

Climate Change, Glaciers, and Water Resources in the Himalayan Region: Draft Summary for the Chairperson

1. The glaciers in the Himalayas, especially in the eastern and central regions, have been shrinking at an accelerated rate in the recent decades, compared to the 1970s. But, such a drastic reduction in the ice cover has not been observed in the northwestern Himalayas. These observations are based on limited case studies, however. There is a lack of data necessary to analyze climate change in the Himalayan region, as stated in the 4AR of the IPCC. There is a need for regional cooperation among the countries in the Himalayan region to gather and share information for assessing and monitoring climate change and its consequences for water resources management.
2. The National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) are currently being prepared by the national governments of the Himalayan region at the initiative of the UNFCCC. These NAPAs need to suggest plans of action to simultaneously work on satellite-based techniques and field-based techniques for monitoring glacier retreat and on hydrodynamic modeling of GLOFs for assessing their potential impact downstream.
3. The principles of IWRM has already been accepted by scientists and policymakers alike. As the national governments of the Himalayan region make preparations to implement IWRM, it is necessary to consider cross-border cooperation for adaptation to the events occurring in the catchments that lie across the borders. For example, GLOFs in China (Tibet) could affect hydropower projects in Nepal
4. A common and coordinate approach will be required to address this problem and this requires a platform for dialogue. In this process, ownership and commitment are critical. Any dialogue needs to be driven and fully owned by the countries of the region. Long-term commitment of the international community, in terms of facilitation and financial support, can assist, this process which by its very nature is long and arduous. But this assistance must be low-profile, patient and non-directive.