

CHAPTER - FOUR

SAARC SUMMITS

4.1 THE FIRST SAARC SUMMIT AND THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SAARC

The First SAARC Summit and the Aims and Objectives of the SAARC

The emergence of South Asian Association for Regional co-operation (SAARC) at the historic Dhaka summit (December, 1985) is a major land mark because of the fact that the seven sister nations of South Asia which constitutes nearly 20 percent of the total world population in 3.3. Percent of the global area have decided to join hands together in some cooperative ventures in spite of several negative forces working against it. The monograph tries to, make an in depth analysis of the emergence of SAARC with in the broad framework of South –South cooperation and economic Declaration at the Seventh NAM summit in New Delhi.

By the close of 1970s, the late President Zia-Ur-Rahman in course of his good will visit to several neighbouring countries mooted the proposal for a summit meeting among the South Asian States with a view to explore the possibility of regional cooperation.

Later, the Foreign office in Dhaka undertook a serious exploratory exercise through a background paper for original cooperation in South Asia. It has been in due course of time recognized as the Bangladesh working paper (BWP). Although the prominent features of the working paper have been discussed at length by a number of the Scholars, one can

at this stage probe its linkage to the several documents which have emerged at the first Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi (August 1983) and the first summit held in Dhaka during Dec.1985 which give a "Formal seal of approval to the South -Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC). The following features of BWP have special relevance for subsequent developments in New Delhi and Dhaka."

First- It wanted a modest beginning of cooperation in the socio-economic spheres and political issues are to be avoided in such a forum. Fortunately this idea has also been duly appreciated, while keeping in mind the political realities of the subcontinent. The eleven broad areas earmarked by the BWP were: (1) Telecommunication, (2) Meteorology, (3) Transport, (4) Shipping, (5) Tourism (6) Agricultural Research, (7) Market Promotion, (8) Joint ventures, (9) Scientific and Technological cooperation (10) Educational and Technical cooperation and (11) Cultural cooperation.

Secondly- It was believed that the SAARC experiment in the Economic and cultural arenas could slowly reduce the tension created by strained bilateralism in the region.

Thirdly- The slow evolution of SAARC would be based on a "step-by-step" approach.

They included establishment of regional institutions for training and research creation strengthening of linkages among existing national institutions in the seven South Asian countries in the agreed areas of cooperation and strengthening of infrastructural support in such areas as postal services, telecommunication, railways, highways, shipping Meteorology etc. which would require capital investment by participating countries.(7)

At the Regional level a Standing or Review Committee would be constituted with the objectives; (a) to approve project, (b) determine inter-sect oral priorities, (c) find the modalities of financing either from the region or from external sources, (d) review the progress of implementation of sect oral programs of Action, and (e) to identify new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies. (8)

In spite of these common factors each on of these countries had a distinct personality and a different political system. The Prime Minister of India clearly asserted that regional co-operation among the countries of South Asia had no military objectives and was not (10) aimed against any one. Mrs. Gandhi emphasized that along with all these areas identified for regional co-operation people-to-people contact should remain a major goal.(9) The Foreign Ministers of seven South Asian countries met for the second time in the Male, categorically stated that although “the societies in the South Asian region are quite diverse their hopes and aspirations do not vary.” (10)

The Male meeting in its joint communiqué expressed its deep application for the valuable spade work done by the Foreign Secretaries of these countries at the level of Standing Committee especially in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the IPA launched earlier at the New Delhi meeting of Foreign Ministers. (11)

The king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wang Chuck in his inaugural address on 13th May, 1985 called upon South Asian States to shed all differences and look ahead with courage and confidence in their ability to shape their future individually and collectively in the best interest of their people and the region.(12)

On the eve of the historic summit meeting(7.8.1985) in Dhaka, the Foreign Secretaries as well as the Foreign Ministers of the South Asian region joined in preparatory meetings and they came to the point to establish a institutional frame-work for SAARC would have a permanent Secretariat.(13) The suggestion for a Secretariat is on the agenda of official discussion for about a year with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh actively supporting it and Sri Lanka opposed it. New Delhi had assimilated the two opposing views by envisaging a small Secretariat could be set up the normal increase of SAARC Activity. (14).

At the end of the Thimpu meetings the Ministers finalizes a charter for consideration at the Dhaka summit. They also decided that the Nomenclature of the new organization henceforth be South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC). Significantly it also calls upon the SAARC, countries to non use of force, non-interference and strict adherence to the principle of the U N charter and non-alignment. (15)

The joint communiqué which piously hoped for urgent measures to ensure development Assistance to the third world. (16) The Standing Committee of the SAARC on 4th December finalized the declaration which the seven South Asian leaders adopted at the two day summit. The declaration was unanimously approved by the foreign secretaries. The Committee was also approved the calendar of activities which includes 42 projects in the nine areas which the Foreign Ministers had earlier approved at the meeting of Thimpu. (17)

At the end of the meeting of the foreign Secretaries, the Chief Conference spokesman, Ambassador Abu Ahsan quipped that the “main

focus was that we should not discuss any contentions and bilateral issue”.
“There was no discussion on regional political issues.” (18)

Apparently the views expressed by some member countries to go slow on extending the areas of cooperation some of the vital areas like trade and industry were left out for the time being. The official spokesman said that the extension of cooperation into other areas would arise only after implementing the concept in the nine identical areas. (19)

President H. M. Ershad of Bangladesh was elected Chairman of the SAARC. He welcomed the summit and said that the areas of cooperation had been painstakingly identified and measures to bring about cooperation designed on pragmatic calculation of “The realm of actuality and the realm of promise. (20)

About the global economic situation he said that with the world economy emerged in a deep crisis and the international economic institutions in disarray. The concerns as on development had broken down and that multilateralism had come under severe strain with growth sharply deceleration when not grounding a halt. Dealing with the impact of this situation on the South Asian region, Mr. Gandhi though the countries of the region had weathered the crisis well but nonetheless they continued to be confronted with formidable problems of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and disease which the respective countries sought to overcome in a highly adverse external environment. He further added, “The South Asian region had been a sizeable for human creativity. Here an unfathomed antiquity interacted with peoples and places who poured in from distant parts of the world. Out of the intermingling of their ideas philosophic and ways of life, grew the noble heritage to which all our seven countries could lay claim. (21)

In a rather Pedestrian address, President Zia of Pakistan suggested that at the appropriate time the creation of a system of consultations on matters of common concern to SAARC members could be considered. He also wanted a collective pledge renouncing the threat or the use of force against one another and to banish nuclear weapons. (22)

General H. M. Ershad speaking at the lean guest hosted by him in honor of the leaders said, "Truly, to battle with that foe must call from each and every one of us for deepest resources of ingenuity and enterprise to fight against the common enemy---poverty and economic subjugation. (23)

The South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) was formally launched on 8th Dec.1985 at the concluding session of the historic summit. The meeting adopted the Dhaka Declaration announcing the formation of SAARC. (24)

Of the documents prepared for the summit, the charter did not entail fresh thinking. The draft circulated at Thimpu was adopted with some updating. It was the name as the New Delhi declaration adopted by the Foreign Ministers in July 1983 but for a slight re-phasing of the preamble. Like the Delhi declaration, the draft charter listed the following eight objectives:-

- (a) to promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
- (b) 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 realize their full potential ;
- (c) to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia;

- (d) to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems;
- (e) to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;
- (f) to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
- (g) to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interest; and
- (h) to co-operate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

However, there were no change in the two "General Provisions" either;

- (1) Decisions at all levels shall be taken on the basis of unanimity;
- (2) Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations.

The principle too, lifted from the New Declaration, had the same reference to sovereign equality, territorial integrity political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of their states and mutual benefit as the basis of cooperation; the same emphasis on the point that such cooperation will not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and shall not be inconsistent with obligations in these two fields.

Dhaka Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of South Asian Association for Cooperation, 8 December, 1985.

- 1. The President of Bangladesh, the king of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India the President of Maldives, the king of Nepal, the

President of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka met in Dhaka on 7 and 8 Dec.1985.

2. The Heads of States or Government under scored the historic significance of their first ever South Asian summit meeting. They considered it to be a tangible manifestation of their determination to cooperate regionally.
3. They reaffirmed their deep conviction in the continuing validity and relevance of the objectives of the non-aligned movement as an important force in international relations.
4. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that strengthening of regional cooperation in South Asia required greater involvement of their peoples. They agreed to increase interaction and further promote people-to-people contact at various levels among their countries. To this end, they decided to take steps to create awareness and public opinion in the region.
5. The Heads of the State or Government of Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were deeply appreciative of the exemplary chairmanship of their meeting by the President of Bangladesh. They expressed their profound gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of Bangladesh and for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. (25)

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The leaders were convinced that they could effectively pursue their individual and collective objectives and improve the quality of life of their peoples only in an atmosphere of peace and security. They recognized that mankind today was confronted with the threat of self extinction arising from a massive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced. The leaders called upon the nuclear weapons-states for urgent negotiations for a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty leading to the complete cessation of testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons. In this connection, they welcomed the recent meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Geneva and expressed the hope that the meeting would have a positive effect on international peace and security.

The Heads of State or Government expressed deep concern at the continuing crises in the global economy. They underscored that deteriorating economic and social conditions had seriously retarded developing countries. Sharply falling commodity prices, deterioration in the terms of trade, intensification of protectionist measures, spiralling debt burden and a decline in the flow of external resources, especially concessional assistance, had caused a serious setback to the economic development of the developing countries.

They strongly urged that determined efforts should be made by the international community towards realization of the goals and targets of the International Development Strategy as well as the Substantial New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. They called for urgent resumption of the North-South dialogue and early

convening of an International Conference on Money and Finance for Development with universal participation.

The Heads of State or Government were conscious of the historic importance of the Dhaka Summit and reiterated their conviction that the launching of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), play an important role in accelerating the pace of economic and social development of their countries, promote the objectives of individual and collective self reliance and further the cause of peace, progress and stability in their region.

4.2 SECOND SAARC SUMMIT ON “NOVEMBER, 1986

Second SAARC Summit – November, 1986

“Bangalore menocurel for its pioneering role in Indian Science – home of C.V.Raman Indian first Nobel Prize winner for physics – and the centre of some of Indian most sophisticated modern industry, today (17th Nov.1986) adds another feature to its capital.

The Declaration we are adopting will henceforth be associated with the name of this capital city of Karnataka, which has played host to us with its traditional sagacity, colour and warmth.”(26) The Frontline (Nov.1 to 14, 1986) hopes from Dhaka to Bangalore, it will be a journey from Euphoria to pragmatism for the South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC). The second summit of seven heads of State and Government on 16th and 17th Nov. 1986 will be concerned with ways to consolidate what was founded at the capital of Bangladesh, the process will be halting. The cooperative pattern may be enriched but will remain technical in character, rendering the outcome less than spectacular. If not so it will be a pleasant surprise.

It has come to the notice the foreign Secretaries of the countries arrived at the concensus that the proposed Secretariat of the SAARC should be located in Kathmandu. They also decided to set up a task force of senior officials and experts to formulate a detailed proposal on the constitution and functions of permanent Secretariat and to examine the question of its funding by member countries.

The Foreign Secretaries who constitute the SAARC Standing Committee accepted a Bangladesh proposal that the post of the Secretary General of the Secretariat be held by each country by relation in alphabetical order for two years. Accordingly, the first Secretary General will be from Bangladesh. The task force will be asked to consider a detailed B.W.P on the question of Secretariat.

The Foreign Secretaries were of the view that the Secretariat should be small one so as not to strain the limited resources of member countries. The B.W.P. has estimated the cost of setting up the Secretariat at \$ 25 million and recurring expenditure of \$ 2.5 million.

They also discussed the question of extending regional cooperation to newer areas Trade, Industry and Education. The foreign Secretaries also discussed the reports of the three conferences held since the first SAARC summit on terrorism, women development and International Economic issues.

The Foreign Secretary Mr. A .P. Venkateswaran emphasized on other issues to consolidate SAARC activities and programs on a sound footing.

The Bhutanese foreign Secretary Mr. T. J. Risein, in his statement called for effectively cooperating in tackling the terrorism problem and

said failure to cope with this growing menace would adversely affect the peace of socio-economic development in South Asia.

The goals included the need for a comprehensive dialogue in an appropriately structured world Forum to redress the present negative trends and promote sustained balanced growth in world economy, resolving debt problems of developing countries, special treatment for the lower income and least developed countries and a new round of multilateral trade negotiations under GATT.(27)

Meanwhile the Bhutan foreign minister, Mr. Dawa Lyonpo Tshering said, "we are determined to make the movement a success", deeming bright the future of SAARC he further added South Africa and Namibia would figure prominently at the meeting. "Illegal occupation of South Africa by the present Pretoria regime will have to go because of world pressure but whether this will be achieved by democratic or violent means is difficult to predict." Referring to the situation in Sri Lanka he said that he felt the talks between President J.R. Jayawardhane and the Tamil United Liberation Front would succeed. Mr. Tshering also said that Bhutan would be able to supply power to West Bengal from the Chukka Hydel Project. (28)

The Committee will also deliberate on a proposal to establish Regional Postal Research and Development centre which will undertake studies on specific proposals of interest to the postal administrations of the SAARC countries.(29) It is not an unfair comment to say that what takes place informally at SAARC summits might be of greater import to the stability of South Asia than the official discussions on all subjects other than contentions bilateral and regional political issues were these private discussions not to take place among the regions leaders, their

meeting would be like Hamlet without the Prince. But the Price is there, even if he prefers a low profile, unobtrusive role. The new SAARC Chairman, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, has said that all international gatherings are used by leaders for bilateral exchanges, these exchanges are of greater significance here precisely because such scrupulous attempts are made and rightly at the official level to sweep all problems under the carpet.(30)

The South Asian summit ended in Bangalore on November, 17, 1986 providing the South Asian Association for regional cooperation with an institutional framework, adding new areas to its cooperative effort and renewing the determination of the member states to expand and strengthen regional cooperation. The leaders committed themselves to devising common policies and approaches for finding common solutions to shared problems. They took a major step forward institutionalizing a permanent Secretariat to coordinate implementation of SAARC activities.

The capital cost of setting up the Secretariat will be met by Nepal and the recurring expenses will be shared by member countries on the basis of a formula worked out by the foreign Secretaries. India will contribute 32%, Pakistan 25%, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka 11% each and Bhutan and Maldives 5% each.

Political and Economical Issues

The summit also adopted a declaration on Political & Economical issues calling upon member states not to allow their territories to be used for tourist activities against another state.

The seven leaders called for an offensive against terrorism and during abuse and expressed their concern over lack of progress towards

disarmament. The two day summit elected the Prime Minister Mr. Rajib Gandhi as Chairman of the SAARC.

The Bangladesh President, General Md. Ershad, outgoing Chairman of SAARC proposed the name of the Rajib Gandhi in his inaugural address said SAARC was the expression of the common belief that national effort should be complemented by regional cooperation. It was agreed that terrorism must be severely condemned and that "each of us must do nothing that condones terrorism or gives aid and comfort to terrorists."

Terrorism, was one issue to which the Sri Lankan President, Mr. J.R. Jayawardane, devoted a major part of his speech, during which he expressed his share helplessness about tackling this problem in the Island nation. He gave expression to his anxiety over violence by terrorists and state security forces, saying that every bullet fired really pierced through his heart.

On terrorism, Mr. Junejo said it warranted cooperative action. Pakistan condemned all acts of violence against innocent people. No cause, however, high or noble could justify it. His country was ready for cooperation among SAARC countries to eliminate the threat of terrorism and in time a binding agreement on this issue could be evolved collectively to meet this challenge. General Ershad did not refer to the issue of terrorism and concentrated instead of need for SAARC encompassing new and vital areas of cooperation. He even suggested a periodic consultation among the planning agencies of the seven countries so that a long term view of regional cooperation could be taken. He said SAARC cooperation should not be limited to "symbolic gestures" and a few "semitised" areas.

The king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, also said that SAARC should particularly concentrate on the promotion of trade and a joint economic venture within the region. The establishment of air links and telecommunication among the seven countries would reliance regional co-operation. In selecting the areas of cooperation he wanted priority to be given to the economic field as it was announced of vital concern. The President of Maldives, Mr. M. A. Gayoom, talked about a regional industrial revolutionary listing the comparative advantages that the different countries of South Asian engaged. He also pleaded for smoother bilateral – relations between the countries of the region. Bilateral understanding was vital for speedy expansion of regional cooperation.

King Birendra of Nepal talked about “Dark forces of division and dissension among us” and hoped that the long inter of mistrust, coldness and suspicion in the region would be followed by a new spring of harmony and cooperation. Each of us can be prove to instability. He pointed out that extent forces could play up the differences with in the region which heard several languages, beliefs and cultures.

At the conclusion of its second summit in Bangalore, SAARC is still looking for an identity in terms of its further role in the region. Undoubtedly it has crossed a long way from 1961 when the idea took shape on the proposal of the Bangladesh President at a seminar for realizing the aspiration of developing countries for collective self reliance to fortify themselves in their dialogue with industrial nation of the North.

