8-9 February, 2008**. The meeting will engage our partners across South Asia in the fields of development, policy, government, the private sector, media, academia, and the grassroots in this contentious and opportune subject. Some of the broad issues that are to be explored would include:

- **The Linkages between the Millennium Development Goals and Climate Change in the South Asian Context:** This platform will take a closer look at the juxtaposition of climate change and its ongoing dialogue, its impact on developing countries with reference to poverty, health, gender, the environment, and development partnerships.
- **The Relevance of Climate Justice for Growth and Development in the South:** The impact upon development choices, the need for technologies, the role of international frameworks such as that of intellectual property rights, are some of the issues that will be raised in this space.
- **Approaches to Balancing the Claims of Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and Development (in terms of progress and wealth creation) in Developing Countries in South Asia:** Innovations for development and climate change mitigation and their consequences; status of adaptive mechanisms; existing and potential areas of convergence in the pursuit of both ends are some aspects for deliberation.
- **Inclusion of Grassroots Voices from Vulnerable Communities and Countries in the Climate Change Dialogue:** This section provides a space for the voices of the least developed, the poor and the marginalised for equitable and collaborative solutions, and will explore various possible approaches to inclusion.
- **Exploring Alternative Platforms for Engagement and Dialogue: A Role for Emerging Media and Information and Communication Technologies?** This platform will examine existing and potential alternatives including the role of information and communication technologies, emerging media, as well as the convergence of traditional and new mediums.
- **Monitoring for Climate Justice: Viable Modes and Methods for Information Propagation and Advocacy:** Means and ways to meet current and future information needs; advocacy for equitable access and inclusion; and monitoring mechanisms for a democratic coverage of populations and issues will form the core of discussions.

- **Collaborations and Partnerships:** The prime focus is to provide a platform for new partnerships and collaborations, and engage stakeholders across sectors, disciplines and interest groups to participatory action, as well as chart the future path to sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## **VI. Structure of the Conference and Intended Outcomes**

The climate justice and development debate will frame the agenda for two days of deliberation. The conference is structured in a manner to facilitate maximum participation in the dialogue, by way of plenaries, a space for high-level dialogues on specific issues, participatory thematic sessions, and a platform for showcasing various initiatives by OneWorld South Asia and its partners.

Our partners from across sectors bring to the proceeding the value of their expertise, experience, and opportunities for concerted action. Participants would be invited to contribute their views through papers, presentations, published and audio-visual materials, etc. They would also be required to take ownership of the dialogue and the proceedings by serving in the roles of the chairs, moderators, presenters and rapporteurs for the various thematic sessions.

Some of the intended outcomes of the conference are:

- A position document on ‘Climate Justice and the Realisation of the Millennium Development Goals in South Asia’
- Online and offline platforms for continued engagement with our partners in this debate
- Avenues for new partnerships and collaborative advocacy and action for climate justice and achieving the Millennium Development Goals
- Identifying the utility and mainstreaming the use of information and communication technologies and emerging media in climate change mitigation and in serving development ends