Sri Lanka Joins Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) as a Founder Member

Sri Lanka recently joined the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) as a founder member. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), announced the launch of the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) last week at the UN Climate Summit (COP27) currently taking place at the resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt. Led by the UAE and Indonesia, the initiative seeks to scale up and accelerate the conservation and restoration of mangrove ecosystems for the benefit of communities worldwide. Along with Sri Lanka, four other countries – India, Australia, Japan, and Spain – have joined the Alliance.

MAC seeks to raise awareness about the role of mangroves as a nature-based climate change solution, and, through its members, will work towards expanding and rehabilitating mangrove forests globally.

Mangrove forests are among the most productive and ecologically important ecosystems on earth. They offer significant climate change mitigation and adaptation co-benefits, as they store carbon up to 400 percent faster than land-based tropical rainforests, protect coasts from rising sea levels, erosion, and storm surges, and provide breeding grounds for marine biodiversity. Around 80 percent of the global fish population depend on healthy mangrove ecosystems.

Referring to Sri Lanka's joining the MAC, Environment Minister Naseer Ahamed, who led Sri Lanka's official delegation to COP27 summit said, "Increasing reliance on nature-based solutions is an integral element of Sri Lanka's climate action on the domestic as well as international level, therefore we seek to expand our mangrove cover. We are happy to partner with the UAE's ambitious target of planting 100 million mangroves by 2030 as declared at COP26".

"We are pleased to join MAC, and believe it will go a long way in driving collective climate action and rehabilitating blue carbon ecosystems," he added.

At the MAC launch ceremony, the website https://mangrovealliance4climate.org, which features the alliance's goals, work mechanisms, and a pledge form for members, went live. A panel discussion was also held with experts discussing on the urgent need to conserve and increase mangrove cover as an urgent climate change action, particularly in the member countries of MAC. Representing Sri Lanka Dr. Sunimal Jayathinga, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Environment served on the Panel.

MAC will follow a voluntary approach. Members can determine their own commitments towards planting and restoring mangrove forests, promoting multilateral cooperation, and sharing knowledge, while the Alliance will support their projects in the areas of mangrove research, management and protection of coastal areas, and educating the public about climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Collectively, members will demonstrate their dedication to maximising the potential of nature-based solutions through mangrove planting and conservation campaigns, enhance mangroves' climate change mitigation capabilities through research and innovation, contribute to mangrove conservation worldwide through scientific and socio-economic studies, engage the community and the private sector in mangrove planting to expand blue carbon ecosystems, and step up concerted efforts to advance the global climate agenda.

MAC will feature multiple interactive platforms, including annual meetings to track progress in implementing its goals, drive cooperation between members, and approve annual reports.

Sri Lanka's expected role in the MAC will further enhance its global lead in conservation of mangroves in pursuant of its own UNEA resolution 4/12 on sustainable management for global health of mangroves, which was co-sponsored by Indonesia, another founder member of MAC.

Dr. Sunimal Jayathunge, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Environment (second from right) with the Ministers of Environment of India, the UAE and Indonesia and other panellists at the launch of the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC).