

**MINUTES OF THE 25TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF
SOUTH ASIA FORUM FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REGULATION (SAFIR)**

DATE: 12TH JUNE, 2023; 04:00 PM IST

VENUE: VIRTUALLY ON MS TEAMS

The meeting was chaired by Ms. Deki Choden, Chairperson, South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR) & CEO, Electricity Regulatory Authority, Bhutan. The list of participants is at **Annexure-A**.

2. Welcoming the members of the Executive Committee, the Chairperson, CERC/Chairperson, SAFIR Secretariat extended warm wishes and expressed his appreciation for the active participation of the members in the activities of SAFIR. He extended a warm welcome to Ms. Deki Choden, CEO, ERA, Bhutan & Chairperson of SAFIR; Mr. Md. Nurul Amin, Chairperson, BERC; Mr. Dilli Bahadur Singh, Chairperson, ERC Nepal and Mr. Sellampola Gedara Senarathna, Member, PUCSL and other participants.

3. Chairperson, CERC highlighted the genesis of SAFIR and its objectives and stated he felt honoured to be a part of this Forum. He highlighted that the rapid transformation of the energy system due to various socio-economic, technological, and environmental factors has impacted the South Asia region and that cross-border electricity trade (CBET) presents an opportunity to integrate with neighbouring countries and to tap into the renewable energy (RE) potential in the region, in particular to enable large-scale deployment and integration of RE. He further stated that various technologies, such as smart grid transmission technologies, innovative energy storage technologies, developing a hydrogen economy, technologies for integrated power system operation, and innovation in the regional electricity market, will play an important role in deepening CBET and regional electricity market development in the SA region. He added that countries can learn from each other's best practices in the area of sustainable development under various business models associated with it and that regional cooperation can also extend to new and emerging technologies, viz., hydrogen-based electricity generation, electricity, electric mobility, and smart grids, as well as topics of common interest. He appreciated the fact that SAFIR has organized a number of executive committee and steering committee meetings to share and address the pending issues in the region. Furthermore, to deepen the cross-border power

trade, SAFIR has conducted joint working group meetings in collaboration with SAREP/USAID and the World Bank to finalize the harmonization of rules and a common minimum grid code and to design the power market in this region.

4. Chairperson SAFIR and CEO of Bhutan Electricity Authority welcomed all the members. She appreciated Chairperson CERC for providing a detailed overview of the region's energy sector, as well as stressing the opportunities and achievements that can be persuaded through SAFIR in order to facilitate and materialise a better energy future for this region. Furthermore, she stated that the last EC meeting was convened in July 2022, and was chaired by Mr. Samdrup. K. Thinley, the then CEO of the Bhutan Electricity Authority, who has demitted office after completing his term. She also stated that it is an honour for her to be a part of this Forum and interact with all of the region's regulators. This Forum has aided in meeting various challenges by facilitating the network of regulators in the South Asian region through discussions, dialogue, and interactions. She emphasised the significance of the core course, which has been crucial in developing regulatory capacity among the members of this Forum.
5. The Forum thereafter took up each of the agenda items for consideration.

AGENDA 1: CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 24TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

6. Deputy Chief (RA), CERC / SAFIR Secretariat, apprised the EC members of the action taken relating to the SAFIR study on "Regulatory Innovations and Practices - Cross Learnings from Infrastructure Sectors 2021" which was awarded to IICA. The draft report was circulated to EC members for comments and suggestions. PUCSL, Sri Lanka, responded by submitting suggestions, which were incorporated into the aforementioned draft report. She informed the members that the final report shared by IICA will be reviewed by the SAFIR Secretariat and proposed that the study be brought up for discussion and approval at the next ECM meeting. After discussion, the EC members unanimously approved the minutes of the 24th EC meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO.2: ACCOUNTS RELATED ITEMS:

(i) Budget for the F.Y. 2023-2024.

