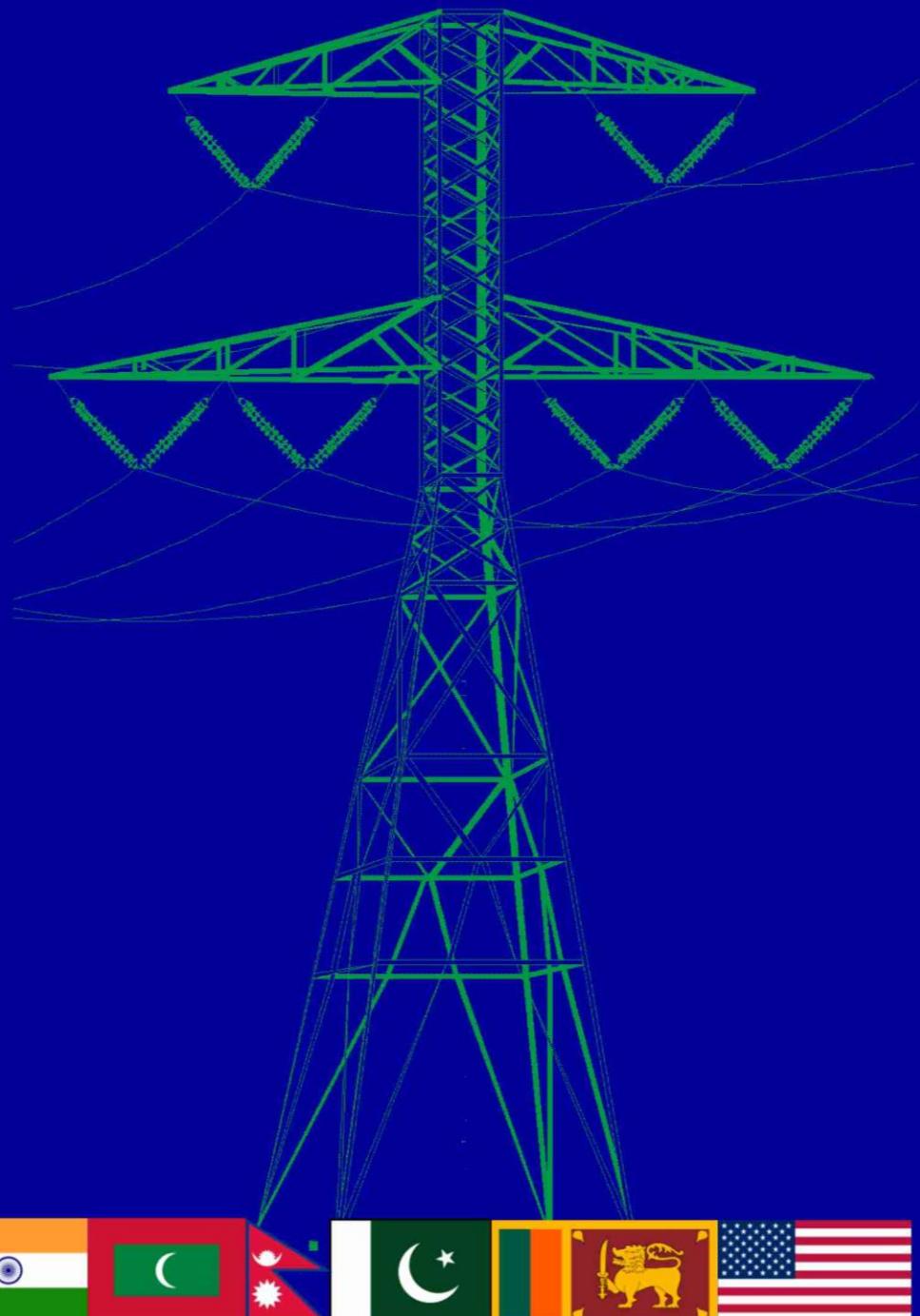


WHITEPAPER ON

Regional Parliamentary Forum

on Energy Cooperation &

Energy Trade in South Asia



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FOREWARD



The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been working to enhance regional energy cooperation in South Asia since 2000 through its South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/E) program. The first three phases of the program focused on building trust, raising awareness, and assessing potential transmission interconnections. The current and fourth phase of the program, called the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI), which was launched in 2012, focuses on advancing regional energy integration through cross-border power trade. This is being implemented by the Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe), a leading South Asian think tank.

South Asia has immense socioeconomic growth potential. As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the region could play an instrumental role in building a cleaner, greener, and sustainable future with universal access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy. Regional energy cooperation will propel South Asia's transition to a thriving and sustainable economy. One of SARI/EI's key mandates is to create an "enabling" environment for this transition and drive consensus by engaging key decision-makers and stakeholders.

A forum with parliamentarians from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka will be central to achieving political consensus on energy cooperation and energy trade. Such a forum could provide a platform to discuss, deliberate, and share knowledge to accelerate power trade, which will offset South Asia's carbon footprint and lead to a more prosperous economy. The white paper *Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade* provides details on the motivation for similar forums across the world as well as their experiences, structural and operational frameworks, and roadmaps for implementation.

I would like to commend the excellent work done by the SARI/EI team at IRADe and CUTS International in developing this white paper. We, at USAID, look forward to promoting the recommendations emerging from this white paper through our new regional energy program, the South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP). I hope that this paper serves as a useful resource for all stakeholders in the region.

Sincerely,

John Smith-Sreen
Director, Indo Pacific Office, USAID/India

PREFACE



We are pleased to present a white-paper on the “Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation & Energy Trade in South Asia”, developed under the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI) project, supported by the USAID and implemented by Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe).

This study assesses the need and potential of establishing a Regional Parliamentary Forum for augmenting energy cooperation in the Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (BBINS) region. The study also combines an extensive review of several domestic, regional, and international forums and multilateral organizations involved in energy cooperation or regional cooperation in other socioeconomic realms to understand the current status and role of similar multilateral forums in ensuring cooperation at a regional level.

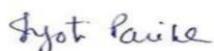
The energy portfolio in the BBINS region is diverse and includes coal, oil, natural gas, hydropower, biomass solar, and wind. But energy cooperation in the region continues to be bilateral, with different degrees of association existing between India and its neighbors, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, respectively. The region has immense potential for multilateral energy trade and cooperation, which can, in turn, benefit each of the individual economies and become a catalyst for the economic development of the region as a whole.

The white-paper contends that while regional collaboration has only been seen from the perspective of energy trade, the role of political leaders is crucial in propagating and strengthening the larger narratives around energy cooperation in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. Taking into account the benefits and challenges of such multilateral, regional forums, this white-paper also proposes a draft structural and functional framework for the envisaged Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in BBINS countries, along with a practically feasible roadmap for its institutionalisation.

The white-paper further advocates that a regional parliamentary forum is essential for energy cooperation in the region to tackle trust deficit and conflicts among member countries, counter regional geopolitics, garner popular support for improving regional connectivity, and, most importantly, ensure political stability and community support for such initiatives. Strong political leadership must ensure effective advocacy for strengthening regional energy cooperation for sustainable policy implementation.

I hope that this white-paper will serve as a starting point for enriching discussions on mitigating regional geopolitics and a greater need for inclusive and sustainable energy cooperation in the BBINS region. I am grateful to USAID for their continued support in the preparation of this white-paper. I appreciate the research team at SARI/ EI Secretariat /IRADe, for their valuable inputs and guidance through sustained efforts in ensuring that the white-paper is completed despite the restrictions posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr. Jyoti Parikh



Executive Director
Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe)

Abbreviations

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
AFPPD:	Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development
APPFGH:	Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health
ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEP:	Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership
BBIN:	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
BBINS:	Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka
BEC:	BIMSTEC Energy Centre
BIMSTEC:	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BRI:	Belt Road Initiative
BWG:	BIMSTEC Working Group
CBET:	Cross-Border Energy Trade
CEERE:	Council of Experts of Energy
CERC:	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission
CSOs:	Civil Society Organisations
FCDO:	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office
FICCI:	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry
FTA:	Free Trade Agreement
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
IPU:	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRENA:	International Renewable Energy's Legislative Energy Agency champions
ISA:	International Solar Alliance
JWG:	Joint Working Group
LED:	Light Emitting Diode
LoC:	Line of Credit

MESASEA:	Middle East-South Asia and Southeast Asia
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs:	Members of Parliament
OSOWG:	One Sun, One World, One Grid
PARFORE:	Parliamentarians Forum on Economic Policy Issues
RIS:	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SAARC:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAC:	South Asian Countries
SAFIR:	South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation
SAGE:	South Asia Group for Energy
SAGQ:	South Asian Growth Quadrangle
SARI/EI:	South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration
SASEC:	South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEC:	SAARC Energy Centre
SETUF:	SASEC Electricity Transmission Utility Forum
SOM:	Senior Officials' Meetings
SOME:	Senior Officials Meeting on Energy
SRETS:	SAARC Regional Energy Trade Study
SRHR:	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STEOM:	Senior Officials of the Trade/Commerce Ministry
TAP:	Transparency, Accountability and Participation
TEMM:	Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting
TUF:	Transmission Utility Forum
UNFCCC:	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
WB:	World Bank
WHO:	World Health Organisation
WPFSD:	World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development

Executive Summary

The BBINS region currently resides in an energy paradox, being rich in energy reserves while lagging in access to reliable, affordable, and clean energy on the other hand. While it has witnessed an increase of almost 800 percent in per capita electricity consumption over the last two decades, the region is still lagging far behind the global average of 3152 kWh.¹

Since energy is one of the key inputs for the socio-economic progress in developing societies, one of the leading proponents of growth in this region will be technological development in the energy sector. However, one of the critical challenges plaguing the region's energy sector development is the distributed nature of the available resources.

Recent studies have highlighted that one of the ways to overcome the challenges for meeting the growing energy demand may be through cross-border collaborations. At present, cross-border energy trade in the South Asian region is limited to bilateral arrangements. However, consistent and strategic efforts are the need of the hour to extend bilateral energy trade and cooperation in the region into a multilateral mode. Regional energy cooperation may include sharing cross-border infrastructure, establishing regional power producers, and enhancing competition and trade across regional markets.

Even though such regional cooperation may be achieved through effective economic policies, historically, regional cooperation across various socio-economic pillars has been strongly guided by political will, given its multi-national implications. Thus, even in the case of energy cooperation and trade, a politically driven regional association such as a 'Regional Parliamentary Forum' may be instrumental in smoothening current geopolitical differences and implementing sustainable and inclusive policies. The Forum could act as a unique platform for debates and action-oriented discussions on issues, challenges, and the potential of energy cooperation in the region for legislators and other relevant stakeholders in the member countries.

¹ https://cea.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/pdm/2020/12/growth_2020.pdf

To that end, this study aims to assess the need and potential of establishing a regional Parliamentary Forum for augmenting energy cooperation in the Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (BBINS) region. Further, using an evidence-based approach, the study aims to suggest a structural and operational framework as well as a detailed roadmap for implementation of the envisaged "Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade." The study combines an extensive review of similar platforms at the domestic, regional and international level conducted, along with consultations with parliamentarians, in each of the BBINS countries for a holistic overview.

The energy portfolio in the BBINS region is diverse and includes coal, oil, natural gas, hydropower, biomass solar, and wind. However, fossil fuels continue to dominate the region, with coal accounting for most of India's electricity generation (approximately 70 percent). Apart from that, the region has significant potential in hydropower generation and renewable energy sources, including solar and wind. However, energy cooperation in the region continues to be bilateral, with different degrees of existing association between India and its neighbours, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, respectively. India's energy association with Nepal dates back to the 1960s, while Bhutan has been there since 1974. The agreement with Bangladesh is relatively new, and associations between India and Sri Lanka are being actively explored. However, the region has immense potential for multilateral energy trade and cooperation, which can, in turn, benefit each of the individual economies and become the catalyst for the economic development of the region as a whole.

Regional cooperation can provide an ideal opportunity to boost sustainable growth and lead to infrastructure development and sharing of resources and technology. So far, regional collaboration has only been seen from the perspective of energy trade. However, it could act as a facilitator of energy access and electrification in the region. The role of political leaders thus becomes exceptionally crucial in propagating and strengthening the larger narratives around energy cooperation in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. The institutional support required for this may be in the form of a regional parliamentary forum with representatives from all the member countries.

The study establishes that a parliamentary forum is essential for energy cooperation in the region in order to tackle trust deficit and conflicts among member countries, counter regional geopolitics, garner popular support for improving regional

connectivity, and, most importantly, ensure political stability and community support for such initiatives. Strong political leadership must ensure effective advocacy and strengthening for sustainable policy implementation, making it a critical requirement for regional energy cooperation.

The study reviews several domestic, regional, and international forums and multilateral organisations involved in energy cooperation or regional cooperation in other socio-economic realms to understand the current status and role of similar multilateral forums in ensuring cooperation at a regional level. It suggests that such platforms may improve coordination between departments and ministries within and across the member countries and ensure detailed scrutiny of initiatives. However, challenges related to skewed dominance, duplication of efforts, non-binding recommendations, and financial arrangements may also be prevalent.

The study, taking into account the benefits and challenges of such multilateral, regional forums, proposes a draft structural and functional framework for the envisaged Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in BBINS countries, along with a practically feasible roadmap for its institutionalisation. The envisaged framework is an attempt to ensure a Forum, which allows for a balance between a formalised framework and designated functions and operational flexibility and inclusivity on the other. It addresses the issue of overlapping efforts by bringing together a formal regional structure with selected representatives from each of the member countries and backward political and bureaucratic linkages with relevant nodal ministries.

The proposed Forum aims to have an elected Core Group of Parliamentarians with adequate representation from all member countries. The key function of this group will be discussion and deliberation on enhancing energy cooperation and trade in the BBINS region. A Governing Council will guide the Core Group of Parliamentarians. In each of the member countries, a Standing Committee of Experts and Technical Support Organisations have also been proposed for providing strategic inputs and data to the Parliamentary Forum. The institutional arrangements prescribed for this Forum are participatory in nature and target-oriented. At the same time, the agreements allow for a healthy co-existence of government and non-government actors.

The study suggests the initial creation of a voluntary association of parliamentarians from the member countries, with a non-government non-partisan institution such as South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI) acting as a nodal agency to ensure a smooth and quick initiation of the proposed Parliamentary Forum. While this voluntary platform will foster relevant debates on regional energy cooperation, the nodal agency may coordinate with each member country's respective Governments and nodal ministries to formalise the Forum through MoUs and formal procedures. The roadmap considers the challenges of creating such a multidimensional regional institution and allows for adequate flexibility and balance during the institutionalisation of the proposed regional parliamentary Forum.

Achieving regional cooperation and ensuring a conducive environment for cross-border energy trade requires long-term and continuous coordination among multiple stakeholders. Hence, the envisaged structure and roadmap attempt to ensure the sustainability of efforts to create a platform for fostering long-term energy cooperation in the BBINS transparent, accountable, and participatory manner.

Over the last three decades, the South Asian region has sustained robust economic growth, but the COVID19 pandemic and global economic crisis have restricted this growth. However, recent studies have shown that the region would be exhibiting economic growth of 7.2 percent in 2021 and 4.4 percent in 2022.²

Since energy is one of the key inputs for the socio-economic progress in developing societies, one of the main proponents of growth in this region will be progressed in the energy sector. Historically, South-Asian countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, have lagged behind other regions, such as the European Union, in terms of access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy, despite technological advancements in the sector. While the per capita electricity consumption of the BBINS countries varies substantially, the regional per capita electricity consumption has increased by approximately 800 percent from 246 kWh per capita in 1990³ to 2218.2 kWh per capita in 2019.⁴

However, it has remained far behind the global average per capita consumption of 3152 kWh.⁵ Further, the existing power shortages and growing import of fossil fuels impose a high cost of energy security to the region.⁶

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/overview>

³ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.USE.ELEC.KH.PC?most_recent_year_desc=true (Average consumption data for 1990 has been calculated using 1990 electricity consumption values for each of the BBINS countries)

⁴ For the year 2019, the average per capita electricity consumption of each of these five countries were calculated –

- Bangladesh – 378 kWh, https://www.bpdb.gov.bd/bpdb_new/resourcefile/annualreports/annualreport_1605772936_AnnualReport2019-20.pdf
- Bhutan – 8664 kWh, <https://ourworldindata.org/energy-production-consumption>
- India – 1208 kWh, https://cea.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/pdm/2020/12/growth_2020.pdf
- Sri Lanka – 652 kWh, https://ceb.lk/front_img/img_reports/1626946210CEB-Statistical_Digest-Form-2020-Web_Version.pdf
- Nepal – 189 kWh, <https://ourworldindata.org/energy-production-consumption>

⁵ https://cea.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/pdm/2020/12/growth_2020.pdf

⁶ <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?arnumber=9178353>

At the same time, the South Asian region is rich in natural resources, including coal reserves of 326982 million tonnes,⁷ hydropower potential of 257 GW⁸, natural gas reserves of 56.64 tcf (trillion cubic feet) and high renewable potential of solar (748 GW)⁹ and wind (348 GW).¹⁰ However, limited but distributed resources available to generate electricity across the South Asian countries present a challenge for meeting the growing demand for electricity in these countries.¹¹

Studies have highlighted that one of the ways to overcome these challenges may be through cross-border energy cooperation. The countries in this region could benefit substantially by strengthening the mechanism of cross-border energy trade. It will help reduce the energy deficit and ensure energy security in the region.¹²

Further, the availability of diverse resources and variation in demand patterns across the countries present gainful opportunities for regional-level cooperation in energy trade.

Currently, cross-border energy trade in the region is limited to bilateral trade. Over the years, India and Bhutan and India and Nepal have taken several bilateral initiatives to develop mechanisms for the cross-border exchange of electricity.¹³

⁷ Cumulative country-wise coal reserves –

- India – 319020 mt, <https://coal.gov.in/major-statistics/coal-reserves>
- Bangladesh – 7960 mt, http://petrobangla.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/petrobangla.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/f734b418_c1fc_4913_8197_35f2db29ff1/2021-01-10-14-49-fd5f00a3f1babfa8f051d2d335c045b7.pdf
- Bhutan – 2 mt, <https://irade.org/SARI-EI-Report-on-BIMSTEC-Energy-Outlook-2030.pdf>
- Nepal & Sri Lanka – NA

⁸ Cumulative Hydropower potential –

- India – 145 GW, <https://powermin.gov.in/en/content/faqs-hydropower>
- Bhutan – 36.9 GW, <https://www.moea.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Bhutan-Sustainable-Hydropower-Development-Policy-2021.pdf>
- Nepal – 72.54 GW, <http://www.wecs.gov.np/storage/listies/February2021/final-report-july-2019-on-hydropower-potential.pdf>
- Bangladesh – 0.06GW, [https://powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/page/4f81bf4d1180_4c53_b27c_8fa0eb11e2c1/\(E\)_FR_PSMP2016_Summary_revised.pdf](https://powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/page/4f81bf4d1180_4c53_b27c_8fa0eb11e2c1/(E)_FR_PSMP2016_Summary_revised.pdf)
- Sri Lanka – 2 GW, https://ceb.lk/front_img/img_reports/1591174971Revised_LTGEP_2020-2039.pdf

⁹ <https://mnre.gov.in/solar/current-status/>

¹⁰ Refer Table 1

¹¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301421513007878>

¹² <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30262/overview-energy-cooperation-south-asia.pdf>

¹³ The initiatives have been discussed in the section on the Current Status of Energy Cooperation in the region below.

