

**Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting
and
Fourth Session of the Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting**

INAUGURATION CEREMONY

1. Inauguration Ceremony of the Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting and the Fourth Session of the Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting was held on 1 October 2007 in Malé, Maldives.

Welcome address

2. The opening ceremony started with welcome address by Abdullahi Majeed Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Water, Maldives. He extended a warm welcome to the participants of the ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting and the Fourth Session of the Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting. He highlighted the achievements of the Malé Declaration in phases: (i) phase 1-baseline studies and networking, phase 2- capacity building for monitoring, and phase 3- capacity building for impact assessment. He thanked the institutions involved in the implementation of the Malé Declaration.

Introduction to the meeting

3. Mr. Surendra Shrestha, UNEP Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, introducing the meeting, pointed out the Malé Declaration adopted by the Environment Ministers of South Asia is important providing the frame work for regional cooperation on atmospheric issues in South Asia. He emphasized that atmospheric issues such as climate change and Atmospheric Brown Clouds (ABC) are high on the regional and global agenda and the implementation of the Malé Declaration should be coordinated with similar initiatives at regional and global level. He mentioned that the Fifth Regional Stakeholders meeting and Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental meeting, which will start tomorrow, has a major task in terms of reviewing the phase 3 implementation and developing the plan for the next 3 years, the phase 4. He thanked member governments, Regional Facilitator (Mr. Rajamani), Monitoring Committee, SACEP, Sida, and SEI for their commitment and continued support for the implementation of the Malé Declaration. He expressed gratitude for H. E. Ahmed Abdullah and the Government of Maldives for hosting the meeting.

Opening remarks

4. Dr. Arvind Boaz, the Director General of SACEP, mentioned that the Malé Declaration is one of the significant milestones in the intergovernmental cooperation in South Asia and the declaration could provide a frame work for cooperation not only on air pollution issues but also for other environmental issues in South Asia. He requested the member countries to consider having SACEP as the Secretariat for the Malé Declaration for the Phase 4 implementation. He thanked member countries, Sida, SEI, and UNEP for their Efforts in the

implementation of the Malé Declaration; and the Government of Maldives for hosting the meeting.

5. Dr. Johan Kulenstierna, the Director of SEI-York, during his opening remarks briefed the success story of Europe in addressing the air pollution issues through regional cooperation. He indicated that the development of technical capacity has already been initiated in South Asia under the Malé Declaration and the future activities should build on the ongoing activities. He informed that SEI will continue to help the member countries in developing their capacities to address the air pollution issues in South Asia.

Inaugural Address

6. His Excellency Ahmed Abdullah, Hon. Minister, Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Water, Maldives, during the inaugural address, informed that it is a privilege for the Government of Maldives to host the Malé Declaration meeting during the holy month of Ramadan in Malé, the birth place of the Malé Declaration. H.E stated that nearly 10 years has passed after the adaption of the Malé Declaration and technical capacity of Maldives to monitor air pollution has significantly increased during these 10 years. In 1998, when the Malé Declaration was adopted, we had no air quality monitoring station in Maldives. Now Maldives is operating 3 monitoring stations on a continuous basis. H. E expressed satisfaction with the existing institutional arrangement for the implementation of the Malé Declaration and recommended that the same should be continued during the phase 4. This Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting is going to consider a plan for the phase 4. The meeting may consider strengthening the basis of the Malé Declaration by moving towards conventions during the next 3 years. The participation could still be on voluntary basis; but the convention will allow member governments to allocate additional resources for the implementation of the Malé Declaration. He thanked UNEP for playing the facilitator role on the atmospheric issues in Asia and providing the secretariat for the Malé Declaration; and Sida for continuously providing the much needed financial support.