. (31)

Mr. Gandhi’s meetings, at the bilateral level, at the second SAARC summit in Bangalore with Mr. M. K. Junejo, the Prime Minister of

Pakistan and with Mr. T.R. Jaywardhane of Sri Lanka have at least met the airing of some of the main bilateral differences at the highest levels. (32)

The Statesman viewed the SAARC summit of Bangalore and its entire endeavor from a different angle when Airhold Smith became the commonwealth first Secretary General, everybody said that the club of former British colonies was assured of ever lasting life; civil servants do not let their jobs die. The club of South Asia is also stepping into eternity this weakened with a Secretariat in Katmandu, a Secretary General from Dhaka and a tidy little allowance, presumably from New Delhi. (33)

The decision to break the year long impasse in Indo Pak ties in an advance, at least a modest one with potential for improving relations that must be topped in the follow up discussions between officials of both countries. Likewise, the gap between what Colombo is prepared to offer and what the Tamil Leaders has not been bridge by the Gandhi-Jayawardhane talks. But some ground has been cleared and some clarifications offered with the foreign ministers of both countries, left to refine the present proposals.(34) The official explanation is that while SAARC is concerned only with matters affecting welfare, these meetings provide a separate opportunity for governmental leaders to thresh out bilateral questions.

Terrorism is the definite and obvious course in point. (35) The establishment of the infrastructure in terms of the Council of ministers, Standing Committee, and action committees – its detailed shape at Bangalore by the establishment of a Secretariat, its location at Katmandu, choice of its head, the proportions of members financial contributions

have been settled under the over all guiding principle .that all decisions should be unanimous.

All these represents some progress towards cooperation with in a region in which the course of bilateral relations has often been marked by mutual suspicious because of the disparate size of India and its historical problems with its neighbors on account of its being the only country to have boarders, and consequent problems, will all the others. The bilateral issues should be excluded from SAARC's discussions; they have a way of in trading upon them, as they did at Bangalore although only in the lack rooms and in the quarter retreat of the Nandi Hills. The birth of SAARC had coincided with the sharp deterioration of the Sri Lanka Tamil's problems and, later, the situation in Punjab, both of which have bulled suspicion about support for territories from across international boarders. It was inevitable that the question of encouragement or liberation of the use of one country for terrorist activities in another should have gained precedence at Bangalore over other issues, followed by Pakistan's suggestion that members should give advance information of troop movement close to their neighbor boarders. (36)

To say that SAARC conferences are more significant for what happens off stage rather than on it is not to decry them. Greater coordination among the countries of the region in combating drug trafficking, in education, child welfare, broad-casting, tourism, disaster control and handling, and similar areas can, by getting good will by itself be a highly commendable development. The more by the seven SAARC states to try and contain terrorism together is an even more impressive example of the importance of a joint approach to an issue that vitally affects their integrity and stability. It is only right and proper that SAARC remains a monopole forum rigorously ruling out matters of bilateral and

regional contention. It cannot be an effective means of mediating intra-regional conflicts, and it must not try to do so. There is enough scope for regional cooperation in non-controversial fields which a SAARC should try to exploit and develop. (37)

Actually, the proliferation has already started. The listed areas of interest rose to nine until the first summit added women in the Development Process.

Bangalore Declaration

The Bangalore Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the members' countries of the South Asian Association for Regional cooperation issued on November 17, 1986.

1. The President of Bangladesh, the king of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, and the President of Maldives, the king of Nepal, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka assembled at the Second SAARC summit in Bangalore on 16 and 17 November, 1986.
2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their desire of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations charter and Non-alignment, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of disputes.
3. The leaders reaffirmed that the principal goal of SAARC was to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia to improve their quality of life, to accelerate economic growth, social programs and

cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potential.

4. The Heads of State or Government recalled that the countries of South Asia had been linked by old cultural, social and historical traditions. These had led to enriching interaction of ideas, values, culture and philosophies. The commonalities constituted solid foundations for regional cooperation for addressing more effectively the economic and social problems.
5. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the great importance of the increasing involvement of the people for ensuring the success of regional co-operation. They emphasized the need for promoting greater contacts among the peoples of the region through such action as regular and frequent interchange of scholars, academics, artists, authors, professionals and businessmen as well as facilitation of tourism.
6. The Head of State or Government emphasized the importance of expanding cooperative endeavors under SAARC. They welcomed the establishment of the Technical committees on women in Development, and on the prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse.
7. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat by the Council of Ministers and their decision to locate the Secretariat in Katmandu and appoint Ambassador Abul Ahsan of Bangladesh as the first Secretary General of SAARC. They were convinced that the establishment of the

Secretariat would assist in the coordination of SAARC activities and more fruitful implementation of its programs and projects.

8. The Heads of State or Government recognized that the meeting of the needs of all children was the principal means of human resources development, children should, therefore, be given the highest priority in national development planning.
9. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern at the crisis facing the United Nation's system.
10. The leaders of the South Asian countries were convinced that an environment of peace, security and respect for international law was essential for their growth and stability. Unfortunately, this environment had become increasing adverse for the pursuit of their cherished goals.
11. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that at the SAARC Ministerial meeting on International Economic Issues a number of priority objectives of the SAARC countries have been identified. These include enlarged confessional assistance, the doubling in three years of the financial flows for the development of developing countries, amelioration of official debts, trade liberalization, especially in textiles and agriculture, commodity price stabilization transfer of Technology and sentries. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the SAARC members should closely and regularly consult and co-operate in relevant international economic conferences and institutions in order to promote the above mentioned objectives. They recognized that an important opportunity in this context would be provided by UNCTAD VII.

12. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were deeply appreciative of the exemplary manner in which the Prime Minister of India discharged his responsibilities as chairman of the meeting. They expressed their profound gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to them by the Government and people of India and for the excellent arrangement made for the meeting.(38)

The Heads of State or Government stressed that mutual trust, goodwill and understanding must animate their cooperative effort under SAARC. Progress and prosperity in each country would provide for the benefit of others. This was what constituted the SAARC spirit.

1. The Heads of State or Government recalled that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was the most populous regional grouping in the world. The countries of the region had large, rich and varied human and natural resources. They expressed their determination to achieve the optimum utilization of these resources by intensifying their cooperation, bearing in mind the immense present and potential complementarities among their economies. They recognised that this would require increasing exchange among their countries, on the basis of mutual benefit, of ideas, experience and technology as well as goods and services, which utilize and enhance the productive capacity of each of their countries and build their collective self reliance.
2. The leaders noted with satisfaction that considerable progress had been achieved in the implementation of SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. They agreed that a progressive movement

towards more concrete and action-oriented projects and programmes was essential to ensure more tangible benefits from SAARC to the peoples of the region. They welcomed the establishment of the Technical Committees on Women in Development, and on the Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse.

3. The Heads of State or Government agreed that co-operation among SAARC States was vital if terrorism was to be prevented and eliminated from the region. They unequivocally condemned all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and deplored their impact on life and property, social economic development, political stability, regional and international peace and co-operation.
4. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their deep commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement and underlined the historic role the Movement had been playing in strengthening international peace, promoting development, establishing equitable and just economic relations and strengthening international co-operation in all fields.
5. The leaders urged that the recent retreat from multilateralism should be urgently reversed through a revival of the North-South dialogue which is responsive to the changed circumstances in the world economy. This must include a process of reform of monetary and financial system, through an International Conference on Money and Finance for Development, and urgent measures for preserving and strengthening the multilateral trading system.

6. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that the forthcoming New Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations posed a challenge for their countries as well as an opportunity to accelerate their development through the expansion of their exports. They underlined the importance of the effective implementation with immediate effect and continuance until the formal completion of the negotiations, of the commitment to observe a standstill on protectionist measures and to roll these back under multilateral surveillance.
7. The Heads of State or Government expressed their conviction that the Bangalore Summit had helped in consolidating the gains of regional co-operation activities so far undertaken by SAARC while, at the same time, exploring new avenues and possibilities for such co-operation. The Bangalore Summit had made a significant contribution to strengthening and streamlining the institutional basis for such co-operation.

The Heads of State or Government reiterated their determination and will to expand and strengthen their co-operation under SAARC. They underlined their belief that SAARC reflected a resurgence of the South Asian consciousness which had inspired the peoples of this region over several millenia.

4.3 THE THIRD SAARC SUMMIT KATMANDU, 1987

The Third SAARC Summit Katmandu – 1987

The Heads of State and Governments of seven South Asian States representing a billion peoples meeting in Katmandu on November 2, took stock of the pledging South Asian Association for Regional co-operation (SAARC) they had matured in the last two years felt that though the

achievements has been commendable, the road to co-operation was long and endless.(39)

“We are ready with re preparations for the conference” announced Nepal’s Foreign Minister M.Sailendra K. Upadhyay. The meeting of senior officials marks the first stage of the four tier conference at which Prime Minister Rajib Gandhi will pairs on the SAARC leadership to the King of Nepal.

Among the new proposals India sponsored move for a regional food reserve. Was it to combat terrorism will also come up for discussions. (40)

Having exchanged complementary and recorded the gains of SAARC, which groups Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, with Nepal’s King. Birendra Birr Bikram Shah Dev taking over the Chairmanship from the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. R.Gandhi, and Parts of the statements of the leaders displayed discordant notes. (41) Rajib Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, has alleged fears that India might not be in terminated in a regional cooperation scheme like the SAARC as it looked its greater role, in world affairs. In an interview to the “Raising Nepal”, he asserted that India did not visualized and individual role for any country, but the collective role of all the member countries of the organization. “I see a role for all the seven countries together and size (of any country) should not be important,” Mr. Gandhi observed. (42) Mr. Gandhi conditioned against reliance on other countries to finance the regional cooperation activities and stressed the used to pool our own resources for the same. Any time we go to others for such resources we compromise our positions. He further added, it is a multi-lateral forum and only matters which affected all the member

countries were discussed at such meetings. Nevertheless, "it does give opportunity for all the heads of states to be together and be able to talk about bilateral matters." He also said India report with all SAARC members' states except Pakistan was quite good. He would like to see much more exchanges in the areas identified at the Professional and Operational level. (43)

Mr. Junejo besides offering to step up this country's contribution to the regional food reserve wanted the SAARC Secretariat to establish contact with its ASEAN counterpart to discuss modalities by which the two associations could benefit from each other's experienced. (44) Regarding the controversial nuclear issue he said, "We should not hesitate to discuss matter which may obstruct or block fountain of creativity and growth."

India has found it hard to accept Pakistan's proposal in the face of Islamabad's nuclear ambitions. But he analogized the chairmanship of Prime Minister Rajib Gandhi and said, provided a vigorous impulse to the development of new proposals and initiatives during his chairmanship the past year in trussed a steady march towards the broadening and deepening of cooperation among South Asian countries on terrorism Junejo said, Pakistan was determined to suppress it as illustrated by the laws it had enacted and the special court it had set up. But the emphasized that highest priority must be attached to eradicating during abuse and drug trafficking in the region. (45)

Mr. R.Gandhi proposed at the SAARC summit, a South Asia Festival to bring together the regions diverse arts and crafts, poetry and songs, dance and drama, and traditional sports. He said, "There is much

more we can do in the area of culture, especially forums of culture which draw in large numbers of people as participative spectators. (46)

It was decided that the fourth summit would be held in Sri Lanka next year and fifth in Pakistan in 1989. (47)

Before the declaration was adopted, the South Asian Foreign Ministers, in the presence of their leaders, appended their signatures to a regional convention for the suppression of terrorism and a scheme for the establishment of a 2,000,000 tones South Asian Food Reserve. India will be contributing the lion's share of the reserve, 153,200 tones and Pakistan 19,100 tones. There would be smaller contribution from the other members. The SAARC Food Security Reserve Board, which will administer the scheme, will let the food grain contributions are stored in the respective member countries till they are required to be drawn to meet emergencies in any member nation.

As developing and non-aligned nations, the member countries have a shared international perspective. This was reflected in the declaration. It held the super-powers responsibility for the deteriorating global political environment with their policies of domination intervention and other destabilizing measures. At the same time the super powers were complemented for the understanding reached on the elimination of intermediate nuclear weapons. The seven leaders expressed their resolve to help the goal of total nuclear disarmament. They would favor the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting both vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The well known stand of the developing nations on International economic issues was incorporated in the declaration. Even for enhancing the performance of the world economy, affected by frequent crises, there has to be equitable participation of the

developing nations in International trading and economic systems. They felt, the urgent need to resume the North South economic dialogue was underlined. (48)

A positive indication of SAARC summit which decided to setting up four more regional research centre in T.B., Telecommunication, software, Transport and shipping added with meteorological and agricultural information centre which already establishes in India and Bangladesh. (49)

Convention on Terrorism

The SAARC convention on terrorism will not facilitate extradition since that would also require a bilateral extradition treaty, which the convention is, prosecution with in the country will be easier. Its main contribution is the identification of terrorist offences that are not to be considered political for the purpose of extradition.

The Katmandu summit has established the inevitability of the politicization of SAARC towards which tentative moves had been made at Dhaka and Bangalore. Normally such a development should not cause concern since it can help sharper the regional identity, but then this South Asian forms has a peculiar composition. The member countries do not share a common perspective on political and security issues and the group happens to have a predominant member.

The Third SAARC summit at Katmandu however, focused on terrorism which is nothing if not an instantly political inter-state subject. (50)

Katmandu Declaration

1. The President of Bangladesh, the King of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, the President of Maldives, the King of Nepal, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka assembled for the Third Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Katmandu from 2-4 November 1987.
2. The Heads of the state or Government expressed their faith in and commitment to the principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations charter. They further believed that the United Nations has an important role to play in promoting universal trust, understanding and concerted actions for the attainment of lasting peace, global development and general disarmament.
3. The Heads of State or Government also reaffirmed their deep commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement. They underscored the validity of its philosophy and the historic role the movement has been playing and continues to play in strengthening World Peace and harmony as well as in promoting development with justice and equity.
4. The South Asian leaders noted that the world economy had long suffered from a structural disequilibrium. The pace of global economic expansion had further slowed down. The downward trend in commodity prices had continued. The next export earnings had fallen aggravating payment imbalances in developing countries.

5. They welcomed the understanding reached between the United States and the Soviet Union on Intermediate Nuclear Forces. This should be a precursor of further accords between them to reduce drastically their strategic nuclear missiles and to refrain from extending the arms race to outer space.
6. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the signing of the agreement establishing a South Asian Food Security Reserve and expressed confidence that this will provide a much needed cushion against food shortages and scarcity situation in the region.
7. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were deeply appreciative of the exemplary manner in which His majesty the King of Nepal discharged his responsibilities as Chairman of the meeting. They expressed their profound gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to them by His Majesty's Government and the people of Nepal and for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting. (51)
8. The Heads of State or Government recalled with pleasure the launching of SAARC which marked the beginning of a new era of regional cooperation for the promotion of peace and progress, mutual trust and goodwill in South Asia and underlined the importance of annual meetings at their level, as a prime mover, in consolidating and accelerating the pace and process of overall social, economic and cultural development in the region. They reiterated their desire of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of

the United Nations Charter and Nonalignment, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of disputes.

9. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that a fundamental goal of SAARC was to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to provide them with the opportunity to live in dignity and realise their full potential. They were conscious of the formidable tasks ahead of eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment and alleviation of environmental degradation facing South Asia today.
10. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the urgent need for resumption of North-South Dialogue with a view to promoting coordinated actions by developed and developing countries to channel trade surpluses for development, revive growth in flagging economies, overcome debt difficulties, expand export access to the developing countries and stabilise commodity prices, regulate capital flows and exchange rates more closely, and provide emergency relief and assistance to the poorest countries. They also stressed the need for preserving and liberalizing the multilateral trading system with renewed efforts both within and outside the GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. They also underscored the importance of the developed countries fully respecting the commitments made in Punta del Este on "standstill and rollback" and called for the early and effective implementation of this commitment. The Heads of

State or Government also reviewed the outcome of UNCTAD VII.

11. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the need for special measures in favour of the least developed countries in order to strengthen their resource capabilities and structural transformation and urged the international community, in the light of recent decisions at UNCTAD VII, to speed-up tangible assistance including increased resource flows to these countries within the framework of the Substantial New Program of Action (SNPA) for the Least Developed Countries for 1980s.
12. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern at the deteriorating international political environment which was due to great power policies and practices of domination and intervention as well as the increased resort to threat or use of force, aggression, occupation, pressure, economic coercion and interference in violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. These destabilising measures were creating a climate detrimental to the policies of peace, goodwill, stability, prosperity and respect for each other.
13. The Heads of State or Government believed that the escalation in military expenditure was a major constraint on world development. In this regard they noted that the UN Conference on Disarmament and Development had clearly established a link between disarmament and development and had provided a valuable frame work for future action in this vital area.
14. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep concern at the fast and continuing degradation of the environment,

including extensive destruction of forests, in the South Asian region. They also noted that South Asia was afflicted with such natural disasters as floods, droughts, landslides, cyclones, tidal waves which have had a particularly severe impact recently, causing immense human suffering. At the same time they expressed concern over the danger posed by the global sea level rise and its effects on South Asian countries. They, therefore, decided to intensify regional cooperation with a view to strengthening their disaster management capabilities. They also decided to commission a study for the protection and preservation of the environment and to the causes and consequences of natural disasters in a well-planned comprehensive framework. They entrusted the Secretary-General with this task.

15. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction at the launching of the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange programme coinciding with the opening of the Third SAARC Summit in Kathmandu. While taking note of the dates for the institution of the SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships and the commencement of Organised Tourism among SAARC member countries, they directed that the schemes for the SAARC Documentation Centre and the SAARC Youth Volunteer Programme be implemented at the earliest.
18. The Heads of State or Government expressed happiness at the signing of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and considered it a historic step towards the prevention and elimination of terrorism from the region.

19. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the first annual review of the Situation of Children in the SAARC member countries. They reiterated their commitment made in the Bangalore Declaration to accord highest priority to the needs of children in national development planning and emphasised that more intensified action should be taken for the welfare and well-being of children. They further reiterated their call for an early conclusion and adoption of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
20. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction at the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, strengthening further the process of regional cooperation in South Asia. They expressed their gratitude to His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev for most graciously inaugurating the SAARC Secretariat.
21. The Heads of State or Government were conscious that SAARC should be increasingly oriented to the people's needs and aspirations so that the masses of the region could be drawn to a greater extent into the mainstream of SAARC activities.
22. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the spirit and objectives with which the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was launched and reaffirmed their determination to work, individually and collectively, towards the attainment of these objectives

4.4 THE FOURTH SAARC SUMMIT ISLAMABAD, 1989

The fourth SAARC Summit Islamabad November, 1989

Islamabad, India today a proposal to make the seven nations South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) opens itself to various external organizations.

It would be premature to establish extraneous relationship when the SAARC itself is yet to venture into areas of cooperation such as trade, industry, money and finance the Foreign Secretary Mr. S. K. Singh said. (52)

Addressing the Standing Committee meeting of the SAARC, held here after a delay of over four months. Mr. Singh called for opening the door for the inclusion of core economic sectors which held the key to bring about a qualitative change in SAARC cooperation.

That the studies currently under way were expected to produce asset of recommendations by the end of the year on measures to promote intra regional trade a sensitive issue.

Mr. Singh, however, gave no details of the external organizations seeking to establish links with SAARC. (53)

India disappoint over the inability of the special meeting for coordinators for studies on trade manufacturers and services to arrive at

The action in another connected sphere of activity indicated by the fourth meeting of planners. This concerned identifying the scope of harmonization of national policies in each of the agreed areas of cooperation.

“We would suggest that a beginning be made with the health and population activities sector as it concerns every man, woman and child in our region. This will be a complain exercise.”(54)

The Foreign Secretaries of the SAARC member states met here to complete preparatory work for the Foreign Ministers meetings to be inaugurated by the Pakistan Prime Minister Mr. Benozir Bhutto on November 8, 1989.

The SAARC Council of Ministers meeting is being held after a delay of over four months, Sri Lanka's boycott threat following differences with New Delhi over a time table for the withdrawal of Indian troops, from the island nation had led to an indefinite postponement of the meeting last July 1989.

A joint communiqué signed by India and Sri Lanka on September 18 paved the way for recovering the postponed meetings (Islamabad November 6). (55)

SAARC nations should better co-operation: Mr. K. K. Bhargove, Secretary General, South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) said on Friday that member countries should continue their efforts to improve regional cooperation between them through bilateral agreements. Since there was tremendous scope to improve relations among the SAARC countries “it would be pity if the regional cooperation declared in spite of the scope” Mr. K. K. Bhargava was addressing a meeting of the Bengal National chamber of commerce and Industry in Kolkata.

The relation between the SAARC countries after got strained because of “too much expectation” since each country had some limitations, expectations should also be curbed to improve the relation

The seven SAARC countries at the Islamabad meet agreed to carry out regional studies for finding out possible ways of improving the trade relation among the member countries. However there had been some progress in this field. The business community was also extended their cooperation to build up a healthy trade relations. (56).

SAARC Rural Medical Association will be set up soon announcing the Motto behind forming the association Dr. Biral Mullick, Secretary General Indian Rural Medical Association, said that he had already selected experts from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. He would go to Nepal and Bhutan to select some other experts before a committee was formed. He was speaking at the 11th National Conference of the IRMA on Monday at the Netaji Subhas Railway Institute in Kolkata.

Talking on the reproductive sights of women Dr. Mullick said that unless women were educated constructive development for them might not be possible. He said the IRMA should organize training courses on various health aspects including sanitation, drug abuse and drug addicts. There was need for efforts to make woman aware of their rights and responsibilities particularly as 1990 had been declared as the International Year of Literacy. Orientation camps for doctors and social workers were also essential or Mullick will be receiving an award from the International University for complimentary medicines. The Albert Sewitzer prize for medicine will be conferred on him for his work in promoting the rural medicine world Congress.

Mrs. Namita Mullick, President, Reproductive Rights of human cell, said human till date did not receive their full rights and recognition. She said there were numerous cases where abortion was done at the dictates of husbands ignoring the sentiments of wives. (57)

Islamabad Declaration – 1989

Leaders Approve Islamabad Declaration

1. The seven SAARC Heads of State and Government today turned their informal retreat in to a working session and approved the Islamabad declaration providing for an action oriented program for the region assisted by their Foreign Ministers, the SAARC leaders also approved the text of a joint statement to be issued by Mr. Benozir Bhutto, the new chair person of the SAARC at her Press Conference on the conclusion of the fourth summit.
2. The SAARC leaders considered the Islamabad declaration clause by clause, extending their stay by over three hours, at the picturesque, 'Daman-e-Koh' picnic spot in Margale Hills, overlooking the Pakistan Capital.

Asked whether differences of opinion among SAARC leaders had forced them to extend their retreat an official Pakistan spokesman said 'wait for the Islamabad declaration'.

3. The declaration according to the officials, emphasized that SAARC needs such as shelter education and literacy to over one billion population of the region by the turn of the century. It calls for a war against narcotics and incorporates the United Nations declaration of making 1989 as the year of the girl child. It also refers to nuclear disarmament with emphasis on global dimension and welcome East-West though creating a new environment of positive international relations.
4. The declaration calls for renewed discussions on the international economic situation to seek solutions to the outstanding problems for the mutual benefit of both developing and developed countries.

It also calls for greater South – South cooperation with serial emphasis on regional cooperation among member countries of the SAARC.

5. The declaration takes note of the movement towards peaceful settlement of the long Standing conflicts in Cypres, Western Sahara, Kamchee, Angola and Namibia.
6. The government of Benazir Bhutto is keen to ensure independence of the media and has taken a series of steps with in a month of assuming office to unshackle it. Pakistan Information and Broadcasting Minister Javed Jabbar said here to day. He told media Representatives covering the SAARC summit over luncheon that the Pakistan peoples Party(PPP) government had become the “first government in the history of the country which within 72 hours of taking office, actually began to reduce government control over various dimensions of freedom of expression on the media.”(58)
7. Beijing adds the Chinese official media has given wide coverage to the summit meeting in Islamabad of the South Asian, Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC).

PROGRAMMES UNDERTAKEN

1. The Heads of State of Government expressed their deep satisfaction at the progress achieved by the Association since the last Summit. They reiterated their commitment to the SAARC Charter and renewed their determination to cooperate in promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improving their quality of life by eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and environmental degradation.

2. The leaders endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers that any country in the region subscribing to the objectives and principles of the SAARC Charter may be admitted as a member of the Association by an unanimous decision of the Heads of State of Government.
3. The Heads of State of Government expressed satisfaction at the progress so far made in the implementation of the SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. They underlined the need for closer cooperation in the activities undertaken under this programme. They directed that the Secretary General may submit recommendation to the Standing Committee which should in turn decide how to streamline SAARC activities and make them more effective. They welcomed the establishment of the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC), as well as the steps being taken for the establishment of other regional institutions.
4. The Heads of State of Government lauded the smooth functioning of the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme which had proved to be a useful medium for promoting a South Asian consciousness amongst the peoples of the region. They decided that SAVE Programmes should also emphasise social, economic and technical themes
5. The Heads of State of Government noted with satisfaction that the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism had been ratified and had come into effect on 22 August 1988, thus reflecting the sincere desire on the part of the Member States to enter into meaningful cooperation to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the South Asian region. They called for the

adoption of enabling measures by Member States to implement the Convention at the earliest.

6. The Heads of State or Government noted that the decision to involve regional NGOs or professional bodies in SAARC activities, taken at the Fifth Session of the Council of Ministers, pursuant to the direction given by the Kathmandu Declaration, was an important step towards the promotion of people-to-people contact which has always been emphasised by the Association.
7. They recognised that Human Resource Development is one of the means of realizing these objectives. In this context they welcomed the offer of the Government of Pakistan to host a Centre for Human Resource Development and directed the Secretary-General to set up a Group of Experts from Member States to examine the proposal on the basis of a paper to be prepared by the Government of Pakistan and to submit its recommendations to the Standing Committee.
8. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their deep commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement as an important force for strengthening world peace and harmony as well as for promoting development with justice and equity.
9. The Heads of State or Government fully supported the call for the initiation of a comprehensive process for the preparation of an International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade as well as the proposal of the Group of 77 for convening a Special Session of the General Assembly in 1990 to revive growth and development in the developing countries.

10. The Heads of State or Government reemphasized the need for increased resource flows and special measures in favour of the least developed countries within the Framework of the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for these countries.

4.5 THE FIFTH SAARC SUMMIT MALE, NOV. 1990

Fifth SAARC Summit – November 23, 1990 (Male, the Capital of Maldives)

The curtain came down on the fifth SAARC Summit in Male, the capital of Maldives on November 23, 1990 with an agreement on restriction of the SAARC activity and extending it to core areas of economic cooperation, biotechnology, environment and tourism, besides setting up three (3) new regional institutions.

The Nine – Page SAARC Declaration:

The Male Declaration adopted at the concluding session, incorporated the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar's proposals for creating fund for regional projects and exchange of expertise in genetic conservation and maintenance of a common bank. The nine page SAARC declaration expressed serious concern over the growing linkages among drug trafficking, international arms trade and terrorists activities.

Suppression of Terrorism:

On the lines of an existing convention on suppression of terrorism, the SAARC member- states (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives) signed SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to deal effectively with the menace of drug abuse and suppression of illicit traffic in the region.

The SAARC leaders were convinced that their mutual cooperation could be a critical factor in enabling them to meet the challenge of the new pattern of global production, consumption and trade and integration of the markets of developed countries.

Three Institutions Summit:

Three important institutions approved at the summit were the Human Resource Development Centre at Islamabad, the Regional Tuberculosis Centre at Katmandu and the Regional Documentation Centre at New Delhi. The Agricultural Information Centre is already functioning in Dhaka.

Gulf Crisis:

Stressing that the Gulf Crisis had dealt a severe blow to the South Asian countries economics, the SAARC declaration called for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. They also called for expeditious action for completing the regional study of the contentious issue of trade, manufactures and services by February 28. The SAARC leaders noted that national studies on the issue.

Visa-Free Travel:

The summit decided to enlarge visa-free travel facilities beyond the present categories of parliament and Supreme Court Judges. It decided that heads of national academic institutions, their spouses and dependent children would also be entitled to the special SAARC travel document. India has been entrusted with the task of printing the special travel document at its Nasik Press.

The leadership of the SAARC has passed over to Maldives with the President, Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, talking over as chairman from Pakistan.

The leaders agreed to observe 1991 as "SAARC year of shelter", 1992 as "SAARC year of Environment" and 1993 as "SAARC year of Disabled Persons" to focus attention of vital issues affecting the region. They also decided to dedicate the last decade of the century, as "SAARC Decade of the Girl child" aimed at ending discriminatory treatment faced by female children in the region.

Sri Lanka would host the sixth SAARC summit on 1991. Colombo was originally allotted the fifth summit which has been held in male after a gap of two years. Beginning with the historic summit at Dhaka in December 1985, such summits had been smoothly organized every year- Bangalore 1986, Katmandu 1987 and Islamabad 1988 – Until it came to Sri Lanka. The newly elected regime of President Premadasa had pledged to the electorate to see Indian peace keeping force out of the country. Accordingly, Sri Lanka announced that it would not be able to hold the SAARC summit until India withdrew its troops.

This was the first time four new heads of States or Government, including that of India, attended the summit. It was also the first time that four Prime Minister participated, reducing the representation of heads of state at the SAARC summit. (59)

Male Declaration 1990:

1. The President of Bangladesh, the king of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, the President of Maldives, the King of Nepal, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka

assembled for the Fifth Summit of South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) in Male on November 23, 1990.

2. India as the First among equals – many senior South Asian officials have returned to their respective capitals from male, Maldives convinced that the South Asian Association for Regional cooperation(SAARC) may not after all be an exercise in a preordained futility,” A new approach” a “much better climate” and” we can do business.”
3. The region’s experts were discussing the SAARC “Convention on terrorism” Which awaited legal institutional follow up action by each member state. The discussion had turned to “cross-border terrorism”, a persistent problem in South Asia largely because of the subcontinent’s ethnic mosaic, its postcolonial history of partition and secession, and the universal common place that ethnic identity and allegiance in this age is no respecters of national borders.
4. A fierce verbal exchange between the delegate of a small country and the representative of a huge neighbor had led almost to blows. It was “borderline terrorism”, remarked a “neutral” third party at the coffee – break. But relations between those two countries have since seen a marked improvement. In large measure, the new neighborhood policy, of the former Prime Minister Mr. V. P. Singh’s government could claim credit for this less tension free environment. Indo-Pakistan relations are of course, an exception.
5. In different ways, each SAARC member has had to make “structural adjustments” as the price of dependence on IMF and World Bank support India. It would appear, must conform too. An

equally important need for SAARC is to adjust to the realities of the emerging post cold war global order for which the Gulf crisis looks like a curtain raiser.

6. The struggle in and for Kashmir may be the "beginning" of post independence history whichever way that first chapter ends, the extra-regional consequences of the Indo-Pak battle for Kashmir are being crazed by the new détente and the fast-changing international environment neither Indo-Soviet nor Sino-Pakistan alliances or special relationships can remain the same. (60)
7. It is the note worthy that the male declaration includes a plea for Expeditious action in this regard in respect of the three year old terrorism convention.

The Heads of State or Government stressed their desire to promote peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Nonaligned Movement, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, nonuse of force, noninterference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Heads of State or Government endorsed the recommendations made by the Second SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Women in Development held in Islamabad in June 1990. They noted with satisfaction the enthusiastic response in all Member States to their collective call for the observance of 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child". They decided that in order to maintain focus on the problems of the Girl Child, the years 1991-

2000 AD should be observed as the "SAARC Decade of the Girl Child".

The leaders urged the international community to mobilize additional finances and to make available appropriate technologies to enable the developing countries to face the new challenges arising from climate changes and sea level rise. They agreed that Member Countries should coordinate their positions at international forum on this issue. They also decided to observe 1992 as the "SAARC Year of Environment".

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the idea of setting up of a Fund for regional projects which could make available credit on easy terms for the identification and development of regional projects. They agreed that representatives of the national development banks of the Member Countries should get together to work out the precise modalities for the source of funds and the manner in which these could be related to joint venture projects. They accepted India's offer to host this meeting.

The Heads of State or Government recalled the usefulness of the First Ministerial Meeting on International Economic Issues held in Islamabad in 1986. They agreed that the second such Ministerial Meeting be held in India in 1991 to review the outcome of the Uruguay Round and to coordinate positions at international conferences including the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, 1992.

The Heads of State or Government noted that millions of disabled persons lived in the SAARC region and immediate action was required to reduce their sufferings and to improve their quality

of life. They decided to observe 1993 as the "SAARC Year of Disabled Persons".

4.6 SIXTH SAARC SUMMIT – DECEMBER 1991

The Sixth SAARC summit was scheduled to be held on 7th Nov, 1991 at Colombo (Sri Lanka). This was, however, postponed on 6th November, due to the inability of king of Bhutan to visit Sri Lanka on that date. Thereafter, it was held on December 21, 1991 at Colombo.

At the one day Sixth SAARC Summit, the leaders of the seven member states expressed their readiness to sink their prejudices and old biases in order to go in for a wide-ranging interaction in economic, social and other issues. It stressed the need for greater regional cooperation in solving pressing problems.

The Colombo declaration adopted after the "business like" SAARC Summit welcomed the general trend towards disarmament. It was hoped that measures in his direction would restrain the pursuit of military weapons in all regions of the world.

While welcoming the trend towards safeguarding human rights, the SAARC Declaration observed that this could not be viewed in "narrow and exclusively political terms," Civil and political rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other are inter-dependent and of equal importance, the joint declaration noted. With regard to human rights, the declaration underlined the efforts of states to guarantee human rights in their full context, through the pursuit of development for all citizens in conditions of stability, which in turn guarantees the enjoyment of human rights by all persons. The SAARC leaders expressed hope that peace dividend would be used for promoting further development of Third World countries.

The SAARC declaration welcomed the trend towards popularly based democratic governments in different parts of the world including in South Asia. In far reaching decisions, they approved that the recently set up inter-governmental group (IGG) should seek agreement on an institutional framework under which specific measures for trade liberalization among SAARC member states could be furthered. They also decided to closely examine Sri Lanka's proposal to establish a SAARC preferential trade arrangement by 1997.

The SAARC leaders decided to establish an independent South Asian committee on poverty alleviation, consisting of eminent persons from SAARC member states to conduct an in depth study of diverse experiences of the seven nations of the group.

The declaration, laying stress on promoting primary education in the region, agreed to share the member countries' expertise and technical know how so as to achieve total primary education for all children by the year 2000.

Recognizing that cooperation among SAARC countries was vital if terrorism was to be stemmed and eliminated from the region, the leaders urged member states to take all necessary measures to give full effect to the obligations under the SAARC regional convention on suppression of terrorism. They particularly stressed the urgent need for expeditious enactment of legislation by those member states which had not yet done so, for the implementation of convention. They pointed out the need for a constant dialogue and interaction among the agencies of member states.

