



INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: 2023 Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum (IPESF), Colombo, Sri Lanka

1. Purpose: To provide stakeholders with the concept, background, description and objectives of the 2023 IPESF to be held in Sri Lanka 14-17 August 2023.

2. Environmental Security and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM):

Environmental security can be broadly defined as countering vulnerabilities caused by the abundance or scarcity of environmental resources and/or degradation. Security related to water, waste, energy, food, biosecurity, climate change and other non-traditional threats fit within this definition and can harbor greater security challenges if left unattended.

The annual IPESF is the cornerstone of USINDOPACOM's Environmental Security Program, and with the Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership (IPESP), engages with regional militaries and civilian agencies on these topics and our mutual environmental stewardship obligations. Increasingly, environmental factors can affect national and regional security by exacerbating societies towards hunger, poverty, instability and conflict. These environmental factors and others often have cross-border impacts. USINDOPACOM believes security for all can improve by sharing lessons-learned, and encouraging governments and their militaries to plan, operate, and execute in an environmentally sustainable manner that supports regional cooperation as well as developing resilient communities and practices. Environmental security projects and cooperation are platforms for relationship building and can help open dialogue on more contentious topics.

Project areas have included oil spill responsiveness, wildfire suppression, illegal fishing and maritime environmental security, solid waste management, and water resource management. The program is ready to expand this list given regional needs as they arise.

3. 2023 IPESF – Colombo, Sri Lanka: The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) and United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) are hosting the 2023 IPESF in Colombo, Sri Lanka 14-17 August 2023.

The 2023 IPESF will focus on the following themes:

- 1) Climate Change and Security
- 2) Maritime, Ocean, and Water Security
- 3) Impacts of Urbanization and Land Security
- 4) Building National and Regional Resilience

The IPESF will include presentations, panel sessions, and group activities to share lessons learned and best practices among environmental security stakeholders, as well as develop actionable plans to address environmental security challenges through project development and workgroup development workshops.

USINDOPACOM works closely with host nation stakeholders to identify the most pressing environmental security topics to include on the IPESF agendas. Below is a list of past events and topics covered:

Past IPESF Events

Year	Country Host	Environmental Security Topics Covered
2011	USA	1) climate change adaptation, 2) environmental sustainability, 3) water resource management, and 4) disaster preparedness.
2012	Indonesia	1) Regional disaster response 2) pollution, 3) deforestation, 4) overfishing and 5) water supply management in the ASEAN context (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).
2013	Australia	1) sustainable environmental management in military operations, 2) military support to disaster relief operations, 3) managing bio-security risks in the military context, and 4) adapting to climate change impacts.
2014	Maldives	1) water, 2) waste management, 3) resource protection, and 4) energy.
2015	Thailand	1) climate change, 2) protection of the commons, 3) military environmental programs, and 4) project concept development.
2016	Fiji	1) sustainable ocean resources, 2) protecting the coastal zone, 3) resiliency to extreme and frequent weather events, and 4) regional project collaboration.
2017	USA	1) environmental security best practices in the Indo-Pacific Region, 2) climate change, 3) water security, 4) waste, 5) energy, 6) State Partnership Program, and 7) biodiversity on military lands.
2018	Mongolia	1) establishing an environmental security habit of dialogue, 2) food-water-energy nexus, and 3) env. security in contingency operations.
2019	New Zealand	1) climate change, 2) environmental security transformation, 3) multilateral approaches to environmental security, 4) coastal planning, 5) marine pollution, 6) biosecurity, and 7) resource protection.
2021	Virtual	Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership Working Group Focus: 1) Education, 2) Policy, 3) Networking, 4) Mitigation
2022	Maldives	1) Climate Security and Role of Defence Forces 2) Addressing Small Island Nation Environmental Security Concerns 3) Ocean and Water Security 4) Women, Peace, and Security and 5) Climate Change Challenges and Solutions

*For additional information on IPESF events and activities, please visit: www.ipesp.org.

4. Event Organization: Organizers from the host nation and USINDOPACOM work as a team to organize the IPESF. The USINDOPACOM team usually travels to the host nation two times for planning and other coordination; interim progress reviews meet via conference call. The agenda and invitation list are developed collaboratively. USINDOPACOM provides funding for the event venue, as well as travel expenses for eligible military and civilian participants. In like manner, the host nation provides ground transportation, hosts an “ice-breaker” social, and provides funds (if needed) for host nation and other attendees to participate.

5. Points of Contact:

Mr. Christopher Sholes, Environmental Program Manager, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command,
christopher.sholes@pacom.mil, +1 (808) 477-9420

Ms. Hannah Thompson, Project Manager, Tellus Civic Science,
hannah.thompson@telluscivicscience.com, +1 (415) 216-3018