

**Eighth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting  
and  
Third Session of the Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting**

**INAUGURATION CEREMONY**

1. Inauguration Ceremony of the Eighth Session of the Intergovernmental Meeting and the Third Session of the Regional Stakeholders cum Coordination Meeting was held on 12 September 2006.
2. The opening ceremony started with the “Marchang Ceremony\*\*”.
3. His Excellency Dasho Nado Rinchhen, Deputy Minister, National Environment Commission (NEC), Bhutan thanked the Chief Guest His Excellency, Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, the Minister for Trade and Industry, Bhutan for his presence at the important meeting. H.E welcomed the delegates, participants, guests, organizers and the donors to Bhutan. In his welcome address, Deputy Minister Rinchhen briefly introduced the Male’ Declaration and the activities that is being implemented in Bhutan. His Excellency emphasized the need for vigilance and actions in air pollution and the need of additional monitoring stations. His Excellency stressed for greater regional cooperation for addressing transboundary air pollution issues, besides the activities carried out at the national level, which is equally important to mitigate air pollution problems. In this regard, His Excellency thanked for facilitating the regional cooperation under the Malé Declaration. His Excellency also highlighted the need of continued support for capacity building, the mutual cooperation among the Male’ Declaration countries, and support provided by UNEP/RR-CAP, SIDA and SACEP in implementing the Malé Declaration successfully.

**Introduction to the meeting**

3. Mr. Surendra Shrestha, UNEP Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, introducing the meeting, pointed out the challenge of sustainable economic growth with minimal adverse environmental effects in a populous region with a large proportion of poor people . He mentioned that we should be aware of climate change and global warming because of its impacts in the region. He emphasized the need of regional cooperation in dealing with regional problems. Mr. Shrestha was optimistic with the development and progress of the Male’ Declaration. He pointed out that the group would be better equipped by the next phase with a better understanding and awareness of the problems and the ability to influence the policy making process, so as to address issues like the ownership of the program and capacity building. Mr.

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*\*\* Marchang ceremony is an important ceremony that is performed before any important meeting or function is held. Traditionally, it is believed to ward-off any obstacles and bad event that may occur during the course of the meeting or function.*

Shrestha appreciated the cooperation and guidance of participating countries, national implementation agencies, and various institutions and personnel.

4. Dr. Arvind Boaz, the Director General of SACEP, stressed the need of steady implementation of the program to address air pollution problems including the transboundary transport of air pollution. He highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge, experiences, problems and solutions in the successful implementation of the program and achieving the goal of the Male' Declaration. Mr. Boaz assured the continued support from SACEP. He thanked NIAs and various institutions including Sida, SEI, MoC, UNEP.

#### Inaugural Address

5. His Excellency Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, Minister for Trade and Industry extended a warm welcome to the delegates, participants, donors and the organizers to Bhutan. In his inaugural address, H.E informed that Bhutan enjoys an excellent reputation for nature conservation and a clean environment. Bhutan has received various prestigious international awards such as the Champion of Earth Award in recognition thereof. H.E laso informed that Bhutan has a stringent policy on air pollution and environmental protection legislations. H.E, however, pointed that there is a gradual increase in air problems in Bhutan such as vehicular emission and local dust reducing visibility, and emphasized the effects of tranboundary transport of air pollutants. Bhutan does not want to pollute the neighboring countries, nor does it want to be polluted by others.. As air pollution is one of the major environmental challenges in the region, H.E stressed the need for concerted regional cooperation to address this regional problem. H.E appreciated the support and cooperation of various institutes, and thanked everyone including the organizers of the meeting.

#### Vote of Thanks

6. Mr. Sonam Yangley, the Director of the National Environment Commission, Bhutan expressed the vote of thanks to the Chief Guest, Minister Yeshey Zimba, Deputy Minister Nado Rinchhen, UNEP Regional Director Mr. Surendra Shrestha, SACEP Director General Dr. Boaz, Sara Stenhammar of SIDA, Johan Kuylenstierna of SEI, collaborating institutions and participants, and organizers of the meeting. He wished a pleasant stay in the Kingdom.