While expressing satisfaction at the signing of the SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances at the previous

Male summit, the leaders urged the member states, which had not got done so, to ratify the convention.

They welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a conference on children in South Asia next year to consider the regional plan of action.

Regarding environment, the SAARC Summit urged the member countries to promote cooperation among themselves for enhancing their respective disaster management capabilities and undertaking specific work programs for protection and preservation environment. The SAARC leaders endorsed the decision of the council of ministers to establish a committee on environment to examine regional studies on causes and consequences of natural disasters identify measures for immediate action and decide on modalities for their implementation.

The Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao proposed that the SAARC nations should form a collective security system on the model of developed nations. "The regional economic cooperation was the only alternative to fulfill the need for an effective safeguard for furthering development and strengthening of economic of developing countries." Analyzing the SAARC Summit's work, PM Narasimha Rao himself remarked: "There is a new found urgency among member states not to be left behind as the new international order gets evolved and regional and economic groupings make rapid strides in technological and trade fields. There is a general softening of attitude to allow regional cooperation opening up in wide areas in the fields of trade and commerce....." He lauded the agreement to remove trade barriers and felt that there was a step-by-step approach, as suggested by India.

Declaration of sixth summit

The Heads of State or Government were pleased to note the establishment of the Committee for Economic Cooperation as an important outcome of the Regional Study on Trade Manufactures and Services.

The Heads of State or Government approved that the Inter Governmental Group (IGG) set up on the recommendation of the Committee on Economic Cooperation should formulate and seek agreement on an institutional framework under which specific measures for trade liberalisation among SAARC Member States could be furthered. It should also examine the Sri Lankan proposal to establish a SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) by 1997. They directed that the IGG should meet as early as possible and report to the Committee on Economic Cooperation. The Heads of State or Government accepted the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the Second Meeting of the Committee on Economic Cooperation at Colombo in June/July 1992 at which the report of the Inter Governmental Group would be considered.

Adequate new and additional resources are needed for developing countries to pursue an environmentally sensitive process of development that will banish the underlying causes of environmental degradation poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Such resources should be transferred to developing countries on an assured basis together with environmentally sound technology at preferential and concessional terms.

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the setting up of a SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) for identification

and development of regional projects. They noted that the Fund would be managed by a Regional Council of Development Financing Institutions of the SAARC Member States and that the First Meeting of the Council would take place in India.

4.7 SEVENTH SAARC SUMMIT

DHAKA (APRIL 1993)

The twice postponed (December 1992 and January 1993) Seventh SAARC Summit was finally held on 10th April, 1993 at Dhaka and the South Asian leaders once again tried both to restore confidence and strengthen mutual economic cooperation that was essential for narrowing down sharp political disputes among their countries. The need to pursue vigorously the poverty alleviation program for nearly one billion people of South Asia, encouraged them to take the shared issues in the right perspective and to attempt a transformation of this regional association from a “talking-shop” into an action oriented body.

After wide ranging and sustained deliberations, the SAARC Summit unanimously adopted the Dhaka Declaration and the South Asian leaders expressed their resolve to give a dynamic impetus to further economic cooperation among the seven member nations.

In fact, South Asia entered a new era in economic cooperation when the Seventh SAARC Summit adopted the 63-point Dhaka Declaration and endorsed the South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA), seeking to reduce trade barriers in the region. The SAPTA agreement which was signed by the SAARC Council of Ministers on the concluding session of the Summit, envisaged a liberalized trade among the member countries.

The 63-point Dhaka Declaration revealed the association's determination to strengthen and enrich the powers and restated its commitment to its principles and objectives. It declared, "The time was now opportune to provide a further dynamic impetus to activities in the core areas of economic, social and cultural cooperation in the SAARC region."

The declaration endorsed an integrated program of action (IPA) on the eradication of poverty in South Asia, trade manufacture and service, environment, population, shelter, children, youth, disabled persons, women development, science and technology, terrorism, drug trafficking, security of small states, people to people contacts, association of SAARC speakers and parliamentarians and South Asian Development Fund. It also touched on international political economic development.

The SAARC leaders, the declaration observed, expressed satisfaction over the "positive outcome" of the Seventh SAARC Summit and expressed their conviction that the summit would greatly contribute towards strengthening the policies and cooperative action of the member-states in areas where SAARC had a distinct contribution to make.

The leaders of the SAARC countries once again reiterated their determination to strengthen and enrich SAARC as an instrument endowing it with a clear set of forward looking goals and objectives as well as requisite institutional capabilities so that it could continue to work to enrich not only the lives of its own members but also promote peace, progress and stability in South Asia in a larger context.

The Summit leaders agreed that the next SAARC Summit was to be held in India in 1994. The dates and venue of the summit was, however, to be settled by the new SAARC Chairperson, Begum Khalida

Zia, after holding discussions with other SAARC countries. Further, it was agreed that an expert group of the member states would examine the various requests for observer status in the SAARC meeting.

As part of SAPTA, a minor concession of a 10 percent reduction in import duty by all seven members was agreed upon. Initially it was to become effective by 1995. However, due to Pakistan's insistence it was agreed that it would be put into practice "as early as possible," This change really involved a postponement of the agreement to a future date. But this clause did not prevent other countries from entering into bilateral trade agreements on preferential basis, and it thereby created the possibility of meaningful and pragmatic economic cooperation in the region.

The Summit did well to denounce all those supporting terrorists from neighboring countries. However, it was more a rhetoric and less a reality. Pakistan continues to provide aid and shelter to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir and Bangladesh continues to shelter the antinational elements and militants operating in North –East India.

Stressing that the youth of South Asia constituted a vital resource for national development and that mobilization of their latent power was imperative, the Heads of State or Government focussed special attention on the needs of the Youth in South Asia and their development

The Leaders noted that the youth of South Asia faced a number of serious problems requiring urgent attention and remedial measures. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host a Ministerial Conference on Youth in South Asia in 1994 to address the problems of the Youth and focus on the broad theme of youth

and development. They also agreed to designate 1994 as the "SAARC Year of the Youth".

The Heads of State or Government emphasized that cooperation in the field of Science and Technology was of utmost importance in order to accelerate the process of development in South Asia.

They called for further intensification of efforts by Member States in this important area, particularly to facilitate research and exchange of information through networking arrangements in the field of bio-technology, genetic engineering, energy modelling techniques and other identified areas of cooperation.

The Heads of State or Government reiterated their grave concern at the growing menace of drug trafficking in the region and the aggravation of the problem of drug abuse among the South Asian population, particularly the youth.

The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to pay special attention to the monitoring of the security of small States and underscored the need to consider special measures of support to preserve their sovereign independence, territorial integrity and the well-being of their people.

The Heads of State or Government endorsed the recommendation of the Council of Ministers for the establishment of an Inter-Governmental Group (IGG) on South Asian Development Fund (SADF) on an ad-hoc basis. They directed that the IGG define in clear terms the size, structure, resources and operational modalities of the proposed Fund. They also directed the IGG to examine the complementarities between the SAARC Fund for

Regional Projects (SFRP) and SADF, and their relationship, including the possibility of their merger. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host the meeting of IGG.

4.8 EIGHTH SAARC SUMMIT INDIA, MAY.1995

The Eighth SAARC Summit was held in New Delhi in May 1995. It accepted the recommendation of the sub-continental foreign ministers' meeting of April 1995 which had proposed the launching of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), which would take SAARC closer to an economic role. The members agreed to operations SAPTA by 8 December 1995. The Summit also decided to establish a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) to promote intra-regional trade. The other important decisions taken by the leaders of SAARC countries included designation of 1995 as the 'SAARC Year of Poverty Eradication'. The Delhi declaration unequivocally condemned all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and stressed that the highest priority be accorded to enactment of legislation at the national level to implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. The Declaration also urged the member states to implement the 1993 SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic substances. The member states committed themselves to the global objective of shelter for all by 2000 A.D. The Summit stressed the importance of international cooperation for building up national capabilities, transfer of technology and promotion of multilateral project and research efforts in minimizing natural disasters. Protection of the environment through concerted action was also emphasized. The Summit reiterated and reaffirmed its resolve to strengthen the UN as the central instrument of peace, security, disarmament, development and cooperation in the world. With regard to nuclear disarmament, the Summit urged the

conference on disarmament to negotiate an international convention barring the use or threat to use the nuclear weapons under any circumstances. The declaration also welcomed the World Trade Organization and hoped that it would expand international trade.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 A.D. through an Agenda of Action.

The Leaders endorsed the recommendations of the Finance/Planning Ministers' Meeting held in Dhaka in July 1994 which recommended that a mechanism should be set up which would act as a forum for exchange of information on poverty eradication programmes, in the context of the policies and strategies adopted, particularly exchange of information on technologies that are relevant to efforts at poverty eradication

In this context, they decided to declare 1995 as the "SAARC Year of Poverty Eradication".

SAARC PREFERENTIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENT (SAPTA)

The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that subsequent to the signing of the Framework Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) during their Seventh Summit in Dhaka in April 1993, the first round of trade negotiations to exchange trade concessions among Member States has been completed. They directed that all necessary steps should be taken to facilitate ratification by all Member States and operationalise SAPTA by the end of 1995 as mandated.

The Leaders reiterated their firm belief that the operationalisation of SAPTA will herald the beginning of a new and significant process of regional cooperation and would lend strength to SAARC as an institution for promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia.

REGIONAL CENTRES

The Leaders welcomed the establishment of the SAARC Documentation Centre (SDC) in New Delhi in May 1994 and the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre (SMRC) at Dhaka in January this year.

LITERACY

The Heads of State or Government noted that illiteracy is one of the major causes of poverty, backwardness and social injustices and called on the Member States to initiate more concrete programmes aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the region preferably by the year 2000 A.D. They decided to observe 1996 as the "SAARC Year of Literacy".

DRUGTRAFFICKING

The Leaders welcomed the ratification of the SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances by all Member States and entry into force of the Convention in September 1993. They urged all Member States to take necessary follow-up action for effective implementation of the Convention.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE CONTACT

The Leaders noted that SAARCLAW (an association for persons of the legal communities of SAARC countries) had been accorded recognition by SAARC. The Leaders hoped that SAARC LAW would

play an effective role in fostering closer cooperation among the legal communities in the region.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Heads of State or Government noted that the end of the Cold War had resulted in fundamental changes in the political landscape. It was therefore important that a new idiom be found to address new concerns. The disappearance of the confrontation between the two power blocs presented an opportunity towards building a genuine consensus for a new international order.

Appreciating the role of some SAARC Member States in the UN Peace Keeping Operations in various parts of the world, the Heads of State or Government felt that such participation had contributed towards maintenance of peace and security in the world.

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES

The Heads of State or Government noted with deep concern that economic growth in the Least Developed Countries and Land-Locked Countries is not satisfactory and emphasised the need to take special measures for accelerating the process of development. They reiterated the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for the developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. They emphasised on the need for exceptional finance to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC Countries.

4.9 NINTH SAARC SUMMIT 1997

The Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held at Male (Maldives) in mid May, 1997.

The summit leaders discussed several issues and unanimously adopted a declaration at the end.

The most important decision taken at this meet was on accelerating the formation of a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in the SAARC region by 2001. The original target date was 2005. SAARC countries also agreed to remove tariff and trade barriers.

The Summit decided on the creation of an eminent persons group(EGP) consisting of two members from each SAARC country to study the progress made by the Association in economic integration and recommend ways to speed up ways to catch up with the rest of the world by the year 2020.

The member countries also decided to amend their laws to curb trafficking in women. The assurance from SAARC leaders that they would look into the problem urgently followed an initiative from non-governmental women's group from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

The Summit also discussed the problem of poverty and accepted the objective of eradicating poverty in the region by the year 2000. However, the question: How was it to be achieved was left open?

The next Summit shall be in Sri Lanka.

SAPTA AND SAFTA AS SAARC EFFORTS FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

SAARC efforts for Economic Cooperation among SAARC Nation – It was felt that regional cooperation among the SAARC nations in the field of trade and commerce was very essential to achieve their economic development. These nations were economically very under developed and

were very poor India has been stressing upon the members from the very beginning that free trade among the member states would be beneficial for economic development of all and of the region.

SAPTA-South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement-First step towards the SAARC economic cooperation was taken up by the signing of SAPTA. By 1990 many regional leading groups had emerged across the world which had made the export position of such Asian Countries very tight initiatives were started to set up a free flow of trade among the SAARC countries. In the Colombo SAARC Summit of 1991 talks were held to start preferential trade activities among the members. After discussions and consensus a document to set up SAPTA was signed in April 1993 by the commerce ministers. Finally the document came into operation in December 1995 after it had been ratified by the member nations. Under this agreement each state was expected to give preference to the members' states in respect of import and export through concessions in tariff rates.

India was first to take steps to enforce this agreement. In 1998 India unilaterally allowed the import of goods from SAARC countries without any quantitative restrictions. About 2000 products were removed from the restricted list and placed in the Open General Lot for export. After agreement with SAARC countries 34,556 items were put under concessional rates. In addition to the concessional trade India has offered to enter into bilateral agreement for free trade.

SAFTA-South Asian Free Trade Area – Next step in SAARC Economic Cooperation was the initiative to start free trade among the SAARC countries. India had already free trade agreements with Bhutan and Nepal and had offered to other SAARC countries also to enter into

bilateral agreements on free trade. It was expected that after SAPTA was enforced, it would pave way for SAFTA.

A committee was set up in the SAARC Summit held at Colombo to prepare a plan for free trade agreement to replace SAPTA. It was expected that the Committee would prepare the plan after consultations and free trade agreement would be signed before the close of the 20th century. But still the negotiations were on and discussions between the countries on the issue were held.

Ultimately SAFTA was accepted and signed by the member states at the 12th Summit held at Islamabad on 4th-6th January 2004. It would start coming into force on 1.1.2006 and would be fully in operation within ten years.

The objective of Free Trade Area is that there would be free trading among the countries who agree. There would be no custom duty, no tariff and no quantitative restrictions. There would be free flow goods. It exists between India and Nepal and India and Bhutan.

MEANING OF SAFTA

SAFTA or South Asian Free Trade agreement was signed by SAARC member states on JAN.4, 2004 during Islamabad Summit of SAARC. Its objective is to liberalize trade regime among member states to promote intra- regional trade among themselves. The intra-regional trade among member states is less than 5% of their global trade.

SAFTA agreement contains 25 articles and come into force on 1st Jan, 2006, which was made fully operational on July 1, 2006. The SAFTA has replaced earlier trade agreement called SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement) which was signed in 1995 by the member

states. The SAPTA made provisions for preferential treatment to member states in intra-regional trade.

However, the SAFTA would eventually lead to creation of South Asian Customs Union and South Asian Economic Union on the pattern of European Community and which would ensure free exchange of goods, finances and services among the member states. So far, there is no definite deadline for the creation of these two Unions.

Under the provisions of SAFTA each country shall liberalize trade by removing non-tariff barriers. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka would maintain their import duty between 0.5 per cent by the year 2012. In the case of other member states, this time limit is relaxed up to the year 2016. Each member country shall prepare a list of sensitive items/ goods on which customs duty shall not be relaxed. For example, India has prepared a list of 884 items which shall be beyond the scope of duty reduction. On other goods/ services, SAFTA duty liberalization shall be applicable. Pakistan has yet to submit such a list of sensitive items.

The SAFTA will facilitate direct trading between India and Pakistan without inclusion of third party. However, Pakistan has prepared a positive list of few items for trade between India and Pakistan under SAFTA. At present, the trade among the SAARC countries amounts to be of \$ 5.2 billion which is likely to increase three times in the next 10 years, if SAFTA is successfully implemented.

The Heads of State or Government noted that, in the twelve years of its existence, SAARC has seen progress in various fields of its endeavour. They directed that a Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) be constituted, with distinguished backgrounds in activities pertaining to regional cooperation, comprising of one representative from each

Member State, with the discretion of each Member State to appoint an additional representative. They decided that the Group may develop a long-range vision and formulate a perspective plan of action including a SAARC Agenda for 2000 and Beyond which will spell out the target that can and must be achieved by the year 2020. The Group may report to the Heads of State or Government at the Tenth SAARC Summit.

With a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the role and functioning of the Secretariat, the Heads of State or Government agreed to amend Article V (1) of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Secretariat and decided that the tenure of the Secretary-General, with immediate effect, shall be for a non-renewable term of three years.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

In considering the Report of the Ministers of Finance/Planning, the Heads of State or Government agreed that effective implementation of poverty eradication programmes required a focus on greater participation of target groups in the formulation and implementation of such programmes through social mobilization. They, therefore, decided to designate 1997 as the "SAARC Year of Participatory Governance".

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPA)

The Heads of State or Government emphasised the need to make the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) more effective through the selection of target-oriented and time-bound activities within an overall framework of enhanced co-operation among Member States. In this context, they noted that the Secretary-General had been authorised by the Council of Ministers to constitute a Group of Experts to review the IPA.

REGIONAL CENTRES

The Heads of State or Government noted that Regional Centres have an important role to play in harnessing the resources and capabilities within the SAARC region in addressing specific and shared concerns of Member States. They welcomed the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish a Human Resource Development Centre in Pakistan.

WOMEN DEVELOPMENT

The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to take urgent action to alleviate the situation of Girl Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (GCEDC), including those orphaned, disabled and/or exploited. In this context, they endorsed the recommendations made by the Council of Ministers, aimed at the creation of a socio-economic environment in the SAARC region which would provide equal opportunities to children from all economic sections.