Further, bilateral initiatives with Bangladesh have also resulted in cross-border interconnections between Bangladesh and India and the flow of power since 2013, and that between India and Sri Lanka is being evaluated. Existing experiences have demonstrated that participating nations have benefited from such regional cooperation.¹⁴

The energy/electricity trade has enhanced access to electricity in Bangladesh and Nepal and is a significant source of revenue. However, consistent and strategic efforts would be crucial in extending bilateral electricity trade to trilateral and multilateral trade in the region. Regional energy cooperation may include sharing cross-border infrastructure, establishing regional power projects, and enhancing competition and trade across regional markets.

It may be argued that such regional cooperation can be achieved through effective economic policies and trade security. Still, it is often triggered by the will of the political persona, which puts the cultural, economic, and political integration in motion.¹⁵ Political leaders either head the Government or influence the Government, to dictate all policies, including for regional cooperation. Consequently, it leads to conflict resolution within the member countries and helps in creating a regional balance. At the same time, experiences from past regional forums^{16,17} suggest that political disparities within the region bring uncertainty and consequently restrict the success of regional cooperation.

Thus, experts¹⁸ suggest that regional integration may be developed depending upon political leaders' ability and interest to resolve domestic and regional differences through diplomacy and peaceful deliberations.

International experience demonstrates that nations with political differences have also come together towards the more significant cause of developing the power sector for the benefit of the local population in the region.¹⁹

¹⁴ <https://irade.org/Background%20Paper%20revised,%20Write%20Media,%20Oct18.pdf>

¹⁵ http://nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/SAARC_Jamshed_Iqbal.pdf

¹⁶ id.

¹⁷ Past regional forums include SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN, SAFTA etc.

¹⁸ http://nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/SAARC_Jamshed_Iqbal.pdf.

¹⁹ The international experience will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

One of the ways is to have a conducive political economy supported by favourable political discourse at the national and regional levels with elected representatives, executives, experts, bureaucrats, and Civil Society Organisations to foster regional energy cooperation. Consequently, it leads to the development of sustainable and inclusive policies at the country and regional levels. Establishing a 'Regional Parliamentary Forum' on Energy Cooperation & Energy Trade in South Asia could be effective. The forum could act as a unique platform for debates and action-oriented discussions on issues, challenges, and the potential of energy cooperation in the region for legislators and other relevant stakeholders in the member countries.

The study has undertaken a comprehensive approach to assess the potential of establishing a regional Parliamentary Forum in the South Asia region. Based on evidence-based practice and analysis, the study aims to suggest a detailed strategy (along with the details on the structural, functional, and operational features) and a detailed road map for implementation and rolling out of the envisaged "*Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade* ." Within its broader objective, the study aims to achieve the following goals:

- Identify potential achievements and challenges concerning energy cooperation and energy trade in the South Asia region.
- Explore the involvement of parliamentarians in regional and country-specific energy issues and the functioning of existing institutional mechanisms for their involvement within the energy sector.
- Establish the rationale and need for creating a regional parliamentary forum by learning from existing similar platforms and identifying drivers, challenges, and impacts.
- Propose an ideal structural and functional framework for setting up an outcome-oriented regional parliamentary forum in the BBINS region.
- Develop a practical and feasible roadmap based on the forum's structure, political economy, and regional geodynamics.

The rationale behind this research is to assess the need for a Regional Parliamentary Forum to augment energy cooperation in the South Asian Region. The assessment is limited to Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. A multipronged approach has been used to develop a comprehensive understanding, including an extensive literature review followed by consultations with the parliamentarians in the five countries. The information so collected has been further vetted through secondary research. The following sections sequentially detail the methodology and approach for each of the research components.

1. Literature Review

An extensive "As is" review and analysis of institutional structures, organisational set-ups, and prevailing practices/existing mechanisms related to Parliamentary Forums focusing on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in the BBINS countries have been conducted to assess the functioning, efficacy, and adequacy of existing parliamentary forums in the member countries.

2. Identification of Best Practices

Existing parliamentary forums and similar platforms in other regions and countries in the world have been reviewed for deriving learnings from their structure, functioning. Based on the assessment of these institutions, drivers and best practices have been identified from the perspective of achieving sustainability and impact. To augment findings, the project team has also consulted relevant experts, parliamentarians, and other stakeholders in this region through emails, telephonic conversations, and video conferencing. Further, the lacunas in the current structure of the existing regional parliamentary forums and bilateral agreements have also been assessed.

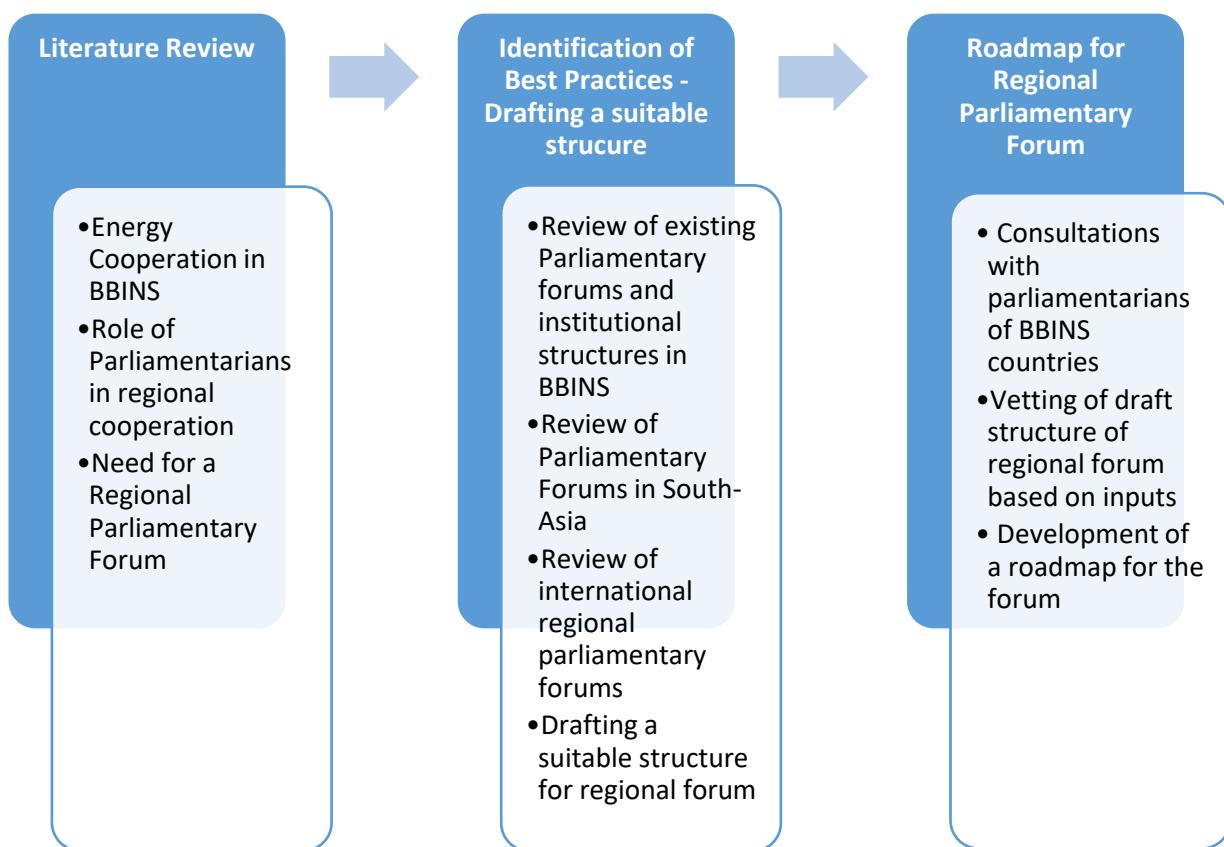
3. Drafting a Suitable Structure

Based on the insights from the intensive literature review, a draft structure of the regional parliamentary structure has been created. This has been drafted in line with the key objective to propose an ideal structural and functional framework of an outcome-oriented regional parliamentary forum in the region.

4. Consultations with Parliamentarians

The draft framework for the forum has been vetted by key Parliamentarians from the BBINS countries to ensure its robustness. (Please refer to Annexure 2 for a list of Parliamentarians who have been consulted)

Based on the inputs received from the consultations and available literature, the research has attempted to develop a roadmap for a regional parliamentary forum.



Current Status and Future Outlook of Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in South Asia

Energy Reserves in the BBINS Region

Even though BBINS countries are rich in various energy resources, these are dispersed in the BBINS countries. Also, there is diversity in the type of energy supply sources among the countries. Thus, it offers opportunities for cooperation in the energy sector.²⁰ The potential total energy reserve of various energy forms in the BBIN region has been presented in Table 4.1. The data indicates the diversity of the energy reserves and the potential direction of energy trade in the region.

Table 4.1: Energy Reserves in the BBINS Region

Country	Coal (MT)*	Oil (MB)**	Natural Gas (TCF)***	Biomass (GW)****	Hydro Power (GW)****	Solar# (GW)	Wind# (GW)
Bangladesh	7960 ²¹	12 ²²	28 ²³	-	0.06 ²⁴	-	-
Bhutan	225	-	-	2726	36.927	-	0.7628

²⁰ https://www.gtg-india.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200616_PPT_ACEF-2020_Case-Study-2_SARI-EI-Final.pdf

²¹ http://petrobangla.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/petrobangla.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/f734b418_c1fc_4913_8197_35f2db29cff1/2021-01-10-14-49-fd5f00a3f1babfa8f051d2d335c045b7.pdf

²² <https://rade.org/SARI-EI-Report-on-BIMSTEC-Energy-Outlook-2030.pdf> and <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Integrating%20South%20Asia%20Power%20Grid%20for%20a%20Sustainable%20and%20Low%20Carbon%20Future%20WEB.pdf>

²³ http://www.petrobangla.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/petrobangla.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/f734b418_c1fc_4913_8197_35f2db29cff1/2021-01-10-14-49-fd5f00a3f1babfa8f051d2d335c045b7.pdf

²⁴ [https://powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/page/4f81bf4d_1180_4c53_b27c_8fa0eb11e2c1/\(E\)_FR_PSMP2016_Summary_revised.pdf](https://powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/powerdivision.portal.gov.bd/page/4f81bf4d_1180_4c53_b27c_8fa0eb11e2c1/(E)_FR_PSMP2016_Summary_revised.pdf)

²⁵ <http://web.archive.org/web/20140605044810/http://www.bp.com:80/en/global/corporate/about-bp/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy-2016.html>

²⁶ <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Integrating%20South%20Asia%20Power%20Grid%20for%20a%20Sustainable%20and%20Low%20Carbon%20Future%20WEB.pdf>

²⁷ <https://www.moea.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Bhutan-Sustainable-Hydropower-Development-Policy-2021.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.moea.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Bhutan-Energy-Data-Directory-2015.pdf>

India	319020 ²⁹	4537 ³⁰	48.74 ³¹	17.54 ³²	145 ³³	748 ³⁴	695 ³⁵
Nepal	-	-	-	28.14	72.5436	-	337
Sri Lanka	-	150 ³⁸	-	2.3 ³⁹	2 ⁴⁰	6 ⁴¹	24 ⁴²
Total	326982	4699	76.74	74.98	256.5	754	722.76

*MT – Million Tonnes; **MB – Million Barrels; ***TCF – Trillion Cubic Feet; **** GW – Gigawatts; # Estimated solar and wind energy potential.

An Overview of the Electricity Sector in South Asia

Overall the South Asian region has a high growth rate in electricity demand. The per capita consumption of the region (2218.2 kWh/capita)⁴³ is far less as compared to the average world per capita consumption (3152 kWh/capita)⁴⁴ indicating that a significant part of the population remains without access to electricity. Among the countries in the region, Bhutan has the highest per capita electricity consumption at 8864 kWh/capita, followed by India at 1,208 kWh/capita (refer to the table below).

²⁹ <https://coal.gov.in/major-statistics/coal-reserves>

³⁰ http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/ES_2020_240420m.pdf conversion factor 7.33 from metric tonne to barrels, <https://qp.com.qa/ar/Pages/ConversionFactor.aspx>

³¹ http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/ES_2020_240420m.pdf conversion factor 35.3 from metric tonne to barrels, <https://qp.com.qa/ar/Pages/ConversionFactor.aspx>

³² http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/ES_2020_240420m.pdf

³³ <https://powermin.gov.in/en/content/faqs-hydropower>

³⁴ <https://mnre.gov.in/solar/current-status/>

³⁵ <https://mnre.gov.in/wind/current-status/>

³⁶ <http://www.wecs.gov.np/storage/listies/February2021/final-report-july-2019-on-hydropower-potential.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.aepc.gov.np/achievement>

³⁸ <https://irade.org/SARI-EI-Report-on-BIMSTEC-Energy-Outlook-2030.pdf>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20140605044810/http://www.bp.com:80/en/global/corporate/about-bp/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy-2016.html>

³⁹ <https://irade.org/SARI-EI-Report-on-BIMSTEC-Energy-Outlook-2030.pdf>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20140605044810/http://www.bp.com:80/en/global/corporate/about-bp/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy-2016.html>

⁴⁰ https://ceb.lk/front_img/img_reports/1591174971Revised_LTGEP_2020-2039.pdf

⁴¹ <https://irade.org/SARI-EI-Report-on-BIMSTEC-Energy-Outlook-2030.pdf>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20140605044810/http://www.bp.com:80/en/global/corporate/about-bp/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy-2016.html>

⁴² <http://www.energy.gov.lk/index.php/en/renewable-energy/technologies/wind-power>

⁴³ Please refer to footnote number 3

⁴⁴ https://cea.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/pdm/2020/12/growth_2020.pdf

Table 4.2: Electricity Scenario in BBINS Region at a Glance

Country	Installed Capacity (MW)	Access to Electricity (%)	Per capita Electricity Consumption (kWh) ⁴⁵
Bangladesh	2038346	85.2 %	378
Bhutan	232647	100 %	8864
India	38688848	95.2 %	1208
Nepal	137849	93.9 %	189
Sri Lanka	426550	99.6 %	652

Source: World Bank - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCTS.ZS?view=chart>; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.USE.ELEC.KH.PC?view=chart>; <https://cuts-citee.org/energy-cooperation-in-the-bbin-region/>; <https://sari-energy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ppt.pdf>.

Fossil fuel is the most predominant source of electricity in the region. India is majorly dependent on coal to generate power, while Bangladesh depends on Natural Gas. Bhutan and Nepal are majorly reliant on hydropower, but Nepal has to import power seasonally to meet its energy demands. Additionally, Bhutan and Nepal are mainly dependent on biomass for heating, cooking, etc. Sri Lanka is predominantly reliant on hydropower, but hydroelectric power generation also depends on oil and biomass to meet its demand due to its unreliable and variable nature. Consequently, the total annual Carbon-di-oxide emission in the region is approximately 2762.62 million tonnes, with India accounting for the bulk of the emissions (2620 million tonnes).⁵¹

Even though the region has vast potential for hydropower; generation, the total installed capacity of hydropower plants in India is 46 GW,⁵² Bhutan 2.3 GW⁵³ and Nepal 1.3 GW⁵⁴. Nepal and Bhutan have the potential to export electricity from hydropower plants. While India has significant coal deposits, the coal deposits in Bangladesh are yet to be harnessed. In addition, there are substantial renewable energy resources like solar, wind, and biomass.

⁴⁵ Please refer to footnote number 3

⁴⁶

https://www.bpdb.gov.bd/bpdb_new/resourcefile/annualreports/annualreport_1605772936_AnnualReport2019-20.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://cea.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/hpi/2021/01/bhutan-12.pdf>

⁴⁸ <https://powermin.gov.in/en/content/power-sector-glance-all-india>

⁴⁹ <https://www.doe.doe.gov.np/license/53>

⁵⁰ https://ceb.lk/front_img/img_reports/1626946210CEB-Statistical_Digest-Form-2020-Web_Version.pdf

⁵¹ <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/india>

⁵² <https://powermin.gov.in/en/content/power-sector-glance-all-india>

⁵³ Please refer to table 2

⁵⁴ <https://www.doe.doe.gov.np/license/54>

The electricity demand in the BBINS region will be 12.46 lakh GWh in 2020.⁵⁵ The demand is further likely to increase with a projected CAGR of 7.4 percent.⁵⁶ Given the current status of energy resources in the region's countries, the most significant percentage of the region's power generation depends on fossil fuels. So, to ensure sustainable growth in the energy sector, it is imperative to promote regional energy cooperation in the region to increase the penetration of renewable sources of energy in the region.

Table 4.3: Electricity Consumption in the BBINS Region

Country	Electricity Consumption (GWh)
Bangladesh	71419
Bhutan	2243
India	1155130
Nepal	7600
Sri Lanka	10500

Source: <https://cuts-citee.org/energy-cooperation-in-the-bbin-region/>; <https://sari-energy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ppt.pdf>, https://ceaindicia.org/wp-content/uploads/pdm/2020/12/growth_2020.pdf,
<https://ourworldindata.org/energy/country/bhutan?country=~LKA>;
<https://powermin.gov.in/en/content/power-sector-glance-all-india>;
<https://mpemr.gov.bd/power/details/80>;
https://www.bpdb.gov.bd/bpdb_new/index.php/site/power_generation_unit;
https://www.bpdb.gov.bd/bpdb_new/index.php/site/new_annual_reports - Annual_report_2019-20;
<https://moewri.gov.np/storage/listies/May2020/electricity-demand-forecast-report-2014-2040.pdf>;
[https://www.nea.org.np/annual_report \(Annual_Report_2019-20\); http://powermin.gov.lk/sinhala/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ENERGY_EMPOWERED_NATION_2015_2025.pdf](https://www.nea.org.np/annual_report (Annual_Report_2019-20); http://powermin.gov.lk/sinhala/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ENERGY_EMPOWERED_NATION_2015_2025.pdf)

Current Status of Energy Trade and Cooperation in the Region

In 2019, 3000 MW of electricity was being traded in the region.⁵⁷ Additionally, according to a recent study⁵⁸ Cross-Border Electricity trade in the South-Asian region

⁵⁵ Please refer to Table 3

⁵⁶ <https://irade.org/Background%20Paper%20revised,%20Write%20Media,%20Oct18.pdf>

⁵⁷ <https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=195195>

⁵⁸ <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/electricity-trade-in-south-asian-could-grow-up-to-60000-mw-through-2045/66477793>

can grow to 60 GW through 2045, likely strengthening regional energy cooperation among the countries in the region.

