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Announcement

## **South Asia Unites to End Open Waste Burning: Kathmandu Declaration Finalised**

On 6–7 September 2025, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) held a high-level regional policy dialogue in Kathmandu, Nepal, where participants adopted the Kathmandu Declaration on Transformative Action to End Open Burning of Waste in South Asia.

In a major stride toward environmental justice and regional cooperation, the declaration represents a unified commitment by South Asian nations to eliminate the widespread and hazardous practice of open waste burning—a major contributor to air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and public health crises across the region. This declaration emerged from a coordinated regional effort by the Department of Environment (DoE), Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal, the Health Environment and Climate Action Foundation (HECAF360), and the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).

### **Key aspects**

The South Asian Regional Dialogue convened government representatives, technical experts, civil society leaders and international partners to forge a shared vision for sustainable waste management and climate resilience. The declaration outlines a transformative agenda focused on:

- Policy reform and enforcement to phase out open burning practices.
- Investment in sustainable waste infrastructure, including segregation, recycling and safe disposal.
- Community engagement and behaviour change to build public support and awareness.
- Regional collaboration and knowledge exchange to accelerate progress and share best practices.
- Innovation in the management and monitoring of data at national and regional levels.

### **A roadmap for urgent, coordinated, and sustained action**

Participants who adopted the Kathmandu Declaration declared their collective intent to end open burning of waste across South Asia, recognising it as an environmental and public health emergency. They emphasised the importance of elevating this commitment through existing regional platforms such as SAARC, SACEP and the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership, as well as through city mayors' networks.

The declaration calls for mandatory measures to reduce PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations to levels below World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and to accelerate the transition toward sustainable, toxic-free and circular waste management systems. It also urges international organisations, development partners and regional institutions to support this mission through technical assistance, financing and policy collaboration. Their support will be critical in scaling solutions, building capacity and ensuring long-term impact.

This declaration opens the door to a new era in South Asia—where waste is no longer burned but managed responsibly, communities breathe clean air, regional solidarity drives environmental justice, public health and climate resilience.