CHILDREN

The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction that the annual reviews of the situation of children in SAARC countries for the years 1995 and 1996 revealed significant progress in reducing infant mortality and in enhancing the coverage of immunisation in the region. They stressed that sustained efforts should be made by Member States to consolidate the gains in these areas. In this regard, they welcomed the decision to designate Seventh December, 1997 and Eighteenth January, 1998 as "SAARC Polio Immunisation Days".

NUTRITION

The Heads of State or Government emphasised that the provision of a safe, secure and clean environment was an essential pre-requisite for the welfare of the most vulnerable sections of society in the region, particularly for the proper growth and development of children, and agreed on the need for launching technology missions to develop low-cost, easily replicable technologies appropriate local conditions for sustainable harvesting of water, provision of clean drinking water and sanitation.

TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

The Heads of State or Government noted the establishment of the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) in Colombo. They agreed on the need to maintain regular flow of relevant information to enable the Monitoring Desks to function effectively.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Noting that cooperation in the field of Science and Technology was imperative in ensuring the acceleration of the process of development in the region and recognising the progress made in this field, the Heads of State or Government emphasised the need to continue cooperation in this area, especially in facilitating research and exchange of information in the fields of bio-technology, genetic engineering, energy modelling techniques and low-cost housing and building technologies.

TOURISM

Emphasising that tourism plays an important role in promoting people to people contact in the region, the Heads of State or Government stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation with the aim of realising its full potential in the region. They were convinced that greater cooperation in this area would contribute to the enhancement of people-to-people contact within the region as well as to the economic development of Member States.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND (SADF)

While expressing satisfaction that the South Asian Development Fund (SADF) had been established in June 1996 initially with its headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Heads of State or Government recognised the need to make the Fund operational at the earliest.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to develop collective SAARC positions in international fora on issues of common concern, in order to enhance the international profile of South Asia as well as to enable Member States to articulate their position on such issues in a more effective manner. In this regard, they noted with satisfaction the collective SAARC positions finalised and presented prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, HABITAT II held in Istanbul in June 1996, and World Food Summit held in Rome in November 1996. They also expressed satisfaction with the formulation of a SAARC common position before the forthcoming Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda.

4.10 TENTH SAARC SUMMIT COLOMBO, JULY. 1998

Tenth SAARC Summit was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in the last week of July 1998. The Summit was held in the background of the nuclear of the tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998. However, the Summit concentrated on such issues like economic development of South Asia, Regional economic integration, cooperation for development and progress from SAPTA to SAFTA. After the Summit, a joint declaration was made in which it was record that all nuclear powers should work for securing an effective nuclear disarmament and the position of South Asia should not be viewed in isolation. The fact that the major nuclear powers were merely talking of disarmament even while maintaining huge stockpile of weapons, was strongly criticized. It was held that NPT and CTBT have neither checked nuclear proliferation nor made any progress towards nuclear disarmament. The only way for securing nuclear non-proliferation was to adopt a global level time bound nuclear disarmament plan.

In respect of economic relations, it was declared that special steps should be taken for safeguarding the interests of least developed and land locked states, which were incapable of securing good economic development. The policy of using economic sanctions as instruments of foreign policy was strongly condemned. It was also declared that the issue of peace, security and stability in South Asia should be viewed in global context and not in isolation.

However, except for making the declaration, no concrete steps were taken at the Summit. India and Pakistan, however, had the satisfaction of holding Prime Ministerial level 'talks' during the course of this Summit.

The SAARC countries though did not make any direct reference to the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, the strains present in Indo-Pak relations kept the environment of SAARC Summit conditioned. While India is always prepared to have a bilateral dialogue, Pakistan is always keen to involve SAARC or other countries in the sphere of relations in India in general and the Kashmir issue in particular. This difference in approach affects the progress of SAARC. SAARC Charter clearly forbids the raising of bilateral issues, yet Pakistan always tries to ignore it and hence the ability of SAARC to concentrate on the core issue of regional cooperation among the South Asian countries remains always limited. Now SAARC countries are trying to act in group for promoting regional cooperation for development. India-Bangladesh-Nepal-Bhutan and India-Bangladesh- Sri Lanka have been trying to secure this objective and hold that this approach can give strength to SAARC. However, Pakistan thinks otherwise. As such in the presence of such a difference in approach, the progress at the Tenth SAARC Summit remained limited. The resolve to march forward from SAPTA to SAFTA was repeated and yet little concrete was really achieved.

The problem being faced by SAARC gets reflected from the fact that in 1999 no Summit was held. The rise of military dictatorship in Pakistan in October 1999 compelled the SAARC leaders to avoid the eleventh Summit. The SAARC countries did not want to help the military dictators of Pakistan to transform its illegitimacy into legitimacy.

CULTURAL UNITY

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a meeting of the Ministers of Cultural Affairs of SAARC to prepare a practical Action Plan to network the national institutes of

cultural relations and to establish a South Asian Cultural Center to promote the distinctive arts of South Asia. They requested the Government of Sri Lanka to circulate a concept paper on the issues to be addressed by the meeting including financing arrangements for the proposed institute.

ENHANCING POLITICAL COOPERATION

The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognising that the aims of promoting peace, stability and amity and accelerated socio-economic cooperation may best be achieved by fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and building confidence, agreed that a process of informal political consultations would prove useful in this regard

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The leaders noted the profundity of the wide-spread changes being effected in the economic, technological, social and information fields and their apparent unpredictability. They expressed serious concern over the severe distortions produced by the process of unrestrained globalisation as has been evidenced in the downturn of economies of several Asian States.

The Heads of State or Government observed that following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva, a process has been initiated at the WTO where implementation issues, built in agenda issues, issues arising out of the WTO Ministerial Conference and other multi-lateral trade issues will be considered with a view to making recommendations to the next Ministerial Conference of the WTO in 1999. These issues

and the decisions arising from this process will have far-reaching consequences for our development strategies and prospects.

PROJECTION OF COMMON POSITIONS

The Heads of State or Government reiterated their resolve to promote the articulation of joint positions at the United Nations and other fora where such action would be in the clear interest of all members of the Association.

SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

With the objective of enhancing regional solidarity and promoting overall development within SAARC, the Heads of State or Government encouraged the development of specific projects relevant to the individual needs of three or more Member States under the provisions of Articles VII and X of the Charter.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The Heads of State or Government noted that the concepts of Open Learning and Distance Education could help substantially towards equal opportunities and access to knowledge. The Heads of State or Government directed that SAARC should build on the substantial expertise already existing in the Region in the field of open education, by establishing a SAARC Forum of Vice Chancellors of Open Universities. This Forum, consisting of regional leaders in the field, should strengthen cooperation in areas such as the sharing and joint development of programmes, credit transfers for specific programmes and the translation of existing programmes.

SOCIAL CHARTER

The Heads of State or Government reviewed the progress made in the social sector by SAARC and determined that, in order to increase effectiveness, it would be necessary to develop, beyond national plans of action, a regional dimension of action including a specific role for SAARC. In this context, they agreed that it would be necessary for SAARC to develop a Social Charter, which would focus on drawing up targets with a broad range to be achieved across the region in the areas of poverty eradication, population stabilisation, the empowerment of women, youth mobilisation, human resource development, the promotion of health and nutrition and the protection of children. The Heads of State or Government further directed the Council of Ministers to initiate work on drawing up a Social Charter.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the results of the First Conference of SAARC Communication Ministers held in Colombo in May, 1998. They noted that technological advances were making telecommunications an important medium for socio-economic development and developing commercial and business relations as well as promotion of people-to-people contact. They called for the speedy implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the First Meeting of the SAARC Communication Ministers.

HEALTH

The Heads of State or Government noted the rich heritage of traditional systems of medicine (TSM) in the region. They observed that regional cooperation in this area would be worthwhile and relevant for meeting basic health needs. They welcomed the offer of India to host the

First Health Ministers Conference to evolve proposals for cooperation in this field.

INFORMATION

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the recommendations of the First Meeting of SAARC Information Ministers held in Dhaka in April, 1998 and the offer of Pakistan to host the Second Meeting of Information Ministers of SAARC Countries.

The Heads of State or Government called for concerted endeavours for the promotion of practical programmes among South Asian countries, including through professional organizations, in the field of information and media exchanges benefitting from technological advances.

Report of the Group of Eminent Persons

The Leaders noted with appreciation that the Report of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) was an important contribution in the on-going process of introspection into the functioning of the Association as well as in setting out a perspective plan of action for that purpose.

SAARC Award

The Heads of State or Government noted with appreciation the proposal made by Nepal to institute a SAARC Award to honour the outstanding work of individuals and organizations within the region in the fields of peace, development, poverty alleviation and regional cooperation, and requested His Majesty's Government of Nepal to submit a concept paper for consideration by the next session of the Council of Ministers.

4.11 ELEVENTH SAARC SUMMIT: NEPAL, JANUARY. 2002

After a gap of about 42 months the eleventh SAARC Summit was held at Katmandu, Nepal on 5th and 6th January 2002. (It was scheduled to be a 3-day Summit, but had to be cut by one day because Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf could not reach in time on 4th January. He had to come via Beijing, as India had banned PIA over flights from its territory and President Musharraf was not interested in getting a special concession from India).

On 5th January 2002, the Summit opened in an environment which clearly had remained dominated by the continued Indo-Pak military build-up all along the borders and the LOC in Kashmir. The opening day witnessed Pakistan's fresh brinkmanship and President Musharraf's theatrics. During the inaugural meeting of the Summit, after delivering his speech in which he offered a sincere and genuine hand of friendship to India, President Musharraf walked up to PM Atal Behari Vajpayee for a hand shake. PM Vajpayee responded with all the civility. He, however, gave a firm, measured and unambiguous response by observing in his speech that President Pervez Musharraf should extend the gesture by eliminating terrorism, which was perpetrating mindless violence in India, from his country and the territory under Pakistan's control.

In fact, India had to act firmly and effectively for preventing the attempts on the part of Pakistan to hijack the summit and convert it into an Indo-Pak dialogue and exercise. The SAARC Charter clearly holds that this regional forum is not to take up bilateral issues. The attempts of Pakistan constituted a waste of time.

The Eleventh Summit, despite the pressure resulting from strains in Indo-Pak relations, tried hard to restart the process which had been stalled

since 1998. All the leaders regretted the virtual failure of SAARC to effectively implement its decisions, but at the same time expressed the resolve to make all out efforts towards the achievement of the objective of promoting mutual cooperation for the development of the region.

The Summit concluded on 6th January 2002 with the seven member states adopting the SAARC Declaration. It recorded a clear and firm call for the urgent conclusion of a comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism and conducting international cooperation including this scourge in conformity with the UN Charter, International Law and relevant convention.

Relating support to the UN Security Council Resolution, the SAARC declaration expressed the determination of the member states to redouble efforts for suppressing terrorism in its all forms and manifestations. "The fight against terrorism had to be comprehensive and sustained. Special measures must be initiated for safeguarding the sovereign independence and territorial integrity of states."

The SAARC leaders urged the international community to deal effectively with the adverse effects of terrorism in general and to meet the rising insurance and security related costs in particular. They also agreed to accelerate the enactment of an enabling legislation within a definite time frame for the full implementation of the convention together with strengthening the groupings terrorist offences and drug offences monitoring desks in an effective manner.

The Katmandu Declaration also focused on such common concerns like economic cooperation, poverty alleviation, special attention to the social and cultural sectors and women and children, education, the international political and economic environment, security of small states

and people to people contacts. It gave a call for speeding up cooperation in core areas of trade, finance and investment for realizing the goal of an integrated South Asian economy and maximizing the benefits of globalization and liberalization as well as minimizing the negative impacts on the region.

The leaders accepted the importance of creating free-trade areas incorporating binding time frames for freeing trade, and measures for ensuring equitable distribution of benefits to all. They gave directions to the SAARC Council of Ministers to finalize the text of the Draft Treaty on SAFTA by the end of 2002.

Regarding the steps needed for poverty alleviation, the SAARC Declaration reaffirmed the resolve to combat the problem with a new sense of urgency by promoting partnerships among national governments, international agencies, the private sector and the civil society. It underlined the need to give a fillip to micro credit with special accent on women and the disadvantaged sections of society. All the members' countries welcomed the SAARC convention on preventing and combating trafficking in women and children and promotion of child welfare.

The Katmandu Declaration also called for an intensified coordination among the South Asian states on all WTO issues. SAARC Missions in Genwa were advised to intensify coordination for promoting common interests of the region at the fifth WTO ministerial conference. Addressing the closing session, of the summit Prime Minister of the host country, Sh. Sher Bahadur Denba described it as a major step that the grouping had resumed its task after a gap of 3 years. It successfully reflected the determination of the member countries towards the

development of regional synergy and for acting positively in the economic social and other spheres besides dealing effectively with the serious threat posed to the peace and security in South Asia. All the leaders while agreeing that developing trust and cooperation was absolutely essential for the prosperity of the region lamented that the grouping has lost its moorings. The need of the hour was, therefore to make conscious and concerted efforts for initiating remedial measures for bringing SAARC back to its chosen path of development through mutual cooperation. There was an urgent need to make South Asia a free trade area by removing tariff and non tariff barriers and structure impediments in the way of securing SAFTA.

It was agreed that the 12th SAARC Summit shall be held in Pakistan in early next year.

Postponement of SAARC Summit, 2003:- On December 22, 2002, Pakistan announced the postponement of the SAARC Summit and tried to blame India for its failure to confirm participation. Indo-Pak tensions provided the background for the postponement of this Summit. Otherwise also, the failure of Pakistan to give due status to India, the inability of the SAARC to secure a desired progress in respect of SAPTA and the resulting failure to move towards the cherished goal of securing a South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) created a situation in which little progress could be expected to characterize the SAARC process. However, in April 2003, a new ray of hope of health for SAARC appeared on the horizon when India announced its willingness to resume a dialogue with Pakistan and the prompt positive response that it got from Pakistan's Prime Minister Mr. Jamali.

Regional Cooperation

1. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to regional cooperation through SAARC and underscored the importance of annual Summit meetings in charting common strategies for the realization of the objectives and principles set out in the Charter of the Association.

The Heads of State or Government stressed that equitable sharing of the benefits of regional cooperation is essential to achieve and maintain a minimum acceptable level of economic and social development in each Member State.

The Heads of State or Government expressed their firm determination to fully benefit from the wealth of traditional wisdom, creativity and enterprise in the region.

2. Reiterating their resolve to promote South Asian regional identity and to strengthen cooperation at the international level, the Heads of State or Government also reemphasized the need to evolve common positions on issues of shared interest at the international fora.

Cooperation in the Economic Sector

3. They expressed their determination to make full use of regional synergy to maximize the benefits of globalisation and liberalization and to minimize their negative impacts on the region. While recognizing that trade and economic expansion is closely inter-linked, the Leaders made a commitment to widen and deepen the scope of regional networks of activities in trade and financial matters.

4. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the outcomes of the successive meetings of the SAARC Commerce Ministers aimed at enlarging the scope of cooperation in the core areas. They recognised the importance of achieving a free trade area and reaffirmed that the treaty regime for creating a free trade area must incorporate, inter alia, binding timeframes for freeing trade, measures to facilitate trade and provisions to ensure an equitable distribution of benefits of trade to all states, especially for small and least developed countries, including mechanisms for compensation of revenue loss.
5. Recognising the need to move quickly towards a South Asian Free Trade Area, the Heads of State or Government directed the Council of Ministers to finalize the text of the Draft Treaty Framework by the end of 2002. They also directed that in moving towards the goal of SAFTA, the Member States expedite action to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and structural impediments to free trade. They also instructed to conclude the meeting of the Inter Governmental Group on Trade Liberalization for the Fourth Round of Trade Negotiations under SAPTA as early as possible as per the decision of the Tenth SAARC Summit in Colombo.
6. The Heads of State or Government also decided to instruct the Secretary-General to facilitate the early finalization of a regionally agreed investment framework to meet investment needs of the SAARC Member States.
7. The Heads of State or Government recognized the immense tourism potential of South Asia and underlined the need to take measures to promote South Asia as a common tourist destination

through joint efforts in areas such as upgrading of infrastructure, air linkages, simplification and harmonization of administrative procedures and training and joint marketing.

Poverty Alleviation

8. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that investment in poverty alleviation programs contributes to social stability, economic progress and overall prosperity. They were of the view that widespread and debilitating poverty continued to be the most formidable developmental challenge for the region.
9. The Heads of State or Government expressed their firm resolve to combat the problem of poverty with a new sense of urgency by actively promoting the synergetic partnership among national governments, international agencies, the private sector, and the civil society.
10. The Heads of State or Government decided to undertake sustained measures to extend rural micro-credit programs with focus on women and the disadvantaged sections of society. They also stressed the need for widening the opportunities for gainful employment. While highlighting the importance of promoting agriculture, indigenous skills and small scale and cottage industries to address the incidence of rural poverty, they decided to enhance cooperation in agricultural research, extension and adoption.
11. They directed the Council of Ministers to review, on a continuous basis, the regional poverty profile to be prepared by the Secretary-General with the assistance of the related UN agencies, nodal

agencies and independent research institutions specialized in the field.

