

PRESS RELEASE (31 May 2010)

GCCA regional conference for Asia



Flooding in Koyra (Bangladesh) following Cyclone Aila, July 2009

Representatives of the EU and of developing countries in Asia have agreed to work together to mobilise international support for stronger action on climate change. Asia's regional conference of the Global Climate Change Alliance brought together representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Myanmar and Nepal as well as of the EU.

As smaller countries we usually, for the sake of a united position, accept what the larger developing countries suggest. But that may not be conducive to our national interests. Now the time has come for us to speak up loud. If we don't unite and make ourselves heard, the outcome might leave us as the worst victims of climate change.

Honourable Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

I read in the press that the interest for climate change has dropped in many developed countries. That is a pity, as we have not yet solved the problem. And people expect it of us. Ask the women out in a Bangladeshi village, those who constantly need to seek shelter from cyclones. Ask the Bangladeshi farmer whose crops were washed away by floods. Ask anyone who sees the change and faces the consequences. We owe it to them to find a solution.

Honourable Ms. Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action

The regional conference (30-31 May in Dhaka, Bangladesh) took stock of the various challenges that climate change poses in Asia, looking at the vulnerable countries' specific problems and at what strategies and actions they have adopted in response. They considered in detail the existing financial mechanisms for support such strategies and

actions, as well as the prospects for reaching an effective global agreement to bring climate change under control.

In addition the representatives of Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Maldives and the EU signed a Joint Declaration on 31st May to help the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in Asia adapt to climate change. The agreement foresees that the EU will provide financial support for national climate change strategies focusing on prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

Background:

The Global Climate Change Alliance is an initiative which was launched in 2007 by the European Commission. It intends to deepen dialogue and cooperation on climate change between the European Union and developing countries which are most vulnerable to climate change, in particular Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. Such countries are hardest hit by the adverse effects of climate change as they have the least capacity to react and adapt to those climate impacts.

The GCCA aims mainly to deepen the policy dialogue between the European Union and developing countries on climate change, and to step up support to countries to implement priority adaptation and mitigation measures. The results of the dialogue and exchange feed into the discussions on the post-2012 climate agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. GCCA dialogues have already resulted in Joint Declarations between the European Union and regional groups such as Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Beyond the policy dialogue, the GCCA provides technical and financial support to targeted developing countries to help meet the new challenges that climate change poses to them. For the period 2008-10, the European Union is making available €100 million to the GCCA from the EU budget and bilateral contributions from Sweden and the Czech Republic, plus €40 million as part of the 10th European Development Fund to promote regional approaches in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. By the end of 2010, it is expected that GCCA-supported activities will be implemented in around 20 most vulnerable countries. Examples of actions which we expect the GCCA to support include:

- **Bangladesh:** Support to the implementation of Bangladesh's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan aimed at building a climate resilient economy and society in Bangladesh through adaptation and mitigation to climate change (€8.5 million);
- **Cambodia:** Support the "Cambodia Climate Change Alliance" initiative to strengthen institutions and improve disaster risk management (€2.2 million);
- **Maldives:** Institutional support to the Government plus pilot projects in particular in waste management in different atolls and islands (€3.8 million);
- **Rwanda:** Support to sustainable management of natural resources through land registration (€4.5 million);
- **Vanuatu:** Capacity development, improved farming practices, scaling up successful water management practices and hazard risk mapping (€3.2 million).