

Taking action for 350

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WILL BATES

YOUTH from all across South Asia and all around the world are leading the charge in a global day of action on the 24th of October. Through creative actions of all kinds, the day will be a powerful call to all governments to commit to policies and actions that will set the world on course to below 350 ppm CO₂, what many scientists now agree is the safe limit of CO₂ in the atmosphere (more information available at www.350.org).

From high in the Himalayas to the Sunderbans of India and Bangladesh, from Swamibhunath in Kathmandu to the Taj Mahal in Agra, in big cities and remote villages -- all across South Asia people are uniting in the common call

for 350.

Why 350? It was just under two years ago that a scientific report called, "Target Atmospheric CO₂: Where Humanity Should Aim" was published by a number of scientists, most notably NASA scientist James Hansen. In that paper, Hansen et al. issued this profound and important statement:

"If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that CO₂ will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm."

Since then many other leading scientists, economists, activists, and leaders from many sectors are joining in a

growing chorus of voices supporting this 350 target. In late August Indian scientists and IPCC head Dr. Rajendra Pachauri added his personal endorsement, "...as a human being I am fully supportive of that goal. What is happening, and what is likely to happen, convinces me that the world must be really ambitious and very determined to move toward a 350 target."

Furthermore over 80 countries, including several in South Asia, now argue internationally that 350 represents the bottom line for effective action on climate. At the UN Climate Talks in Bonn last month, the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) joined forces with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to make a powerful statement to demand that a climate agreement coming out of Copenhagen must actually be bold enough to fix the problem. For AOSIS and the LDCs that means a peak in global emissions by 2015 and deep short-term reductions. According to a press-release they issued in Bonn, these reductions are necessary to make it possible to "return atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations to 350."

But certainly it's not just the experts or government officials talking about 350. What makes the 350 target particularly

unique is the growing grassroots movement of support for strong and effective international cooperation to get CO₂ levels back below 350 ppm. Already in 2008 and 2009 young people, religious groups, athletes, and artists have been spreading the number around the globe. And now the 24th of October is gearing up to be one of the most widely distributed coordinated global actions to ever take place--and the www.350.org website documents it all.

Now, following the South Asian Youth Summit on Climate Change, the youth networks across the region are stepping up their own leadership and taking the movement to the streets, mountains, beaches, temples, and everywhere. In every country, youth are organizing and recruiting actions, but the 24th of October day of action is not restricted to youth. People of all ages are invited to join. Wherever you live you can attend an action if one is being planned near you, or you can start your own. To find more information about actions near you or on how to organize one yourself (no previous organizing experience necessary) please visit www.350.org.

Will Bates is the Asia Pacific Campaign Coordinator of 350.org.

South Asian Youth Summit on Climate Change

SAYSoCC 09



Declaration

September 6 2009, Dhulikhel, Nepal

WE the youth of South Asia are deeply perturbed by the impacts and causes of climate change on human and natural systems.

We reaffirm the fundamental relationship between human and natural systems.

We firmly support upholding principles of equity and human and eco rights in all processes of decision making and implementation of policies, laws and programmes on climate change.

We recognize the extreme vulnerability of South Asia to climate change and its low historical responsibility for the contribution of atmospheric greenhouse gases.

We appreciate the shared cultural heritage, common histories, geographical proximity and calling for a strong concerted community based, local, regional, and global action.

We seek effective governance and management of resources that aligns efforts to eradicate social injustices and combat disaster and displacement caused by climate change.

We believe in effective participation and negotiation by all countries, especially those most vulnerable, at the global level towards concrete solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

We the youths from South Asia are committed to:

- Forming a youth network that will unite grassroots and country level movements across South Asia.

- Articulating and committing to a region wide and country level strategies that will address climate change.

- Conducting follow up events that will review progress made, plan future events and provide a venue for sharing ideas and inspiring each other.

- Playing a major role in sensitizing the society, youth in particular, and disseminating information on climate change issues and raising awareness.