7. The EC was apprised of the features of the SAFIR budget for F.Y. 2023-2024, including the projected income and expenditure. The members were apprised that the membership fee for F.Y.2023-2024 has been retained at the same level as last year due to the availability of accumulated reserves in SAFIR. To summarize, it was informed that for F.Y. 2023-2024, the total budgeted income is Rs.1.13 crore (USD 138507) and the budgeted expenses are Rs.0.99 crore (USD 121052).
8. After discussion on the heads of income and expense, the Executive Committee Members approved the budget of SAFIR for the F.Y. 2022-2023.

(ii) Audited Accounts of SAFIR for the F.Y. 2022-2023.

9. The EC was apprised of the features of the Annual Accounts of SAFIR for F.Y. 2022-2023. As the Audited Accounts of SAFIR are currently indicated in INR, Chief (Regulatory Affairs), CERC advised that a dummy of the Audited Accounts in USD be prepared from next year onwards for the convenience of the members.
10. The Executive Committee Members approved the Annual Accounts of SAFIR for F.Y. 2022-2023.

AGENDA ITEM NO.3: MEMBERSHIP RELATED ISSUES:

(a) Expansion of membership in SAFIR.

11. The EC was informed that currently, SAFIR has 29 members from India and 6 members outside India. Recently, requests have been received from a few of the members of SAFIR for the withdrawal of their membership. Hence, there is a need to expand the membership base by sending invitations to other prospective members in all SAFIR member countries.
12. During the discussion, it was suggested to send invitations to Corporates, Utilities & Institutions in member countries. The Chairperson, Bangladesh Electricity Regulatory

Commission opined that letters should be sent to all the member organizations representing their respective countries in the Executive Committee to explore the feasibility of contact with other such organizations in member countries. Secretary, SAFIR/CERC also suggested sending an invite to PGCIL, Grid India, CTU and Power exchanges in India.

13. After discussion, it was agreed that SAFIR Sectt. shall write to the members of the SAFIR Executive Committee, who will suggest names of other Corporates, Utilities & institutions in their respective countries whom SAFIR Sectt. can approach for membership.

(b) Requests for withdrawal of membership

14. The EC was informed that a few of the members of SAFIR, viz. Andhra Pradesh ERC, Assam ERC, Rajasthan ERC, Tripura ERC and TRCSL of Sri Lanka, had sought to withdraw from SAFIR. As the invoices for these members were already raised during the previous year, SAFIR Sectt. has paid the Goods & Service Tax in the previous year with the respective departments and now seeks advice on the cancellation of the invoices so as to seek a refund of the GST component.
15. The Chairperson, SAFIR suggested that the SAFIR secretariat once again reach out to the members wanting to withdraw their membership to ascertain the actual reasons for their withdrawal before taking a final decision.
16. Further, it was agreed that the decision on raising membership fee invoices for the F.Y. 2023-2024 or cancellation of earlier unpaid invoices in respect of these five organizations will be taken in the next ECM, to be held in a couple of months.

(c) Non-payment of membership fees

17. The EC members were informed that a few members, viz., NHPC Ltd., OGRA, Pakistan and NEPRA, Pakistan had not been paying fees for the past few years. Representative of NEPRA, Pakistan (who joined as an Observer in the absence of the Chairperson, NEPRA) informed the members present that instructions have already been sent to their bankers for payment of the membership fee of SAFIR for the last three years, and the payment is expected by June 30th. In respect of OGRA, Pakistan and NHPC Ltd, SAFIR Secretariat

was advised to contact them directly to ascertain their interest in continuing as members in SAFIR.

(d) Request for waiver of fees

18. The EC Members were informed that CUTS Institute for Regulation & Competition and Haryana ERC had requested for reduction / waiver of fees whereas, PUCSL, Sri Lanka has requested for concessionary period of at least one year for the payment of fees in view of restrictions imposed by their Government on outward remittances. After discussion, the Executive Committee accepted the request of PUCSL, Sri Lanka for concessionary period of one year for payment of their fees in view of the prevailing situation in Sri Lanka. However, it was decided not to accept the requests of CUTS as the membership fee of CUTS is already the least among all the categories of members. The request of Haryana ERC for waiver of fees due to non-participation in SAFIR activities was also not accepted as membership fee is collected for funding all the activities of SAFIR and members are free to participate in all events of SAFIR as communicated by SAFIR Secretariat.