Cross-border cooperation between Bhutan-India and India-Nepal has exhibited its effectiveness in the regional context, though India's electricity trade with its neighboring countries is mainly one-sided.⁵⁹ In 2020-2021 India imported approximately 6351 GWh electricity and exported 9491 GWh.⁶⁰ Bhutan primarily exports electricity to India, while Bangladesh and Nepal mainly import electricity from India.⁶¹ Additionally, several initiatives have emerged in parts of the region, highlighting the willingness of the regional countries to explore increased cross-border cooperation, although in a bilateral manner. The existing bilateral cross-border arrangements among the BBINS countries are briefly discussed below:

India-Nepal cooperation: The cross-border energy cooperation between India and Nepal dates back to the 1960s when India assisted the development of a 1 MW hydropower plant in Pokhara, Nepal, which was commissioned in 1968. However, 22 radial links at 132/33/11 kV are present across the long common shared border.⁶²

Nepal has a total hydropower potential of 72 GW, but the installed capacity is only 1.3 GW. The total electricity consumption in 2019-20 was 6,422 GWh corresponding to a total available energy of 7,741 GWh. Nepal's indigenous electricity generation comprises approximately 78 percent of the total available electricity, whereas import from India accounts for 22 percent.⁶³

Nepal aims to enhance its electricity generation capacity to 16500 MW by 2030, including the joint hydropower project with India at Pancheshwar. Furthermore, the countries have charged⁶⁴ the Nepal-India Dhalkebar – Muzaffarpur 400 VK line project to total capacity, to increase power trade capacity between Nepal and India to 1000 MW. Once Nepal strengthens the internal east-west transmission network within Nepal, the Dhalkebar – Muzaffarpur 400 KV line would be more utilised. The cross-

⁵⁹ <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/electricity-trade-in-south-asian-could-grow-up-to-60000-mw-through-2045/66477793>

⁶⁰ http://www.mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/ES/Energy%20Statistics%20India%202021.pdf

⁶¹ <https://rade.org/Background%20Paper%20revised,%20Write%20Media,%20Oct18.pdf>

⁶² <https://cii.in/WebCMS/Upload/CII%20-%20Nepal%20India%20Cooperation%20on%20Hydropower.pdf>

⁶³ https://www.nea.org.np/annual_report (Annual Report 2019-20)

⁶⁴ <https://thehimalayantimes.com/business/dhalkebar-substation-charged-at-full-capacity>

border transmission line is also likely to materialise the proposed energy banking.⁶⁵ between the countries.

India-Bhutan Cooperation: Electricity cooperation between the two countries began in 1961 with the Jaldhaka project on the border shared by Bhutan with West Bengal, India. However, the development of the 336 MW Chukha hydroelectric power project, Bhutan's first mega power project, was a landmark in their history of cooperation.⁶⁶

This was followed by the development of Kurichu (60MW) and Tala (1,020MW) hydroelectric power projects. In addition, Bhutan and India entered into an umbrella agreement.⁶⁷ to develop hydropower projects and associated transmission systems and trade-in electricity through public and private sector participation.⁶⁸

Consequently, Bhutan exported 6172 GWh of electricity to India in 2019-20, 40 percent more than the previous year. Such increase in the export of electricity was mainly due to the commissioning of the Mangdechhu Hydropower plant in October 2019,⁶⁹ which the Government of India funded.⁷⁰ Hydropower sales account for 63 percent of its total exports for Bhutan and have a significant national GDP share. Given Bhutan's abundant water resources, the constant bilateral cooperation seems to be a mutually beneficial option for both countries.⁷¹

India-Bangladesh Cooperation: Under the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Bangladesh-India in 2010 to enhance the electricity generation in

⁶⁵ The two countries agreed to the 'Nepal-India energy banking deal' at the 13th meeting of the Power Exchange Committee held in 2018 in New Delhi. **The banking system** would involve exchanging electricity for electricity instead of cash. Under this, one country exports electricity to the other when it has a surplus and imports back the same amount of energy when it has a deficit.

<https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/India-Nepal-agree-to-set-up-energy-bank/67288280#:~:text=The%20Kathmandu%20Post,-The%20two%20countries%20agreed%20to%20the%20Nepal%2DIndia%20energy%20banking,in%20New%20Delhi%20on%20Tuesday.&text=Under%20this%2C%20one%20country%20exports,when%20it%20has%20a%20deficit.>

⁶⁶ https://www.mfa.gov.bt/rbedelhi/?page_id=28

⁶⁷ **Umbrella agreements** are a **contract** framework with terms and conditions that take in potential possibilities within a **contract's** lifetime and beyond. Parties should be given and taken when negotiating umbrella agreements, and each party should be happy with the final **agreement** before signing.

⁶⁸ <https://www.ptcindia.com/trading-with-bhutan/#:~:text=India%20has%20signed%20umbrella%20agreement,for%20the%20upcoming%20hydro%20projects.>

⁶⁹ <https://www.bpc.bt/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://www.power-technology.com/projects/mangdechhu-hydroelectric-project-trongsa-dzongkhag/>

⁷¹ https://www.mfa.gov.bt/rbedelhi/?page_id=28

Bangladesh, both countries had decided to invest jointly in power projects. In addition, it also aimed to strengthen electricity trade between the countries through cross-border grid connectivity. Subsequently, it led to developing a 400kV, 30km double-circuit HVDC line from Bheramara (Bangladesh) to Baharampur (India) and 1000 MW electricity through Bheramara and 160 MW electricity through Cumilla from the eastern border of Bangladesh, from Tripura, India.⁷²

A small portion of the Bheramara (Bangladesh)-Baharampur (India) 2nd 400 kV double circuit transmission line is under construction and will likely be completed by 2021.⁷³

Furthermore, to meet the electricity demand in the Rajshahi and Rangpur region in Bangladesh, the country aims to import 1496 MW of electricity from the thermal power plant of Adani Power Jharkhand Limited in Godda, Jharkhand. A 400 kV transmission line is being constructed from Rahanpur to the Monakasha Border in the Chapainawabganj district of Bangladesh.⁷⁴

Furthermore, to enhance the traditional ties of friendship between the countries through the development of economic cooperation while also realising the increasing demand for electricity for social-economic development, the government of India and Bangladesh have signed a Memorandum of Understanding⁷⁵ (MoU) in 2010 to trade power between countries at a mutually agreed upon price and procedure depending upon the techno-commercial and social feasibility of such trade.

Further, the seasonal diversity between Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal offer a great potential for electricity trade. For example, Bangladesh experienced an electricity demand of approx. 12900 MW during the summer in 2021, which reduces to half in winters.⁷⁶ However, the seasonal trend in demand is the opposite in Nepal and Bhutan. Thus, it creates an opportunity to trade electricity throughout the year.

India is committed to exploring a natural gas pipeline to Nepal. Experts believe that a trilateral partnership between Bangladesh, India, and Nepal in developing shared

⁷² <https://web.pgcb.gov.bd/report/2783/download>

⁷³ https://web.pgcb.gov.bd/project_details/169

⁷⁴ https://web.pgcb.gov.bd/project_details/160

⁷⁵ https://hcidhaka.gov.in/pdf/bi_doc/MOU.pdf

⁷⁶ <https://reglobal.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/bangladesh-power-sector-an-appraisal-from-a-multi-dimensional-perspective.pdf>

assets in the form of pipelines, terminals, and gas storage facilities will augment the economic viability of the projects and foster trade in the region.⁷⁷

India-Sri Lanka Cooperation: Sri Lanka relies primarily on imported fossil fuels and domestic hydropower to meet its domestic needs. However, it has pledged to generate 100 percent electricity through renewables by 2050 in the 22nd UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Marrakech, Morocco.⁷⁸ This provided a potential investment opportunity to develop inter-connectivity transmission links, utility-scale wind and solar for the Indian private sector.

Subsequently, India- Sri Lanka grid connection lines were proposed. It involves the construction of an HVDC connection between Madurai in India, and Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, through the Palk Strait. Earlier, the link was proposed to be 285km, including 50km of submarine cables. In the latest feasibility done by India, it is envisaged that the link can be a complete overhead line due to shallow waters, which will also reduce the cost of the link substantially. It may initially transfer up to 500 MW of power and eventually transfer up to 1,000 MW.

Furthermore, solar power generation in India could complement wind power in Sri Lanka. Trade-in electricity between India and Sri Lanka could augment the flexibility in the grid management. in both countries regarding the intermittencies of generation from renewable energy sources. This link will help Sri Lanka save US\$180mn annually in electricity generation costs and link Sri Lankan offshore wind projects with the transmission line.⁷⁹

In addition to regional cooperation within the BBINS countries, there is a potential to involve other nations in the sub-continent that benefit from energy trade and cooperation. One such example could be the Maldives, which has no proven fossil fuel reserves and therefore has overdependence on energy imports. In 2018, energy imports to the Maldives totalled 643,900 tonnes.⁸⁰

Within its larger regional cooperation plan, the Government of India is undertaking a strategic role in paving the roadmap for achieving energy security in the Maldives.

⁷⁷ <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/powering-south-asias-energy-trade-links/2088638/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/354591/sri-lanka-power-2050v2.pdf>

⁷⁹ <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/powering-south-asias-energy-trade-links/2088638/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/what-does-energy-security-mean-maldives/>

India, through its Ministry of External Affairs, assumed a key role in the installation of smart LED⁸¹ streetlights in the Maldives to curb peak electricity demand and reduce carbon emissions.

Further, the Government of India plans to tackle regional CO2 emissions, adding more green energy resources for the Maldives and extending full cooperation to the Maldives to enhance the renewable energy capacity.⁸² This may help the Maldives realise its true potential with green energy resources, focusing on the three founding pillars of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and integration of technology innovation.

Role of Parliamentarians of South Asian Countries for the Current Level of Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade

The primary role of the Parliamentarians is to bolster political, economic, social, and cultural relations within their respective and other countries. They intend to strengthen partnerships in diverse areas of cooperation through dialogue and diplomacy. For instance, hydroelectric cooperation between India and Bhutan is an integral part of economic cooperation between the two nations.⁸³

The cooperation between India and Bhutan is governed by the bilateral agreement on cooperation in hydropower signed in 2006. In addition, to further strengthen the cooperation between the two countries, an Inter-Governmental Agreement was signed in 2014 to facilitate the development of four hydropower projects in Bhutan.⁸⁴

Better diplomatic relations between the countries tend to instill trust among the investors and bolster trade and investment between them. For instance, under the Indian Line of Credit (LoC) agreement signed between EXIM Bank of India and the Government of Sri Lanka, India has offered US\$100mn to Sri Lanka to enhance solar power generation.⁸⁵ The LoC will provide financing to floating Solar plants in addition

⁸¹ Light Emitting Diode

⁸² <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/what-does-energy-security-mean-maldives/>

⁸³ https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Brief_Bilateral_Brief_bhutan_Feb_2020.pdf

⁸⁴ http://www.meaweb.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bhutan_May_2018.pdf

⁸⁵ https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/IndSriLanka_2019.pdf

to the funding provided to install 30,000 rooftop solar systems with a generation capacity of 60 MW.⁸⁶

From the existing experiences of bilateral cooperation amongst the BBINS countries, it is reasonable to assume that the role of the parliamentarians is to create an enabling environment to augment investment, trade, and cooperation among the countries. Subsequently, it will lead to the formulation of just and fair policies and regulations that complement trade and investment in the region. The parliamentarians may bolster public support and build consensus among the local key stakeholders, which could further enhance the cooperation in the region.

⁸⁶ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-offers-100-mn-line-of-credit-to-sri-lanka-for-solar-projects/article32701304.ece>

Review of Multilateral Forums in the South Asian Countries (SACs) with a Focus on BBINS

In the South Asian context, many multilateral and regional organisations have played a significant part in building the narrative to develop regional cooperation in the energy sector. Different organisations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),⁸⁷ South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)⁸⁸, South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR)⁸⁹, South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (BIMSTEC)⁹⁰Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, and USAID have undertaken different studies to identify various issues, mobilised support from stakeholders, and provided financing to implement the multiple projects. The key aspects of each Forum are detailed below:

South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

In January 2000, a Technical Committee on Energy was set up by SAARC, which focused on energy cooperation in the region. In January 2004, the Council of Ministers approved the creation of a specialised Working Group on Energy. During the first meeting of the SAARC Energy Ministers, held in Islamabad, Pakistan, on October 01, 2005, it was decided that an Expert Group would be constituted to deliberate on the options and potential of energy conservation and energy efficiency measures and to formulate a road map for its implementation.

The 13th SAARC summit in 2005 decided to establish the SAARC Energy Center in Islamabad (discussed below). The government of India organised the South Asia Energy Dialog on March 05, 2007, to bring together experts, academic think-tanks, and other stakeholders in the region and make recommendations to promote energy sector cooperation. In the third meeting held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in January 2009, the Energy Ministers approved the concept of a South Asia Energy Ring.

⁸⁷ SAARC - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

⁸⁸ SASEC - *South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation*

⁸⁹ SAFIR - *South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation*

⁹⁰ BIMSTEC - Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

After the Dhaka Declaration in 2005, SAARC established its energy centre (SEC) in 2006 in Islamabad, Pakistan, to enhance energy cooperation among the South Asian Countries (SAC).⁹¹ The key objectives⁹² were the development of energy resources, including renewable and alternative resources and to promote energy trade in the region. Further, during the 15th SAARC summit in 2008, the member states recognised the need to build up renewable energy resources and the trade and sharing of technology.⁹³

Consequently, the working group on energy, in 2009, proposed 'Regional Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement', which was further pushed in its seventh meeting held in March 2013. Hence, in November 2014, SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) was finally signed.

Under the Agreement, SAARC member states have to provide non-discriminatory access to the regional transmission grids in their respective countries. The Agreement allows

- Authorised entities of SAARC member states, including private or public power producers, power utilities, trading companies, transmission utilities, distribution companies, or other institutions established under the law, to buy and sell electricity within the region.
- Buying and selling entities to negotiate the terms and conditions, payment security mechanism, and tenure of the electricity trade, subject to regulation by the laws of the concerned member states.
- Member states are to consider exempting export and import duties and other fees for cross-border trade and exchange of electricity between buying and selling entities.

In addition to these institutional frameworks, SAARC energy ministers, senior officials, and expert groups meet periodically to discuss the issue of regional energy cooperation. The SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (CEERE), established in 2016, meets regularly under the SAARC framework to promote energy cooperation and knowledge sharing among the experts.

⁹¹ Priyantha Wijayatunga & P.N. Fernando. "An Overview of Energy Cooperation in South Asia" *Asian Development Bank South Asian Working Paper Series*, no.19 (2013). Accessed December 24, 2020.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30262/overview-energy-cooperation-south-asia.pdf>

⁹² <https://www.saarcenergy.org/vision-mission/>

⁹³ <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/fifteenth-saarc-summit-declaration-addresses-climate-change-and-food-security/>

Studies suggest that the success of the regional cooperation in the South Asia region through the SAARC platform is limited.⁹⁴ One of the reasons is the lack of conducive domestic and foreign policies, which could augment regional trade and cooperation. The issues between India and Pakistan have remained unsettled, which restricts the two major countries in the region from having conducive trade relations. However, the Charter⁹⁵ of SAARC does not include deliberations on political issues and conflicts. Experts believe that regional cooperation without a conducive political will may limit the association to achieve its primary goal and render the process of collaboration inconsequential.⁹⁶

South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)

In 1996, four SAARC members- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal- formed the South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) to accelerate sustainable economic development through regional cooperation. SAARC endorsed SAGQ in 1997 at the SAARC Summit held in Malé, Maldives. The initial four-member countries then requested Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance to promote economic cooperation in the sub-region, leading to the creation of the SASEC Programme in 2001.⁹⁷

The Maldives and Sri Lanka joined SASEC in May 2014, and Myanmar became the seventh member of SASEC in February 2017.⁹⁸ One of the main objectives⁹⁹ of this cooperation is to enhance electricity trade in the region by diversifying energy supply and meeting energy demands while securing power reliability. Consequently, the SASEC member countries have signed 12 energy-related projects worth US\$1.58bn, which are in the implementation process.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, to build confidence and mutual trust among the member countries, SASEC has created discussion platforms where shared interests are identified and addressed for the benefit of all members. Such platform includes SASEC Nodal officers

⁹⁴ <https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvloA2LALJouq9hkR/BX0BIUWk6n.pdf>

⁹⁵ <http://saarc-sdmc.org/sites/default/files/charter.pdf>

⁹⁶ <https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvloA2LALJouq9hkR/BX0BIUWk6n.pdf>

⁹⁷ South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Operational Plan 2016–2025

⁹⁸ <http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=news&nid=600&url=myanmar-joins-sasec>

⁹⁹ South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Operational Plan 2016–2025

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=what-is-sasec>

meetings and sector-wise working groups. The SASEC secretariat, located in Manila, Philippines, works with all the member governments to facilitate the implementation of projects and initiatives while providing support in technical areas.¹⁰¹ For instance, in October 2012, the SASEC energy working group met to discuss the Proposed Transmission Utility Forum (TUF).¹⁰²

Consequently, the SASEC Electricity Transmission Utility Forum (SETUF) was established in 2013 as a technical sub-committee of the energy working group. It aims to play a key role in developing cross-border power transmission connectivity and promote more significant power trade between the SASEC sub-region and Sri Lanka. It also serves as a vehicle for knowledge exchange in developing cross-border power transmission infrastructure.¹⁰³

SAFIR was established in May 1999, with the World Bank's support, to provide high-quality capacity building and training on infrastructure regulation and related issues in South Asia. Further, it aimed to stimulate research on the subject by building a network of regional and international institutions & individuals that are active in the field.¹⁰⁴

It is an association of Infrastructure Regulators from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The Forum plays a key role in disseminating knowledge and best practices among infrastructure regulatory institutions in South Asia. The secretarial service to SAFIR is provided by India's Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC). It conducts flagship core courses and capacity-building programmes in electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, water, transport and other sectors.

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organisation comprising seven Member States - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. This sub-regional organisation

¹⁰¹ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=what-is-sasec>

¹⁰² <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=50&url=sasec-meetings-on-the-proposed-transmission-utility-forum-and-subregional-power-generation-and-trans>

¹⁰³ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=85&url=first-meeting-of-the-sasec-electricity-transmission-utility-forum>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.safirasia.org/about-safir>

came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration. The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and Southeast Asia and represents relations among these countries. BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.¹⁰⁵

BIMSTEC has identified 14 priority areas where a member country takes the lead. Energy is one of these priority areas, with Myanmar leading the region. The areas of energy where BIMSTEC countries are focusing on are: oil and gas, power and non-conventional sources of energy.¹⁰⁶

Its objective is to enhance energy cooperation among BIMSTEC Member countries through the establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection. Subsequently, it will lead to the expansion of energy trade among Member countries and accelerate the development of new hydropower projects, interconnection of electricity and natural gas grids among the nations, implementation of renewable energy projects, and sharing knowledge technology. BIMSTEC conducts its business through BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting, Senior Officials Meeting on Energy (SOME) and Task Force/Expert Group Meetings. While Energy Ministers are supposed to meet once every two years, SOM-E is supposed to meet at least once a year to follow up on energy sector-related cooperation.¹⁰⁷

On January 22, 2011, the Member States signed the Memorandum of Association (MoA) to establish the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) in Bengaluru, India. The key objectives of BEC are to enhance cooperation, share best practices, conduct feasibility studies and function as a secretariat for energy cooperation activities. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection was signed on August 31, 2018 at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The MoU has entered into force on 07 April 2019. This MoU will facilitate:¹⁰⁸

- i. optimisation of using the energy resources in the region for mutual benefits on a non-discriminatory basis is subject to the respective parties' laws, rules, and regulations.

¹⁰⁵ https://bimstec.org/?page_id=189

¹⁰⁶ SARI/EI Report on BIMSTEC Energy Outlook 2030

¹⁰⁷ https://bimstec.org/?page_id=268

¹⁰⁸ <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=160976>

- ii. promotion of efficient, economic and secure operation of power systems needed through the development of regional electricity networks.
- iii. the necessity of optimisation of capital investment for generation capacity addition across the region
- iv. power exchange through cross border interconnections

While BIMSTEC is interregional and connects South Asia and ASEAN, this Forum has some concerns. The most prominent is the infrequency of BIMSTEC summits. The Summit should be held every two years; however, only four summits have been held to date. This raises serious concerns over the seriousness of the member countries. Furthermore, unprecedented delay in adopting the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a framework that was agreed upon in 2004, questions the effectiveness of the BIMSTEC.¹⁰⁹ BIMSTEC members established a permanent secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh, but it has suffered from meagre financial and human resources, consequently affecting its performance adversely.¹¹⁰

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative

The BBIN sub-regional initiative is envisioned to improve economic cooperation and connectivity among the four South Asian countries- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. Informal discussions led to the evolution¹¹¹ This initiative aimed to strengthen sub-regional ties outside bilateral agreements, owing partly to the continued failure of existing systems. It operates through regular Joint Working Group (JWG) sessions, represented by each member state that discusses the formulation, implementation and review of quadrilateral agreements. The Joint Working Group (JWG) has met three times in the past. The last meeting was held in January 2016 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which discussed specific hydropower projects under the BBIN framework.

