



SASEC

South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation

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SASEC News

SASEC Events



Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference

Joint Statement by Multilateral Institutions on Trade Facilitation Assistance

Bali Package Concluded at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference **5-7 December 2013: Bali, Indonesia**

This five-day Ministerial Conference agreed on the Bali Package, comprising a selection of issues from the Doha Round negotiations, and adopted five decisions on intellectual property, electronic commerce, consideration to issues of small economies, affirmation of commitment to Aid for Trade, and increased flow of technology to developing countries. Estimates indicate that the Bali Package could increase global GDP by US\$1 trillion through improvement in trade facilitation, agricultural issues, and market access for least developed countries.

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Upcoming Events

[BTILS Updating: Interim Workshop](#)
Jan-Feb 2014 (TBD)
Bangkok, Thailand

[BIMSTEC Expert Group Meetings](#)
Jan-Feb 2014 (TBD)
Bangkok, Thailand

[Subregional Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Customs Valuation](#)
3-7 February, 2013
Colombo, Sri Lanka

[BTILS Updating: Meeting on Draft Policies and Strategies](#)
13 March 2014
Nepal, Kathmandu

[SASEC Trade Facilitation Week](#)
25-28 March 2014
Bangkok, Thailand

Visit sasec.asia to see recent event updates.



CII Sector Update: Press Release

Event Documents and Materials on SASEC Website

Connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia: Interim Report

ADB-Confederation of Indian Industry Conference on Promoting India-Mekong Cooperation **19 November 2013: New Delhi, India**

India's Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Salman Khurshid opened this ADB-CII Conference by describing economic cooperation between India and countries of the Mekong region as a "win-win proposition." He further stressed the need to increase infrastructure financing in the region and improve connectivity between India and the Mekong region. The Conference aimed to

- Promote awareness of the benefits, opportunities, and challenges of enhancing cooperation between the Mekong countries and India;
- Share information on major ongoing and planned subregional initiatives in transport connectivity, trade facilitation and trade finance, energy security, and regional infrastructure finance; and
- Provide a platform for stakeholders to exchange views and to identify opportunities to engage in planned initiatives.

The conference was jointly organized by ADB, CII, and the Government of India, and attended by over 175 delegates.
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[SAARCLAW Press Release](#)

[SAARCLAW Website](#)

[News Feature on SASEC Website](#)

ADB-SAARCLAW Memorandum of Understanding **12 November 2013: Manila, Philippines**

A delegation from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Law (SAARCLAW) met with ADB President Takehiko Nakao and Vice President Bruce Davis to discuss areas for potential cooperation. Vice President Davis signed a historic MOU, noting that SAARCLAW and ADB would:

- Facilitate improvement, harmonization and use of legal resources in the development process in South Asia;
- Engage the legal communities in South Asia to promote cooperation, understanding, and information exchange;
- Coordinate and collaborate in delivering projects that create economic and development impact in various areas, including trade, and transport; and
- Promote sustainable development through improvement and maintenance of legal and judicial systems and processes.



[India CPS 2013-2017](#)

[Nepal CPS 2013-2017](#)

[News Feature and Press Releases on SASEC Website](#)

ADB Country Partnership Strategies approved for India and Nepal **5 November 2013 / 29 October 2013: Manila, Philippines**

ADB Board of Directors approved a new Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) 2013-2017 for India to support the country's Five-Year Plan in creating jobs for youth, reforming investment, and improving infrastructure in energy, transport, water, and services. Regional cooperation and integration (RCI) is a cornerstone of the strategy. Northeast operations include a land-bridge for India to reach fast growing ASEAN markets; Southeast India provides access to cost-effective shipping routes, enhancing economic corridor development and expanding access to international trade.

ADB supports the Government of Nepal's development objective of accelerated, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The Nepal CPS 2013-2017 is aligned with the country's new Three-Year Plan (FY2014-2016). RCI is emphasized in the CPS through investments anchored on the SASEC Program, and ADB assistance focuses on the three core sectors of energy, transport, and urban infrastructure. Under transport, priority sections of the Strategic Road Network will be financed, including expansion of capacity and safety measures at the Tribhuvan International Airport and upgrading of the Gautam Buddha Airport.



[SASEC Road Connectivity Project](#)

[News Feature and Press Releases on SASEC Website](#)

ADB funds Bangladesh SASEC Road Connectivity Project **31 October 2013: Gazipur, Bangladesh**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh inaugurated the SASEC Road Connectivity Project which will boost the national economy, facilitate subregional cooperation, and increase trade. The project received ADB loan financing of \$198 million, and will

- Support the Government of Bangladesh in upgrading to four lanes about 70 kilometers of the Dhaka–Northwest corridor—a major subregional artery;
- Improve two land ports at Benapole and Burimari; and
- Strengthen road sector capacity of this major international trade corridor and enhance land port operations.

