

Asia Pacific Climate Week 2019 (APCW19) was a 5- day regional conference held at the UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific) from 2-6 September, 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. This was the last regional meeting (amongst other that was held at Africa, Abu Dhabi, and Latin America & Caribbean), before the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres' climate week at the New York being held from September 23-29 this year, where the outcomes of this conference will be presented.

The main objective of the conference was to boost the Asia Pacific region's response to the current climate emergency and discuss upon the actions required to meet the central Paris Agreement goal of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees celsius and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The results of APCW19 would feed into the outcome of the Climate Action Summit, New York; thereby boosting ambition and accelerating the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals.

This conference was co- organised by UNESCAP along with United Nations Climate Change, World Bank Group, The International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and UNEP DTU Partnership.

I got the opportunity to participate in the conference as a delegate of 'Academia' category from Nepal, because of the nomination from South Asia Foundation Nepal. Throughout the 5 day conference, we had various interactive programs co hosted by different organisations like UNFCCC, Red Cross and Red Crescent, UNDP, UNDRR, IGES, UNEP among many, and open plenaries by the UNESCAP with agendas revolving around the burning issue of Climate Change. The conference was in an overall a learning and growing experience which also provided me with an opportunity to put forth my voice and question first- handedly various phenomenons that are critical for us. It also bridged as a platform for me to connect and network with different international, national entities and establish relationships with organisations and youth from almost all over the world, especially from the Asia- Pacific region.

During the first day of the conference, I was provided with an opportunity to present the key recommendations from my group during the session, "Co- design Lab for Multilevel Adaptation Planning and Implementation". On the third day of the conference, I was also invited to the office of UNICEF, to participate as a youth delegate in a Global Cafe setting discussion on "The young generations: capturing voices and action needed to build resilience for all". Also, on the closing plenary, a short video compilation on "voices of youth on climate change" was presented at the UN Conference where my voice was also presented alongside youth from countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Philippines in front of the distinguished guests and participants. It was an honorary moment to be recognized and complimented for my presentation, thought- provoking questions, and recommendation- solutions during the conferences by various participants and distinguished personalities like Mr. Youssef Nassef, Director, Adaptation, UNFCCC, who also extended an invitation to me for participating and

contributing at the COP25 conference in Chile during the end of November with full lodging, transportation sponsorship, upon letter of nomination provided by the SAF Nepal.

Their key recommendation, outcomes and conference details has been reported briefly here below:

## DAY 1: Co- design Lab for Multilevel Adaptation Planning and Implementation

This was an interactive whole day session, which aimed at:

- Bringing together different groups from the Asia Pacific region that possess a wide array of experience and lessons on main streaming, comprehensive/ integrated risk management and inclusive approaches.
- Collectively designing and developing an initial set of approaches and standards to bridge national and local planning efforts
- Developing a roadmap to validate, finalize and disseminate the approaches/ standards.

There was a plenary discussion revolving around the agenda with members from UNDRR( United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), Mr. Sanny R. Jegillos- Regional Program Coordinator UNDP, Mr. Chris Dolan- Red Cross and Red Crescent and Mr. Mozaharul Alam (Babu)- UNEP.

The panelists discussed upon the main challenge of “how to achieve coherence in continuously changing environment?”

With the changing environment, it was affirmed that while we build solutions and rules for today’s world, it would change the immediate next year, and next year, and so on, especially with advancement to technologies. Therefore, a long run approach planning is important rather than a short term immediate action recommendations.

It was discussed that the dynamic nature of climate changes and its dynamic nature of impact requires national adaptation. Babu from UNEP had stressed, “National adaptation plan is an important vehicle to use for all nations.”

Also, vernacular language, differences in data and mindset were identified as key factors for adaptation planning.

Risk informed investments, adaptation communications, progress both in terms of integration and planning for climate change actions, extending research and support throughout the country, the importance of international conferences, and ensuring supporting frameworks were some of the major discussed areas.

We were then divided into two groups who brainstormed together for the recommendations on challenges identified which was then presented at the end of the conference. Some of the recommendations proposed were:

- Flexible strategies that also considers future risks
- Translation of right information to the local context
- Planning from bottom- up approach (from local to national)
- Strengthening community forests to overcome vulnerabilities
- National Budget inclusive of legal framework
- Local government tap into local opportunities



**Delegates during the session**



**Presenting the recommendations put forth by our group**



**Youth from Japan, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Nepal**

## DAY 2: Stepping up Actions on Delivering a Resilient Future

This conference was divided into five sessions expanding throughout the day:

- Session 1 : Connecting the Dots- Early Action for Rapid Decision- Making to Prevent Disasters
- Session 2: Driving Scale and Sustainability for Climate Action Programs and Policies through a Systems Approach
- Session 3: Building Resilience for All: Intersectional Approaches to Vulnerability Reduction in Asia
- Session 4: Re- Naturing through Nature based Solutions for a Resilient Future
- Session 5: Strengthening Climate Resilience through Financial Innovation in Asia-Pacific

Early warning systems was discussed as an adaptive measure for climate change, using integrated communication system to help communities prepare for multi- hazards. This session discussed challenges, gaps and innovative and practical approaches (policy, governance and technical). Also, it was highlighted how there is a need for systems thinking to climate change programs and policies.