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/saarc-vs-bimstec-the-search-for-the-ideal-platform-for-regional-cooperation/>

¹¹⁰ Id

¹¹¹ <https://defenceforumindia.com/threads/bbin-updates-and-discussion.68467/>

The World Bank

The World Bank predominantly advocates for regional energy cooperation in the South Asian Region. It instituted numerous studies on the various aspects of regional cooperation in South Asia, including energy. The reports, titled 'Potential and Prospects for Regional Energy Trade in the South Asia Region'¹¹² and Cross Border Electricity Cooperation in South Asia¹¹³ are amongst the key studies that identified the main potential, opportunities, and challenges for developing regional energy trade in the region.¹¹⁴

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB is one of the prime advocates of regional cooperation in the region. With its South Asia Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation, ADB has been supporting cross-border electricity trade in the region. For instance, it supported SAARC in carrying out the SAARC Regional Energy Trade Study (SRETS),¹¹⁵ which identified four regional or sub-regional trade options: (i) power market (ii) petroleum refinery (iii) LNG terminal, and (iv) power plant.

As a follow-up to the SRETS study, SAARC has commissioned a study on Regional Power Exchange¹¹⁶ with the assistance of ADB. In addition to the research studies mentioned above, ADB also finances infrastructure projects to promote cross-border energy trade. For instance, the Dhalkebar Muzaffarpur 400kV cross-border interconnection project¹¹⁷ between Nepal and India, and 400kV, 30km double-circuit HVDC line from Bheramara, Bangladesh to Baharampur, India, was partly funded by the ADB.

¹¹²

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17537/462820ESM0bBox1regional1energy1trade.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹¹³

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22206/Cross0border0e0ration0in0South0Asia.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹¹⁴

<https://rade.org/Background%20Paper%20revised,%20Write%20Media,%20Oct18.pdf>

¹¹⁵

https://www.sasec.asia/uploads/publications/srets_a.pdf

¹¹⁶

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/81168/43224-012-tacr-01.pdf>

¹¹⁷

<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/HN/article/view/11273/9139>

USAID-SARI/E and SARI/EI

The SARI/E programme,¹¹⁸ started by the USAID in 2000, has been consistently advocating for promoting energy security in the South Asian nations by working in three focus areas: cross-border energy trade, energy market formation, and regional clean energy development. In 2012, the SARI/E programme entered its fourth and final phase, called the SARI/Energy Integration (SARI/EI) programme. In this phase (2012-2017), the project's goal was to advance regional energy integration for enhancing cross-border energy trade. It focused on the three components: a) Harmonisation of policy, legal, and regulatory mechanisms; b) Advancement of transmission system interconnections; and c) Establishment of South Asia Regional Electricity Markets. The project has extended to 2022, focusing on implementation through institutionalisation and the propagation of renewable energy sources.

¹¹⁸ <https://sari-energy.org/>

Rationale and Need for a Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade

Regional energy cooperation can provide an ideal opportunity to boost sustainable growth and lead to infrastructure development and sharing of resources and technology. So far, regional cooperation has only been seen from the perspective of energy trade. However, it could act as a facilitator of energy access and electrification in the region. The role of political leaders thus becomes highly crucial in changing the narrative and reaching out to the masses to gain public support on the project of regional importance.

The failure of leadership to muster political will is thus an issue that has several interconnected elements, all of which individually constrain regional projects and collectively create an intractable deadlock. Furthermore, while the literature has consistently highlighted political issues as the significant challenge for regional energy cooperation, it has failed to analyse these issues systematically. Establishing a "Regional Parliamentary Forum" in this regard could be an effective intervention.

Parliament committees or forums can be seen as a tool to strengthen the functioning of the parliament. They act as a platform for deliberations on issues of interest or concern. In principle, it is reasonable to assume that a parliamentary committee is a group of members who have demonstrated interest in the respective issues and the expertise of law-making and can hence lead to transparent, thorough, and informed decision-making. While the members may belong to different political ideologies, within a committee, they can foster intense deliberations on the issues they otherwise might not do in open houses, wherein the vision and mission of political parties overcome individual opinions.

Regional energy cooperation and expansion of trade and infrastructure impose new political economy challenges that require solid institutional support. The institutional support could be in the regional parliamentary forum with representatives from all the member countries. While the parliamentarians exhibit exorbitant political acumen, the

domain expertise can be drawn through Civil Society Organisations and other experts in the sector.

The primary reasons for the need for a parliamentary forum on energy cooperation and energy trade in the region are outlined below:

- **Trust deficit among the member countries**

Trust deficit arises from limited regional cooperation amongst the BBINS countries. One of the primary reasons for the existing poor levels of regional cooperation could be existing power asymmetry in the region, leading to mistrust and a sense of obscurity among the member countries.¹¹⁹ According to Barry Buzan, India is the economic and military powerhouse in the region, and it has become a local hegemon or the core state.¹²⁰ It augments the apprehension and the distrust among the member countries. Subsequently, the smaller countries tend to trade outside the region to minimise India's dominance.

In addition, the Article X (2) of the SAARC charter¹²¹ excludes deliberation on bilateral issues, which further restricts the trade and cooperation in the region. The regional parliamentary forum could provide a platform for the member countries to engage with experts and bureaucrats on relevant issues. In addition, it could also offer an opportunity to deliberate on the issues freely and build a sense of trust, accountability, and consensus among the political representatives of the member countries.

- **Regional Geopolitics**

South Asian countries share analogous geographical and cultural attributes. Additionally, all countries share a land border with India except Sri Lanka and the Maldives. However, none of these countries share common borders among themselves, which increases their geographical reliance on India. This increased reliance on India as the economic superpower in the region appears to be affecting the domestic and foreign policies of the member countries. In addition, the dominance of China in the region, and its increased investment in the member countries, further restricts the regional trade and cooperation amongst these

¹¹⁹ <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2020/01/26/power-asymmetry-has-been-disrupting-cooperation>

¹²⁰ <https://gprjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvloA2LA1Jouq9hkR/2c82FNDmNd.pdf>

¹²¹ <http://saarc-sdmc.org/charter>

countries. For instance, China invested US\$1.3bn to augment the power system network in Bangladesh,¹²² and approximately US\$1.2bn to enhance electricity generation capacity in Sri Lanka.¹²³

Furthermore, China extensively invested in the Upper Trishuli hydropower project and West Seti Dam project projects in Nepal, and consequently, Nepal supported China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI).¹²⁴ Several investments made by China in South Asia have ensued in creating untenable debt-for-infrastructure deals, which foster China's geostrategic plan in the region.¹²⁵

Thus, to reduce the influence of China in developing energy infrastructure and meet energy demands in the region, regional energy cooperation is imperative. A regional parliamentary forum in South Asia could pave the way for augmenting such regional cooperation.

- **Need for Better Connectivity in the region**

As mentioned above, the region's geography restricts the connectivity of the member countries. The trilateral and quadrilateral cooperation among member countries is insignificant due to the apprehension of the member countries to reduce dependence on India.

India plans to roll out a grid connectivity plan called One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWG) to augment connectivity in the region.¹²⁶ This plan is divided into three phases; the first phase deals with Middle East-South Asia and Southeast Asia (MESASEA); the second phase aims to connect MESASEA to African Grid, whereas the third phase includes global connection. However, implementing the grid connectivity plan at such a scale is extremely difficult without political will and support. Thus, to gauge the necessary political and economic support from the member countries, the involvement of parliamentarians in regional trade and cooperation becomes imperative.

¹²² <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/china-bangladesh-strategic-linkages/#:~:text=China%20is%20working%20on%20a,investment%20of%20US%20%24%202.04%20billion.>

¹²³ <https://asia.ub-speeda.com/en/china-supercharging-sri-lanka-will-one-belt-one-road-enter-energy/>

¹²⁴ <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/chinese-investments-nepal-2/>

¹²⁵ <https://thewire.in/world/china-debt-trap-diplomacy-south-asia-europe>

¹²⁶ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-sets-up-high-level-group-for-south-asia-energy-security-11609777234076.html>

- **Ineffective Conflict Resolution Mechanism**

SAARC primarily focused on promoting socio-economic and cultural cooperation in the region, but it excludes the need for political cooperation. The political issues in the region have restricted the success of regional cooperation. For instance, the territorial claims by the Nepal government have revitalised the border disputes between India and Nepal, which may deter the trade relationship between the countries.¹²⁷

However, the real concerns lie in the Charter of SAARC, which disregards the deliberations on political issues between the countries on a common platform. It is believed that the political issues pose insecurities and restrict South Asian regional cooperation. However, to enhance regional cooperation, much has been dependent upon the capabilities and will of the political leaders to resolve long-standing domestic and regional issues through peaceful negotiations.¹²⁸ Thus, a regional parliamentary forum will provide an unbiased platform to discuss relevant issues and act as a conflict resolution forum for the region.

- **Political Instability**

It has often been seen that political instability and inconsistent leadership have restricted cooperation efforts on energy projects. For instance, the conflicting interests of the two major national parties of Bangladesh led to inconsistency in the country's foreign policy. Consequently, the bilateral relationships in the subcontinent have often been unstable. Experts believe that conflicting interests and strategies of political leaders could jeopardise the future of big infrastructure projects.¹²⁹ Similarly, the political instability in Nepal has restricted its ability to undertake regional energy cooperation.¹³⁰

- **Need to mitigate impacts on communities due to hydroelectric projects**

Though hydroelectric projects augment local jobs and spur economic growth in the region, they also adversely impact the local community and its ecology. The

¹²⁷ <https://scroll.in/article/975753/why-saarc-has-not-been-able-to- replicate-the-of-the-european-union-or-asean>

¹²⁸ http://nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/SAARC_Jamshed_Iqbal.pdf

¹²⁹ <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article7899.html>

¹³⁰ Dissecting political challenges to energy cooperation in South Asia, Huda 2020; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340632008_Dissecting_political_challenges_to_energy_cooperation_in_South_Asia

whole community needs to be resettled away from their native land, disrupting their cultural heritage and livelihood.

Reports¹³¹ have suggested that people from several hydroelectric projects such as the Tala Hydroelectric project and Mangdechhu Hydroelectric project in Bhutan were resettled on hilltops which are water-scarce and infertile. This has affected their livelihood immensely, as it takes years for barren lands to become fertile again. Similarly, several people lost their indigenous identity and native lands in various hydroelectric projects in Nepal.¹³²

The local political leaders play an important role in mobilising the community during the rehabilitation and resettlement programme under the project. They could be instrumental in ensuring fair and just compensation to all the affected communities from the project. Given the vested interests of local political leaders in supporting local communities, as that will strengthen their political stand in the region, they could push the agenda of communities to the national level. Furthermore, such concerns could be deliberated in the regional parliamentary forum to make a template to ensure that a fair and just rehabilitation plan could be included in the project planning phase.

- **Need for Better Advocacy to foster Energy Cooperation**

Research reports have highlighted that one of the major reasons for the meagre regional cooperation is the absence of effective political leadership to stimulate regional consensus. In the past, it has been observed that the regional meeting of the member countries had been cancelled due to political unrest in the region.¹³³

However, India has continuously taken initiatives to foster regional cooperation through bilateral and multilateral dialogue in the region. For instance, to promote and facilitate policy dialogue on regional energy cooperation in the region, India has created a South Asia Group for Energy (SAGE) under a think tank (Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) run by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The objective is to achieve balanced and optimal

¹³¹ http://www.vasudha-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Bhutan-Report_30th-Mar-2016.pdf

¹³² Domestic Socio-economic Barriers to Hydropower Trading: Evidence from Bhutan and Nepal, <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability>; <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su11072062>

¹³³ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/SAARC-summit-quotpostponed-indefinitelyquot/article15419427.ece>

energy infrastructure development through mutual understanding and cooperation.¹³⁴ This energy group comprises bureaucrats, industrialists, and domain experts from India.

- **Strengthening institutions to strengthen the law-making process**

Parliamentary committees are often seen as an effective tool to strengthen the law-making process.¹³⁵ These committees generally include parliamentarians, bureaucrats, industry experts, and policy think tanks. The primary objective of the committees is to provide a platform to initiate meaningful deliberations on issues by the members and encompasses technical knowledge and political acumen. These deliberations could assist the policymakers in formulating favourable domestic and foreign policy, which can boost regional cooperation in the region. Thus, it strengthens policy institutions and enriches the quality of draft regulations.

¹³⁴ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-sets-up-high-level-group-for-south-asia-energy-security-11609777234076.html>

¹³⁵ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/whither-house-panels/article28621493.ece>

Review of Domestic Parliamentary Forums on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in BBINS

India

Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate Change¹³⁶

One of the eight Parliamentary forums in India, The Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate Change, was constituted in 2005. The Forum's primary objective is to provide a platform for the Members of the Parliament to deliberate on the relevant vital issues in a structured manner.

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is the ex-officio president of the Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate Change. In addition, the Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha, the concerned Minister and Chairpersons of the concerned Standing Committees are ex-officio Vice-Presidents of the Forum. The Forum comprises not more than 31 members, excluding President and Vice Presidents. There are 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 members from Rajya Sabha nominated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The forums also invite experts from different relevant fields as special invitees during meetings and seminars.

The primary function of the Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate Change is to identify, review and analyse the problems related to Global warming and Climate Change and make appropriate recommendations to the relevant government departments. The Forum members also interact with the national and international experts in the field to deliberate on mitigating the impacts on climate change and global warming. The Forum also aims to sensitise Members of the Parliament about the causes and effects of climate change through workshops and webinars.

¹³⁶ <http://164.100.47.194/our%20parliament/Parliamentary%20Forums.pdf>

Standing Committee on Energy¹³⁷

It is one of the 16 Departmentally Related Standing Committees under the Lok Sabha Secretariat. Akin to the Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate Change, the Committee consists of 31 members, out of which 21 members are from the Lok Sabha and nominated by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. 10 members of the Committee are from the Rajya Sabha and nominated by the Chairperson, Rajya Sabha. The Chairperson of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst the Lok Sabha Members of the Committee. The term of office of the Committee is one year from the date of its constitution.

The primary function of the Standing Committee is to review, analyse and report the findings of the Demands of Grants by the Ministry of Power and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to the House of Parliament. In addition, it examines and reports the bills and policy documents referred by the Speaker of Lok Sabha and/or Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.

FICCI Forum of Parliamentarians¹³⁸

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) Forum of Parliamentarians is an initiative to augment policy advocacy through dialogues on strategic, economic, and socio-cultural aspects with elected representatives, industry, policy experts, think tanks, academicians, amongst others. It is a platform for Indian politicians to interact with other countries. The Forum advocates for fair and just foreign and domestic policy to ensure a healthy and competitive business environment. The Forum engages in various activities such as policy dialogue, leadership programmes, outbound missions for MPs, and knowledge exchange programmes for young leaders. Further, the core area of work of FICCI includes power and renewable energy, wherein it works extensively on policy and regulatory issues.¹³⁹

Parliamentarians Forum on Economic Policy Issues (PARFORE)

It is an initiative taken by CUTS International¹⁴⁰ in the year 2005. It is a non-partisan and informal forum where MPs can deliberate on core economic issues, including regulatory reforms and investment, amongst others. CUTS manages this Forum as a

¹³⁷ http://164.100.47.194/Loksabha/Committee/CommitteeInformation.aspx?comm_code=9&tab=1

¹³⁸ <https://www.ficciforumofparliamentarians.in/brochure.pdf>

¹³⁹ <https://ficci.in/sector-details.asp?sectorid=20>

¹⁴⁰ <https://parfore.in/about-cuts/>

neutral organisation and provides research-based inputs for deliberation with parliamentarians and subject experts.

Bangladesh

Standing Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources¹⁴¹

According to the Constitution of Bangladesh and subsequent procedural legislation, each Ministry has a committee to enhance legislation, manage public expenditure, and put checks and balances on the executive body. Subsequently, there is a Standing Committee on the Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources to inform policy and law-making on relevant subjects. The Committee is formed on a motion by the Leader of the House. The Parliament appoints the Chairman of the Committee. If the Parliament fails to elect the Chairman, the members can choose the Chairman from amongst themselves. The term of the Committee is equivalent to the term of the Parliament. However, the Parliament has the power to reconstitute the Committee at any time.

The Committee may examine any policy and/or matter referred to them and submit their report to the house. In addition, the Committee may submit its special report for the issues which arise during their work, which the Committee may deem essential to deliberate in the House of the Parliament. The Committee has the power to regulate its procedure. Furthermore, it can also seek advice from experts on policy and related issues. The Committee may propose amendments and suggest recommendations on the bills.¹⁴²

The National Committee to protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Port¹⁴³

The Committee is also known as the National Committee for Protection of Resources. It consists of members from political parties, social, cultural professionals, and experts in the field. The primary objective of the Committee is to mitigate the exploitation of resources and promote the efficient exploration and judicious use of resources for the welfare of people. In addition, the Committee provides appropriate support to political and economic movements in the country.

¹⁴¹ http://www.parliament.gov.bd/images/pdf/how_com_works.pdf

¹⁴² http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/9565/1/Parliamentary_Committees_in_Bangladesh.pdf

¹⁴³ <https://ncbd.org/>

Nepal

Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Cooperative and Natural Resources in the House of Representatives¹⁴⁴

According to the Constitution of Nepal, thematic committees may be formed to assist in the legislative process. This Committee assists the government in the policymaking process and supports monitoring and evaluation of the policies and schemes of the government. The Committee cannot have more than 51 members, and the Speaker of the House nominates the members. The primary function of the Committee is to evaluate the policy, schemes, and other related activities of the relevant Ministry and departments and suggest appropriate recommendations.

Energy Development Council in Nepal¹⁴⁵

It is a national think tank that advocates for policy reforms and energy-friendly regulations and informs policymakers and other key stakeholders in the energy sector. It comprises members from Energy Developers, Energy Associations and Financial institutions, and CSOs. The Nepal Chamber of Commerce hosts it. Its primary objective is to facilitate investment in the energy sector through targeted initiatives and create a network of stakeholders. It is one of the primary think tanks for the India-Nepal energy issues and assists the government in policymaking and related activities.

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Parliament has a well-knit Committee System to ensure the country's effective functioning of parliamentary democracy. Two major committees work to better the energy sector. They are:

Ministerial Consultative Committee on Power and Energy¹⁴⁶

The members of the Committee include the respective Cabinet Minister as Chairperson, the State Minister, Deputy Minister, and five other Members of Parliament as nominated by the Committee of Selection. The Committee discusses the issues referred by the Member of Parliament.

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/3911>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.edcnepal.org/about-us/>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.parliament.lk/en/component/committees/categories?id=2&Itemid=106>

Sectoral Oversight Committee on Power and Energy¹⁴⁷

This Committee functions for the duration of the Parliament. The Committee may work on any matter as referred by the Member of the Parliament and/or any other Committee. It assists the Parliament in its review, analysis, execution, and effectiveness of legislation.

