

5th ESCAP Disaster Resilience Week

25 to 28 November 2025

SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

Building heat resilience through subregional and regional cooperation: Learning and perspectives from South Asia

Wednesday, 26 November 2025, 13:00 to 14:00 (UTC+7), UN Conference Centre,
Bangkok Thailand



Overview

This side session will cover the following areas:

1. Showcasing Regional Cooperation and Transferable Learnings:

- Highlight the achievements of South Asia Hydromet Forum (SAHF) as a model for regional cooperation and discuss how these learnings can be adapted and applied to other regions, as well as discussing challenges and successes in the adoption of regional and subregional approaches at national levels.

2. Integrating Initiatives for Enhanced Resilience:

- Explore how platforms like SAHF can complement and integrate with other regional initiatives, such as Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs) and emerging Global Heat Health Information Network (GHHIN) regional hubs - focusing on integration strategies which could support improved resilience to extreme heat in the Asia-Pacific region.

3. Capitalizing on Regional Approaches for Service Delivery and Policy Integration:

- Discuss the benefits of regional approaches and how they can be integrated into broader policy, planning, and investment strategies. Provide recommendations for:
 - Building disaster and climate resilience through regional cooperation in science and technology innovations in the context of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS).
 - Incorporating heat-related issues into regional strategies and national roadmaps for strengthening early warning systems in the context of the Early Warning for All (EW4All) initiative.

Objectives

Informed by examples from South Asia, this side event will discuss the challenges, opportunities and mechanisms to capitalise and sustain the benefits of regional/sub-regional cooperation to strengthen early warning and build resilience to extreme heat.

Regional cooperation for early warning and heat-health

Noting the complex, compounding, cascading and trans-boundary origins and impacts of disasters and climate risks, and significant variations in national level capacity across sub-regions of Asia Pacific, regional cooperation on disaster and climate risk management, including early warning, provides significant benefits: For example, better cost-effectiveness through sharing and pooling of resources, improvement of forecasting accuracy through better access to regional-national data, tools, and resources; and increased efficiency (or quality or performance) through the development of common approaches to tackling hazards and impacts. Also, (sub)regional cooperation provides mechanisms to collectively respond to global-regional priorities i.e., the EW4All initiative, and to engage with donors and funders to enhance coordinated investments.

Regional cooperation can thus play a key role also in building resilience to extreme heat and in improving public health and there are a range of current and emerging fora e.g., RCOFs, GHHIN regional hubs, Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action - Anticipation Hub, and regional investment programmes e.g., the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative and the UK's Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA) initiative which can play a key role in maximizing the benefits of regional cooperation, and others.



Programme

Time	Agenda
13:00–13:05	<p>OPENING SESSION</p> <p>Opening remarks: His Excellency Abdulla Ziyad, Minister of State for Tourism and Environment, Maldives.</p> <p>Session overview by moderators Mr. David Corbelli, Regional Manager Asia Pacific, Met Office Ms. Madhurima Sarkar-Swaigood, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP</p>
13:05–13:20	<p>PROMOTING THE BENEFITS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR STRENGTHENING HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL SERVICES AND EARLY WARNING</p> <p>SAHF - overview & learnings (5 mins)</p> <p>Dr. Anshul Agarwal, Team Leader Hydrology, RIMES</p> <p>Panel/Floor Discussion (10 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we realise the benefit of (sub)regional initiatives at a national level and ensure policy and planning integration? <p>Panelists Dr. K J Ramesh, SAHF Advisor, RIMES Dr. Rupa Kumar Kolli, Expert Member, GHHIN; Honorary Scientist, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) Dr. Orrapan Untimanon, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand</p>
13:20 – 13:40	<p>ENHANCING DATA AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE</p> <p>Learning and future direction from SAHF Knowledge Hub for regional digital and data exchange (7 mins)</p> <p>Ms. Danna Valdez, Expert, RIMES Mr. Rahul Kumar Suman, Expert, ESCAP</p> <p>Panel/Floor Discussion (8 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can we effectively leverage the diverse range of data and tools available to enhance our adaptive strategies for extreme temperature events at national and regional levels? <p>Panelists Dr. Quamrul Hassan. Deputy Director, Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) Dr. Orrapan Untimanon, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand</p>
13:40 – 13:55	<p>ENHANCING REGIONAL/SUB-REGIONAL COORDINATION FOR EXTREME HEAT</p> <p>Overview of the SAHF Impact-Based Forecasting (IBF) Working Group (5 mins)</p> <p>Ms. Helen Caughey, Deputy Chief & International Meteorologist, Met Office</p> <p>Panel/Floor Discussion (15 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can we connect and leverage across related platforms and initiatives such as regional climate outlook forums and GHHIN regional hubs? - How can we collaborate and share learnings effectively across regions?

	Panelists Dr. Jochen Luther, Technical Coordinator, Regional Office for Asia and South-West Pacific, WMO. Dr. Rupa Kumar Kolli, Expert Member, GHHIN; IITM Dr. Madhurima Sarkar-Swaisgood, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP
13:55 – 14:00	CLOSING REMARKS AND WAY FORWARD Mr. Ben Churchill, Director, Regional Office for Asia and the South-West Pacific, WMO Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director, Information & Communications Technology & Disaster Risk Reduction Division, ESCAP

Background Information and Additional Resources

SAHF

To address the escalating weather and climate risks faced by the region, the SAHF was established to support regional engagement, promote collaboration and enhance capacity at the regional and sub-regional levels towards improving hydromet, early warning, and climate service delivery in South Asia.

During its first implementation phase (2018-2024) SAHF established working groups across priority 'themes' including: Impact-Based Forecasting (IBF), Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP), Observation Networks, Capacity Enhancement, and Hydrology which collectively have delivered multiple benefits, for example, through creation of regional knowledge and data platforms, strengthening capacity through regional training, enhancing collaboration between National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and users of information to support development of coproduced services. During this phase, SAHF was largely supported by the World Bank's Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) for South Asia project and Met Office under the UK-funded Asia Regional Resilience to a Changing Climate (ARRCC) programme.

As SAHF moves into its second implementation phase (2025-30), its Executive Council has reaffirmed SAHF's role as a regional platform for advancing EW4All initiative in South Asia, and endorsed the next phase of SAHF's development as a period to deepen technical capabilities, broaden operational coverage, increase engagement across public and private sector, and for IBF, scale up demonstration projects with an initial focus on temperature-related hazards. During this phase, the main financial support to SAHF is being provided by the CREWS South Asia Project and the Met Office Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER) programme under the UK-funded CARA initiative.

SAHF plays a key role in coordinating with related regional and global initiatives, for example, the South Asia Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF), the emerging GHHIN South Asia Hub, which will have a key role in supporting resilience to impacts of extreme heat, and overall, with WMO's Regional Association II (Asia).

Organizer(s)

Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia, Met Office, UK, World Meteorological Organization, World Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Contacts

- Dr. Anshul Agarwal, Team Leader Hydrology, RIMES, anshul@rimes.int
- Dr. Leila Salarpour Goodarzi, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP, leila.salarpour@un.org
- Mr. David Corbelli, Regional Manager Asia Pacific, Met Office, david.corbelli@metoffice.gov.uk
- Ms. Helen Caughey, International Meteorologist, Met Office, helen.caughey@metoffice.gov.uk