- Creating a generation of youth who will lead a low carbon life style ensuring sustainability for inter generational equity.

And we strongly demand that the governments of South Asia should:

- Agree to the MVC/AOSIS position that temperature increase should be limited to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and CO₂ concentrations should return to below 350 ppm. And ask Annex I

defined parameters for the South Asian youth and governments which can direct them in their climate change event.

Eco-friendliness

Occasionally does it happen that forums act in accordance with what they aim to project. SAYSoCC was once such event where one got to see the physical manifestation of the idea of eco-friendliness. The organisers of the Summit paid special attention to maintaining a 'green' disposition throughout the event.

It was a pleasant surprise to know that the Summit venues, Mirabel Resort in Dulikhel and the Kantipur Hotel in Kathmandu, were environment friendly. For instance, the food that we had was recycled using a biogas plant, and the rooms had no fans or television.

Upon hearing about the initiatives taken by local networks of different countries on reducing carbon footprints, it became apparent that the participants too really believed in living sustainable and environmentally secure lives.

Shared vision and action

However, the most important aspect of the Summit was the formulation of the South Asian Youth Declaration on Climate Change. The efforts of the drafting committee in this regard are noteworthy, who toiled on draft after draft, followed by a heated debate among the participants, to come up with the Declaration. Though the document is an initial effort which still requires further amendments and discussion, what it offers is certain

be a fun-filled activity, but also exposed the participants to the proceedings of the actual negotiations scenario.

Opportunity

With over 100 participants from 10 different countries attended the event, one can expect diverse perspectives and experiences. Aisha, an environmental consultant from Maldives, thinks that "SAYSoCC was a focal point for me to meet new people and work towards addressing climate change". Marina, a youth activist from Pakistan, saw SAYSoCC as "an opportunity to learn about environment issues of different countries", while Masood from Afghanistan feels that "such events are necessary to empower our youth and make them well-informed about current issues".

Farukh Zaman is delegate from Pakistan Youth Climate Network.

aggravating the problem. For a fast developing country like India with 70% of the population below the age of 35, climate change worsens the existing social inequality. To bridge that gap, policies that incorporate the challenges of CC and adaptation to it are needed. For a young India, people from all walks of life need to be sensitized and equipped with the knowhow on the steps individuals can take to limit the problem.

Nepal

RUSHIKESH RAM BHANDARY, National Coordinator, Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA)

NEPAL is very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Livelihoods hinge on the precarious balance of nature. Furthermore, the effects of climate change are already being felt through accelerated glacial melts and irregularity of the monsoons.

As essential stakeholders in the climate change challenge, Nepali youth have risen up. Whether it be through awareness programmes or through providing input to the policy process, Nepali youth have been active. Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA) is a network of individuals, organizations and other partners, all working on climate change.

In an attempt to reach the grassroots across Nepal, NYCA is going to hold regional climate camps in Nepal's five development regions. NYCA will continue to work very closely with schools and colleges to spread awareness on climate change and encourage people to come up with local solutions. Special efforts will be made to broaden the base of climate activists in Nepal. NYCA will continue to encourage strong involvement of youth in policy making, both nationally and in international negotiations.

Pakistan

MARINA AHMED, National Coordinator, Pakistan Youth Climate Network (PYCN)

PAKISTAN'S greatest challenge is, undoubtedly, the lack of awareness regarding the issue of climate change. The practical consequences of climate change, daunting as they are, do not hit home. Moreover, the masses, like any developing countries, are primarily concerned with the basics of survival, like food. Concepts like 'climate change' are not only hard to comprehend, but seem unlikely and unrealistic in their actualization. Spreading more knowledge and emphasizing the effect of climate change on everyone's life individually, becomes fundamental to Pakistan's movement.

The Pakistani youth is, as of recently,

parties that they commit to emission reduction by 45% by 2020 and 90% by 2050 with base year 1990 and emission peaking no later than 2015.

• Remain cognizant of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the need to take nationally appropriate mitigation measures but also lobby for advanced developing countries inter alia India and China to take mandatory mitigation targets as well.