Bhutan

Environment & Climate Change Committee

The Constitution and National Assembly Act of Bhutan mandates the Parliament to appoint a committee to ensure efficient functioning of the Parliament.¹⁴⁸ The Environment & Climate Change committees aim to review and analyse the existing policies and regulations and suggest appropriate amendments. It also interacts with relevant national and international organisations and key stakeholders to deliberate on the relevant issues. The Committee further intends to build capacity and develop the expertise of Members of Parliament on policy and legislative processes.¹⁴⁹

Key Takeaways from Review of Existing Domestic Parliamentary Forums/ Committees in BBINS

Parliamentary committees are a key instrument to ensure executive accountability and transparency in the system. The roles and responsibilities bestowed upon the Committee warrant a thorough review and analysis of the matter referred to them. Given that parliamentarians have great political acumen but limited subject expertise, it is reasonable to assume that the committee system is designed to inform parliamentarians on complex government activities. The committees review and analyse a plethora of data, which enhances the parliamentarians' knowledge and subsequently strengthens the parliamentary system and leads to good governance.

Some of the key takeaways of the existing parliamentary forums/ committees are discussed below:

- **Ease in Inter-ministerial and Inter-departmental coordination** - The primary role of the committees is to assist the parliamentarians and the concerned ministries with coherent, coordinated, and comprehensive strategies and

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.parliament.lk/en/component/committees/categories?id=6&Itemid=106>

¹⁴⁸ https://www.nab.gov.bt/en/committees/list_of_committees

¹⁴⁹ https://www.nab.gov.bt/en/committees/committee_members/7

recommendations on the matters referred to them. Given that the members of the committees include parliamentarians from varied ministries and departments, bureaucrats, and industry experts, the coordination among different departments becomes easy. However, given that the mandates of various departments are different, it is often challenging to ensure coherence in the proceedings of the Committee.

- **An instrument for detailed scrutiny** – The primary function of the committees is to review, analyse and examine the existing policies, regulations, and matters referred to them. Consequently, the committee reports are comprehensive and exhaustive and provide well-researched information. The committees' reports are generally vetted by experts and finalised after seeking public opinion.
- **Duplication of Efforts** – While it is evident that the committees/forums thoroughly review and analyse the matter referred to them, an overlap in the central objectives of different forums of committees might lead to duplication of efforts. For instance, there is a Parliamentary Forum on Global Warming and Climate and a Standing Committee on Energy. Thus, this may lead to dispersed or diminished impacts.
- **Systemic weakness – lack of oversight** – Experts¹⁵⁰ believe that the performance of parliamentary committees has deteriorated. There is no mechanism in place to ensure the regular assessment of the performance of the Committee. Further, the follow-up mechanism for achieving the outcomes of the meetings is poor. Consequently, the impact of such deliberations remains limited and fails to inform policy adequately. There is a need for institutionalising mechanisms to ensure monitoring of the committees' performance.

¹⁵⁰ <https://thewire.in/government/parliamentary-standing-committees>

International Experiences of Parliamentary Forums

This chapter aims to depict key aspects of international parliamentary forums, including reasons for formation, organisation structure, and key tasks performed. World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development (WPFSD)

World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development (WPFSD)

WPFSD has been initiated and organised by the Indonesian Parliament to discuss matters related to sustainable development and efforts of parliaments worldwide to address the issue. The first edition of WPFSD was held in 2017, and since then, it has been held annually in Bali, Indonesia. The Forum aims to empower parliamentarians on sustainable issues, build networks among members of Parliament, and provide a forum for sharing best practices. A snapshot of the World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development (WPFSD) is given in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development: A Snapshot

Evolution ¹⁵¹	Realising the vital role of Parliamentarians in successfully achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through regular review on the implementation of the SDGs, the Indonesian Parliament organised the First WPFSD in September 2017 in Bali, Indonesia. Till date, 3 WPFSD's have been organised.
Aims & Objectives ¹⁵²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguard efforts towards achieving SDGs, particularly on achieving sustainable energy for all. Generate more understanding of the challenges of utilising clean, affordable, and renewable energy and resolve them. Increase women's participation in public policymaking, particularly on sustainable energy. Strengthen the commitment of Members of Parliaments in the achievement of SDGs, particularly Goal No. 7 and other related targets

¹⁵¹ <https://www.womenpoliticalleaders.org/event/wpl-will-join-world-parliamentary-forum-sustainable-development/>

¹⁵² Terms of Reference- WPFSD. Accessed here: < <http://ksap.dpr.go.id/pf2018/page/detail/id/323> >

Members	All Parliamentarians, representatives of governments, international/regional NGOs, intellectuals, researchers, CSOs and business practitioners
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions	WPFSD is not an organisation yet, it is a forum, which is held annually in Bali, Indonesia.
Key Focus Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs and Climate Action • Ending Violence and Sustaining Peace • Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Development
Operational Aspects	<p>WPFSD is a two-day event with specific themes for each year. The event is further divided into various sessions based on the key focus areas.</p> <p>These sessions allow panelists to deliver keynote speeches or short lectures related to the areas mentioned above. Each session is held for 2 hours with around 3 or 4 speakers.</p>

The World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development output is a declaration that constitutes a summary of policy analysis, experience, and best practices from various countries and various sectors related to sustainable development.¹⁵³

International Renewable Energy Forum

IRENA Legislators Forum

The International Renewable Energy's Legislative Energy Agency (IRENA) is an intergovernmental organisation that assists countries in transitioning to renewable energy. The Legislators Forum was first held in 2016.¹⁵⁴ It acts as a platform for international cooperation and advocates for sustainable policymaking to bolster the adoption of renewable energy across the globe. It further facilitates knowledge and technology sharing, dissemination and exchange of information and best practices in the sector.¹⁵⁵

IRENA Legislator Forum serves as a unique platform for parliamentarians and renewable energy experts to deliberate upon the concerns related to investment and

¹⁵³ <http://ksap.dpr.go.id/pfsd2017/faq>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.irena.org/history>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.irena.org/aboutirena>

sharing of technology to scale up the adoption of renewable energy. Consequently, it helps incapacitating regional and local stakeholders and creates a network of renewable energy champions.¹⁵⁶

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

IPU is a global organisation of national parliaments dedicated to promoting peace among people through parliamentary democracy and dialogue. The organisation was established in 1889 as the Inter-Parliamentary Congress, and its founders sought to create the first permanent Forum for multilateral political negotiations. Initially, IPU membership was reserved for individual parliamentarians but has since transformed to include the legislatures of sovereign states. As of 2020, the national parliaments of 179 countries are members of the IPU, while 13 regional parliamentary assemblies are associate members.¹⁵⁷

IPU has a legal personality and has the authority to enter into international agreements, including cooperation agreements with national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organisations and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations.¹⁵⁸ Since its inception, IPU has played a leading role in the development of international law and institutions, including the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the League of Nations,¹⁵⁹ and the United Nations.¹⁶⁰ It also sponsors and takes part in international conferences and forums and has permanent observer status at the United Nations General Assembly.

Objectives

The primary objective of IPU is to promote peace and cooperation among people and for the solid establishment of representative institutions. To that end, it shall:

- a) Foster contacts, coordination and exchange of experience among Parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries
- b) Consider questions of international interest and express its views on such issues to bring about action by Parliaments and their members

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.irena.org/parliamentarynetwork>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.ipu.org/about-us>

¹⁵⁸ Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed here: <<https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/statutes-and-rules-ipu>>

¹⁵⁹ Lange, C. (1932). The Interparliamentary Union. *Advocate of Peace through Justice*, 94(1), 26-37. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20681660>

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/inter-parliamentary-union>

- c) Contribute to the defence and promotion of human rights, which are universal in scope and respect for which is an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development
- d) Contribute to a better knowledge of representative institutions' working and the strengthening and developing their means of action.

IPU's mission is to facilitate peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action. A snapshot of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is given in Table 8.2:

Table 8.2: Inter-Parliamentary: A Snapshot

Evolution	Founded in 1889 as the first international political organisation ever, by two parliamentarians, the Englishman William Randal Cremer and the Frenchman Frédéric Passy. At its inception, the organisation's main goal was international arbitration and disarmament, which has evolved since then.
Aims & Objectives	To promote democratic governance, accountability, and cooperation among its members
Members	179 Member Countries and 13 Associate members ¹⁶¹ (BBINS countries are members)
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions	<p>Five-part structure which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President is the political head and represents the IPU • The Assembly: Brings together parliamentarians to address and drive change on issues on the international agenda. • The Governing Council: In charge of the policymaking in IPU • The Executive Committee: Assists the Governing Council • The Secretariat: In charge of Day-to-Day operations of IPU

¹⁶¹ **Associate members:** Andean Parliament, Arab Parliament, Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), European Parliament (EP), Inter-parliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS), Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)

Key Focus Areas	Peace; Democracy; Human Rights; Gender Equality; Youth Empowerment and; Sustainable Development
Operational Aspects	The Assembly is convened twice each year to enable multilateral exchanges between member country delegates. The Assembly is comprised of parliamentarians designated as delegates by the Members of the IPU. The governing council normally holds two sessions in a year. The Governing Council is composed of three representatives from each Member country. The Executive Committee assists the Governing council through recommendations on various matters. The Secretariat, located in Geneva, is responsible for handling the daily operations of the organisations.
Finances ¹⁶²	Each Member and Associate Member of the IPU makes an annual contribution to the expenses of the IPU in accordance with a scale approved by the Governing Council.

Organisation Structure

The organisation structure of IPU (**Error! Reference source not found.**) is explained below:¹⁶³

- **President:** The president is the political head of IPU and represents the organisations at global events and gatherings. The president is also responsible for directing and monitoring the IPU's work. He/she also serves as the head of the Executive committee, elected for one mandate of three years by the Governing Council.
- **Assembly:** The Assembly comprises parliamentarians designated as delegates by the Members of the IPU. It is the main political body through which Member Parliaments (MPs) adopt resolutions on parliamentary action on world affairs. The assemblies are held bi-annually, either in Geneva or in other cities worldwide. The Assembly is assisted in its work by Standing Committees, which normally prepare reports and/or draft resolutions for the Assembly.
- **Governing Council:** The governing council is the administrative and policymaking body of the IPU. Its main responsibilities are admitting, readmitting and suspending members; overseeing the budget and work programme; electing the President and

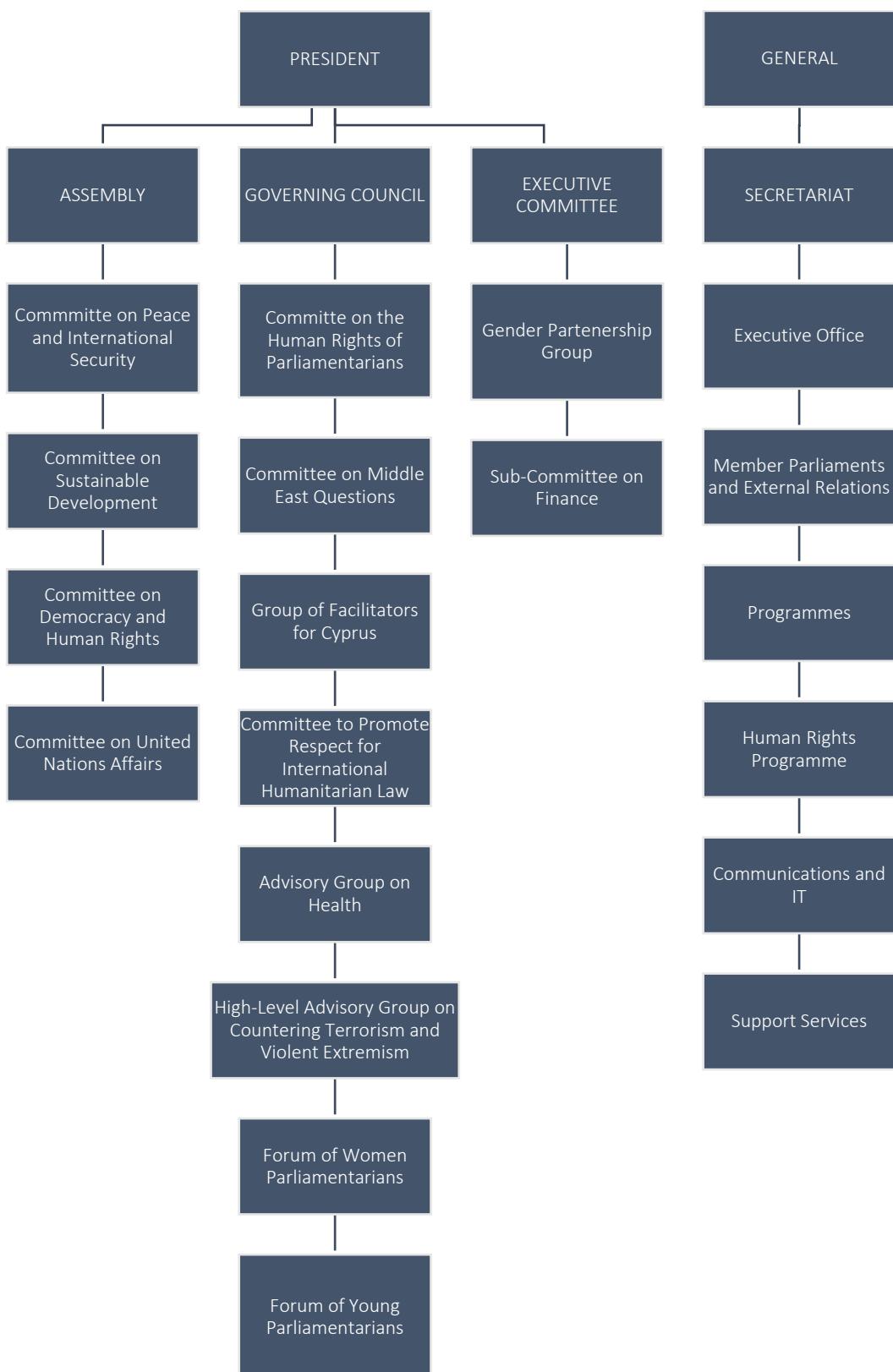
¹⁶² Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed here: <<https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/statutes-and-rules-ipu>>

¹⁶³ <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/structure-and-governance>

Secretary-General of IPU; deciding on the mandate and composition of committees, working groups and ad hoc bodies and; deciding on venues and dates of the assemblies. The Governing Council is made up of three MPs from each Member of the IPU.

- **Executive Committee:** The executive committee oversees IPU's administration and assists the governing council through recommendations on various matters such as candidates for the post of Secretary-General to IPU's annual work programme and budget. The Executive Committee is composed of the President of the IPU, 15 members belonging to different Parliaments, President of the Coordinating Committee of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians.
- **Secretariat:** The Secretariat carries out the daily work of the IPU, and it constitutes the totality of the staff of the organisation under the direction of the Secretary-General.

Figure 8.1: IPU- Organisation Structure



Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)

AFPPD is a regional non-governmental organisation established in 1981 at the Asian Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development held in Beijing to promote the involvement of lawmakers in the Asia-Pacific region in addressing the population and development issues. It serves as a coordinating body of the 30 National Committees of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Asia-Pacific region¹⁶⁴. A snapshot of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is given in the Table 8.3.

Table 8.3: Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development: A Snapshot

Table 8.3: Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development: A Snapshot	
Evolution	Established in 1981 to promote the involvement of lawmakers in the Asia-Pacific region in addressing population and development issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), family planning, gender equality, active aging, youth issues, urbanisation, migration and HIV/AIDS
Aims & Objectives	To strengthen the regional network of parliamentarians who are committed to implementing the population and development agenda
Members	30 National Committees of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Asia-Pacific region ¹⁶⁵
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions	AFPPD is <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governed by the General Assembly• Managed by the Executive Committee• Advised by three Standing Committees on its strategic priorities• Supported by the Secretariat located in Bangkok, Thailand.
Key Focus Areas/ Activities¹⁶⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish and promote collaboration among parliamentarians and other elected legislative representatives, the associates of those representatives and institutions in all Asia-Pacific countries for the development, utilisation and sharing of data, information,

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.afppd.org/about-afppd.php>

¹⁶⁵ **National Parliamentary Committees of** Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vietnam.

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.afppd.org/about-mission-objectives-activities.php>

	<p>research findings, expertise and experience about population and development issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the dissemination and utilisation of information and research, including through print and online resources, to promote policy solutions to population and development issues • Facilitate, support and organise events for parliamentarians to promote and encourage their involvement in addressing population and development issues • Generate and mobilise resources needed to render AFPPD capable of fulfilling its functions and responsibilities on a sustainable basis • Encourage and promote the formation of National Committees of parliamentarians to address population and development issues where these bodies are not yet in existence.
Operational Aspects	AFPPD, through its three standing committees on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Investing in Youth and; Active Ageing, provides capacity development for parliamentarians and National Committees.

Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health (APPFGH)

The APPFGH is a platform for parliamentarians to exchange ideas, build political will, strengthen capacities and foster collaboration in driving sustainable action for health. Established in 2015 with technical support from the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for the Western Pacific and other partners, the Forum is open to the 30 countries comprising the Member States of the WHO Western Pacific Region and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The WHO Western Pacific Region Office serves as the Secretariat.¹⁶⁷

Objectives

The objectives of APPFGH¹⁶⁸ are:

- a) To provide a platform for Members, as well as international partners, to exchange ideas for prioritising health agendas and promoting sustainable action at the community, national and global levels.

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/partnerships/regional-health-initiatives/asia-pacific-parliamentarian-forum-on-global-health>

¹⁶⁸ Articles of Association- APPFGH. Accessed here:<<https://iris.wpro.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665.1/14195/articlesofassociation-rev2017-eng.pdf>>

- b) To promote awareness of the Forum and advocate for health among fellow Parliamentarians
- c) To encourage mobilisation of greater resources for health
- d) To continue expanding the scope of the Forum to other health matters as appropriate under the circumstances.

Strategically positioned to help align global health mandates with regional and domestic priorities and to facilitate national implementation of international health commitments, APPFGH is an important part of the WHO Regional Office's assistance to Member States in taking a whole-of-government approach to enhance the rule of law in health governance and expand the role of law in health policy. A snapshot of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health (APPFGH) is mentioned in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4: Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health: A Snapshot

Table 8.4: Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health: A Snapshot	
Evolution	The parliamentarians play an important role in enacting legislation, approving budgets and mobilising resources, providing oversight to ensure government accountability and transparency, ensuring national implementation of global commitments, and fostering political constituencies for health. Hence, in this context, APPFGH was established in 2015, with the support from WHO.
Aims & Objectives	Strengthening the role of parliamentarians throughout the Asia-Pacific region in promoting and protecting human health and well-being.
Members	30 countries comprising the Member States of the WHO Western Pacific Region and the ASEAN.
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly: The supreme body of the Forum shall be the Assembly. It is comprised of all the members of the Forum • Executive Committee: The Assembly of the Forum has the authority to elect the officers of the Executive Committee. It is responsible for organising the annual assembly meetings. • Secretariat: It manages the responsibilities and duties deemed by the Assembly as fit.
Key Focus Areas/ Activities	Health Policy and Legislation; Health service delivery and; Universal Health Coverage

Operational Aspects	<p>The Assembly of the Forum holds annual meetings for providing a platform for parliamentarians to deliberate on the facets related to human health and well-being as well as make recommendations on future actions by the Forum. It also confers power and duties upon the Executive Committee, as necessary.</p> <p>The main responsibility of the Executive Committee is to oversee the organisation of assembly meetings, ad hoc meetings, and other activities of the Forum. It consists of the following officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) President, to be elected by the Assembly and hold office for four years (b) Vice-President, to be appointed ex officio as the host country of the previous assembly meeting (c) Vice-President, to be appointed ex officio as the host country of the next assembly meeting.
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Climate Parliament^{169,170}

The Climate Parliament is a global, multi-partisan voluntary network of legislators founded in 2004 and striving to address climate-related issues to speed up the action on climate mitigation and related emergencies. It is headquartered in Brighton, England and is registered as a charity there while in Belgium it is registered as a non-profit ASBL¹⁷¹. The network primarily focuses on energy access, climate ambition, renewable energy, sustainable transport and energy efficiency. The group's efforts are channelised worldwide through MPs who have a keen interest and motivation in endorsing such causes.