12. In order to ensure social stability and to protect the vulnerable sections of population from the adverse impacts of globalisation and liberalization, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to enhance cooperation to create and maintain appropriate safety nets.
13. The Leaders directed the Council of Ministers to coordinate efforts to integrate poverty alleviation programs into the development strategies of Member States. In this context, they agreed to reconstitute the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation, with Nepal as its Convener and Bangladesh as Co-convenor, for reviewing the progress made in cooperation on poverty alleviation and for suggesting appropriate and effective measures. They instructed the Chairman of the Council of Ministers to seek two nominations from each Member State by end of January 2002 to enable the convening of its first meeting before the proposed Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in Pakistan in April 2002.

Cooperation in the Social and Cultural Sector

14. The Leaders recognized the debilitating and widespread impact of the HIV/ AIDS, TB and other deadly communicable diseases on the population of South Asia and stressed the need for evolving a regional strategy to combat these diseases. The strategy should include, inter alia, culturally appropriate preventive measures, an affordable treatment regime and should specially target the

vulnerable groups. In this regard, they felt that SAARC should collaborate with the international organizations and civil society. They also emphasized that the SAARC Tuberculosis Centre in Kathmandu should play a coordinating role in the related areas.

Women and Children

15. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and expressed their collective resolve to treat the trafficking in women and children for commercial sexual exploitation as a criminal offence of a serious nature. They also welcomed the signing of the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia and observed that the Convention reflected their commitment to place the child first in the national and regional programs of the Member States. They instructed the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and other specialised agencies, to present a report on measures for the effective implementation of the Conventions to the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.
16. The Heads of State or Government agreed to establish, on the basis of recommendations of the Regional Task Force responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, a voluntary fund with contributions from Member States, individuals, and donor countries and

agencies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of trafficking.

17. The Leaders recognized the need to form an autonomous advocacy group of prominent women personalities from the Member States with a view to making recommendations to the SAARC bodies on a broad spectrum of gender related issues. They directed the Council of Ministers to take necessary steps to prepare and present, for consideration at their next meeting, the Terms of Reference for the purpose.
18. The Leaders directed the Council of Ministers to take concrete steps to give priority to investing in children as an effective means for poverty reduction in the long run. Reaffirming their commitment to the Colombo Plan of Action and the Rawalpindi Declaration and recalling the declaration of 2001 to 2010 as the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child, the Heads of State or Government noted with appreciation the South Asia High-level Meeting on Children held in Kathmandu in May 2001. They reaffirmed their conviction that the children in South Asia deserve urgent and focused attention to enhance the long-term and overall progress of the countries of the region.
19. The Heads of State or Government agreed to mobilize the necessary resources and intensify broad based actions to achieve a set of priority goals related to improving the status of children, such as polio eradication by 2005, protection of children from mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, and quality basic education to the children within a time-bound period.

Education

20. The Heads of State or Government instructed the concerned Ministries of Governments to devise appropriate strategies for raising the quality of education through the exchange of information among the universities in the region.
21. The Heads of State or Government recognized that access to quality education was an important element for the empowerment of all segments of society, and undertook to develop or strengthen national strategies and action plans to ensure that all children particularly the girl child have access to quality primary education by 2015; and to improve levels of adult literacy by fifty percent by eliminating gender disparities in access to education as envisaged in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All adopted by the World Education Forum held at Dakar in April 2000.

International Political and Economic Environment

22. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm support for the principles and purposes of the United Nations in order to create a just, balanced and equitable world order. They reaffirmed their commitment to continue working with the NAM and other like-minded countries for the reform and democratisation of the United Nations System with a view to making it an effective and more democratic institution for international peace, security, progress and cooperation.
23. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that stability, peace and security in South Asia should be promoted together with efforts to improve the global security environment.

24. The Leaders emphasized the need to take appropriate measures to make international financial institutions and the global trading regime more responsive to the needs and concerns of the developing countries. They reiterated the call for genuine partnership among the developed and developing countries in international trade and finance and for the reform of the global financial architecture with an enhanced level of resources.
25. The Leaders also called upon the developed countries to facilitate and ensure an unimpeded and enhanced level of market access to products from the developing, the least developed and the land-locked countries.
26. Recognizing the important role that trade can play in advancing the overall development of a country, thus contributing to an equitable and sustainable world order, the Heads of State or Government also called for an early realization of a rule-based and non-discriminatory world trade regime. In this context, they appreciated the positive elements of the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Doha and called upon the developed countries to fulfill their commitments to address the particular concerns and needs of the developing and the least developed countries. The Leaders also instructed the forthcoming meeting of the Committee on Economic Cooperation to devote at least half a day for discussions on the evaluation of the decisions of the recently concluded Doha conference in order to evolve better coordinated positions among the Member States on all WTO issues. They further stressed the need to intensify coordination among the SAARC missions in Geneva and begin the necessary preparation

to advance the common interest of the region in the Fifth WTO Ministerial conference.

27. Recalling the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in May 2001 and the decisions of the Zanzibar Declaration of July 2001, the Leaders urged the developed countries to adopt more liberal trade and aid policies responsive to the particular needs of the least developed countries. Referring to the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Mexico in March 2002, the Leaders urged the international community to strengthen cooperation for development by addressing international and systemic issues related to financing for development in the developing and the least developed countries in a holistic manner.

Security of Small States

28. The Heads of State or Government recognized that due to their particular vulnerability, small states require special measures for support from the international community for the safeguarding of their sovereign independence and territorial integrity. They reiterated that the real protection of small states should be firmly rooted in the scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, the rule of law and the strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms related to sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all states, irrespective of size. This, they stressed, should be ensured by all the countries, either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate action.

Terrorism

29. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is a challenge to all states and to all of humanity, and cannot be justified on ideological, political, religious or on any other ground. The Leaders agreed that terrorism violates the fundamental values of the United Nations and the SAARC Charter and constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security in the Twenty-first century.
30. The Heads of State or Government emphasized the need for the urgent conclusion of a Comprehensive Convention on Combating International Terrorism. They also emphasized that international co-operation to combat terrorism should be conducted in conformity with the UN Charter, international law and relevant international conventions.
31. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their support to the United Nations Security Council Resolution of September 28, 2001 and affirmed their determination to redouble efforts, collectively as well as individually, to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including by increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international Conventions relating to terrorism to which they are parties.
32. The Heads of State or Government were unanimous in recognizing the distinct ominous link between terrorism, drug-trafficking, money laundering and other trans-national crimes and emphasized the need to coordinate efforts at the national and

regional levels to strengthen the global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security.

33. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, which, among others, recognizes the seriousness of the problem of terrorism as it affects the security, stability, and development of the region.

Report of the Group of Eminent Persons

34. The Leaders noted with appreciation that the Report of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) was an important contribution in the on-going process of introspection into the functioning of the Association as well as in setting out a perspective plan of action for that purpose. They endorsed the report of the Council of Ministers on the implementation of the recommendations of the GEP Report, and directed the Council of Ministers to undertake a review of progress in this regard.

Enhancing Political Cooperation

35. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognizing that the aims of promoting peace, stability and amity and accelerated socio-economic cooperation may best be achieved by fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and building confidence, agreed that a process of informal consultations would prove useful in this regard. The Leaders further recognized that this process would contribute to the appreciation of each other's problems and perceptions as well as for decisive action in agreed areas of regional cooperation. They underlined the importance of informal political consultations in

promoting mutual understanding and reinforcing the confidence building process among the Member States.

Sub-regional Cooperation

36. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the validity of the idea of encouraging the development of specific projects relevant to the individual needs of three or more Member States under the provisions of Articles VII and X of the SAARC Charter.

South Asian Development Fund (SADF)

37. The Heads of State or Government underlined the urgent need to make the South Asian Development Fund operational by making utilization of the existing funds. They also instructed the Secretary-General to submit a proposal for seeking possible assistance from regional and international sources for the implementation of specific regional poverty alleviation priority projects.

Environment

38. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the growing public awareness on the need for protecting the environment within the framework of regional cooperation. They reiterated their call for the early and effective implementation of the SAARC Environment Plan of Action as endorsed by the SAARC Environment Ministers. They directed their Environment Ministers to take this into account and come up with an agreed position in their forthcoming meeting.

People-to-People Contact

39. The Heads of State or Government were unanimous in recognizing the need for further promoting a sense of regional identity amongst the peoples of the region. The Leaders lauded the roles played by intellectuals, professionals and eminent persons in promoting people-to-people contacts within the region and agreed to encourage such endeavours as a healthy sign of regional cohesion and fraternity. In this context, they took note of the activities of the SAARC-LAW including other recognized bodies. They also took note of the First Meeting of the Chief Election Commissioners of SAARC Countries held in Kathmandu in February 1999 and appreciated the initiative on free and fair election. The Leaders instructed the Secretary-General to collect on a regular basis study reports and other relevant documents and information from the civil society on matters relating to regional cooperation for dissemination to Member States.

Rationalization and Institutional Issues

40. The Heads of State or Government were in agreement that the Summit and all other meetings of SAARC needed to be made more business-like and result-oriented with focus on programs and activities supported by informed regional inputs from the cross-sections of the society.

SAARC Award

41. The Heads of State or Government noted with appreciation the proposal made by Nepal to institute a SAARC Award to honour the outstanding work of individuals and organizations within the region in the fields of peace, development, poverty alleviation and

regional cooperation, and requested His Majesty's Government of Nepal to submit a concept paper for consideration by the next session of the Council of Ministers.

Date and Venue of the Twelfth Summit

42. The Heads of State or Government welcomed with appreciation the offer of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the Twelfth Summit Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for the Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Pakistan in early 2003.

The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal conducted the proceedings of the Eleventh SAARC Summit in his capacity as Chairperson. They also expressed their deep gratitude for the generous hospitality extended to them by His Majesty's Government and people of Nepal, and for the excellent arrangements made for the Summit.

4.12 TWELVETH SAARC SUMMIT

(ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 2004)

The summit was held in Islamabad (Pakistan) from 4-6 January, 2004. It was attended by the Heads of State and Governments of the seven member countries. At the end of Summit Islamabad Declaration was adopted. The Declaration condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations because it posed a serious threat to the international peace and security. On this occasion the members signed South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement which would come into force from 1

January 2006. As per the agreement the member states agreed to reduce their tariffs to 0.5 per cent in seven years from the date the agreement came into force. Each member was permitted to maintain a sensitive list of products on which tariff will not be reduced. The Agreement suggested a number of measures which the members may adopt, viz., and removal of barriers to intra-SAARC investment, harmonization of customs facilities, transit facilities for efficient intra-SAARC trade and simplification of procedures for business visas. Under the SAFTA agreement provision was made for withdrawal by members. Members were permitted to withdraw from the organization by serving six months notice to the Secretary General of SAARC. The Declaration also laid emphasis on increasing political co-operation among members. It stated "We envisage South Asia to be a peaceful and stable region where each nation is at peace with itself and its neighbors and where conflicts, differences and disputes are addressed through peaceful means and dialogue." The Summit adopted an additional Protocol on Terrorism which outlined the measures for combating financing of terrorism in pursuance of UN Security Council resolution. The Summit also adopted a Social Charter for promoting the welfare of the people of South Asia in all fields.

Slow Progress of Regional Co-operation

It is evident from the above discussion that over the years the countries of South Asia have realized the need of co-operation. But the progress in this regard has been quite slow. This slow progress has been attributed to the difference in the approaches, attitudes and perceptions of the countries of the region. It is argued that this was quite natural in view of the different socio-economic character and varying geo-political and strategic objectives of the countries of the region. For example,

Bangladesh favoured co-operation in the economic sphere to start with, which could be subsequently extended to the social and cultural spheres. Sri Lanka on the other hand pleaded for more comprehensive co-operation and favoured extension of co-operation to the political fields as well. Initially Pakistan's attitude was more restrained and it wanted regional co-operation to be limited only to four out of the eleven areas identified in the Bangladesh Working Paper. Pakistan's Foreign Secretary said at first meeting, "We have to move forward in a measured manner, one step at a time without forcing the pace of progress". However, Pakistan's attitude towards the scope of regional co-operation became more flexible in the subsequent meetings. India's approach was somewhat identical to that of Bangladesh. It laid emphasis on expanding co-operation in the cultural, infrastructural, scientific and technological fields and refrained from making any reference to political or security objectives.

On the question of the institutional framework for the South Asian Regional Co-operation also the members adopted different attitudes. Bangladesh consistently emphasized the need of evolving some institutional framework. Sri Lanka emphasized the need of establishing an association for the purpose of promoting and safeguarding the interests of the participating member states. Nepal too favoured an additional institutional framework for regional co-operation. On the other hand both India and Pakistan favoured institutional framework, which must evoke enthusiastic response for an informal forum for consultation.

Social Issues

We hail the signing of the SAARC Social Charter as a historic development, which would have a far-reaching impact on the lives of

millions of South Asians. Issues covered under the Charter, such as poverty alleviation, population stabilization, empowerment of women, youth mobilization, human resource development, promotion of health and nutrition, and protection of children are keys to the welfare and well being of all South Asians.

Member States should move towards an early ratification of the two Conventions on Child Welfare and Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

Easy and affordable health care, and prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other serious communicable diseases are priorities. The year 2004 is declared as the "SAARC Awareness Year for TB and HIV/AIDS".

Information and Communication

We recognize the vital role that information and media can play in the promotion of peace, progress and harmony in South Asia. In this context, the initiatives for introducing regular 'SAARC Roundup' and 'SAARC News' programmes for telecast and broadcast on National TV and Radio Channels respectively in Member Countries is a welcome development. We agree to the establishment of a SAARC Information Centre in Kathmandu.

SAARC should endeavour to bring the benefits of information and communications technology to all peoples of the region, bridging the digital divide and assist in the development of knowledge based societies.

SAARC Integrated Programme of Action (SIPA)

We note with satisfaction the progress achieved in regional cooperation through SIPA. The commitment to SIPA must be matched by a corresponding allocation of resources for it.

Strengthening of the SAARC Secretariat

We agree to strengthen the capacity of the SAARC Secretariat. In this regard a Committee comprising of a Member from each Member State should meet soon and submit its recommendations within three months for consideration of the next session of the Council of Ministers. The Secretary General would coordinate the work of the Inter-Governmental Committee. Pending implementation of the recommendations of the proposed Committee a Poverty Alleviation Cell at the Secretariat should start functioning with a view to following up the Summit decisions on poverty alleviation.

4.13 Thirteenth SAARC Summit, Dhaka, November 2005

The Prime Minister of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the King of Nepal, His Majesty Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Shaukat Aziz; and, the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Thirteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 12 - 13 November 2005.

1. The Heads of State or Government noted that the Thirteenth Summit was taking place at an important moment in the evolution of South Asia when SAARC stood at the threshold of a new decade of its existence. They agreed that the Summit provided a unique opportunity to consolidate the gains made in regional cooperation during its first two decades and to chart a forward-looking strategy to promote effective cooperation at all levels to realize the objectives and principles set out in the Charter of the Association.
2. The Heads of State or Government noted that cooperation and partnership within the framework of SAARC is based on the sound foundation of shared values, beliefs and aspirations. The objectives and goals of SAARC, they affirmed, were of continuing relevance and importance to all Member States. The dynamics of recent political and economic changes in South Asia and the world highlighted the importance of, and the compelling logic for, a more vibrant and effective process of constructive regional cooperation. They emphasized their commitment to making such cooperation an enduring feature and thus contribute to the regions peace, progress and stability.
3. The Heads of State or Government noted that SAARC has evolved in a positive direction during the first two decades of its existence and that its agenda encompassed concerns and areas vital for the fulfillment of the Charter objectives of promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia, accelerating economic growth, social progress, cultural development and strengthening collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia. They stressed that realization of these objectives not only called for

continued and serious result-oriented efforts but also for consistent endeavours to translate pledges and commitments into concrete actions, regional initiatives and projects. They reiterated their commitment to making SAARC an effective instrument for cooperation, which will visibly improve the quality of life of millions in South Asia. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that efforts must continue to free South Asia from poverty, hunger and other forms of deprivation and social injustice which present a daunting challenge. Member States expressed determination to work towards significantly accelerating regional cooperation in economic areas. The main emphasis will be to secure a wider economic space, so that benefits and opportunities offered therein can be shared by all, and that the true economic potential of South Asia can be fully realized. Efforts will be made to create dynamic complementarities in the development of human resources and capacity of Member States to address their common challenges. They underlined the need to accelerate regional cooperation through all possible means and mechanisms, including exchange of best practices in various fields in the Member States.

4. The Heads of State or Government reiterated that the peoples of South Asia are the real source of strength and driving force for SAARC and resolved to make regional cooperation more responsive to their hopes and aspirations. They agreed that the Association should broaden its engagement with the civil society organizations, professional groups, and entrepreneurs. Member States should also strive to promote and assert their South Asian

identity, encourage greater people-to-people contact and draw strength from their shared cultural heritage.

5. The Heads of State or Government emphasized the importance of initiating project cooperation under the SAARC auspices. They encouraged Member States to undertake projects, as per existing provisions of the Charter. These projects may pertain to economic and social sectors, including Human Resource Development and Poverty Alleviation. These may be undertaken, where required, with financial or technical assistance, from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or, UN Funds and Programmes or, any extra-regional State, as appropriate.

