

IPCS Conference Report

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Energy and Environmental Security

A Regional Dialogue

Reported by J Jeganaathan

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Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies



Energy and Environmental Security: A Regional Dialogue

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The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), established in August 1996, is an independent think tank devoted to research on peace and security from a South Asian perspective.

Its aim is to develop a comprehensive and alternative framework for peace and security in the region catering to the changing demands of national, regional and global security.

Address:
B 7/3 Lower Ground Floor
Safdarjung Enclave
New Delhi 110029
INDIA

Introductory Remarks

D Suba Chandran

Director IPCS

For the past three years, the Consortium has been working on South Asian regional security issues. The aim is to bring together expertise from leading think-tanks of the region to study topical security issues and formulate a set of policy recommendations for the respective governments of the South Asian Countries as well as for SAARC.

The first endeavour was based on 'Connectivity', which was completed in 2009, while the second project was on 'Terrorism' which was completed last year. This year the consortium commissioned a study on 'Energy and Environmental Security' in January 2011 at the Kathmandu conference. In the second conference held in Colombo, the researchers presented their findings and proposed policy recommendations. These papers have been subsequently published into an edited volume.

This volume on energy and environmental security issues in South Asia is divided into two parts. The first part discusses about various country perspectives; it addresses how each country in South Asia looks at energy and environmental security issues in terms of what their problems are; what are the prospects; and what their major recommendations are.

The second part of the book talks about what can these countries do collectively at the regional level? It reflects on cooperation in energy, water and climate change issues and examines the prospects for regional energy corridor, electricity grid and water management. Lastly, the book offers policy recommendations on what needs to be further done on energy and environmental security issues.

Maj Gen Dipankar Banerjee
Mentor IPCS

The Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT) is an informal grouping of leading think tanks in South Asia, which meets every year for research and study on significant problems concerning the region. From a think-tank perspective, COSATT brings out solutions and publishes policy recommendations before each SAARC Summit. So, at the end of every SAARC Summit, it generates an idea or theme highlighted by the previous summit and then develops a research project consisting of an year-long study which finds solutions to the given problems thus taking the policy orientation forward.

The theme for this years summit is 'Building Bridges' which encapsulates the full dimension of civil issues that can be



brought together under a regional cooperative framework. This would immensely help to address the fundamental challenges that the region confronts today: to develop a sense of understanding; to build a wisdom of cooperation; and through that develop concrete ideas in order to take the regional cooperation one step ahead. For any such cooperative endeavour the most important thing is 'Vision'.

Maldives, as an active member of SAARC has provided quality leadership that has shaped the vision of SAARC since 1980s. Maldives also played a major role in setting up an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) from the SAARC countries. The EPG report laid out a perspective for 2020 on what could SAARC develop and achieve. It still remains a source of inspiration for developing a vision for regional cooperation in this region. The COSATT has been constructively engaging to carry forward this initiative to achieve regional cooperation and integration in South Asia.

Initial Remarks

Ibrahim Hussain Zaki *Special Envoy to President of Maldives*

Today, with the release of the book on Energy and Environmental Security, the project undertaken by COSATT is brought to a successful culmination. For Maldives, Energy and Environmental is a matter of serious concern and it is more appropriate that the book is released in Male.

The most important document that COSATT has produced in the past is the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report on SAARC Vision 2020, which lays out a road map for the future of SAARC and also outlines new mechanisms to enhance regional cooperation in South Asia through SAARC. Perhaps, this document would have come ahead of time but now in this summit we have appealed to the leaders of the SAARC to address the issue without any further delay because in that way we can move from the current level of cooperation to a higher level of cooperation.



Well, COSATT has spent good amount of time in bringing out this book. To produce such book needs financial support and here I would like to convey my deep appreciation to Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) which has been instrumental in supporting various cooperative initiatives in South Asia.

Their commitment, dedication and sincerity towards South Asia is highly laudable. Also, I would like to thank the

members of COSATT for their decision to have the meeting in Maldives and I hope they will continue to enrich the academic discourse on relevant issues even in future.

Keynote Address

Dr Mohammad Waheed, Vice President of Maldives

The issue that this book addresses - energy and environmental security is more pertinent to Maldives than any other country in the region. As everyone is aware of how vulnerable Maldives is to climate change, it is timely that the report has been released just a week before the SAARC Summit. It is my hope that the recommendations provided in the report will find a place in the foreign policy decision-making of SAARC countries.

The government of Maldives has taken a decision to follow low carbon economic growth path. There are three important reasons for this development. One

obvious reason is environmental issues. With Maldives being the most vulnerable country to climate change, it cannot pursue an economic development based on fossil fuel energy.