Climate Parliament regularly organises virtual or physical regional parliamentary meetings on different themes pertaining to the current climate agenda. Both subject experts and legislators are brought together on a common platform through these meetings where best practices, case studies, targets, and recommendations are discussed for initiating necessary parliamentary action. Apart from that they also organise country-specific workshops and multinational hearings. The group

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.climateparl.net/about-us>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/climate-parliament/about/>

¹⁷¹ Association Sans But Lucratif

collaborates with multi-partisan legislators to reach a balanced representation of political background, age and gender.

The network has an emerging presence in the BBINS region. In India, MPs associated with Climate Parliament have, over three years, played a significant role in a five-fold increase of the annual budget of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy of India. Additionally, the network has been instrumental in setting up solar mini-grids in remote villages in Bihar, Odisha, and Karnataka with the help of Local Area Development Funds. Similarly, in Bangladesh, the group has successfully established the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority, responsible for overseeing the development and financing of all renewable energy projects in the country. Further, a global parliamentary roundtable was also organised by Climate Parliament in Delhi, India, in 2017, as part of its Green Grids initiative.

The network's current major initiatives include the Green Grids Initiative, which aims to bring together a group of Governments, legislators, and international organisations to accelerate the infrastructural growth for a world powered by clean energy. It includes a massive expansion of renewable energy generation capacity connected by a continental grid. Apart from this, their remarkable projects are Parliamentary Action on Renewable Energy and Map of Green Ambition.

Climate Parliament works with International Solar Alliance (ISA), Pan African Parliament, and Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organisation. Their efforts are supported by funding from donor agencies, foundations, corporates, and individuals located across the globe, including the European Commission, UKaid, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) UK; Environmental Defence Fund, EuropeAid, Foundation for the Third Millennium, GIZ Senegal, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Wallace Global Fund.

Key Takeaways from Review of Existing Parliamentary Forums

Duplication of Efforts: Parliamentary forums may, at times, be focused on overlapping or narrow themes, which, in turn, may lead to diminished impacts in terms of aligning the themes with any dominant national or global discourse. For instance, the 15th Lok Sabha (India) had 8 Parliamentary forums with themes covering climate change, disaster management, water conservation, youth, children, public health, and Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, multiple simultaneous influential interventions are working towards driving policy or practice change, including global financial institutions, binding multinational agreements, regional trade and investment blocs, various national ministries, departments, planning bodies, etc. This, often results in dispersed impacts and duplication of efforts. If not actively involved in relevant interventions, Parliamentary forums may often end up reiterating existing efforts while failing to inflict additional impact on the issue at hand through better quality debates.

Institutional Arrangement: Parliamentary Forums can be structured in multiple ways. Primarily, they are either constituted as an institution for undertaking continuous work or are envisaged as isolated events. Thus, a forum can be interpreted to mean an 'event' or an 'institution'. Both these cases have their respective pros and cons. While the event format, such as the one adopted by World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development (WPFSD), can be a good platform to discuss issues of immediate significance and chart out an urgent roadmap for action, it lacks the element of sustainability and continuum of dialogues.

On the other hand, an institutionalised structure of Parliamentary Forum like the one adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), addresses any concerns related to the short lifespan of the Forum. However, it faces the constraint of becoming a mere namesake organisation, with little accountability towards achieving any tangible outcomes in the immediate timeframe.

Geographical Coverage: Another critical feature of such forums is the geographical coverage of such Forums. For instance, in the case of the WPFSD Forum of 2017, while delegations (mostly members of parliament) from 45 countries attended the WPFSD forum, none were from Europe. They came from Southeast Asia, Latin America and South Pacific areas, mostly developing countries. Indonesia had just finished organising another international parliamentary forum, Indonesia-Pacific Parliamentary Partnership in late July 2018, and most South Pacific countries attended both events.¹⁷²

The participants coming from Pacific islands were shown that small island countries are important for Indonesia, although admiration towards Western countries from Europe and North America has never diminished. Thus, restricting the coverage of any forum to particular geography has its own set of positive and negative implications. It ensures that topical issues are being discussed in the context of a particular region and the potential implications of any development on that region. However, at the same time, it has its challenges of integration or sharing of knowledge and other technical support, particularly in a globalised world order.

Levels of Participation: The means through which such forums operate and conduct their proceedings implies the quality of discussions. For instance, in the WPFSD of 2017, the session was divided into just one plenary and no further segregation into sub-committees was done. The Forum became more of a 'listening' platform than a debating chamber, like the Parliament.¹⁷³

Skewed Dominance: Owing to multiple attributes of the way such forums function, there is often the situation of high-jacking of the agenda of the Forum by a few dominant countries. For instance, in the WPFSD meeting in Indonesia, studies have highlighted how the agenda was set up only by the chairs and not by the participants. Similarly, in international forums like the SAARC or BIMSTEC, there is a critique of skewed dominance of India, which adds to the problem of lack of trust. This has direct implications on the capability of such forums to deliver on their objects and drive change in the actual situations on the ground.

¹⁷² (minutes p. 2)

¹⁷³ Adiputri, R. 2015. Political culture in the Indonesian Parliament: Analysing parliamentary debates on the regional parliaments 1999-2009. (PhD Dissertation) University of Jyväskylä. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-6248-7>

As a result of such issues that seek to hinder a level-discussion field for all the ensuing member countries irrespective of their economic size, in addition to dominant narratives around protectionism and regionalism, there is a shift towards envisaging smaller and smaller regional blocs which have decent working relationships with each other. It dents the noble objectives like Sustainable Development or Climate Change. It also furthers the drive towards mis-trust by not solving and just navigating through the main problem of mis-trust amongst the regional countries.¹⁷⁴

Language Issues: At times, language becomes a barrier in members putting forth their thoughts and suggestions spontaneously. Given the varying degrees of ease of articulation in English language by various countries, mandating English language as a medium often acts as an obstacle for free flow of discussion. This results in representatives reading our pre-written speeches while abstaining from making spontaneous remarks.¹⁷⁵

Legislature – Executive Divide: In many cases, like the Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP), Parliamentary Forums become yet another show of representatives from different countries putting forward case studies or larger issues from their host countries and not necessarily their constituencies. This defeats the purpose of having Parliamentarians of different countries as the participants in any forum. This situation is also further aggravated by the style of governance in respective member countries.

In most cases, the ambit of making immediate policy changes rests with the executive arm of governance, i.e., the Government. Thus, it remains outside the purview of Parliamentarians to invoke considerable changes in the immediate aftermath of any such meeting, even though such meetings might have resulted in an actionable framework for implementation. Therefore, the criticism of such Forums for their capability to influence policy or practice change comes from this paradigm of lack of institutional credibility within the legislature of most countries to drive such change, as opposed to the executive.

Financial Arrangements: In the backdrop of having countries of varying sizes of economy and population as members in the same Forum, the issue of financial

¹⁷⁴ Zajak, Sabrina (2010). "Interregionalism: Transnationalization without representation? The Asia Europe meeting". Available at: <https://governanceborders.com/2010/10/11/interregionalismtransnationalization-without-representation-the-example-of-the-asia-europe-meeting-asem/>

¹⁷⁵ <http://wroxtonworkshop.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-Adiputri-.pdf>

contributions towards the setting up and operations of such Forums arises. While certain forums like the AFPPD provide for the Forum itself to mobilise funds for its working, other financial arrangements include voluntary contributions from member countries and pre-determined contributions from the member-countries, as in the case of IPU. The main challenge with arrangements that leave the discretion of the quantum of funding on the respective member countries is that it often tends to disregard the principles of equity and fair contributions. Hence, such an arrangement runs the risk of furthering the cycle of mis-trust between economically dominant and weaker countries in the region.

Non-binding Recommendations: Often, owing to structural reasons and other factors, the recommendations put forth by such Parliamentary Forums remain weak and difficult to implement at a collective scale. This was in the case of WPFSD in Indonesia and ASEP in which the outcome was a declaration seeking commitment from members of the Forum. Such declarations are often mouthpieces and remain unchecked even after such meetings, owing to their non-binding nature. On the other hand, making binding commitments faces the concerns of impugning the sovereignty of member countries and over-stepping into the jurisdiction of national governments to decide on the policies or treatment of issues under discussion at these Forums.

Lack of Oversight: In most cases, there are limited structural ways to ensure that proper follow-up is being conducted in response to the outcomes of any forum meetings. This results in such discussions remaining only superficial without making any tangible difference in the policies of the host countries or the constituencies of the member Parliamentarians. There are hardly any institutionalised mechanisms for feedback or oversight that seek to inform such forums' future plans of action.

Lack of Institutional Memory: Owing to the urge to take up matters of topical relevance, such forums often fail to ensure coherence and continuity in their proceedings. Thus, the themes of each year's meeting in forums like IPU or WPFSD seem to be determined based on the contemporary relevance of the issue rather than the terms of reference or objectives of setting up the Forum in the first place. This results in forums getting trapped in the dogma of starting every new discussion from scratch rather than revisiting the previous discussions to establish a continuity of proceedings in moving towards the envisaged goals.

Structural & Functional Framework for Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in South Asia

Based on an extensive review of the structural and functional frameworks, best practices and challenges of existing forums in the South Asian Region and beyond (Refer to Sections 7,8, 9 and Annexure 1), a draft structure of the envisaged Parliamentary Forum has been prepared. Using that as a benchmark, 27 consultations have been held with Parliamentarians and other relevant stakeholders across BBINS to strengthen the structural and functional framework of the Forum.¹⁷⁶ Based on these insights, a formal Parliamentary Forum has been proposed. The reason for proposing a formal structure for the Parliamentary Forum, i.e., its pros and cons, have been highlighted below.

Pros of a Formal Structure for the envisaged Parliamentary Forum

- A formal structure will lead to defined roles and objectives of different components and members of the Parliamentary Forum. This will help in the smooth functioning of the Forum.
- It will address the challenge of duplication of efforts by providing a documented, transparent, and accountable action framework.
- It will enable coordination between different constituent bodies within the Forum and help in the creation of a structured pathway for decision-making
- It will provide decision-making power to individual actors while at the same time ensuring collective responsibility.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Forum's activities will be easier with a formal framework in place

Cons of a Formal Structure for the envisaged Parliamentary Forum

- Procedural hurdles may lead to slowing down of the brainstorming and decision-making process

¹⁷⁶ Please refer to Annexure 2 for details of consultations

- The presence of a rigid framework of action may limit intellectual capacities. Meetings or discussions may occur just because of a mere procedural requirement and may not yield effective outcomes.

A thorough review of the pros and cons of a formal structure highlight that the benefits of a formal structure outweigh the misgivings. At the same time, ignoring the cons may lead to creating a forum that may not yield any effective outcomes. Hence the following structural and functional framework of the envisaged Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in BBINS has been proposed, considering the pros and cons of its structures and necessary checks and balances in place to ensure the challenges of formality can be addressed effectively.

Table 10.1: Structural and Functional Framework of Regional Parliamentary Forum

Section	Characteristic	Details	Rationale
1	Vision	1.1 Enabling regional energy cooperation for an integrated, inclusive, resilient and sustainable South Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For strengthening efforts towards promoting multilateralism and inclusive economic growth in the region • For ensuring convergence between efforts on energy cooperation with sustainable development goals. • For integrating narratives on climate resilience and just transition

			in the core values of the Forum.
2	Aims and Objectives	<p>2.1 To facilitate dialogue and knowledge sharing on avenues and framework of cooperation between BBINS countries on issues related to energy trade</p> <p>2.2 To provide collective assistance for discussions on energy cooperation in member countries.</p> <p>2.3 To propagate the need for energy trade and cooperation through outreach, dissemination and engagements with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>2.4 To enable smooth sharing of relevant datasets from member countries for informing the discussions of the Forum</p> <p>2.5 To promote sustainable development of energy resources in the BBINS region, focusing on the integration of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and innovative technologies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For leveraging the institutional credibility, public accountability and capability to influence policies of the parliamentarians, in their respective member countries.

3	Member Countries	<p>3.1 The Forum shall comprise the required number of representatives as per section 4, from five South Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka (BBINS)</p> <p>3.2 For each of the countries, the Nodal Ministry for all official purposes shall be the respective Ministry of External Affairs in consultation with the relevant Ministries of Power, Renewable Energy and Trade and Commerce Upon mutual consensus amongst the core member countries, the membership of the Forum may be extended to other countries in the South Asian region. Such a decision shall be taken only if any member country issues an expression of interest which is then ratified by the Forum's Governing Council by a majority of not less than 2/3rd of the members present and voting in the Governing Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the dynamic geo-politics of the South Asian region, only those countries which demonstrate shared interests towards promoting regional cooperation and trade have been considered in the envisaged Parliamentary Forum. However, a clause for future expansion of the Forum has been provided in section 3.3. For ensuring that the Forum's proceedings and outcomes have political buy-ins in the member countries, concerned ministries are proposed as nodal agencies for official purposes.
4	Organisation Structure	4.1 Core Group of Parliamentarians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For ensuring adequate,

	<p>4.1.1 The Forum shall consist of a Core Group of Parliamentarians from each member countries. Each country shall ensure that the Core Group is a representative group of all political parties/fronts prevailing in the country.</p> <p>4.1.2 Each country shall nominate 03-07 Parliamentarians, as the respective nodal Ministry is deemed fit.</p> <p>4.1.3 These Parliamentarians shall be members of the Core Group for a maximum term of 02 years or till their membership from the respective country's Parliament expires.</p> <p>4.1.4 The nodal Ministry in member countries shall make efforts to nominate Parliamentarians in case of expiry of the term of any existing member of the Core Group.</p> <p>4.1.5 Each of the Core Group Members should have a demonstrated experience and interest in the field(s) of energy/trade/ sustainable development</p>	<p>unbiased and inclusive representation from different member countries as well as political ideologies, the given structure of the Core Group has been proposed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the Forum the requirements for experience and interest have been provided • For ensuring smooth operations keeping in mind the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual operations have been proposed
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		<p>/international relations or any other relevant field</p> <p>4.1.7 The quorum required for conducting any meeting of the Core Group of Parliamentarians shall be designated participants from 3 out of 5 member countries. This rule may be revised by the Governing Council accordingly in case of an increase or decrease in the number of member countries</p> <p>4.1.8 To account for challenges faced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings may also be conducted if there are travel related restrictions or reservations in the event of the quorum not being met.</p>	
		<p>4.2 Governing Council</p> <p>4.2.1 Functioning of the Core Group of Parliamentarians will be overseen by a Governing Council, consisting of members elected from the Core Group through a formal voting process.</p> <p>4.2.2 The Council will consist of one parliamentarian from</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For ensuring that decision-making in the Forum takes place based on the principles of collective leadership a horizontally structured Governing Council

	<p>each member country, elected for a term of two years. Each member of the Council will have one vote, to be exercised during any decision-making processes or dispute settlement.</p> <p>4.2.3 The formation/re-election of the Governing Council shall take place in tandem with the term of the Core Group of Parliamentarians.</p>	has been proposed
	<p>4.3 Standing Committee of Experts</p> <p>4.3.1 A multinational Committee of Experts will form the Standing Committee of Experts and be a part of the Forum to provide the Core Group of Parliamentarians with relevant sector-specific inputs and recommendations. The Committee will consist of 02-03 sector experts from each member country engaged on an honorary basis.</p> <p>4.3.2 The procedure for the formation of the Standing Committee will be through a formal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For ensuring informed discussions and decisions by the Core Group, assistance from a Standing Committee of sectoral experts has been proposed • Further, for ensuring unbiased and inclusive representation of all members, a multinational structure and a formal selection procedure has been proposed

	<p>application process conducted by the Technical Support Organisation (refer to Section 4.4) of each country. The applications shall be referred to the Governing Council for final selection after initial scrutiny and shortlisting by the respective Technical Support Organisation based on the predefined eligibility criteria.</p> <p>4.3.3 Each member of the Standing Committee should possess at least 10 years of credible experience in the fields of energy/ trade/ commerce/ environment/ regulation along with a relevant academic background.</p> <p>4.3.4 The members of the Standing Committee will be invited by the Governing Council to the meeting of the Parliamentary Forum on a case-to-case basis, depending on the alignment of their background with the meeting agenda.</p>	
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	<p>4.4 Technical Support Organisation(s)</p> <p>4.4.1 Each of the member countries of the Forum shall have one Technical Support Organisation which will be responsible for providing analytical, research and monitoring support to the Forum and its members.</p> <p>4.4.2 The Technical Support Organisation shall be selected by the concerned nodal Ministry through an open bidding process. Details of the process to be as per existing guidelines in respective countries.</p> <p>4.4.3 The Technical Support Organisation must have demonstrated experience and excellence in the areas of work of the Parliamentary Forum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For fulfilling the key objectives of the Forum regarding energy cooperation and trade, Technical Support Organisations have been proposed. Data collation, analysis and research support by these organisations will provide a structure and strategic direction to the Core Group's discussions and decisions.
	<p>4.5 Secretariat</p> <p>4.5.1 The Secretariat for the Parliamentary Forum shall be located in India.</p> <p>4.5.2 It will be headed by a Secretary-General who shall be of the rank of Secretary to Parliament. The term of the SG shall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the key role played by India in the demand and supply market for Energy, in South Asia, as well as its close proximity to each of the BBINS members, the

		<p>be 02 years. The Secretary General shall be appointed by each country in alphabetical order.</p> <p>4.5.3 The Secretariat shall include administrative officers from all the member countries who shall be appointed in accordance with recruitment rules in the respective member-countries.</p>	<p>Secretariat will be located in India. However, to ensure unbiased and inclusive decisions, representation will be there from all member countries.</p>
5	Roles and Functions	<p>5.1 Core Group of Parliamentarians</p> <p>5.1.1 To meet at least twice a year or under exceptional situations to discuss and deliberate ways to enhance energy cooperation and trade in South Asia.</p> <p>5.1.2 Elect members of the Governing Council for a term of 2 years</p> <p>5.2 Governing Council</p> <p>5.2.1 To organise the meetings of the Core Group of the Forum, including deciding the agenda, inviting relevant experts from the Standing Committee and governing the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The roles and functions have been decided after close consultation with parliamentarians from the BBINS region as well as a thorough review of existing such Forums, as conducted in the preceding section

		<p>proceedings of the core group meetings</p> <p>5.2.2 To settle disputes amongst the Core Group, if any and provide the casting vote</p> <p>5.2.3 To nominate members of the Standing Committee of Experts upon consultation with the Technical Support Organisation</p> <p>5.2.4 To review and approve the annual budget of the Forum, prepared and presented to it by the Secretariat.</p>	
		<p>5.3 Standing Committee of Experts</p> <p>5.3.1 To meet twice a year, as and when the Core Group meets, subject to an invitation from the Governing Council</p> <p>5.3.2 To provide strategic inputs from outside the system to inform the proceedings of the Core Group of parliamentarians.</p> <p>5.3.3 To adequately represent the interests of their respective community/domain/sector</p>	

	<p>5.3.4 To guide the Technical Support Organisations as and when required</p>	
	<p>5.4 Technical Support Organisation(s)</p> <p>5.4.1 To maintain a databank of information/data relevant to the energy sector and pertaining to energy trade/cooperation from the point of view of respective member countries</p> <p>5.4.2 To collate, analyse and present data for the Core Group meetings, pertaining to the agenda to facilitate informed discussions as per the guidance of the Standing Committee of Experts</p> <p>5.4.3 To review the proceedings of each meeting of the Forum and provide structured feedback.</p> <p>5.4.4 To be the nodal agency(s) for periodic monitoring and evaluation of the functioning of the Forum. For this purpose, one Technical Support Organisation will take the lead during one term of the Core Group, in alphabetical order.</p>	

		<p>5.5 Secretariat</p> <p>5.5.1 To support and assist in the day-to-day operations of the Forum, including communication, outreach, dissemination, records, publications, events, budgeting, Annual Financial Reports etc.</p> <p>5.5.2 For the initial years of the Forum, the SARI/EI secretariat/ other USAID-supported programs may carry out this function/provide support to the new Secretariat.</p>	
6	Financial Arrangement	<p>6.1 The Secretariat, with support from respective Technical Support Organisations shall draft the annual budget for the Forum, which will include allocations for the meetings, honorariums, budget for the respective Technical Support Organisations and budget for the functioning of the Secretariat.</p> <p>6.2 The Annual Budget shall be presented to the Governing Council, for its approval, before the beginning of each financial year.</p> <p>6.3 The contribution of each country to the annual budget of the Forum shall be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure a progressive structure of financing for the Forum, wherein members' financial support is proportional to their national financial capacities and energy demand, such a financial arrangement has been proposed.