Poverty Alleviation

6. The Heads of State or Government decided to declare the decade of 2006-2015 as the SAARC Decade of Poverty Alleviation. During the Decade, endeavours - both at the national and regional level - will continue to be made with a sense of commitment and urgency to free South Asia from poverty.
7. The Heads of State or Government appreciated the valuable work of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA). They also endorsed the SAARC Development Goals (SDGs), as recommended by the Commission, and called for follow-up and implementation of the Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation, adopted by the 12th SAARC Summit. They entrusted the ISACPA to continue its advisory and advocacy role in this regard. They endorsed the priorities for action identified in the Report of ISACPA adopted by the Twelfth SAARC Summit. They agreed that these priorities

would be duly taken into account while working out the elements for regional initiatives in this vital area. They decided to focus on formulation and implementation of concrete regional programmes and projects as well as forging partnerships among all stakeholders.

8. Underlining the need for an exclusive forum for focused and comprehensive examination of poverty related issues, the Heads of State / Government decided to replace the three-tier mechanism on poverty and the Secretaries dealing with Poverty Alleviation at the national level.

Funding Mechanisms

9. The Heads of State or Government decided to establish a SAARC Poverty Alleviation Fund (SPAF) with contributions both voluntary and/or, assessed, as may be agreed. They called upon the Finance Ministers to formulate recommendations on the operational modalities of the Fund, taking into consideration the outcome of the Meeting of the Financial Experts. In this regard, they welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host the next meeting of the Finance Ministers. The operational modalities of the SPAF shall be decided by the Finance/ Planning Ministers. They agreed that the SPAF shall function within the SADF to be reconstituted, as SAARC Development Fund (SDF), to serve as the umbrella financial institution for all SAARC projects and programmes and comprise three Windows namely Social Window, Infrastructure Window and Economic Window with a Permanent Secretariat.
10. The Heads of State or Government decided that Finance Ministers should meet within the first quarter after every Summit and also

on the sidelines of the World Bank and ADB annual meetings, to take stock of macro-economic developments and outlook for South Asia, achievement of SAARC Development Goals as co-related to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to assess the investment climate, foreign capital inflows, financial sector reforms and other areas of cooperation.

Advancing Economic Cooperation

11. The Heads of State or Government stressed that accelerating cooperation in the core economic areas was of vital importance for the realization of Charter objectives and also for making South Asia truly vibrant, dynamic and secure in its robust progress alleviation by a two-tier one, comprising the Ministers. They reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate cooperation in the economic and commercial fields, especially in the energy sector. They noted the progress in the negotiations on outstanding issues and directed early finalization of all the Annexes ensuring entry into force of the SAFTA Agreement as agreed, with effect from 1 January 2006.
12. The Heads of State or Government stressed the importance of the entry into force of the SAFTA Agreement on the scheduled date i.e. 1 January 2006. The launching of SAFTA would mark an important milestone on the road to a South Asian Economic Union. They directed that the negotiations on the outstanding issues under the Agreement should be completed by end November 2005. They further directed that the necessary national procedures should be completed in time to facilitate the operationalisation of the Agreement.

13. They reiterated the need to strengthen transportation and communication links across the region for accelerated and balanced economic growth. They directed further measures aimed at trade liberalisation, as provided for in the SAFTA Agreement. They noted with satisfaction the ongoing SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study to enhance transport connectivity among the Member States. The Heads of State or Government agreed to undertake trade facilitation measures, including transit among SAARC countries, on the basis of understanding among concerned countries, for enhancing intra-regional trade and other economic activities. They noted the Indian proposal in this regard. They agreed to study the proposal by India for daily air service facility by designated airlines, on a reciprocal basis and without prejudice to existing rights, to all the SAARC Member States and also the proposal to extend fifth freedom rights to designated airlines from the Member States, both intermediate and beyond, within the SAARC region on a reciprocal basis.
14. The Heads of State or Government recognized the need to take the process of regional economic integration further by expanding the scope of SAFTA to include trade in services, enhanced investment and harmonized standards. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the following Agreements during the thirteenth SAARC Summit:
 - The Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters
 - The Agreement on the Establishment of SAARC Arbitration Council

- The Limited Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters
15. They emphasized the need for parallel initiatives for dismantling of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers. In this context, they called for expeditious action on conclusion of agreements on mutual recognition of standards, testing and measurements with a view to facilitating intra-regional trade. They recognized the potential of trade in services which have expanded rapidly at the informal level. They called for a study to see how services could be integrated into the SAFTA process.
 16. The Heads of State or Government decided to encourage, where appropriate, trade-creating investment in the Member States. They stressed the need for closer regional cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), including Tele-communications.
 17. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the Joint Statement of the First SAARC Energy Ministers meeting in October 2005 in Islamabad. They agreed to the recommendation to establish the SAARC Energy Centre in Islamabad; to promote development of energy resources, including hydropower; and energy trade in the region; to develop renewable and alternative energy resources; and promote energy efficiency and conservation in the region. They underlined the need to constitute a South Asian Energy Dialogue process, involving officials, experts, academics, environmentalists and NGOs, to recommend measures to tap potentials of cooperation in energy sector to provide inputs to the Working Group on Energy.

18. The Heads of State or Government noted the proposal for the establishment of a Regional Food Bank proposed by India and agreed to examine the proposal.
19. With regard to paragraph 15 of the Council of Ministers Report, the Heads of State or Government noted the offer of Nepal to host the Regional Support Unit.

South Asia as Social Challenges

20. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to take initiatives at national as well as regional levels for achieving the specific objectives contained in the SAARC Social Charter. They recognized that realization of these objectives is crucial to enable SAARC to meet the hopes and aspirations of the common peoples of South Asia and visibly improve the quality of their lives. They emphasized that in outlining future actions in this regard national implementation efforts should be complemented by regional programmes and projects in areas requiring collective regional response. They appreciated the establishment of National Coordination Committees (NCCs) in all Member States, decided on annual meetings of the Heads of NCCs and directed convening of their first meeting at the earliest for follow-up and implementation of the Social Charter. In this regard, they noted the proposal from the Maldives to convene an experts' group meeting on establishing a Civil Society Resource Centre.
21. The Heads of State or Government called upon the Member States to expeditiously complete the process of preparing their national strategy and plan of action. They also emphasized that national implementation efforts should be complemented by

regional projects and programmes. In this context, they directed that regional projects, particularly in health and poverty alleviation, should be initiated. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their pledge to continue to work in the next decade and beyond to address the formidable challenges faced by women and children, especially the girl child. They noted that sustained efforts were needed on the part of the Member States not only to free them from all types of deprivation but also to make them full partners and beneficiaries of South Asian progress and development. In this context, they decided that a mid-term review of the progress in realizing the objectives of SAARC Decade on the Rights of the Child (2001 - 2010) should be undertaken in 2006.

22. The Heads of State or Government affirmed their strong resolve to continue to work together to address the problem posed by trafficking in women and children. They expressed satisfaction at the ratification of the SAARC Conventions relating to Trafficking in Women and Children and Promotion of Child Welfare by all Member States and called for effective measures for their early implementation. They noted that the civil society organizations and the media have an important role to play in raising awareness of the degrading and inhuman treatment faced by the victims of trafficking. They encouraged them to continue their constructive role in this regard. They stressed that law enforcement agencies in the Member States should also coordinate and strengthen their efforts to address this problem effectively.
23. The Heads of State or Government noted the achievements of the Member States during recent years in the area of primary

education through sustained efforts and adoption of country specific innovative approaches. They recognized that regional initiatives in this particular area might focus on sharing of experiences and best practices. They also called for optimal utilization of resources and identification of strategic interventions in the area of training, management and performance evaluation of these programmes so as to ensure sustainability, coverage and quality of education imparted and services provided. They stressed that freeing South Asia from the scourge of illiteracy is a major objective of SAARC in the third decade of its activities. They called for effective measures to realize the SDGs, in particular universal primary education in the context of pursuing the Millennium Development Goals.

24. The Heads of State or Government stressed that to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century Member States must make important strides in the areas of science, technology and higher education. They decided to give priority attention to encourage regional cooperation in these areas to derive benefits from the synergy of collective, well-planned and focused initiatives undertaken by Member States. They directed that a SAARC Plan of Action for Science, ICT and Technology be elaborated for consideration during a Meeting of SAARC Science, ICT and Technology Ministers to be convened as soon as possible. They noted the offer of India to establish a South Asian University and agreed to examine this matter further.
25. The Heads of State or Government recognized the need to collaborate on preparedness for addressing health emergencies, including prevention and control of pandemics like avian

influenza, as these pose a major global threat with impact on health, trade and tourism involving human mobility. They emphasized on the need to develop a regional strategy for such emergencies as soon as possible; and identify and strengthen collaboration within and beyond the region and establish links with other regional organizations. They called for early establishment of a SAARC Health Surveillance Centre and a Rapid Deployment Health Response System, to deal with emerging and re-emerging diseases.

26. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the preparation of a strategy for collective SAARC response to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. They noted that regional response in this regard should be further enhanced to eliminate this dreadful disease from South Asia. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of early implementation of the Regional Strategy of HIV/AIDS. At the same time, they underscored the need for increasing cooperation to develop regional strategies for the prevention and treatment of Dengue, Malaria and other infectious or communicable diseases constituting major public health concerns.
27. The Heads of State or Government agreed to launch a regional initiative with regard to basic healthcare services and sanitation in the rural areas and encouraged exchange of experience and best practices within the region. They called for expediting elaboration of a SAARC Plan of Action for cooperation in medical expertise and pharmaceuticals, as well as traditional medicine, and availing affordable pharmaceuticals produced in the region, harmonization of standards and certification procedures and production of affordable medicines. They also agreed that steps should be taken

to promote traditional medicine and to protect the intellectual property rights related to them as a matter of regional priority.

South Asia as Environmental Challenges and Natural Disasters

28. They further decided to consider the modalities for having a Regional Environment Treaty in furthering environmental cooperation among the SAARC Member States. They expressed deep concern at the continuing degradation of environment and reaffirmed the importance of concerted action in the protection and preservation of environment. While expressing satisfaction at the progress in implementation of the SAARC Environment Action Plan, the Leaders welcomed the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish a SAARC Forestry Centre in Bhutan. They emphasized on the need for the Centre to have a coordinating role in the field of Forestry for exchange of information, expertise, training and formulation of regional projects with emphasis on social forestry
29. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the Declaration of the Special Session of the SAARC Environment Ministers in Male in June 2005 convened in the wake of the tsunami catastrophe. They endorsed the recommendation for elaboration of regional programmes and projects for early warning, preparedness and management of tsunami and other natural disasters. They called for elaboration of a Comprehensive Framework on Early Warning and Disaster Management.
30. They endorsed the decision of the Special Session of the SAARC Environment Ministers to further enhance the capacity of the existing SAARC Institutions namely, SAARC Meteorological

Research Centre and SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre, to carry out their mandated tasks.

31. In view of the extensive loss of life and colossal damage to property as a result of earthquake and tsunami and other natural disasters in South Asia, the Heads of State or Government underscored the urgency to put in place a permanent regional response mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief and rehabilitation to ensure immediate response. They directed the concerned national authorities to coordinate their activities in such areas of disaster management as early warning, exchange of information, training and sharing of experiences and best practices in emergency relief efforts.
32. The Heads of State or Government underlined the need for collaborative action in the area of environment, including water conservation, to promote sustainable development. They decided to proclaim the Year 2007 as the Year of Green South Asia devoted to a region-wide afforestation campaign. They also agreed to address the problem of arsenic contamination of groundwater and assistance to affected peoples.
33. The Heads of State or Government agreed that terrorism violates the fundamental values of the SAARC Charter and the United Nations, and constitutes one of the most critical threats to international peace and security. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction at the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism by all Member States and called for putting in place effective mechanisms for its implementation. They strongly

condemned terrorist violence in all its forms and manifestations, agreed that terrorism is a challenge to all States and a threat to all of humanity, and cannot be justified on any grounds. They underlined that there should be no double standards in the fight against terrorism. In view of the continuing and recent terrorist attacks in the region and their impact on security, economic stability and social development, they expressed their determination to unite in their efforts in preventing and combating terrorism. They also noted the United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) in this regard.

34. They called for early and effective implementation of the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. They underscored the need for an early conclusion of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. They also agreed that Member States would strengthen their cooperation in such important areas as exchange of information, coordination and cooperation among their relevant agencies.
35. They decided that SAARC Interior/Home Ministers would meet annually preceded by a meeting of the Interior/Home Secretaries.
36. The Heads of State or Government directed that concrete measures be taken to enforce the provisions of the Regional Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances through an appropriate **Security of small states**
37. The Heads of State or Government noted that due to their specific vulnerabilities, small states require special measures for support from all concerned for safeguarding their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. In this context, they

stressed that protection of small states should be firmly rooted in scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, rule of law and the strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms related to sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States, irrespective of their size. They committed themselves to give concrete expression to protect the interest and security of all small states through the pursuit of appropriate policies and actions.

People-to-people contact and cultural cooperation

38. The Heads of State or Government noted that the spirit of SAARC needed to be sustained by efforts to promote people-to-people contact and by a vibrant civil society throughout South Asia actively engaged in forging links across national boundaries. They felt that the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians should meet at an early date to establish a mechanism for periodic contacts among the Parliamentarians of South Asia. They stressed that continued efforts would be made by the Member States at all levels to promote people-to-people contact by facilitating travel among SAARC countries, promotion of youth exchanges in culture and sports, promotion of intra-SAARC tourism, establishment of linkages among professional bodies and through adoption of other concrete measures. They decided to launch 2006 as South Asia Tourism Year." They directed their Ministers for Tourism to meet at an early date and elaborate a plan of activities to be undertaken during the year 2006. They also stated that Member States would encourage initiatives by private sector the region.

39. The Heads of State or Government recognized the crucial role of culture in bringing the peoples of South Asia closer. They also stressed that cooperation in the area of culture was vital for reinforcing and projecting the distinct identity of South Asia. In this context, they expressed satisfaction on the progress made in establishing the SAARC Cultural Centre in Kandy and underlined the importance of making it operational at the earliest. They also directed the SAARC Ministers of Culture to meet as soon as possible to elaborate a SAARC Agenda for Culture. They noted the offer of India to establish a SAARC Museum of Textiles and Handicrafts inter alia to preserve designs in various crafts and related traditions, train artisans and crafts persons, foster design skills, hold promotional events, undertake research.

International political and economic environment

40. The Heads of State or Government reviewed international political and economic developments since their last Summit in Islamabad. They underscored the imperative need to ensure universal adherence to the principles and objectives enshrined in the UN Charter. They called upon the international community to redouble efforts to meet the commitments of the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey consensus. They noted the outcome of the UN World Summit 2005 and underlined the need for meaningful reforms of the United Nations system in consonance with its role as the central organ for the cooperative management of the global problems and for the promotion of peace, security, development, justice and human rights. They also reiterated their full support for a comprehensive approach, which would facilitate implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in a time bound manner.

41. The Heads of State or Government stressed that for removing the existing asymmetries in security and in ensuring undiminished security for all, at the regional and global levels. They also emphasized the importance of pursuing effectively the global objectives of universal disarmament and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
42. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the multilateral trade regime of WTO. They called upon all WTO members to demonstrate necessary understanding and accommodation for a breakthrough at the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting in December 2005 to pave the way for the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round. They underscored that the development dimension should continue to be at the heart of the on-going negotiations so that the legitimate concerns of the developing countries are adequately reflected in the outcome of the current round of trade negotiations. They agreed that the SAARC Member States would work closely together to coordinate their positions in the on-going negotiations on trade and other key economic issues. The Heads of State or Government directed the Commerce Ministers to hold consultations on the sidelines of the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Hong Kong in December 2005, to evolve a common SAARC Position on issues of common concern.

43. The Heads of State or Government addressed the question of electing the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the year 2006, being aware of the unanimous view that the well-established principle of geographical rotation should be observed and that an Asian should be appointed as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. In this regard, they noted that Sri Lanka has offered a candidate.

Enhancing Political Cooperation

44. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the States to promote cooperation in an environment of enduring peace and stability in South Asia. They reiterated their commitment to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and national independence, non-use of force, non-intervention, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other Member States. Recognizing the increasing interdependence and the imperative of pursuing the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity, they re-affirmed their resolve to foster mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and a more meaningful cooperation through sustained constructive engagement among Member States.

External Profile and Linkages of SAARC

45. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the observer status granted to SAARC by the United Nations General Assembly at its Fifty-ninth Session; and expressed the hope that this would not only enhance the profile of SAARC in the world body but would also enable Member States to project common positions of SAARC in various multilateral forums. They also acknowledged

the renewed interest of other regional and international organizations, bodies and entities to cooperate with SAARC in various collaborative endeavours in accordance with the objectives and priorities of SAARC. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the request by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for membership and invited Afghanistan as a member, subject to the completion of formalities. They also welcomed and agreed in principle with the desire of the Peoples Republic of China and Japan to be associated as observers. The Council of Ministers will decide the modalities in this regard at their twenty-seventh meeting in July 2006. Incremental broadening of the SAARC agenda and increased emphasis being placed on implementation of plans and programmes, there was a need for a commensurate strengthening of institutional capabilities of SAARC. Recognizing the importance of thematic Ministerial meetings, they emphasized that these meetings should focus on regional challenges and priorities and contribute to the realization of the objectives of SAARC. They agreed that on completion of twenty years of SAARC's existence, it was essential that a comprehensive review and reform of all SAARC institutions and mechanisms, including the Secretariat and the Regional Centers should be undertaken. In this context, they called on the Council of Ministers to convene a Meeting of Experts, to be nominated by each Member State, to undertake a detailed Study and present a report to the next Council of Ministers. They empowered the current Chairman of the Council of Ministers to prepare within the next fifteen days a draft Terms

of Reference for the Study to be approved, if necessary, by tele-conferencing of all SAARC Foreign Ministers.

