



Announcement

Sixth Session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-6), Drought Workshop, Capacity Building Workshop and User Forum for Water Sector Dhaka, Bangladesh, 19-23 April 2015

South Asia is home to well over one fifth of the world's population inhabiting just 3% of the global land area, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. The weather and climate of South Asia is dominated by South-West monsoon. Almost 70-80% of the total annual rainfall occurs in this time (June–September) of the year and it affects the socio-economic sectors of the countries of this region. Therefore, the influence of South-West monsoon on the life and livelihood of the people of this region is very significant. Seasonal to inter-annual variability of monsoon rainfall, both in amount and distribution, often results in severe droughts or floods over this densely populated region, with large-scale impacts on the agrarian societies in terms of agricultural production and food security. As there is a strong link between the impacts of summer monsoon and overall economic condition of all the South Asian countries, planning and implementing development programmes for effective and sustainable economic growth, more accurate and reliable information and early warning about monsoon activity over South Asia is a growing demand of the society.

The science behind the South Asian monsoon and its variability on different time and space scales is quite complex and monsoon prediction is still considered to be a difficult problem. That said, over the last few decades have seen remarkable advances in the understanding and prediction in respect of different aspects of monsoon, mainly the rainfall strength and its pattern during the season with more lead time. As monsoon is a strongly coupled phenomenon where ocean, atmosphere and large land area are integral components of the system, its process is sometimes difficult to understand for the meteorologists and researchers and this demands further collaborative research.

In Asia, information and outlook regarding the monsoon season for the entire continent is being provided through a Regional Climate Outlook Forum (RCOF), coordinated by China since 2005 through the Forum on Regional Climate Monitoring-Assessment-Prediction for Asia (FOCRAII; <http://bcc.cma.gov.cn/channel.php?channelId=70>). Considering Asia as a vast continent with large differences in the climatological conditions, Regional Association II (Asia) of World Meteorological Organization (WMO) recommended the establishment of sub-regional RCOFs, dedicated to specific needs of groups of countries having similar climatic patterns. With this point of view, in a meeting convened by WMO, the Directors General of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in South Asia and Permanent Representatives (PRs) of the respective countries with WMO, at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Trieste, Italy, on 6 August 2009 had unanimously agreed to establish a South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF), to be implemented from 2010 onwards. Since then, the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum has been working as a scientific platform to overcome the challenges in seasonal prediction including the process and trend of South-West monsoon system in this region.

The main objectives of SASCOF are the following:

1. To review the progress made in understanding and long range prediction of summer monsoon both regionally and globally;
2. To assess the available information on climate variability in South Asia and the associated predictions and prepare consensus-based seasonal outlooks for dissemination;
3. To provide a platform for the stakeholders to share and exchange experience and knowledge on summer monsoon and its prediction;
4. To initiate capacity building/human resource development activities for the South Asian region, particularly in seasonal prediction;
5. To build collaboration and partnerships among the members of SASCOF for mutual benefit;
6. To identify needs of user sectors through a dialogue among different groups.

The first three meetings of SASCOF were held in Pune, India jointly hosted by India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) with the support of WMO. In the first meeting of SASCOF (SASCOF-1) held in April, 2010, the Forum agreed that, more collaboration among operational long range forecasters of South Asia and research institutes of the countries of the region are required to improve the prediction skill of the models. The Forum also agreed for active interaction with the concerned global and regional experts. It strongly recommended the initiation of a capacity building/human resource development plan for the South Asian nations, particularly for seasonal prediction. Accordingly, from the second SASCOF onwards, capacity building training workshop for participants from the South Asian countries became an important part of the Forum meeting. The SASCOF-2 meeting was held during 13-15 April, 2011 and the first training workshop on seasonal prediction was organized during 8-12 April, 2011. The SASCOF-3 training workshop and Forum meeting were held during 16-20 April, 2012. SASCOF-4 training workshop and Forum meeting were held at Kathmandu, Nepal during 15-19 April, 2013. The SASCOF-5 training workshop and main Forum meeting were held at Pune, India during 14-23 April 2014. In conjunction with SASCOF-5, a User Forum for Water Sector coordinated by International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) was also held during 23 to 25 April, 2014.

The Sixth Session of SASCOF (SASCOF-6) will be held during 21-22 April 2015 at the Headquarters of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh. It will be preceded by a Capacity Building Training Workshop on Seasonal Prediction for the operational climate experts of the South Asian countries, from 19 to 20 April 2015 at the BMD Headquarters, Dhaka. In conjunction with SASCOF-6, there will be a Drought Workshop on 20 April 2015 that is being organized jointly by WMO, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Global Water Partnership (GWP). A User Forum for Water Sector coordinated by International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) will also be held during 22-23 April 2015 at the same premises. These meetings are co-sponsored by the WMO through a programme for implementing the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) at regional and national scales funded by the Department of Environment, Government of Canada, and supported by IMD, ICID, IWMI, GWP and BMD. All the above programmes will be conducted in English and there will be no provision for translation.

The Forum is expected to provide a climate outlook for the 2015 summer monsoon season. Experts from the SASCOF member countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as several regional and global experts will participate in it. In order to facilitate the dialogue and promote the use of RCOF products by the climate sensitive user sectors, the Forum will also be attended by representatives of the user community. The Forum will include appraisals of country perspectives, assessing capacity building needs, global and regional indicators, consensus outlook generation and user interaction. The participating national climate experts will receive guidance in using, interpreting and downscaling global seasonal prediction products and developing a consensus outlook.