		<p>determined by distributing the required budget amongst the member countries on 70:30 share, where 30 percent of the total annual budget of the relevant nodal Ministry shall be distributed on a fixed and equal basis for all member countries and remaining 70 percent contribution shall be proportional with energy demand of each country.</p>	
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Roadmap for Rolling out the Regional Parliamentary Forum

Consultations with a diverse group of parliamentarians from the BBINS region have brought to fore the implementation pillars of the envisaged Regional Parliamentary Forum. The key essence that has emerged from most of these discussions has been the positive appetite for an unrestricted flow of efficiencies beyond borders. At the same time, the need for collective leadership, TAP¹⁷⁷, and unbiased and inclusive decision-making has emerged, as the binding principles for the effective and efficient functioning of such a regional Forum. Drawing from these observations and insights, while keeping in mind the geo-political scenario in the BBINS region, the paper suggests the following roadmap for the creation and functioning of a Regional Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in South Asia.

- A non-government, non-partisan institution to take the lead in floating the idea of the Forum with BBINS countries
 - SARI/EI or any such Aid Agency to be the lead institution for this purpose
 - SARI/EI or any such Aid Agency to proceed in a consultative manner for reaching out to each member-country's Governments for addressing any geo-political tensions and history of association amongst these countries.
 - SARI/EI or any such Aid Agency to provide a neutral platform for one-to-one, bilateral and multilateral discussions amongst member countries for addressing respective concerns
- Creation of an informal voluntary regional network of Parliamentarians as a stepping stone for establishing a formal regional institution.
 - To address the tedious and time-consuming process of setting up a formal regional institution, a voluntary association may be formed amongst interested parliamentarians from the BBINS region. This can serve as an initial platform for fostering debates and discussions on CBET and regional energy cooperation issues.

¹⁷⁷ Transparency, Accountability and Participation

- SARI/EI to be the nodal agency for this purpose and facilitate such voluntary meetings
 - Simultaneously, SARI/EI to take active efforts to formalise the association through regular communication with the nodal ministries in the respective member countries.
- Drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by SARI/EI to be signed between the BBINS countries to provide their in-principle approval towards participating in such a penta-partite arrangement, including notifying the nodal ministry(s) for implementation of the Forum.
 - MoU is to be appended with the Parliamentary Forum's pre-determined structural and functional framework. The framework designed as per this Whitepaper may be used as a reference for this purpose.
 - Conducting multiple rounds of penta-partite consultations with BBINS countries for gathering their inputs and addressing their concerns vis-à-vis the draft MoU and the proposed framework
 - Facilitating signing of the MoU and approval of the structural and functional framework of the Forum between the member countries
- Creation of the Parliamentary Forum on Energy Cooperation and Energy Trade in South Asia
 - Nodal ministries in each of the member countries, in consultation with SARI/EI and with assistance from the SARI/EI Secretariat, to nominate relevant Parliamentarians for forming the Core Group of Parliamentarians of this Forum
 - Nodal ministries in each of the member countries, in consultation with SARI/EI and with assistance from the SARI/EI Secretariat, to invite bids for recruitment of Technical Support Organisations in their respective countries under the structural and functional framework as well as national recruitment regulations
 - Nodal ministries in each of the member countries, in consultation with SARI/EI and with assistance from the SARI/EI Secretariat, to nominate the Secretaries and other administrative officers for the Forum's Secretariat as per the proposed framework

- Kick-off meeting for the Forum
 - SARI/EI to call for the first meeting of CGP to facilitate the following agenda items:
 - Election of Governing Council
 - Notification announcing the creation of the Parliamentary Forum and appointment of Secretary-General
- Appointment of Technical Support Organisations and Standing Committee Experts
 - Upon completion of the selection process for selection of TSOs in respective member countries, each country to appoint a TSO for this Forum
 - The respective TSOs, per the framework, to invite applications of sector experts for forming the Standing Committee of Experts of the Forum
 - Following that, the TSO to carry out initial screening of the applications and put it for the purview of Governing Council for formulating the final Standing Committee
- Facilitation of funds for the Forum
 - TSO, in consultation with the Forum's Secretariat and SARI/EI Secretariat to prepare the Annual Budget of the Forum and determine country-wise contributions by the framework and present it to the Governing Council for its approval
 - Based on the approved budget, the Forum to facilitate the smooth transfer of funds from member countries for creating the corpus to aid the operations of the Forum
- To carry out the business of the Forum as per the framework, the Governing Council to undertake necessary steps to give effect to the objectives and vision of the Forum in tandem with the operations of the CGP, Standing Committee of Experts and TSO, with support from the Forum's Secretariat.

The proposed structural, functional and operational framework of the Parliamentary Forum tries to address key challenges of existing forums, derived from their extensive review. The envisaged structure is an attempt to ensure a forum that allows for a balance between a formalised framework and designated functions and operational flexibility and inclusivity on the other.

It addresses the overlapping of efforts by bringing together a formal regional structure with designated representatives from each of the member countries and backward political and bureaucratic linkages with relevant nodal ministries. This provides executive validity to the Forum while at the same time bestowing the relevant parliamentarians with responsibilities. Thus, it also attempts to institutionalise a fine balance between the executive and legislature in the respective nations and use it to benefit the operation of the Forum.

Achieving regional connectivity and ensuring a conducive environment for carrying out cross-border trade requires long-term and continuous coordination among multiple stakeholders. The envisaged structure is an attempt towards ensuring the sustainability of efforts by ensuring continuity in the Forum's validity and operations in the longer term. This addresses the concerns of lack of institutional memory and short life cycle of which are prevalent among existing such forums.

One major roadblock for establishing and functioning such multi-national forums lies in the financial arrangements. The arrangements may often not be equitable or fair. To address these challenges, the proposed structure has ensured that the budget is prepared in an unbiased manner and financial support of each member country is in line with their national financial capacities

Lastly, the institutional arrangements prescribed for this Forum are participatory in nature and objective-oriented. At the same time, the arrangements allow for a healthy co-existence of government and non-government actors. This will aid ineffective feedback, monitoring and evaluation of the Forum.

Annexure 1

Multilateral Forums in the South Asian Countries

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

SAARC is a regional organisation of all the countries of South Asia, i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for promoting socio-economic development, stability, and welfare economics, and collective self-reliance within its member nations. It was established in December, 1985 with the signing of SAARC charter¹⁷⁸. Initially, Afghanistan was not a member nation, but, due to rapid expansion within the region, it received the full member status on 3 April 2007.

Table 1 provides a snap shot of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Table 1: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): A Snapshot

Evolution	SAARC was set up in December 1985 for cooperation in economic, social and technical aspects to promote welfare of the people in the region and to provide a platform for the people of South Asian region to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding. ¹⁷⁹
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life• To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potentials• To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia• To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems• To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields• To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries

¹⁷⁸ SAARC Charter, 1985

¹⁷⁹ Muchkund Dubey. "SAARC and South Asian Economic Integration." *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 14 (2007): 1238-240. Accessed December 23, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419435>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests • To cooperate with international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes.
Member Countries	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions¹⁸⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Council of Minister¹⁸¹ is responsible for the formulation of policies; reviewing progress; decision on new areas of cooperation; establishing additional mechanism as deemed necessary; and deciding on other matters of general interest to the Association • The Standing Committee¹⁸² is responsible for overall monitoring and coordination of programmes and the modalities of financing; determining inter-sectoral priorities; mobilising regional and external resources; and identifying new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies. • The Programming Committee¹⁸³ holds the responsibility of selection of regional projects including their location; cost-sharing modalities among the member states; and mobilisation of external resources; inter-sectoral priority of Work Programme; and review of the calendar of Activities. • The Technical Committee¹⁸⁴ formulates programmes and prepare projects in their respective fields; responsible for monitoring the implementation of such activities. • SAARC secretariat, based in Kathmandu, Nepal, coordinates, executes and monitors all the SARRC activities. It also works as communication link between SAARC and other international forums
Key Areas of Cooperation	Agriculture and Rural Development; Investment and commercial dispute settlement; Biotechnology; Culture; Economic and Trade; Education; Energy ; Environment; Finance; Food Security; Funding Mechanism; Information and Communication technology; Poverty Alleviation; Science and Technology; Security Aspects; Social development; Tourism
Operational Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council of Minister Meeting of the SARRC member is held twice a year and may meet in extraordinary session if required

¹⁸⁰ <http://saarc-sec.org/Council-of-Ministers/53/>; <http://saarc-sec.org/Standing-Committee/54/>; <http://saarc-sec.org/Programming-Committee/76/>; <http://www.saarc-sec.org/Technical-Committees/72/>; <http://www.saarc-sec.org/SAARC-Secretariat/18/>

¹⁸¹ It is comprised of the Foreign Ministers of member states.

¹⁸² It is comprised of the Foreign Secretaries of member states.

¹⁸³ It is comprised of the senior officials.

¹⁸⁴ It is comprised of representatives of member states.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standing Committee meets as often as deemed necessary but in practices it meets twice a year and submits its reports to the Council of Ministers. • The Programming Committee generally meets prior to the sessions of the Standing Committee. It is also mandated to convene on stand-alone basis to coordinate implementation of the approved SAARC programmes and activities. • The Technical Committee has to submit periodic reports to the Standing Committee. The chairmanship of Technical committee is rotated among Member States in alphabetical order every two years. • The Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General, who is appointed by the Council of Ministers from Member States in alphabetical order for a term of three years. His Excellency Mr. Esala Ruwan Weerakoon from Sri Lanka is the current Secretary General. The Secretary General is assisted by eight Directors on deputation from the Member States.
Financial Arrangement¹⁸⁵	Member states make provision in their respective national budgets, for financing activities and programmes under the SAARC framework including contributions to the Secretariat budget and that of the regional institutions. The financial provision thus made is announced annually, at the meeting of the Standing Committee.

Energy Cooperation in SAARC

Access to reliable and quality energy plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of an individual. Realising this, SAARC created a technical committee, in 2000, which focussed on energy cooperation in the region. Subsequent to the Dhaka Declaration in 2004, SAARC established its own energy centre (SEC) in 2006 in Islamabad, Pakistan to enhance energy cooperation among the South Asian Countries (SAC).¹⁸⁶

Its key objectives¹⁸⁷ are:

- To promote development of energy resources, including hydropower and energy trade in the region
- To develop renewable and alternative resources

¹⁸⁵ <http://saarc-sec.org/Working-Groups/77/>

¹⁸⁶ Priyantha Wijayatunga & P.N. Fernando. "An Overview of Energy Cooperation in South Asia" *Asian Development Bank South Asian Working paper Series*, no.19 (2013). Accessed December 24, 2020.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30262/overview-energy-cooperation-south-asia.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.saarcenergy.org/vision-mission/>

- To promote energy efficiency and conservation in the region

Furthermore, during the 15th SAARC summit in 2008, the member states recognised the need to build up renewable energy resources and the trade and sharing of technology.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, the working group on energy, in 2009, proposed 'Regional Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement' and in its seventh meeting held in March 2013, asked the SAARC secretariat to give the Draft Agreement a legal shape. Hence, in November 2014, SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) was finally signed.

Under the Agreement, SAARC member states have to provide non-discriminatory access to the regional transmission grids in their respective countries. The Agreement allows

- Authorised entities of SAARC member states, including private or public power producers, power utilities, trading companies, transmission utilities, distribution companies or other institutions established under the law, to buy and sell electricity within the region.
- Buying and selling entities to negotiate the terms and conditions, payment security mechanism and tenure of the electricity trade, subject to regulation by the laws of the concerned member states.
- Member states to consider exempting export and import duties, and other fees for cross-border trade and exchange of electricity between buying and selling entities.

In addition to these institutional frameworks, SAARC energy ministers, senior officials and expert groups meet periodically to discuss the issue of regional energy cooperation. SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (CEERE) meet periodically, under the SAARC framework, for promotion of energy cooperation and knowledge sharing among the experts. Figure 1 gives a brief snapshot of the key issues discussed in the meetings of Energy Regulators till 2019.

¹⁸⁸ <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/fifteenth-saarc-summit-declaration-addresses-climate-change-and-food-security/>

Figure 1: Meeting of SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (CEERE) - A Snapshot¹⁸⁹

First Meeting of SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity)

- It was held in December 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Member states were encouraged to harmonise the legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for facilitating the Cross-Border Energy Trade (CBET)
- The members discussed the possibility of establishing a Regional Forum of energy regulatory authorities

Second Meeting of SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity)

- It was held in October 2017 in Islamabad, Pakistan
- Reviewed and updated the SAARC Plan of Action on Energy Regulations (Electricity) to address the regulatory issues and remove possible regulatory barriers for CBET among the SAARC Member States.
- The members also agreed to have a Regional Regulatory Body to oversee the harmonisation/ coordination of regulation, codes and standards for the electricity grid, tariff determination principles and dispute resolutions.

Third Meeting of SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity)

- It was held in November 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Discussed ways to initiate regional power trade through the implementation of the SAARC Framework Agreement

Fourth Meeting of SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity)

- It was held in June 2019 in Male, Maldives
- Discussed finalising the draft roadmap of the SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity), which will facilitate assistance for projects pertaining to renewable energy; and enable cross-border electricity trade among countries in the SAARC region.

South Asia Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)

In 1996, four of the SAARC members- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal- formed the South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) as a vehicle for accelerating sustainable economic development through regional cooperation. SAARC endorsed SAGQ in 1997 at the SAARC Summit held in Malé, Maldives. The initial four member countries then requested Asian Development bank (ADB) assistance to promote economic cooperation in the sub-region, leading to the creation of the SASEC Programme in

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=events-list>

2001¹⁹⁰. Maldives and Sri Lanka joined SASEC in May 2014. Myanmar became the seventh member of SASEC in February 2017.¹⁹¹

In 2016, the organisation adopted the SASEC operational plan for the next decade¹⁹². It presents the following strategic objectives of the SASEC partnership:

- Enhancing physical connectivity through multimodal transport systems.
- Following a comprehensive approach to transport and trade facilitation that will expand the current focus from land-based to sea-borne facilitation.
- Enhancing **electricity trade**, which will lead to an expanded and diversified energy supply to meet energy needs and secure power reliability.
- Promoting synergies between economic corridors being developed in individual SASEC countries, and optimising development impacts of these economic corridor investments through improved cross-border links.

As of June 2020, SASEC member countries have signed and implemented 61 ADB-financed investment projects worth around US\$13.58bn. The transport sector accounts for the most number of projects (41 projects worth a cumulative US\$11.20bn), followed by **energy** (12 projects worth US\$1.58bn), economic corridor development (three projects worth US\$697mn), trade facilitation (three projects worth over US\$80.66mn), and Information and Communications Technology (two projects worth US\$20.80mn).¹⁹³

SASEC Discussion Platforms

In order to build confidence and mutual trust among the member countries, SASEC has created discussion platforms where shared interests are identified and addressed, for the benefit of all members.

The structure and hierarchy of the discussion forums is mentioned in Figure 2:

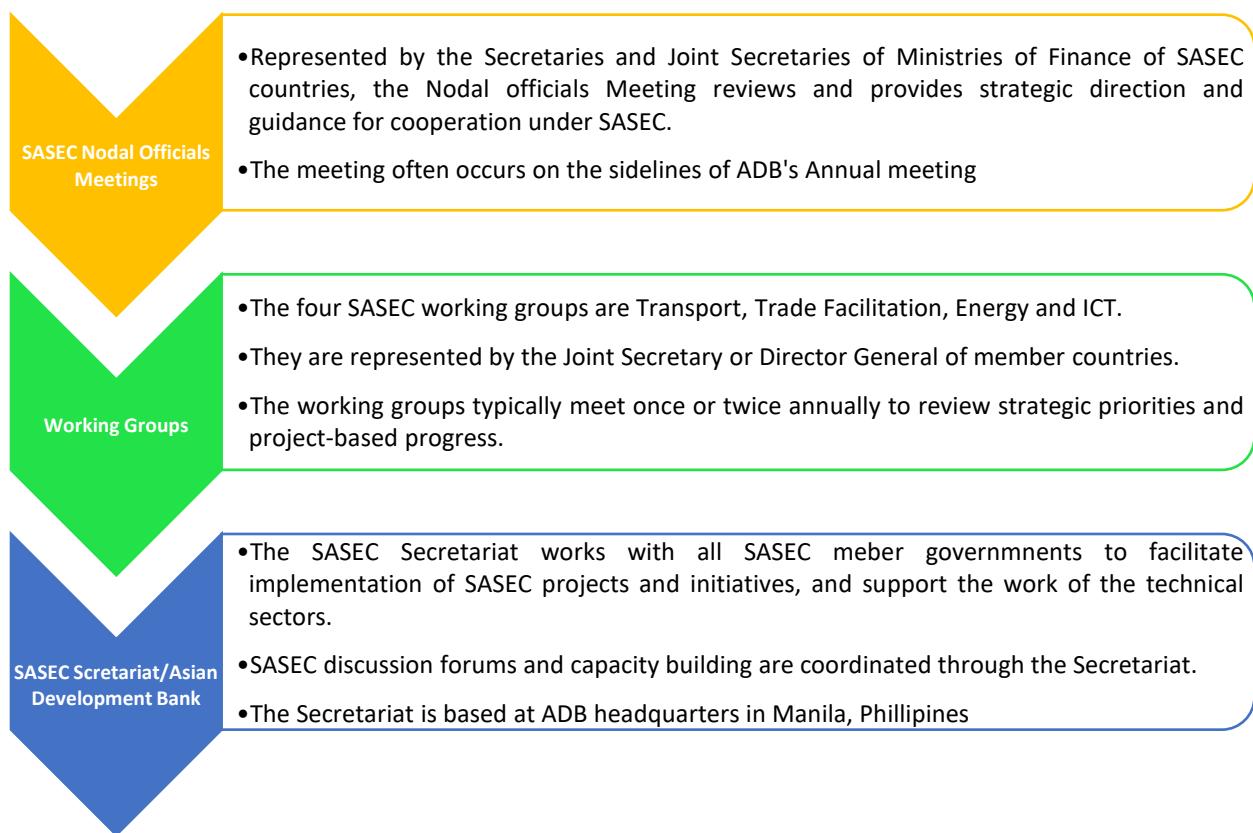
¹⁹⁰ South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Operational Plan 2016–2025

¹⁹¹ <http://sasec.asia/index.php?page=news&nid=600&url=myanmar-joins-sasec>

¹⁹² South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Operational Plan 2016–2025

¹⁹³ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=what-is-sasec>

Figure 2: Structure of SASEC Discussion Forum



Energy Cooperation in SASEC

As mentioned in the previous section, the energy working group meet periodically to review strategic priorities and project-based project. In October 2012, the SASEC energy working group met to discuss the Proposed Transmission Utility Forum (TUF).¹⁹⁴

Consequently, the SASEC Electricity Transmission Utility Forum (SETUF) was established in 2013 as a technical sub-committee of the energy working group that aims to play a key role in developing cross-border power transmission connectivity, and promote greater power trade between the SASEC sub-region and Sri Lanka. It also serves as a vehicle for knowledge exchange in the development of cross-border power transmission infrastructure.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=50&url=sasec-meetings-on-the-proposed-transmission-utility-forum-and-subregional-power-generation-and-trans>

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=event&eid=85&url=first-meeting-of-the-sasec-electricity-transmission-utility-forum>

South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR)

The South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR) was established in May 1999 with the support of the World Bank. SAFIR is an association of Infrastructure Regulators from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The Forum plays a key role in disseminating knowledge and best practices among infrastructure regulatory institutions in South Asia. The secretarial service to SAFIR is provided by Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) of India. Table 6 provides a brief snapshot of SAFIR.