• NMAs of developing countries financed and technologically supported by Annex I parties must not be counted towards the domestic reduction targets of developed countries and emissions must be controlled at the source.

• Raise a unified voice for adaptation funding that is adequate, predictable, additional and sustainable to ODA and targeted to meet the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable groups and communities. Adaptation needs must be country driven and the funds must be governed under the UN processes.

• Call on developed countries to fulfil the commitment made in Marrakesh, Morocco to fund the implementation of NAPAs.

• Move towards a low carbon economy through the support of developed countries in terms of grants in financing and technology transfer.

• Develop a mechanism in which Annex I parties support appropriate technology development and diffusion to the developing countries; encourage technology transfer and sharing of indigenous skills between developing countries.

• Ensure that the policies and programmes of international funding bodies fully appreciate the grave nature of climate change and are climate sensitive

• Establish South Asian regional centre that is fully funded by Annex I parties for research, scientific development and economic diversification thereby building climate resilient socio economic systems in the developing countries.

• Include youths in all policy matters surrounding climate change and more specifically for the inclusion of youth representatives in the official delegation to climate change negotiation. We also call on our governments to endorse the inclusion of youth as a constituency to UNFCCC negotiations.

A united effort

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FARRUKH ZAMAN

THE South Asian Youth Summit on Climate Change (SAYSoCC) was an incredibly delightful experience. It not only proved to be a productive one in terms of enlightening the youth about various environmental issues, but also provided an opportunity for the participants to forge relationships that permit collective and collaborative thinking and action towards tackling climate change.

Even though the Summit largely comprised of young individuals, one cannot doubt the seriousness and hard work involved that made the event possible, and successful. The diversity and talent that the Summit attracted from different countries of the South Asian region was impressive. Under one roof, I met a project coordinator for UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) from Bangladesh, a journalist from Bhutan, a financial officer working for UN in Afghanistan, a Ministry representative from Pakistan and youth activists from Nepal, Sri

Lanka and India, among others. This multiplicity proved that no matter which country we belong to, or whatever we do in our daily lives, we all share a common goal: to address the immediate concern of climate change through communication and partnership in South Asia.

Climate talks

SAYSoCC featured informative presentations and sessions on several crucial issues and topics on climate change. The Summit was a critical information exchange platform, where the youth was imparted with specialized knowledge and awareness on climate change and its socio-economic and cultural predicaments. A workshop on Public Narrative was also conducted by Will Bates, which taught the participants on how to do effective campaigning against climate change. Furthermore, a simulation exercise based on the pattern of official UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) negotiations was also carried out that not only turned out to

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Bhutan

TSHERING CHUKI GYANTSHO, National Coordinator, Bhutanese Youth Network for Climate Change (BYNC)

BHUTAN with its fragile (mountain) ecosystem is very vulnerable to the threats posed by climate change, it has been a major concern in every aspect of life in Bhutan. Bhutan's climate has been warming over the years following which changes in temperature and precipitation with continued emission of greenhouse gases will bring changes in land suitability and crop yields.

Bhutan is dependent on agriculture and we still import about 7,200 tons of rice from India every year. However, one of the primary goals of the country's food security policy is to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains. The target in terms of self-sufficiency has been set at 70% of the total food requirement, which will be at threat due to climate change.

Glacier Lakes Outburst and floods, landslides, threats to biodiversity and land degradation are some of the major concerns in regards to climate change in Bhutan.

As of now, we do have the Young Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA) who are currently using the 3Rs and doing various cleaning campaigns. Every school in Bhutan also has a nature club. However, there is much more that needs to be done in creating awareness and educating the people on the threats of climate change.

On October 24, 2009, coinciding with the Global Day of Action, we would like to start the first Bhutanese Youth network for climate change. There is an immense need to define the role of Bhutanese youth in combating the ill effects of climate change as we all strongly believe that we are the future of our country and we have a lot more at stake.

Sri Lanka