

MEDIA UPDATE ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FORUM 12, 13th March 2012, UNCC

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Preparing Asia Pacific for climate change

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By : Jessica Cheam

The Asia Pacific region needs to spend US\$40 billion a year on infrastructure to prepare for the future effects of climate change, said the Asian Development Bank vice president Bindu Lohani on Monday.

But less than 10 per cent of this money to “climate proof” the region’s infrastructure is available today, he told the Asia Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum in Bangkok.

“We need this fund now... to make this happen, we must get the money and governance right,” he said in his keynote speech at the two-day summit.

Mr Lohani noted that the added cost of boosting infrastructure to manage future climate disasters such as floods and other extreme weather events is about five to 15 per cent more of investment costs.

This was a necessary spend because “we have a special responsibility to protect the investments that we do... to make sure they are protected from a wide range of risks,” he said.

He pointed out three ways Asian societies can move towards being more resilient to the future effects of climate change – improving knowledge to make better use of resources; using climate investment funds to fund specific projects; and finding a financial structure that will support this “transformational approach”.

Thailand’s vice minister of natural resources and environment Pithaya Pookaman said Thailand was a country that needed such a transformation.

The country suffered its worst floods in half a century last year, which killed more than 800 people and destroyed millions of dollars of properties. The forum was in fact cancelled last year due to the floods and reconvened this year.

Mr Pookaman said Bangkok could be submerged in the next 20 years unless key issues of infrastructure and land use planning are addressed. Thailand has set up a climate change policy board chaired by its Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and is preparing a 10-year masterplan that will focus on addressing climate change, he added.

“The successful implementation of these plans and policies depends on... all levels of government and requires better linkage between research and action,” he told the audience of more than 200 delegates from the region.

The region is facing stark environmental challenges, he noted. Its biodiversity is degraded, ecosystems are over-exploited and poverty is rampant. “Climate change presents a clear and present danger to our lifestyle and existence... our actions to address it are inextricably intertwined with issues of human development,” he added.

“We understand there is no one size fits all approach,” he said, urging policymakers, private sector and civic society participants to “support and take into consideration the actual needs of the most vulnerable population”.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Achim Steiner, in a video address, called for greater sharing between countries on development planning “so we can learn from one another and shorten the learning curve”.

The Adaptation Forum, in its second year, is organized by the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platform for Asia (Adaptation Knowledge Platform) and the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (Adaptation Network).

The Adaptation Knowledge Platform is a response to the demand for effective mechanisms for sharing information on climate change adaptation and developing adaptive capacities in Asian countries.

The initiative supports research and capacity building, policy making and information assimilation, generation, management and sharing.

The platform was set up by the Asian Institute of Technology/United Nations Environment Programme Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific (AIT – UNEP RRC.AP) the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA) and UNEP with funding support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

<http://www.eco-business.com/features/preparing-asia-pacific-for-climate-change/>

Asian nations must build resilience: ADB

The Nation March 12, 2012 - There was a pressing need for Asia-Pacific countries to accelerate efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change, said Asian Development Bank.

"Public lenders and private investors cannot continue to channel billions of dollars to massive infrastructure projects without factoring in the realities of warmer temperatures, rising sea levels and more violent storms," said Bindu Lohani, ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development.

In his keynote speech at the Second Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum in Bangkok, he said that resources currently available to "climate proof" roads, sewers, bridges and pipelines are grossly inadequate, much less to improve data collection, early warning systems, and other activities vital to build climate resilient societies.

Latest estimates suggest that effective adaptation will require around US\$40 billion per year through 2050 to cope with climate change in the region. In contrast, estimates for 2009-2010 indicated that only \$4.4 billion was available for adaptation activities globally.

In 2011, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a record 59 projects supporting environmental sustainability, which amounted to about \$7 billion in financing. In 2012, ADB is seeking to mobilise significant funding for climate adaptation to help close regional gaps in knowledge, capacity and finance.

The two-day forum has attracted over 800 participants, including climate experts, development practitioners, policymakers, and members of NGOs and civil society organizations. Recent flooding in Bangkok and surrounding areas has served as a dramatic reminder of the impact of climate change on Asia and the Pacific and the need for urgent action.

The forum is organised by the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network, the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Knowledge Platform for Asia and ADB. ADB and other agencies supporting the forum have emphasised that climate change is a development issue, since poor communities are among the most exposed to climate change, but have the least capacity to deal with the impacts.

This year's forum focuses on "Adaptation in Action", signifying a shift from deliberations to decisions, plans to policies and policies to practices. The two-day event has attracted more than 800 participants, including climate experts, development practitioners, policymakers, members of NGOs and civil society organizations and representatives of youth and the private sector.

