

Media Update-2

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PRESS RELEASE

A call for bolder decisions for climate justice from Asia

30 October 2021 | KATHMANDU: United Nations Development Programme representatives from eight Asian countries have called on world leaders to take bold action to ensure climate justice for highly vulnerable developing states.

They were speaking at the 'Asian Pre-COP26 Dialogue' hosted by UNDP Nepal on Friday 29 October 2021, from Namche, that lies in the shadow of Mount Everest, nearly 3600 meters above sea level.

The event brought together heads of UNDP from Bhutan, India, Thailand, Pakistan, Laos, Maldives, and Mongolia. Over 200 development experts and climate practitioners joined the discussion to exchange country-level experiences, challenges, and innovative solutions, to tackle the climate crisis.

"We are at crossroads now. The world is on a pathway to exceed 2.7 degrees in global warming. It is time to join forces, express solidarity, and make our voices heard," said Kanni Wignaraja, UNDP's Assistant Secretary-General and the Director of its Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. "Let's say it out loud: Do not choose extinction!"

The dialogue concluded with a strong and common message: We need bolder decisions and partnerships for climate justice, particularly climate and sustainable development finance. Such financing would help poorer and vulnerable countries who have done little to contribute to the climate crisis.

The dialogue also emphasized the need for countries to make strong national climate pledges and step up their climate ambitions, as expressed through their “Nationally Determined Contributions” (NDCs), cut emissions and achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

“We are borrowing our carbon budget from our children and grandchildren. It is the youth of today that will suffer as a direct implication of our inaction and unwillingness to step up global climate action,” UNDP Nepal RR Ayshanie Medagangoda Labe. “Nepalis of yesterday did not borrow so much of today's Nepalis' carbon footprint, so today's Nepalis have the same duty to tomorrow's Nepalis, as advocating and investing for climate harmony is everybody's responsibility.”

“The Himalaya are one of the most beautiful parts of the world but also severely affected by the Climate Emergency. Yet in Ladakh, India, local communities are showing how to live in a harmony with nature and practice sustainable lifestyles. We must learn from them to leave a green and healthy planet, for our future generations,” said Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India.

“The world largest economies are still spending disproportionate amounts of resources on fossil fuel subsidies that are putting our climate at risk of the 1.5 degrees tipping point,” said Enrico Gaveglia, UNDP Resident Representative in the Maldives. “This is a death sentence for Small Island Developing States such as Maldives, who are already living in a climate crisis. It's time to bring in fossil fuel subsidy reforms and unlock climate finance to help our planet survive, with people on it. It's now or never.”

“Mongolia is faced with intensifying desertification and biodiversity loss. In response, the government has committed 1% of its GDP to combating climate change and deforestation, with a goal of planting one billion trees by 2030. Community engagement is essential to achieve a green, inclusive, and sustainable future,” said Elaine Conkievich, UNDP Resident Representative Mongolia. “Climate change and inequality are inextricably linked, as it is poor and vulnerable people who will mostly pay the price of inaction. COVID-19 presents an opportunity for governments across the globe to act now to prevent the devastating consequences of climate change.”

“We often talk about climate change as something that will happen in the future, but in northern Pakistan it is already happening. Regular disasters are hitting many villages, caused by Glacier Lake Outburst Floods

(GLOFs),” said Knut Ostby, UNDP Resident Representative Pakistan. “UNDP is supporting the Government of Pakistan and the local community to respond to this situation. Climate change is here. And we need to take action and address this right now.”

“Though not a net contributor to climate change, Lao PDR is heavily impacted by it. To combat desertification and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by droughts and floods; UNDP and the Global Environment Facility is supporting the government in the implementation of the SAFE-Ecosystems project, to not only help increase the forest cover, but also protect the endangered Eld’s Deer and biodiversity, together with the livelihoods of the people,” said Ricarda Rieger, UNDP Resident Representative in Lao PDR.

“Although Bhutan is carbon neutral, warming global temperatures are directly affecting all aspects of life. As a small and mountainous country, Bhutan is stepping up its climate ambition through the second NDC, but it cannot solve the climate crisis on its own,” said Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP Bhutan. “The countries with financial and technical capacity need to step up to honor the Paris Agreement. The COP26 will be a platform to make decisive commitments towards zero – carbon futures.”

“With Thailand located in the monsoon region, it is highly susceptible to extreme climate events, such as sea-level rise, flooding, cyclones and erosion. Climate change is impacting local tourism, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture and natural resources while creating additional stress on land and water resources,” said UNDP Resident Representative Renaud Meyer. “To address climate change, it is critical to implement community-based solutions working collaboratively with the public and private sectors.”

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About UNDP

As the United Nations lead agency on international development, UNDP works in 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. We help countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities, and to build resilience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Our work is

concentrated in three focus areas; sustainable development, democratic governance and peace building, and climate and disaster resilience.

UNDP through its Climate Promise is supporting 120 countries in their efforts to enhance their national climate ambitions and commitments under the Paris Agreement.