



Fifteenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES XV) Unleashing an equitable green transformation in South Asia

Kathmandu | 11-13 December 2024

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

The notion of green economy is getting unprecedented attention amid an urgency to protect the environment, tackle climate change, achieve energy security as geopolitical tensions escalate and seek new sources of job-creating sustained economic growth. States, developed and developing, are providing various forms of support to green technologies and industry. Green economy is also an integral part of the comprehensive gamut of development goals that the world has embraced as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Besides mitigation, for the developing world, including South Asia, especially important are strategies for adaptation, resilience and sustainable transformation of economies with equity as industrial production processes and urbanization models, among other things, hitherto followed are not replicable and the transition to a green economy has equity implications.

South Asia is a poor region that is growing fast, albeit with a variation across countries and a lot of catch-up to do vis-à-vis more advanced developing countries. Growth is accompanied by a stress on the environment. Some countries in the region are industrializing while some have prematurely deindustrialized. Alongside the longstanding imperative of significantly reducing poverty and creating decent jobs, South Asian countries have to respond to the rise of carbon markets, the introduction of carbon border taxes and the proliferation of carbon labels, capitalizing on the opportunities and minimizing the risks and adverse effects.

The region is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. More than half of all South Asians were affected by one or more climate-related disasters in the last two decades. Up to 800 million people could see their living conditions significantly worsen on account of climate change. South Asia's climate vulnerabilities are accentuated by Himalayan glacier melt, which is escalating due to human-induced climate change, posing grave risks to future food and water security. The Himalayas are melting at least 10 times higher than the average over past centuries leading to floods and landslides in the region. Forecasts suggest that the adverse economic impacts of climate change in South Asia will surpass the global average, primarily due to agriculture's crucial role in the regional economy. Projections indicate potential GDP declines by 2099, with Bhutan facing an 18 percent reduction, Nepal 13 percent, and both India and Pakistan experiencing a 10 percent decrease each. Climate change-induced loss and damage could cost South Asia US\$518 billion by 2050, potentially escalating to US\$997 billion by 2070. South Asian nations collectively need US\$1,758 billion by 2030 to implement their climate plans. At the current monetary value and level of warming, they require roughly US\$200 billion annually until

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2030. However, they only receive an average of US\$1.25 billion per year in climate-related development finance.

Discussions on the prospects for and feasibility of cooperation among South Asian countries in pursuit of an equitable low-carbon, green growth have been limited. What is the scope for forging cooperative pathways in areas such as industry, trade, infrastructure, climate finance, technology, food security, energy, tourism, farmers' rights, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction/management—at multilateral, regional, subregional and bilateral levels? Where does South Asia stand on climate justice? How are the implications of climate challenge for inequality? What interventions are needed to support the resilience of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and women-led businesses?

About SAES

Five leading think tanks from South Asia have been organizing the South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) on an annual basis since its launch in 2008. SAES has emerged as a reputed platform bringing together the research community, policymakers, lawmakers, the private sector and the broader civil society to deliberate on issues of interest to the South Asia region, identify new avenues of cooperation and generate creative and practical ideas for forging a collective way forward. A wide range of development partners have supported this endeavour.

The think tanks spearheading this initiative are Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh; Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan; and Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.

A timeline of the previous fourteen summits along with the overarching theme of each of them are presented in Annex 1.

SAES XV

The 15th edition of the Summit is being hosted in Kathmandu on 11-13 December 2024 with SAWTEE as the lead organizer and the other four think tanks as co-organizers.

The overarching theme is **Unleashing an equitable green transformation in South Asia**. Discussions will be spread across plenary and parallel sessions, covering a range of topics and issues of interest to the region:

- **Setting the scene—Vision 2030: Towards a green South Asia**
 - Agenda for cooperation at regional and subregional levels

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- Key elements of what is needed for an equitable green transformation:
 - Industry, trade, infrastructure, finance and technology
 - *Trade and industrial policies in a time of climate action, including country-level net-zero plans and agendas*
 - *Digital, green and sustainable trade facilitation*
 - *Circular economy*
 - *Trade in environmental goods and services*
 - *Carbon markets and trade, and implications of carbon border adjustment mechanisms and responses*
 - *Guarding against greenwashing and green laundering*
 - *Green value chains*
 - *Climate-proofing trade and other infrastructures*
 - *Green finance (e.g., public finance, private finance, including international cooperation on operationalizing the loss and damage fund)*
 - *Investment, including FDI*
 - *Technology and green transition (e.g., what technologies need to be prioritized? Intellectual property rights issues. Technology transfer issues. Role of digitalization)*
 - Climate justice
- Agriculture, food security and green transition
- Disaster risk reduction/management
- SAARC Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation and harnessing clean energy
- Blue economy
- Sustainable tourism
- Biodiversity
- Farmers' rights
- Gender and green transition (e.g., mitigation, adaptation and finance)
- Towards a smooth and irreversible LDC graduation
- Technology and innovation (e.g., digitalization; digital trade; ecommerce)
- Climate resilience and MSMEs and women-led businesses

Select research papers will also be presented during the conference.

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Prospective participants

Around 150 participants representing governments, parliaments, the private sector, academic institutions, think tanks, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media.

Outputs

Live coverage on social media; media releases

Resources

SAWTEE, co-organizers and development partners will be contributing to the technical and financial resources needed to organize the Summit.

Annex I

Summit	Host, place and date	Theme
First South Asia Economic Summit	IPS-Colombo: 28 July-3 August 2008	Economic integration in South Asia: SAFTA and Beyond AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE
Second South Asia Economic Summit	RIS-New Delhi: 10-12 December 2009	South Asia in the context of global financial meltdown AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE
Third South Asia Economic Summit	SAWTEE and SACEPS- Kathmandu: 17-19 December 2010	Regional economic integration, climate change and food security: Agenda for the decade 2011-2020 AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE
Fourth South Asia Economic Summit	CPD-Dhaka: 22-23 October 2011	Global recovery, new risks and sustainable growth: Repositioning South Asia AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE

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Fifth South Asia Economic Summit	SDPI-Islamabad: 11-13 September 2012	Making growth inclusive and sustainable in South Asia <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Sixth South Asia Economic Summit	IPS-Colombo: 2-4 September 2013	Towards a stronger, dynamic and inclusive South Asia <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Seventh South Asia Economic Summit	RIS-New Delhi: 5-7 November 2014	Towards South Asia Economic Union <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Eighth South Asia Economic Summit	SDPI-Islamabad: 7-8 December 2015	Regional cooperation for sustainable development in South Asia <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Ninth South Asia Economic Summit	CPD-Dhaka: 15-16 October 2016	Reimagining South Asia in 2030 <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Tenth South Asia Economic Summit	SAWTEE-Kathmandu: 14-16 November 2017	Deepening economic integration for inclusive and sustainable development in South Asia <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Eleventh South Asia Economic Summit	SDPI-Islamabad: 4-7 December 2018	Corridors of knowledge for peace and development <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Twelfth South Asia Economic Summit	IPS-Colombo: 26-27 September 2019	Shaping South Asia's future in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Thirteenth South Asia Economic Summit	RIS-Delhi: 19-20 April 2022 Summit	Prospects of greater economic cooperation in South Asia <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>
Fourteenth South Asia Economic Summit	CPD-Dhaka: 4-5 November 2023	Reframing South Asian regional cooperation in the new context: National and global dimensions <u>AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE</u>