SAARC Vision: An agenda for Third Decade of SAARC

46. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the realisation of the vision of South Asian Economic Union in a phased and planned manner. They agreed that as SAARC completed its twenty years of its existence, it was an opportune occasion to draw a roadmap for regional cooperation in South Asia for the next decade. In view of the new challenges facing the region, pledges and commitments made in the last two decades should be translated into concrete actions in the form of regional projects and programmes and innovative initiatives.
52. They directed all SAARC institutions and mechanisms to work collectively towards a decade dedicated to implementation so that a visible and emphasized that while this would enable SAARC to realize its basic objectives of improving the quality of life of all South Asian peoples, it would at the same time create an enabling environment towards the establishment of a South Asian Economic Union. They directed the Standing Committee to formulate its recommendations, at its next Special Session, on a Vision for SAARC's Third Decade and the course of action for its realization, to be elaborated by a high-level Committee of Senior Officials.

Date and venue of the Fourteenth SAARC Summit

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of the Government of India to host the Fourteenth SAARC Summit in 2007.

4.14 FOURTEENTH SAARC SUMMIT, INDIA. APRIL - 2007

ADOPTING 30 – POINT DECLARATION

The 14th SAARC Summit held in the Indian Capital of New Delhi on April 4, 2007 concluded adopting a 30 point declaration with commitment to ensure market access by all SAARC member countries and also collectively combat poverty, diseases, disaster and terrorism.

The 14th SAARC Summit, in its declaration, stressed smooth implementation of Trade Liberalization Program and directed the SAFTA bodies to review “On a regular basis” the progress on making the free-trade regime fully operational.

In the 30 point Delhi Declaration, adopted in the concluding session of the meet at Vijnan Bhavan, the heads of state or government articulated their resolve to collectively overcome the challenges of poverty, diseases, natural disaster and terrorism. The SAARC leaders underlined that terrorism is a threat to peace and security in the region and condemned the targeted killing of civilians and terrorist violence in all its forms and manifestations “Wherever and against whomsoever committed.” About corruption, they noted that it is also an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating the menace effectively. The SAARC members also renewed their resolve to execute the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention dealing with the prevention and suppression of terror financing.

The South Asian Nations agreed to work on the modalities of implementing the provisions of the existing SAARC conventions to combat terrorism, narcotics and psychotropic substances, trafficking in

women and children and other transnational crimes. In the declaration, they expressed their commitment to take every possible measure to prevent and suppress, in particular, the financing of terrorist acts by criminalizing the provision, acquisition and collections of funds for such acts, including through front organization and also to counter illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, persons and illicit arms. The heads of state or government underlined the importance of implementing trade-facilitation measures, especially standardization of basic customs nomenclature, documentation and clearing procedure. They directed that a comprehensive agreement on harmonizing customs procedure be finalized. The leaders called for an extension of the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS) to include Afghanistan and called for early implementation of the recommendations contained in the study in phases. The heads of state or government welcomed the entry of Afghanistan into SAARC as a new member and China, Japan, The European Union, South Korea and the USA as observers. They also welcomed Iran to be associated with the South Asian forum as observer. The 14th SAARC Summit decided to designate one rural community as SAARC village in each member state to showcase home grown innovative models of development. It was noted that the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) is an important pillar that would bring concrete benefits to the people of the region.

The heads of State or Government agreed to take steps to facilitate rationalization of telecom tariffs on a reciprocal basis. They also agreed that national and regional telecom infrastructures should be upgraded to boost people-to-people connectivity in the region. In the declaration they recognized the region's rapidly increasing energy demands for meeting the developmental needs of SAARC countries and acknowledged the

need of expediting. The development of conventional sources of energy are sustainable manner and for strengthening renewable energy development such as in hydropower, bio-full solar and wind. They acknowledged women's full participation in all spheres of society; including decision making process and that regional project should be focused on addressing issues relating to women and children. Two agreements on establishing South Asian University and SAARC Food Bank were signed in the concluding session of the 14th SAARC Summit in New Delhi.

The next Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) will be held in Male, the Capital of the Indian Ocean Country Maldives. The present SAARC chairperson Indian Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh announced the venue following a unanimous decision adopted in the concluding session of the 14th SAARC Summit in New Delhi.

SAARC: NEW THRUST AREAS

The 14th SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) Summit meeting held on April 3-4, 2007 at New Delhi was marked by certain new orientations in terms of inclusion of new areas/countries and new issues within its orbit While, Afghanistan was admitted as the 8th member of this regional grouping and participated for the first time in the summit meeting. Iran was granted the status of observer in the summit meeting. It should be recalled that five nations/groups namely China, Japan, USA, South Korea and European Union were accorded observer status in the 13th meeting held at Dhaka in 2005. These five nations participated as observers in the 14th summit meeting at appropriate level and pledged co-operation and support to

SAARC region in various ways. SAARC leaders have welcomed the trend. However, earlier SAARC was reluctant to solicit external support for the regional development. In the background of neo-colonialism, the external support was looked with suspicion as interference. However, the new environment of regional co-operation amidst globalization and liberalization augurs well for the intra-regional co-operation.

NEW DELHI DECLARATION

Though, during the summit meeting, individual member states expressed their specific concerns and emphasized on various issues of their interest, the summit was concluded with a renewed vigor to forge ahead with regional co-operation in South Asia. While Pakistan laid emphasis on peace and security as prerequisites for successful co-operation, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan called for full operationalisation of SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) Bangladesh and Sri Lanka emphasized on the strong fight against terrorism in all its forms and strengthening the democratic process in the region. In an oblique reference to Indo-Pak differences, the Pakistan Prime Minister argued that SAARC had been slow in catching up with other regional organizations because the political environment in South Asia had remained vitiated by disputes and mistrust. Thus, there is a need to remove this trust deficit and to ensure level-playing field among member states for a truly effective regional division of labour and production.

In spite of these divergent views, the leaders were able to forge agreements and consensus on the following crucial points at the conclusion of summit meeting.

1. It decided to make tangible progress in the next six months on four issues-water, energy, food and environments that affect people's daily lives in the region. The SAARC will approach international agencies to develop and implement viable cross- border regional projects in given time frame in four sectors.
2. Agreement was signed to set up a South-Asian University in India. The proposal for this University was mooted by India in the 13th Summit held at Dhaka in 2005.
3. Another agreement was signed for forming a regional food bank, which would take care of food shortage in the region.
4. Iran was formally accorded 'Observer Status' by the SAARC Summit.
5. There was consensus on the need to develop a roadmap for a South Asia Customs Union and South Asian Economic Union in a planned and phased manner, as a part of South Asian Free Trade Agreement which has to be implemented in letter and spirit. They stressed the need for ensuring market access through implementation of trade liberalization program under SAFTA. Related to trade liberalization was a call for earliest finalization of agreement on the services sector.
6. The leaders felt the need for the operationalisation of SAARC Development Fund, Which will have resources mobilized from both within and outside the region. The working of and decision-making in the fund shall be consistent with the SAARC Charter. There was controversy over the decision-making mechanism in the fund as some members favoured majority decision making while

others wanted to give weight age to member states in terms of their contribution to the fund as is practiced in the IMF and World Bank.

7. The declaration made strong statement against terrorism and called for the urgent conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The summit agreed to work on the modalities of implementing the provisions of the existing SAARC conventions to combat terrorism, narcotics, smuggling and other transnational crimes. As per the declaration issued, the member states made commitment to take every possible measure to prevent and suppress, in particular, financing of terrorist acts by criminalizing the provision, acquisition and collection of such funds for terrorist acts including through front organization. The leaders pledged to counter illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, persons and arms.
8. The leaders agreed to draft a SAARC convention on mutual assistance in legal matters which shall be considered in the SAARC Home Ministers' meeting to be held in Oct.2007.
9. The 15th SAARC Summit meeting shall be hosted by Maldives in the year 2008.

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the entry of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan into SAARC. This was a historic moment as Afghanistan assumed its rightful place as a valued member of the SAARC fraternity.

The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that there is a wide range of homegrown best practices and innovative solutions for transforming the lives of peoples in South Asia. They decided to earmark one rural community as SAARC Village in each Member State

to showcase these innovative models of development in order to further replicate these across the region.

The Heads of State or Government emphasized the need to develop, at an early date, a roadmap for a South Asian Customs Union and a South Asian Economic Union in a planned and phased manner.

The Heads of State or Government noted the cultural and social ties among the SAARC countries, based on common history and geography, and reiterated that the future of peoples of South Asia is interlinked. They stressed the importance of people-to-people contact as a key constituent in regional connectivity. They agreed to take measures to charge nationals of SAARC Member States fees for entry into archeological and heritage sites as applicable to their own nationals. They also directed that an enlarged SAARC Scholarship Scheme in ICT and related areas be instituted. They welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to host the First SAARC Youth Camp in 2007.

The Heads of State or Government stressed the need to collectively overcome the challenges of poverty, disease, natural disasters and terrorism. They confirmed that countries of South Asia must work together to deal with these challenges in order to secure the region's collective prosperity.

The leaders welcomed the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement establishing the SAARC Food Bank with the participation of all the SAARC countries. The Food Bank will supplement national efforts to provide food security to the people of the region.

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the People's Republic of China, Japan, European Union, Republic of Korea and the United States of America, to be associated as Observers to SAARC. The

region would benefit from these external linkages and help its economic integration with the international community. The Heads of State or Government also welcomed the Islamic Republic of Iran to be associated as Observer to SAARC.

In view of the above far reaching issues, the Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh rightly remarked in the Summit speech, "I believe that a new dawn is breaking out over South Asia and that we are set to fulfill the promise and vision of SAARC."

PARTICIPATION OF OBSERVERS

The 14th Summit benefited by the participation of representatives of observer nations for the first time. The Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhao Xing expressed China's willingness to establish a co-operative mechanism with SAARC to alternate poverty and to carry out a comparative study on poverty reduction models. China was also willing to forge co-operation with SAARC countries in the development of infrastructure and energy resources on the basis of equality and mutual benefit and encouraged Chinese enterprises to make investment in South Asia. Thirdly, China proposed to institutionalize China-South Asia Business Forum as a platform for discussion on economic co-operation and Trade.

The Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso represented Japan in the Summit. Japan pledged an additional 7 million for the existing SAARC Japan special fund. Japan will also co-operate with SAARC to achieve better regional connectivity and support priority project in the region as a running mate of South Asia.

The Japanese Foreign Minister reiterated that Japan would continue to support democratization process in Nepal as they have worked to rebuild the war ravaged Afghanistan.

Richard Boucher, participating as US representative, argued that there is enormous potential if South Asia can overcome problems of trade security and democracy. Thus, the lacks of democracy and inconsistencies in trade among member states have prevented SAARC from realizing its full potential.

Nepal, a founder member of SAARC, made a strong plea for the inclusion of China as a full-fledged member of SAARC during the interaction between the SAARC leaders and the Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

4.15 Fifteenth SAARC Summit (COLOMBO)

The fifteenth summit of SAARC was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 1–3 August 2008. The issues discussed were regional cooperation, partnership for growth for the peoples of South Asia, connectivity, energy, the environment, water resources, poverty alleviation, the SAARC Development Fund, transport, information and communications technology development, science and technology, tourism, culture, the South Asian Free Trade Area, the SAARC Social Charter, women and children, education, combating terrorism, and the admission of Australia and Myanmar as observers.

Major Areas of Discussion

Food Security

At the summit, one of the major points of discussion was the global food crisis. The SAARC heads of government made a statement saying

"in view of the emerging global situation of reduced food availability and worldwide rise in food prices, we direct that an Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Agriculture Ministers of the SAARC Member States be convened in New Delhi, India in November 2008, to evolve and implement people-centred short to medium term regional strategy and collaborative projects." They also acknowledged the need to forge greater cooperation with the international community to ensure the food availability and nutrition security.

The Colombo Declaration Renewed resolve for collective regional efforts the Heads of State or Government of SAARC reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the SAARC Charter. They renewed their resolve for collective regional efforts to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life, thereby contributing to peace, stability, amity and progress in the region. On terrorism the Summit finalized and signed the Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters; on food security it issued a Special Statement, released along with the Summit Declaration, where the Leaders of the SAARC countries affirm their resolve to make South Asia once again a major granary of the world, through a series of inter-connected and specific regional collaborative projects, said Mahindra Rajapaksa.

The Colombo Declaration Renewed resolve for collective regional efforts The Heads of State or Government of SAARC reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the SAARC Charter. They renewed their resolve for collective regional efforts to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and

improve their quality of life, thereby contributing to peace, stability, amity and progress in the region.

The 15th SAARC Summit that concluded has taken far-reaching decisions on key issues affecting the region such as terrorism, food and fuel security and trade, with discussions that had a strong focus, on economic and commercial cooperation and members can draw satisfaction from a most productive and fruitful outcome, said President Mahinda Rajapaksa in his statement at the conclusion of the 15th SAARC Summit.

Terrorism featured prominently in the addresses of the SAARC leaders at the inauguration of the 15th SAARC Summit. They were united in condemnation of terrorism and warning of the threat it posed to development of the region.

The establishment of new air links between Sri Lanka and Dhaka was among the key items discussed between the Head of State and Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Dr, Fakhruddin Ahmed and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at bi-lateral talks held at the Presidential Secretariat.

4.16 Sixteenth SAARC Summit

The 16th SAARC (South Asia association of Regional Cooperation) summit concluded in the capital of Bhutan. The theme of the summit was "Towards a green and happy south Asia". South Asia is the home of 1.5 billion people, which comprise eight nations, namely India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

This is the silver jubilee year of SAARC. In the summit, the leaders of member countries rightly raised this issue. First, our Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh called the 25-year long journey of SAARC, "a glass half empty" then Bhutan's PM Jigmi Y Thinley said that SAARC

is losing its focus from core issues, such as poverty, food security etc. In one sense these statements are true, as there are many bilateral issues between member countries which used to affect the multilateral efforts and initiatives of the developments, e.g. India-Pakistan relations have always overshadowed the SAARC summits and this time also the summit started with the huge speculations of Indo-Pak meets at the sidelines of the summit. Though, according to SAARC charter, bilateral issues cannot be raised on its forum, still the mere possibilities of Indo-Pak high level meet used to occupy a lot of space of the summit's unofficial or official agenda. This fact is clear through the comment of Mohammad Nasheed, president of Maldives, he said, "the summit will lead to a greater dialogue between India and Pakistan". The state heads of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan also expressed the similar views. President Nasheed also asked for the more focus on important issues which are related to SAARC nations and their problems which used to be overshadowed by the Indo-Pak stern relation.

One more issue, which has maintained gap between members, is the "India factor". India has geographically, economically and politically a big brother image among the rest member countries of SAARC. All the nations of south Asia are connected geographically with India (Afghanistan through POK). Only Maldives, the island nation has no land connectivity with India. This big brother image has always raised negative thoughts and fears among the other members, the political parties have frequently used the anti- India card to raise the public emotions, e.g. in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and off course Pakistan. This insecurity has provided a suitable opportunity for big powers to intervene in south Asia. Besides, ethnic, language, border and water

disputes between the members, it has also created set-backs among bilateral and multilateral relations.

However, some significant events took place in Thimphu. The landmark decision was the announcement of a fund by Indian PM, to meet with the challenges of climate change and to cater for the needs of effective adaptation and capacity building of small nations. Though no proper action plan for climate change was drafted, still this is an important initiative as all the nations of south Asia are facing serious threats of global warming, such as, glacial melting, frequent cyclones, floods and droughts.

The next important event of summit was the Indo-Pak meeting on 29th April, between Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and his counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani. It was the first meeting of both leaders after the one in Sharm- el –Sheikh in July 2009. In the meeting, India insisted on Pak to take some credential action against the 26/11 perpetrators. India refused to start the conventional form of composite dialogue that is based on eight issues. Pakistan's emphasis remained on delinking of terror from talks and an immediate return of composite dialogue. However, India rejected this offer and no joint statement took place, but the positive side of talks was that both sides agreed to keep the dialogue process open and decided to meet as soon as possible at Foreign Ministers' level and at foreign secretary level.

Besides above developments, the 16th SAARC summit lacked behind on many issues. No progress took place on SAFTA (south Asia free trade agreement), nor the leaders of south Asia tried to find out any regional solution of Afghan problem. Though in a joint statement released by prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and President Karzai, Dr.

Singh supported an “ Afghan-led , Afghan-owned” rebuilding of Afghanistan, based on the principles of national sovereignty, independence and non-interference. The rising interference of superpowers such as USA and China in south Asia too did not become an issue of concern for the leaders of subcontinent. The leaders of SAARC though felt that bilateral issues are creating hurdles in the progress of the region and its 1.5 billion people but no concrete step has been taken to overcome those issues.

However, the summit remarked the need of dialogue and conversation among the members to resolve their differences. After all, it gives an open forum to its members to exchange their views and visions regarding south Asia’s present, future and its potential role in international political and economic structure.

The Thimphu summit also marked the silver jubilee celebration of SAARC that was formed in Bangladesh in December 1985 with the aim of eradicating poverty and improving the living standard of 1.5 billion people of the region through mutual cooperation. This was the first SAARC summit Bhutan has hosted.