The forum will showcase knowledge, practices and experiences, and provide an "interactive space" to promote networking to maximise synergy, stimulate actions and facilitate experiential learning that supports the process of adapting to climate change. The forum will also encourage participants to link local level adaptation initiatives with those at the national and regional levels.

The ADB report, Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific will be launched at the Forum.

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Asian-nations-must-build-resilience-ADB-30177785.html>

Asian Nations Must Build Resilience to Climate Change – ADB

BANGKOK, THAILAND – Nothing less than transformational change will be required to build societies in Asia and the Pacific that are resilient to climate change, Bindu Lohani, ADB Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, stressed today in his keynote speech at the Second Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum.

Mr. Lohani told participants that there was a pressing need for countries in the region to accelerate efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Resources currently available to “climate proof” roads, sewers, bridges and pipelines are grossly inadequate, much less to improve data collection, early warning systems, and other activities vital to build climate resilient societies.

“Public lenders and private investors cannot continue to channel billions of dollars to massive infrastructure projects without factoring in the realities of warmer temperatures, rising sea levels and more violent storms,” said Mr. Lohani.

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<http://www.asiatoday.com/pressrelease/asian-nations-must-build-resilience-climate-change-adb>

Asia leads the world in adaptation to climate change

Saleemul Huq, 16 March 2012 : I have just returned from attending the second Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum in Bangkok on March 12-13. It was supposed to have been held in October 2011 but had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the floods that devastated Bangkok at that time. It was jointly organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Asia-Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Swedish government (amongst others) and brought together over 800 participants from all over Asia and Pacific including ministers, senior government officials, researchers, NGOs, private sector, UN agencies, media and others, with five plenary sessions and twenty parallel thematic sessions. There were also stalls set up by many organisations and a film competition.

Having attended both the first Asian Adaptation Forum in 2010 as well as the second this month, I am quite sure (based on my work on adaptation globally) that Asia leads the world on the practice, planning and knowledge generation of adaptation to climate change. I give a few examples below to demonstrate why this is so.

Mix of countries and ecosystems:

The Asia-Pacific region has by far the biggest population as well as the largest number and variety of countries of all the world's continents. This variety includes developed countries like Japan, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) like Bangladesh, small island developing states (SIDS) like the Maldives as well as the giants like China and India.

At the same time, it has all the vulnerable ecosystems like mountains in the Himalayas, low-lying coasts, small islands, mangroves and other forests, drylands, major river systems like the Ganges-Brahmaputra and Mekong and, perhaps most importantly, some of the fastest growing cities and mega-cities.

The knowledge being generated within the region on adaptation in such a wide variety of countries and ecosystems is truly enormous and is also very relevant for many other parts of the world.

Pro-active governments:

Some of the most pro-active governments on tackling adaptation to climate change are also in Asia. They include developed countries such as Japan and Australia as well as LDCs such as Bangladesh and Nepal and SIDS such as the Maldives and Kiribati (to name just a few).

The learning that is coming from such national level adaptation planning (and increasingly also implementation) can be shared with other countries in developing best practices in different areas.

Urban adaptation:

With over half the world's population living in cities and with the fastest growing cities in the world being in Asia, there are already many examples of good adaptation practice in urban settings. One pioneering venture to pilot and share such experiences is the Asian Cities Climate Resilience Network (ACCRN) set up with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, which is already carrying out adaptation in ten cities in India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Community based adaptation:

One of the thematic panels at the Forum was on Community Based Adaptation (CBA), where Asia has some of the best experiences to share with other continents. It is significant that the sixth international conference on CBA will be held in the region -- in Hanoi, Vietnam -- from April 16 to 22 this year, and the seventh international conference (CBA7) will be held in Bangladesh next year (April 2013).

Knowledge generation and management:

Many universities and research institutes in the region have started significant research as well as training, teaching and capacity building activities. To name just a few, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) based in the Philippines is developing saline- tolerant rice varieties. Several universities in Australia are doing work on drought while Japanese universities are working on sea level rise and coastal defences. It is also significant that the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has chosen to set up the new International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Bangladesh at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) together with the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

Bangladesh at the Asian Adaptation Forum:

Bangladesh was well represented at this year's Asia Adaptation Forum with a large contingent from government, NGOs, universities and media. They participated in many panel discussions and also had stalls showcasing their work.

BCAS also won an award for best video on adaptation for its short video on coastal resilience in Bangladesh.

In conclusion, it can be said that, as adaptation to climate change is becoming a higher priority in developing as well as developed countries globally, the countries in Asia (including developed countries like Japan and Australia) as well as LDCs (like Bangladesh and Nepal) and SIDS (like the Maldives and Kiribati) are amongst the world leaders.

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<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=226406>