(e) Request for services in lieu of fees.

19. The members were informed that the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), a member of SAFIR, has requested for an adjustment of their membership fee from FY 2023-24 onwards in lieu of academic-cum-advocacy contributions that they have offered to SAFIR. This includes Webinars, panel discussions, online talks, and SAFIR newsletters on a quarterly basis. Chief, RA, CERC informed the EC that IICA has been playing the role of knowledge partner for another organization viz., Forum of Indian Regulators, for which CERC is also providing Secretariat services, and in order to enhance the visibility of SAFIR, it will be a good idea if IICA's request is accepted.
20. The members, after discussion, agreed that the services of IICA can be tried for one year (in kind), and further continuation of the services may be decided after evaluation of the services for the 1st year.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIR AND VICE CHAIRS

IN ICER

21. Deputy Chief (RA), CERC / SAFIR Secretariat apprised the members about the reference received from the International Confederation of Energy Regulators (ICER) Secretariat, of which SAFIR is a member, for the position of Chair and two Co-Vice Chairs' which will fall vacant when the upcoming World Forum for Energy Regulation from 22nd to 25th August 2023 in Peru concludes. She further informed the members that the role will be completely voluntary in nature, and whichever organisation chairs the WFER, the Secretariat assistance will also have to be provided by it for a period of 3 years.
22. The EC members felt that SAFIR should currently focus more on strengthening regional cooperation among its members, increasing its membership base, and other activities, and therefore it may not be possible to send any nominations for Chair or for Co-Vice Chairs in ICER at this stage.

AGENDA 5: NEXT CHAIRPERSON OF SAFIR

23. Deputy Chief (RA), CERC / SAFIR Secretariat informed the members that CEO, Electricity Regulatory Authority, Bhutan would be completing her term of two years as Chairperson of SAFIR. She added that, as per the Rules of SAFIR, the Chairperson of SAFIR is selected on rotation basis for a period of 2 years from among the member countries represented in the SAFIR EC.
24. Mr. Md. Nurul Amin, Chairperson, BEREC proposed that India be elected for the position of Chairperson of SAFIR. This was seconded by Mr. Dilli Bahadur Singh, Chairperson, ERC, Nepal. NEPRA representative (observer) mentioned that NEPRA may also be considered.
25. It was noted that, as per Rules/by-laws of SAFIR, the Chairperson of SAFIR is to be elected at its Annual Conference/Steering Committee meeting. It was decided that the election of the next Chairperson shall be held strictly as per these provisions at the next Annual Conference/Steering Committee meeting.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

ANNEXURE-A

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF
THE 25TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF “SAFIR”**

DATE :12TH JUNE, 2023

VENUE : VIRTUALLY ON MS TEAMS

Sl. No.	Name	Organization
01	Ms. Deki Choden, CEO, ERA Bhutan & Chairperson, SAFIR	Electricity Regulatory Authority, Bhutan
02	Mr. Jishnu Barua, Chairperson	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, India
03	Mr. Md. Nurul Amin, Chairperson	Bangladesh Electricity Regulatory Commission
04	Mr. S. G. Senarathna, Member	Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka
05	Mr. Harpreet Singh Pruthi, Secretary, CERC/SAFIR	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, India
06	Dr. Sushanta K. Chatterjee, Chief (Regulatory Affairs), CERC	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, India
SPECIAL INVITEES		
07	Mr. Dilli Bahadur Singh, Chairman	Electricity Regulatory Commission, Nepal
SAFIR SECRETARIAT/OTHERS		
08	Ms. Rashmi Somasekharan Nair, Dy. Chief (Regulatory Affairs)	Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, India
09	Mr. Antony P. Mathew, Asst. Secretary	CERC/ SAFIR
10	Observer	National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, Pakistan
11	Mr. M.M. Prasad, Sr. Accounts Officer	SAFIR
12	Mr. Nilesh Diwan, Accounts Officer	SAFIR
13	Mr. Kushal Pal, Research Associate	SAFIR