

Press Release

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For immediate release

IWMI and World Bank convene experts on climate adaptation and water resources management in South Asia

Regional and international experts meet in Colombo to determine how to more effectively manage water resources in the context of climate change

(Colombo, 12 July). Following the Paris COP 21 meeting, where water management was prominent in discussions on responding to climate change, a two-day meeting of experts from seven South Asian countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - and the international community kicks off today in Colombo. With recent floods in Sri Lanka, ongoing flooding in Peninsular South Asia and the last two consecutive years of El Nino drought that effected nearly 330 million people in India alone fresh in the minds of policy makers and affected communities, this meeting organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and sponsored by the World Bank through the South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI) Technical Assistance on climate change and water resources management will address the challenge of enhancing capacities at all levels to manage water resources more effectively in South Asia in order to adapt successfully to climate change and minimize risks to communities and economies.

Recent devastating floods, droughts and heat-waves across South Asian countries highlight the challenges ahead in preparing for and responding to climate change. Building on three diagnostic papers prepared under the first phase of the technical assistance SAWI project which is being implemented by the IWMI and the Bank, the meeting will enable unprecedented sharing of knowledge and experience across the region, a key element in responding to change when so much of the region's water resources are transboundary in nature. The meeting will also address critical challenges facing countries in managing groundwater more effectively in the context of climate change.

According to Dr. Rafik Hirji, the World Bank Team Leader, "this SAWI – supported technical assistance has the objective of collaboratively building knowledge, tools, and capacity across the region to assist governments in adapting to the emerging climate change threats in the water sector through developing effective policy frameworks as well as practical planning, development and management actions that promote effective adaptation responses." The experts meeting brings together key decision makers from seven South Asian countries to: establish a network of specialists on Water and Adaptation in South Asia, review Phase 1 work, and seek guidance and support for the establishment of a second phase, focused on the development of adaptation frameworks in respective countries.

In his inaugural address Professor Mohan Munasinghe, former Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), will examine the question: Whether South Asia's water sector is resilient enough to adapt to climate change and achieve the SDGs? Over two days, more than 50 participants will tackle these and other core questions, seeking to shape further the adaptation frameworks necessary at all levels to support more effective climate change adaptation.

Co-organizer of the meeting, Dr. Alan Nicol from the IWMI says that this meeting "is about addressing the challenges for all at a more collective and coherent level – including assessing the current state of knowledge and establishing ways and means of ensuring more effective knowledge dissemination in future across South Asia".

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Notes for editors:

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The **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** is a non-profit, scientific research organization, headquartered in Colombo, which focuses on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries. IWMI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium. CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. It leads the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems which examines how we can intensify agriculture while still protecting the environment and lifting millions of farm families out of poverty. www.iwmi.org

The World Bank Group headquartered in Washington, DC with Country Offices in South Asia, including Sri Lanka is committed to achieving a water secure world for all by helping countries manage water sustainably across multiple sectors, now and for future generations. It is a major water sector development partner in South Asia. The Bank's lending portfolio in SAR includes 172 projects totalling US\$ 25 billion in the Water Practice and an additional US\$10 billion of water-related lending in other Practices). Of this, 28% is in SAR, and this proportion is growing. Within the water portfolio, work on water resources management is now the largest and fastest growing component. This increasingly includes supporting water supply and water resources infrastructure, governance and institutional reforms, and improved water planning for river basins and aquifers and climate change adaptation. www.worldbankgroup.org