

## **International Conference on Transboundary Rivers of South Asia held at North South University**

The two-day long international conference on ‘Transboundary Rivers of South Asia: Fostering Regional Collaboration for Environmental Sustainability’ successfully was held at North South University on 7-8 May 2024. The event, organized by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) in collaboration with the Department of Geography at the University of Manchester, UK, and the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), Bangladesh, aimed to address critical issues surrounding transboundary river management and environmental sustainability in South Asia. The South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA) was the associate partner of the conference.

The opening ceremony featured Professor Akhlaque Haque, President of the South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA), Dr. Meheub Sahana, Lecturer University of Manchester, UK, Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams, Rector, Foreign Service Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, Mr. Sarwar Mahmud, Chairman, National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), Bangladesh and Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice Chancellor, North South University.

A total of 40 papers were presented at the conference by authors from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, the United Kingdom, Turkiye and Kenya. There were around 60 participants of which 30 were international, mostly from India. An edited volume will be published from the selected papers of the conference by CRC Press, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group.

In the opening ceremony on 7 May 2024, Professor Akhlaque Haque emphasized the importance of sustainable management of the shared water resources of South Asia. He also stated that this conference is not only a place for discussion but also a beacon of hope for the future.

Dr. Meheub Sahana provided an insightful introduction to the conference themes and objectives. He underscored the importance of research from the Global South and South Asian regions on rivers and river governance, as there are more transboundary rivers in the region. This is important for the voices of the Global South in the international community and setting our narrative regarding transboundary rivers.

Dr. Mohammad Abul Hossen stressed the importance of joint efforts, stating that stakeholders play an important role in resolving water issues. He urged the researchers and journalists who attended the event to write in the international newspapers so that transboundary water issues are highlighted to the global audience.



Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams stated that countries in the South Asian regions have a shared history and have similar linguistic and cultural roots. Transboundary river issues are important for the nations to resolve and utilize for shared prosperity. She further appreciated the Bangladesh government's diplomatic acumen in dealing with the water issues with its neighboring countries and hoped to resolve existing issues in the future.

Mr. Sarwar Mahmud echoed the sentiment, advocating for enhanced regional cooperation to protect vital water resources and foster sustainable development. NRCC is continuously working on policy advocacy, research, and community engagement and promised future collaboration with SIPG. He further said that rivers are not just geological features but the essence of our existence.



Professor Atiqul Islam emphasized the importance of upstream riverine countries being considerate of the downstream countries, as they also have rights to water resources. According to him, everyone is equal in the eyes of nature's judicial system. He also stated that NSU has always provided a platform for key issues for Bangladesh and the world and will continue to do so in the future.

The special guest of the closing ceremony on 8 May 2024 was Professor Ruard Ganzevoort, the Rector of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) at the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

The conference brought together leading scholars, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from across South Asia and beyond, facilitating meaningful dialogue and sharing of innovative solutions aimed at enhancing regional collaboration for environmental sustainability.