Table 2: South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR): A Snapshot

Evolution	SAFIR was established in May 1999, with support of World Bank, for providing high quality capacity building and training on infrastructure regulation & related topics, in South Asia and to stimulate research on the subject by building a network of regional and international institutions & individuals that are active in the field. ¹⁹⁶
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a platform for experience sharing amongst the regulators of the region• Build regulatory decision-making and response capacity in South Asia• Facilitate the regulatory process• Conduct training programmes to serve regulatory agencies and other stakeholders• Spur research on regulatory issues• Provide a databank of information relating to regulatory reform processes and experiences
Member Countries	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
Organisational Structure- Roles and Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The activities of the SAFIR are guided by a Steering Committee comprising all the members• The Executive Committee of SAFIR will hold the responsibility for operationalising the strategic direction provided by the SAFIR Steering Committee. The current members of the Executive Committee are from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.safirasia.org/about-safir>

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.safirasia.org/overview-0>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual Working Groups from amongst the representatives of the Member organisations, to discuss on issues of great importance to the infrastructure sector
Key Focus Area(s)/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts flagship core course and capacity building programmes in the electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, water, transport and other sectors. Organises Infrastructure Conference every year to present the vibrant and evolving policy and regulatory framework in South Asia. Conducts in-house research as well as studies by engaging external agencies.
Operational Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) and the Executive Committee Meeting (ECM) of the SAFIR members are also held once a year. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the SAFIR members is held in the form of an annual Executive Committee Meeting. In the AGM, views of all members are sought on SAFIR's functioning, role, and future directions. Secretariat support/Administrative function provided by CERC, India

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organisation comprising seven Member States- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. This sub-regional organisation came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration. The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries. BIMSTEC has also established a platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members. The BIMSTEC region is home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of the global population with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.7 trillion economy.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ https://bimstec.org/?page_id=189

Objectives

The key objectives of BIMSTEC¹⁹⁹ are mentioned below:

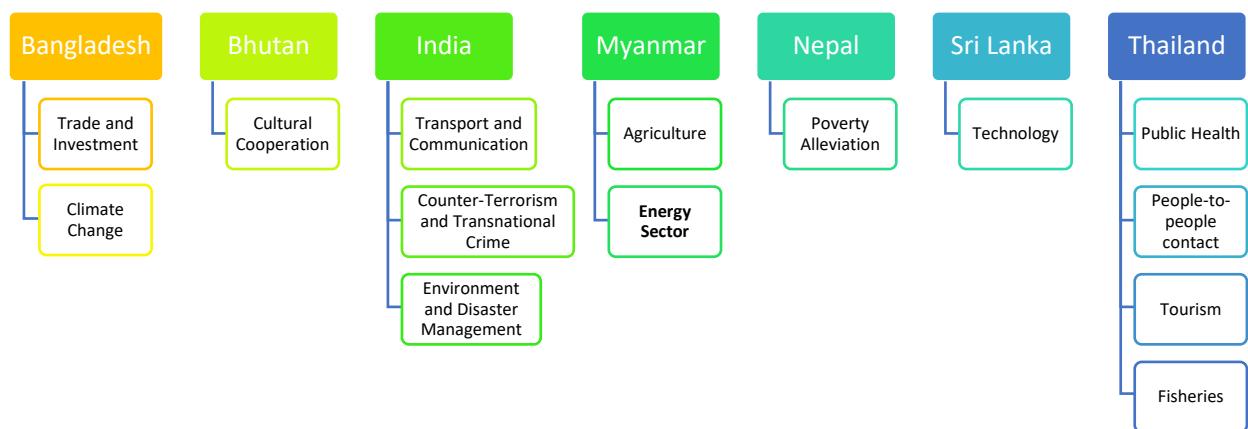
- To create an enabling environment for rapid economic development through identification and implementation of specific cooperation projects in the sectors of trade, investment and industry, technology, human resource development, tourism, agriculture, energy, and infrastructure and transportation.
- To accelerate the economic growth and social progress in the sub-region through joint endeavours in a spirit of equality and partnership.
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, technical and scientific fields.
- To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional and technical spheres.
- To cooperate more effectively in joint efforts that are supportive of and complementary to national development plans of Member States which result in tangible benefits to the people in raising their living standards, including generating employment and improving transportation and communication infrastructure.
- To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes.
- To cooperate in projects that can be dealt with most productively on a sub-regional basis and make best use of available synergies among BIMSTEC member countries.

Areas of Cooperation

There are fourteen priority areas of cooperation between the BIMSTEC member states and each member states takes lead in one or more of these priority areas. Figure 3 is the list of member states and the priority areas where the member country takes the lead.

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.bimstec.org/index.php?page=overview>

Figure 3: Key Focus Area- BIMSTEC



Operational Mechanism

BIMSTEC- Organisational Structure²⁰⁰ and Roles and Functions of Bodies/Committees are explained below.

- **BIMSTEC Summit:** This is the highest policy making body in the BIMSTEC process. As per the decision of the 6th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Thailand on 8th February 2004, the Summit should be held every two years, as possible. However, till date 4 summits have been held.
- **Ministerial Meetings:** Ministerial Meetings cover the area of foreign affairs (MM) and the area of trade and economic affairs (TEMM). The Foreign Ministerial Meeting determines the overall policy as well as recommendations for the BIMSTEC Summit. It is represented by the Foreign Secretaries of the member States. Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting (TEMM) monitor the progress in the Trade and Investment Sector as well as the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) policy. It is comprised of the Trade/Economic Ministers of the Member States and assisted by Senior Trade/Economic Officials Meeting.
- **Senior Officials' Meetings:** This is divided into the areas foreign affairs (SOM) and trade and economic affairs (STEOM).
 - **SOM:** SOM precedes the Ministerial Meeting and is represented by the Senior Officials of the Foreign Ministries of the Member States at the Foreign Secretary Level. A representative from the Ministry of Commerce /Trade is also inducted in the delegation. The SOM helps the Ministerial Meeting in monitoring and providing overall direction to the BIMSTEC activities. Till date, 21 SOMs have been held.

²⁰⁰ https://bimstec.org/?page_id=1761

- **STEOM:** STEOM is an operational body comprising Senior Officials of the Trade/Commerce Ministry of the Member States and representative from Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This meeting precedes the Ministerial Meeting and reports to the TEMM. Till date, 5 STEOMs have been held. There are two forums (Business and Economic Forum) under the STEOM, which allow active participation of the private sector.
- **BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG):** The BWG reports to the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). The Meeting is held about monthly to review the progress of and ensure coordination among different activities. BWG Meetings are being held in the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka chaired by Nepal.
- **Expert Group Meeting:** The Lead Countries of the priority sectors of cooperation and sub-sectors are to host expert group meetings of their responsible sectors regularly and report the result to the BWG via respective Embassies to Thailand. The result will then be further reported to the SOM.

Energy Cooperation

BIMSTEC has identifies 14 priority areas where a member country takes the lead. Energy is one of these priority areas, with Myanmar leading the region. The areas of energy where BIMSTEC countries are focussing are: oil and gas, power and non-conventional sources of energy.²⁰¹

The objectives of the sector are to enhance energy cooperation among BIMSTEC Member States through the establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection programme to expand energy trade among Member States and accelerate development of new hydro-power projects, interconnection of electricity and natural gas grids, implementation of viable renewable energy projects, and sharing of experiences, knowledge and information on energy efficiency programmes.

This sector conducts its business through BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting, Senior Officials Meeting on Energy (SOM-E) and Task Force/Expert Group Meetings. Energy Ministers are supposed to meet once every two years. SOM-E is supposed to meet at least once a year to follow up on energy sector related cooperation.²⁰²

²⁰¹ SARI/EI Report on BIMSTEC Energy Outlook 2030

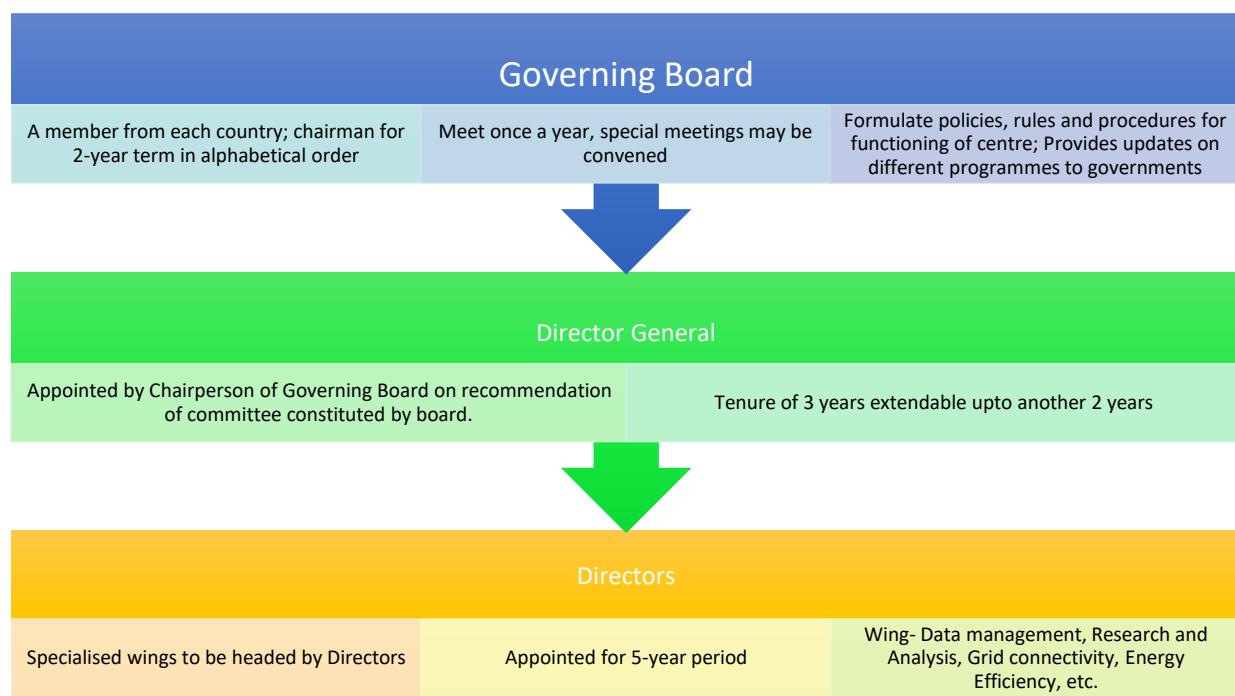
²⁰² [https://bimstec.org/?page_id=268'](https://bimstec.org/?page_id=268)

Energy Centre

On 22 January 2011, the Member States signed the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) in Bengaluru, India. The key objectives of BEC are to enhance cooperation, sharing of best practices, conduct feasibility studies and function as a secretariat for energy cooperation activities.

The organisation structure and operational aspects for BIMSTEC Energy Centre is provided in the Figure 4.

Figure 4: Organisation Structure and Operational Aspects for BIMSTEC Energy Centre²⁰³



Grid Interconnection Agreement

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection was signed on 31 August 2018 at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The MoU has entered into force on 07 April 2019. This MoU will facilitate²⁰⁴:

²⁰³ SARI/EI Report on Regional Energy/Electricity Regulatory Institutional Mechanism In South Asia: South Asia Forum of Electricity/Energy Regulators (SAFER)

²⁰⁴ <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=160976>

- i. the optimisation of using the energy resources in the region for mutual benefits on non-discriminatory basis subject to laws, rules and regulations of the respective Parties
- ii. the promotion of efficient, economic, and secure operation of power system needed through the development of regional electricity networks
- iii. the necessity of optimisation of capital investment for generation capacity addition across the region
- iv. power exchange through cross border interconnections

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative

The BBIN sub-regional initiative is envisioned to improve economic cooperation and connectivity among the four South Asian countries- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. A Snapshot of BBIN initiative is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative	
Evolution ²⁰⁵	Informal discussions led to renewed consensus on sub regional ties outside bilateral agreements, owing partly to continued failure of extant systems. The November 2014 SAARC summit held at Kathmandu saw endorsement of an accord on land transport by regional states.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore avenues of cooperation, exchange experiences, views and best practices across several sectors. • Review data sharing arrangements for disaster mitigation and environmental forecasting • Strengthen transit facilitation measures such as shared border stations on key routes and harmonised customs procedures.
Member Countries	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
Key Focus Area(s)/Activities	Transport, power and other infrastructure areas
Operational Aspects	It operates through regular Joint Working Group (JWG) sessions, represented by each member state that discusses on the formulation, implementation and review of quadrilateral agreements.

²⁰⁵ <https://defenceforumindia.com/threads/bbin-updates-and-discussion.68467/>

Till date, The Joint Working Groups (JWG) has met 3 times. The last meeting was held in January 2016 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which discussed specific hydropower projects under BBIN framework that could be concretised on equitable basis.

Annexure 2

List of Consultations

SI No.	Name	Designation/ Relevant Details	Political Affiliation/Party	Country
1.	Dr. Amar Patnaik	Member of Rajya Sabha	Biju Janata Dal	India
2.	Ritesh Pandey	Member of Lok Sabha	Bahujan Samaj Party	India
3.	K. J. Alphons	Member of Rajya Sabha	Bharatiya Janata Party	India
4.	P.D. Rai	Former Member of Lok Sabha	Sikkim Democratic Front	India
5.	Shahiduzzaman Sarkar	Member of Parliament and Chairman of Standing Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources	Bangladesh Awami League	Bangladesh
6.	Nurul Islam Talukdar	Member of Parliament and Member, Standing Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources	Jatio Party	Bangladesh
7.	Aslam Hossain Saudagar	Member of Parliament and Member of	Bangladesh Awami League	Bangladesh

SI No.	Name	Designation/ Relevant Details	Political Affiliation/Party	Country
		Standing Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources		
8.	Nargis Rahman	Member of Parliament and Member of Standing Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources	Bangladesh Awami League	Bangladesh
9.	Shirin Akhter	Member of Parliament	Jatio Shamajtantrik Dal	Bangladesh
10.	Fazlee Hossion Badsha	Member of Parliament	Workers Party of Bangladesh	Bangladesh
11.	Shamim Haider Patwary	Member of Parliament	Jatio Party	Bangladesh
12.	Wangchuk Namgay	Hon'ble, Speaker, National Assembly of Bhutan	Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa	Bhutan
13.	Dupthob	Member of National Assembly	Druk Phuensum Tshogpa	Bhutan
14.	Passang Dorji	Member of National Assembly	Druk Phuensum Tshogpa	Bhutan
15.	Dil Maya Rai	Member of National Assembly	Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa	Bhutan
16.	Yeshey Dem	Member of National Assembly	Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa	Bhutan

SI No.	Name	Designation/ Relevant Details	Political Affiliation/Party	Country
17.	Barshaman Pun	Member of Parliament and Former Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre)	Nepal
18.	Gagan Thapa	Member of the House of Representatives	Nepali Congress	Nepal
19.	Khadaga Bahadur Bisht	Executive Director, Millenium Challenge Account Nepal	NA	Nepal
20.	Kulman Ghising	Former Managing Director, Nepal Electricity Authority	NA	Nepal
21.	Minendra Rijal	Member of the House of Representatives	Nepali Congress	Nepal
22.	Ram Sharan Mahat	Former Minister of Finance	Nepali Congress	Nepal
23.	Harsha de Silva	Member of Parliament, Former State Minister of national Policies and Economic Affairs	Samagi Jana Balawegaya	Sri Lanka
24.	Patali Champika Ranawaka	Member of parliament and Former Minister of Power and Energy	Samagi Jana Balawegaya	Sri Lanka

Sl No.	Name	Designation/ Relevant Details	Political Affiliation/Party	Country
25.	M.A. Sumanthiran	Member of Parliament	Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi	Sri Lanka
26.	Rauff Hakeem	Member of Parliament	Sri Lanka Muslim Congress	Sri Lanka
27.	Tharaka Balasuriya	Member of Parliament and State Minister for Regional Cooperation	Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna	Sri Lanka

About SARI/EI

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/E) program in the year 2000 to promote Energy Security in the South Asia region, working on three focus areas: Cross Border Energy Trade (CBET); Energy Market Formation; and Regional Clean Energy development. The program covers the eight countries in South Asia, viz. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The fourth and current phase of the program, called South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/ EI), is aimed at advancing regional grid integration through cross border power trade. This phase is being implemented by Integrated Research and Action for Development(IRADe), leading South Asian Think Tank. SARI/EI is a key program under USAID's Asia EDGE (Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy) Initiative. SARI/EI focuses on moving the region from bilateral to trilateral and multilateral power trade, enabling creation of institutions and forums for sustained CBET and establishing the South Asia Regional Energy Market (SAREM).

About USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent government agency that provides economics, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. USAID's mission is to advance broad-based economics growth, democracy, and human progress in developing countries and emerging economies. To do so, it is partnering with governments and other actors, making innovative use of science, technology, and human capital to bring the profound results to a greatest number of people.

About IRADe

IRADe, located in Delhi, is a non-profit and fully autonomous institute for advance research. IRADe's multidisciplinary research and policy analysis aid action programs. It is a hub for a network of diverse stakeholders. Established in 2002, the institute is recognized as an R&D organization by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and Ministry of Science and Technology of the Government of India. The Ministry of Urban Development has accorded IRADe the status of Centre of Excellence for Urban Development and Climate Change. Through the SARI/EI program, IRADe is pushing the envelope for sustainable energy access through experts and members from South Asia.

For more information, please visit the SARI/EI project website:

Website: <https://sari-energy.org/>

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