People's experiences of natural hazards vary depending on socio- economic, cultural, political and environmental contexts, and thus the session also explored different factors that intersect to create exclusion, inequalities and vulnerabilities. Nature Based Solutions (NbS) was acknowledged as fundamental in enhancing adaptive capacity by providing a vital link between sustainable socioeconomic development with biodiversity and ecosystem conservation to achieve climate resilience.

There were various panel discussions, and presentations on factors like effective early warning system, Nature Based Solutions, and Financial innovations with case studies from India, Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar.

In the Philippines, understanding the vulnerabilities of local communities and turning them into an action plan and utilizing the available data enabled primarily coastal, agricultural area take pre- actions on climate change calamities like Typhoon. The presenter emphasized that "Bringing all stakeholders is vital", and how it actually worked in the case of the Philippines.

Similarly in Indonesia introducing injection well became an important milestone to overcome long dry seasons with enough water supplies. It was concluded that "it is important to identify the entry points for working with the government".

Nepal has three stages of plan on resilience: local disaster management plan, local adaptation plan and local development plan. With the interventions at three levels: government, institutional and practise level the plans have been climate induced harmonical plan (Madan Pariyar, Director IDE Nepal). He also talked about the early flood warning system practised in Nepal.

The key recommendations concluded from the sessions were:

- Driving scale and sustainability for climate action progress and policies through a system approach.
- There is data available, but not all local people are aware. So strengthen the awareness and accessibility
- Nexus Approach- risk reduction through restoration of local ecology and economy.
- Integrating language from the community to science academy
- Plans should be endorsed by the local level- building connection between community and local government.
- Climate Budget tagging system
- Instead of putting public funds directly to community, it should be shifted to the private sector
- Innovative finance- a means for change in climate change adaptation (a holistic approach).

The five sessions covered large topics revolving climate change. It was a rigorous discussion throughout the day with an analysis from different perspectives of local, governmental (policy, political), scientific, and financing.



**The panelists during one of the session**

## Day 3: Plenary by UNESCAP- (High level Segment)

The third day comprised of 6 plenaries at the UN Hall on different agendas:

- P1: Towards COP 25 and Efforts to Achieve the Aims of the Paris Agreement
- P2: NDC Implementations: Raising Ambition
- P3: Long- Term Strategies for Decarbonization
- P4: Markets and Carbon Pricing in Asia- Pacific
- P5: Stakeholders Engagement Towards the Climate Action Summit and COP 25
- P6: Facilitating NDC Actions: All Actors on Deck

I also participated in a global cafe discussion session at UNICEF with a few other delegates on “The young generations: capturing voices and action needed to build resilience for all”, during the lunch break.

Some of the panelists, keynote speakers in different plenaries were:

- Warawut Silpa- archa, Minister of Environment, Thailand
- Olvais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Climate Change, UNFCCC
- Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary UNESCAP
- Amena Yauvoli, Ambassador for Climate Change and Oceans, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fiji
- Peter Thompson, Ambassador, UN Special Envoy for the Ocean
- Kripat Jiamset, Governor, Metropolitan Electricity Authority, Bangkok, Thailand
- Nur Masripatin, Senior Advisor to the Minister on Climate Change and International Conventions, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia
- Tae Yong Jung, International Cooperation Committee of the National Council on Climate and Air Quality, Republic of Korea

It was addressed on the discussions how “our window of increasing temperature is closing and honouring the 2020 ambition is needed in both action and support” (Warawut Silpa). Increasing the share of domestic mitigation, investment in renewable energy by using Natural Gas as the bridge, cutting of single use plastics which contribute to greenhouse emission in every stage of production and tax on such single use plastics with better monitoring on leakage of them especially to the ocean were addressed in the session.

“Asia Pacific region has experienced unparalleled growth and thus the region is most vulnerable” (Olvais Sarmad). This region houses twice as many people as the region of vulnerable as in the world. The deputy secretary of UNCC pointed out how, “we are turning our greatest asset into greatest threat.” He remarked that if businesses are not working, it clearly indicated that businesses must change and that a new direction of cleaner and greener world should be embarked.

With each report coming from IPCC, the comprehension of climate change keeps adding. The data claimed that upon increasing of global warming to 2 degree celsius, the sea level rise will lead to diminishing loss of precious biodiversity. Thus some of the expected outcome and necessary steps summarized were:

- Financing and raising mitigation and adaptation
- SDG is critical commitment to overcome climate change
- We are scaling up our regional ambitions, creating partnerships
- We need to once again generate the wheel to build framework for Paris Agreement
- Climate Neutrality- the vision of Paris Agreement must be achieved
- It is unaffordable to make mistakes in the first generation infrastructures.
- There needs to be a decision on Article 6, which makes the ambition of NDC possible
- Need to develop new financial instruments
- Requirement of multilateral, bilateral, governmental, financial, institutional partnerships



**Plenary by UNESCAP**



**Discussing during the Global Cafe setting at UNICEF**



**Participants at UNICEF**

## Day 4: Resilience and Adaptation, Nature- Based Solutions (Ocean Ecosystems and Water Resources)

The first session, 'Resilience and Adaptation' discussed on strengthening a shared understanding of coherent adaptation and disaster risk reduction planning. Also, the key opportunities were explored to accelerate coherence in practise and means to achieve it, integration and scale- up, both at the sectoral and local levels, to inform and strengthen the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The panelists discussed upon the aspects of risk assessment and the global risk outlook in terms of impact. They specific challenges pointed out were: the science challenges revolving with food, energy and water as a nexus, localizing adaptation targets, urban rural partnership for sustainable resource management, coherence and interference. The importance of science-governance interface was also highlighted.

“Any division between DRR and adaptation is purely artificial, and one also has to look at the mindsets” (Youssef Nassef, Director, Adaptation, UNFCCC). The institutional difference were also addressed in the plenary.

The 3 policy actions suggested were:

- Invest in disaster resilience. (inclusive investments are affordable and delivers important socio- economic co benefits.)
- Empower the poor with big data and new technologies
- We must seize opportunities for action through A-P disaster resilience network

The second half of the day had another plenary discussion on, 'Nature- based solutions(NbS)', which primarily focused on the ocean ecosystems and water resources. Examples of natural methods like Mangrove forests, recharge parks in urban areas (sponge cities), were presented with further inputs on other various methods by the participants and the panelists collectively. Nature- based solutions is a widely accepted concept which has been adopted in policy by numerous institutions including the European Commision and the United Nations organizations.

The importance of putting nature on plans (climate plans, development plans, city plans) was also stressed. The initiative , 'Bonn Challenge' was also presented which works with countries to restore 350 million hectare of forest lands by 2030.

The session was successful in harmonizing and understanding relation to the concept of NbS through policy and action in relation to biodiversity and climate change with a focus on ocean ecosystems and water resources in Asia and the Pacific.



**Presentation on NbS**



**Presentation on Resilience  
and Adaptation**

## Day 5: Thematic Dialogue on Transparency and Plenary on Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations for the Climate Action Summit

The dialogue had following objectives:

- Familiarize countries with the new MPGs for transparency and the implications for national implementation
- Demonstrate the added value of the enhanced transparency framework so that it inspires countries to take stronger ownership of the process
- Discuss experiences, opportunities and challenges at the national level from countries with the support received for establishing MRV systems
- Identify options for future improved planning of international support to strengthen national-level readiness for enhanced climate action.

The enhanced transparency framework established under the Paris Agreement and its modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs) were introduced by Mr. Tomasz Chruszczow, High-Level Champion, Poland. Alongside, different perspectives from Mongolia, Cambodia and Japan was also presented in the plenary.

There also was a side event where participants from Tonga, Nepal and India presented the technological solutions and innovative approaches and the challenges in the context of their country for smart energy and water use in the agri- food.

In the end, the closing plenary address the key messages that emerged from various discussions throughout the week, especially around energy and industry transition, resilience, and adaptation. They key messages were reflected by representatives from different organisations like ADB, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCAP, World Bank.

The deputy regional director, UNEP remarked, “We have been working very hard panning the 4 key messages coming from the conference, meeting the diversity of concepts; going not only beyond national level, but also at local level from the grassroots”. It was pointed out how all the countries have become strongly interested on how the price will be put on carbon, and also how the argument on fossil fuels have come on larger scale with thinking of measures to enlarge the renewable energy.



**The closing Plenary**



**A few of us delegates with  
Mr. Ovais Sarmad,  
Deputy Executive Secretary,  
UNFCCC after the closing  
plenary**

On an ending note, the plenary pointed that the climate week has now become part of the global climate calendar. It also stressed on the global engagement of youth that has reminded on the impact of climate and the assets not inherited from past, but borrowed from the future. The delegates were urged to take the role of communication and advocacy back to their home countries and establish stronger wave of awareness and action, a step forward to overcome climate change- “A Race We Can Win”.