Senior government officials attended the inaugural ceremony along with ADB Bangladesh Resident Mission Country Director Stefan Ekelund, and other development partners.

Recent SASEC Events



[Event Documents and Materials on SASEC Website](#)

Meeting of the SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group (TFTWG)

29-30 October 2013: Singapore, Singapore

Secretaries and Joint Secretaries of relevant ministries, senior government officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal appreciated the considerable progress in implementation of priority sections of transport corridors and connectivity projects at the TFTWG Meeting. ADB will provide almost \$2.5 billion in support of future transport connectivity projects and supporting initiatives in trade facilitation. Other areas tabled for discussion included:

- Outlining criteria for future SASEC projects in transport;
- Tracking progress in trade facilitation;
- Finalizing support for the proposed SASEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework;
- Establishing a SASEC knowledge network to promote regional knowledge generation and sharing.

In addition to the TFTWG Meeting, delegates shared the experience of developing and implementing automated trade facilitation processes during field visits to the [PSA Singapore Terminals](#) and [Crimson Logic](#), provider of end-to-end business and e-Government solutions. [Read more>>](#)



[Event Documents and Materials on SASEC Website](#)

SASEC Brainstorming Meeting on Sanitary/Phytosanitary Priorities (SPS) and Challenges

24-25 November 2013: Bangkok, Thailand

The Brainstorming Meeting on SPS Priorities and Challenges in SASEC Member countries initiated development of a regional agenda in South Asia to address issues relating to existing standards under SPS measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).

Outcomes of the meeting included:

- Increased understanding of country-specific constraints in SPS/TBT in the region;
- Enhanced knowledge of available assistance and support from international organizations and research networks;
- Preliminary identification of preferences and priorities for necessary SPS/TBT diagnostics and studies in SASEC countries;
- Identification of capacity building activities at regional and national levels; and
- Agreement on the need and general scope for a regional platform addressing SPS/TBT development in the SASEC region.

Participants included government officials from relevant agencies; international experts from IPPC, SAARC, STDF, UNFAO, WTO, UNFAO; ARTNeT experts; and ADB and UNESCAP staff. The event was jointly organized by ADB and UNESCAP, and co-funded by AusAID.



[Event Documents and Materials on SASEC Website](#)

SASEC Trade and Transport Facilitation Performance Monitoring System

26-27 November 2013: Bangkok, Thailand

The workshop introduced the TTFPM to the SASEC countries and developed the system to monitor progress and effectiveness of transport and trade facilitation in the region. Delegates reviewed existing TTF measures and created national action plans to implement the TTFPM. The workshop participants

- Discussed the benefits and opportunities of the TTFPM system;
- Shared lessons from the experience of Korea, Greece, and Thailand in undertaking time release study, time-cost-distance study, and business process analysis;
- Identified resource requirements and challenges in developing a TTFPM for SASEC;
- Evaluated necessary measures for SASEC members to ensure sustainability and ownership of the system.

The workshop was attended by officials from SASEC ministries of finance and customs administrations, together with representatives of the private sector. The meeting was co-organized by ADB and UNESCAP, and co-funded by AusAID.

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Publications



[Asian Economic Integration Monitor](#)



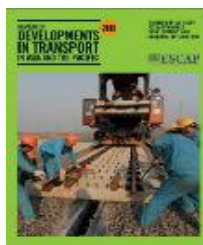
[Deepening Economic Cooperation between India and Sri Lanka](#)



[South Asia Economic Focus: A Wake-Up Call](#)



[Trade Facilitation and Poverty Reduction in Asia and the Pacific: A Case Study of a South Asian Economic Corridor](#)



[Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific 2013](#)



[Who Profits from Trade Facilitation Initiatives?](#)



This e-learning course examines challenges and opportunities for developing economies associated with trading in a rapidly evolving and complex global landscape of technical regulations and standards. Offering analytical frameworks and practical evidence to identify strategic options for responding to higher standards related to agriculture trade, it aims to increase awareness and dialogue among policy makers, regulatory agencies, NGOs, private companies, and other related stakeholders, so that optimal strategies and partnerships are pursued that meet goals of food safety, competitiveness, sustainability and poverty reduction in developing economies.

See more publications on regional cooperation in South Asia and other regions at www.sasec.asia/books.php

Please contact the SASEC Program Secretariat at sasec@adb.org

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