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Announcement

Tenth Session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-10)

Thimphu, Bhutan, 24-26 April 2017

South Asia is home to about one fourth of the world's population and occupies only 3% of the global land area, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. The weather and climate of South Asia is dominated by the South-West monsoon. Almost 70-80% of the total annual rainfall occurs during the monsoon season (June–September) and the monsoon greatly affects the socio-economic sectors of the countries of this region. Seasonal to inter-annual variability of monsoon rainfall, both in amount and distribution, often results in severe droughts or floods over this densely populated region, with large-scale impacts on the agrarian societies in terms of agricultural production and food security. As there is a strong link between the impacts of the summer monsoon and the overall economic condition of South Asian countries, in order to plan and implement programmes to encourage sustainable economic growth, South Asia requires ever more accurate and reliable information about the monsoon as well as early warnings about monsoon activity.

The monsoon is a strongly coupled phenomenon in which ocean, atmosphere and large land area are integral components of the system. The science behind the South Asian monsoon and its variability on different time and space scales is quite complex and monsoon prediction is still considered to be a difficult problem. That said, the last few decades have seen remarkable advances in the understanding and prediction with more lead time of several aspects of the monsoon, mainly the rainfall strength and its pattern.

Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs) are being conducted in many parts of the world with the aim of providing consensus seasonal climate information on a regional scale. In line with the goals of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), RCOFs also provide an opportunity for the providers of climate services and sectoral users to interact in order to strengthen the use of climate services in sectoral decision-making. The South Asian Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) was established in 2010 by the South Asian members of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Since 2010, SASCOF sessions have been organized every year just prior to the summer monsoon season. Given the large benefits derived from the annual summer SASCOFs, the first winter SASCOF was organized in October 2015.

The main objectives of SASCOF are the following:

1. To review the progress made in understanding and long range prediction of South Asian monsoons both regionally and globally;
2. To assess the available information on climate variability in South Asia and the associated predictions and prepare consensus-based seasonal outlooks for dissemination;
3. To provide a platform for the stakeholders to share and exchange experience and knowledge on South Asian monsoons and their prediction;
4. To initiate capacity building/human resource development activities for the South Asian region, particularly in seasonal prediction;
5. To build collaboration and partnerships among the members of SASCOF for mutual benefit;
6. To identify needs of user sectors through a dialogue among different groups.

The first three meetings of SASCOF were held in Pune, India jointly hosted by India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) with the support of WMO. The participants in SASCOF-1, April 2010, agreed that more collaboration among operational long range forecasters of South Asia and research institutes in the region are required to improve the prediction skill of the models. The Forum also agreed on the importance of maintaining an active interaction with relevant global and regional experts. Based on the recommendations of SASCOF-1, conducting of capacity building training workshop for participants from the South Asian countries prior to Forums for summer monsoon was started from SASCOF-2. SASCOF-2 was held during 13-15 April 2011 and the first training workshop on seasonal prediction was held immediately prior to it (8-12 April 2011). The SASCOF-3 training workshop and Forum were held during 16-20, April 2012; SASCOF-4 training workshop and Forum were held at Kathmandu, Nepal during 15-19 April 2013; and SASCOF-5 training workshop and Forum were held at Pune, India during 14-23 April 2014. In conjunction with SASCOF-5, a Climate Services User Forum for the Water Sector (CSUF-Water) was coordinated by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) and was held during 23 - 25 April 2014. SASCOF-6 was held during 21-22 April 2015 in Dhaka, Bangladesh along with CSUF-Water. SASCOF-7, which was the first Forum that focused on the winter season, was held in Chennai, India during 14-15 October 2015, in conjunction with the first CSUF-Agriculture. SASCOF-8 was held during 25-26 April 2016 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. CSUF-Water and CSUF-Health was organized in parallel sessions during 27-28 April. In addition, a joint CSUF session was held with SASCOF on 26 April 2016. SASCOF-8 was also preceded by a Capacity Building Training Workshop on Seasonal Prediction for the operational climate experts of the South Asian countries during 19-23 April 2016. The Training Workshop was focused on operationalizing the long-range forecasts. SASCOF-9 was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar during 27-29 September 2016, in conjunction with the second CSUF-Agriculture.

SASCOF-10 will be held in Thimphu, Bhutan from 24-26 April 2017, is hosted by the National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology (NCHM), Government of Bhutan, and is technically supported by IMD. SASCOF-10 will be preceded by a Capacity Building Training Workshop (Pre SASCOF) as a part of the 9th International Training Workshop on Climate Variability and Prediction (9ITWCVP), organized by NOAA-USAID-WMO and IITM, and hosted by IITM from 13-21 April 2017 in Pune, India. SASCOF-10 is expected to provide a climate outlook for the 2017 summer monsoon season. Experts from the SASCOF member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) as well as several regional and global experts will participate. The Forum will offer appraisals of country perspectives; assess capacity building needs; examine global and regional indicators; and generate a consensus outlook. The participating national climate experts will receive guidance in using, interpreting and downscaling global seasonal prediction products and developing a consensus outlook.

Participation in SASCOF-10 is mainly by invitation, and by nominations from the Permanent Representatives of the respective countries with WMO. Limited resources are available to support the travel and per diem expenses of such participants through WMO. Expressions of interest by self-supported participants, if relevant to the topics of the various sessions, may be considered subject to the availability of space. SASCOF-10 is financially supported by the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)-funded Programme for Implementing GFCS at Regional and National Scales.

For more details and updated information including the agenda, please visit <http://www.imdpune.gov.in/> and <http://www.hydromet.gov.bt/>.

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