Maldives has been playing a substantive role in mitigating carbon emission concerns in the region and it hopes that this will have a considerable impact on global initiatives to reduce the carbon imprint. If Maldives succeeds in reducing carbon emissions, then others can also follow suit. If the global warming rises even by 3 to 4 degree celsius it will be a threat to the very existence of Maldives. So if the other countries do not agree to emission reductions, ultimately Maldives will have to face the consequences.

Environmental security is a core issue for Maldives but energy security also plays a significant role in its economic policies, because of its complete dependence on fossil fuels. For instance, any rise in global oil prices especially diesel can have enormous impact on Maldives because diesel industry is



subsidized here. Electricity is produced by using diesel and ordinary Maldivians cannot afford to bear the price rise according to the global market level.

The cost of electricity production in Maldives from fossil fuels is lesser than that of solar energy. This is because, economically renewable energy sources are difficult to harness due to technological cost. However, in the past two years the cost of production of solar energy has gone down due to technological developments and availability, though storage continues to be a problem. In terms of energy security, Maldives needs to develop a policy on how to tap renewable energy sources. Tapping solar energy sources is the way to meet electricity requirements and reduce fossil fuel dependency. Maldives is now planning to shift 60 per cent of production to solar and the rest 40 per cent to other sources including biomass. Unfortunately, Maldives does not have biomass sources and it has to invest from outside. This is where the neighbours, particularly India, can play a role in the supply of biomass sources.



Concluding Remarks

Tomislav Delinic

Director Regional Programme SAARC, KAS

It is indeed a right decision to release the report on energy and environmental security in Maldives. Though Maldives does not figure in any key global political debate, it is an effective actor in global climate change. Germany has been playing a significant role in pushing the agenda in global energy security with a clear vision on how the energy trends will change in the next few decades. European model of cooperation on energy and environmental security can be emulated in the South Asian context. It is the vision of great leaders that brought the Europeans together after the devastation of the Second World War.

Today there are 27 countries in the European Union (EU) where even the smaller members have strong voice. It is my hope that smaller countries of South Asia like Maldives' security concerns should be addressed. At EU, the bigger ones listen to the smaller ones. We hope that sometimes the bigger ones in this region will also listen to the smaller ones.

Despite many failures and setback the European



integration process enabled the citizens of nation-states to move across Europe without passports and they can trade wherever they want to. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung does not believe in nationalism rather it strongly advocates regional integration and cooperation for peace and security.

Mallika Joseph

Director IPCS

Despite the geographical proximity of the south Asian neighbours, there are certain issues which create rift amongst these countries. Also, we have issues that can bring us together, like energy and environmental which will encourage us to work together and cooperate with each other. And when you look at the future of the SAARC, it is demographically very well poised and it has to make a mark in the world as economic growth and development becomes very important. In that respect, energy and environmental security becomes very crucial for the region. The institute of peace and conflict studies (IPCS) is extremely privileged to be the convenor of COSATT and be instrumental in bringing out the report on energy and environmental security.

COSATT 2012: A Discussion

The COSATT members discussed about the agenda for 2012. Taking the cue from the SAARC Summit declaration that urged the member countries to focus their efforts on connectivity issues under a broad theme 'Building Bridges', COSATT has decided to study connectivity issues



in South Asia. During the brainstorming session, the members identified four key areas of focus: establishing trade corridors, gas corridors, common electricity grid, and common climate change and energy policy. The basic aim will be to build and implement a community model of cooperation in South Asia. To realize a South Asian community one needs to be very clear about what kind of community is to be built – economic or political community? Countries of this region irrespective of their diversity do share common values and interests but they differ in their cooperative endeavours due to varied perspectives.

Therefore, country perspectives on the idea of building bridges are necessary for the study. Some questions that need addressing are: What does the South Asian Countries understand by building bridges? What is their interpretation of connectivity? So far the issue of connectivity has been understood in terms of physical like transportation and people-to-people contact. But today connectivity includes building civil society at country levels and establishing regional networks of trading community. Civil society can also contribute



towards addressing key developmental issues across the region.

The following was proposed during the discussion for 2012: The COSATT will study the issue of connectivity in a very broad sense with an innovative approach. It will engage in serious deliberation to conceptualize the theme and explore possible areas where bridges can be built. For this it will reach out to policy-makers and media from the SAARC countries besides bringing scholars and expertise together. This will be done in four consecutive meetings of COSATT partners and members.

The first meeting will be a planning meeting which would bring heads of think tanks from SAARC countries to develop a research framework for the study and identify the expertise. The second will commission a study and request a research paper from the selected members of partner institutes. In the third meeting the initial findings of the research will be presented and discussed for additional inputs and comments. The final report of the study in the form of book will be released for the public at the fourth meeting.