

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS OF SAARC

**Summits of the Heads of State or Government
(1985-2010)**



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Preface

The Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) is pleased to publish in a single booklet form the texts of the Statements of the Nepalese Heads of State or Government and Summit Declarations of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) from 1985 to 2010.

Needless to say, one of the main objectives of the Institute is to help strengthen the operational and policy dynamism of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) by providing it with timely inputs and suggestions on varied issues of international relations, particularly related to the implementation of foreign policy. Accordingly, the Institute provides regular inputs and suggestions to the Ministry, based on the outcomes and recommendations of different seminars, talk programs, workshops and other similar interactive programs that it organizes from time to time. The publication of recommendations distilled from such important deliberations in a booklet form to help increase the institutional memory is another regular feature of the Institute.

The publication of this booklet is done with those very objectives in mind. The objective of bringing this booklet is to facilitate avid researchers, students and other informed readers to acquire comprehensive information and knowledge about the various facets of regional cooperation, its challenges and achievements. It is hoped that this booklet will obviate the need for them having to look for different sources to get hold of comprehensive information on the range of various issues of regional cooperation.

As can be seen, the first part of the booklet contains a collection of statements of the Nepalese Heads of State or Government from 1985 to 2010. The second part incorporates the Summit Declarations adopted and issued at end of each SAARC Summit. The institute will highly appreciate any suggestions, comments and recommendations, if any, from the readers.

Finally, the Institute is appreciative of the cooperation received from Ms. Anjan Shakya, the Deputy Executive Director and other supporting staff of the Institute for the publication of this booklet.

Tika Jung Thapa
Executive Director
IFA, Tripureswor
Kathmandu, Nepal.

Part I

**The Statements of the Nepalese Heads of State
or Government of SAARC from 1985-2010**

Statement by
His Majesty Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

King of Nepal, First SAARC Summit, 7-8 Dec. 1985, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mr. President
Your Majesty
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

It is indeed with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to extend to you Mr. President, congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Conference of the Heads of State or Government of the countries of South Asia. With your commitment to our common cause of regional cooperation and wise counsel. I am confident that we will all move in a direction of achieving our common goal with lasting results.

To all the distinguished delegates assembled here at this august gathering I bring the greetings of the government and people of Nepal. I would also like to add with it our sincere thanks to the President, the government and the friendly people of Bangladesh for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this friendly city of Dhaka. In view of the initiative consistently taken by the leaders of Bangladesh, including the late President Ziaur Rahman and you, Mr. President, it is indeed fitting that Bangladesh should have the honour of hosting this first historic conference. I would also like to convey my appreciation for the opportunity to renew my personal contacts with the leaders of the region and the excellent arrangements made for this occasion.

Mr. President, situated in the Himalayas, Nepal as a sentinel of independence has for many centuries watched over the drama of our sub-continent that stretch from the snowy peaks to the rolling waves of the Indian Ocean. Bounded between the high mountains, the seas and the ocean, this landmass from the picturesque atolls to the high mountains constitutes a total eco-system that

governs our life. Each summer the monsoon sets into motion a pattern of life that are all so common to us. Year after year from the planting of rice to the harvesting of wheat, our people through the ages have followed a cycle of events that marks the change of seasons into a harmonious rhythm of life. Undoubtedly, the Himalayas in combination with the seas plays a cooperative role that can only be described as providentially meaningful.

For centuries Nepal has watched over the moving pageants of peoples and communities who came from different directions in different epochs to make this vast, sunlit region of South Asia their home since the beginning of history. This fact also makes us among the most ancient nations on earth. In the march of times in the region, we have heard exuberant cries of victory as well as the anguish of defeat. We have seen external aggressions and brutal scenes committed through greed and inspired by lust. We have also observed the defeat resulting into humiliation through internal dissensions. In the midst of it all, we have seen dynasties rise and fall, empires come and go, civilizations blossom and wither away. Yet the people of our region have contributed to the world the finest of philosophic thoughts, a rich heritage of culture based on the quest of peace, freedom and brotherhood among men.

Mr. President, we all know that the people of South Asia constituting nearly one billion are crammed into a region with relatively limited land and resource base. With the legacies of internal divisions, exploitation and domination by powers beyond us, I think there are many challenges we face in common. The problems of basic needs remain real for the large segments of our people in this region. The world never has had in its recorded history such technological resources as it has today to cope with poverty and hunger on a global scale. But the gradual erosion of the collective spirit has aggravated our problems and frustrated our efforts. Which is why we have agreed over the years to strengthen cooperation among ourselves in international fora on matters of common interest. The weakening of the global economic interdependence and the disillusionment with the continuing deadlock in restructuring the international economic order have thrust upon us greater responsibilities for collective self-reliance and South-South cooperation on a much larger scale.

Indeed, it is our firm conviction that regional cooperation can strengthen the building of a lasting edifice of peaceful co-existence through initiatives and interactions in the fields like the cultural scientific, technological and economic spheres. We realize that there exist among us many differences in size, situation, population, resources and the levels of development. In a way, this diversity has been our drawback in the past. But destiny has put us together in such close proximity that no matter how hard we try to delink ourselves from each other we cannot override the compulsions of geography

nor can we ever ignore the lessons of history. It is, indeed, a fact of life that historically, powers have played on our divisions to an extent that even the principles of non-alignment which we have commonly adhered to could come to a danger threatening the very peace and stability of this region. The challenge therefore is whether we are able to turn our weakness into strength by resolving to reach into a principle of agreeable harmony, an order that says not for one but for all to the betterment of all our people of this region.

As the century draws to its close and as each country is thinking of a vision for the future, let this gathering be able to chart out a course of action based not only on high ideals alone but also on common sense and hard realism. Let us not forget that the very objectives we have been seeking in so many forums have now become more urgently than ever, a common challenge to us. Form the side of Nepal with the high Himalayas as one of our assets and a vast reservoir of yet untapped water resource that can give to the millions of our people a means to fulfill their basic needs, I wish to draw the attention to the fact that there exists this priceless resource waiting to be harnessed for the benefits of our people.

Before I conclude, Mr. President, may I add that for the first time in the history of our region, we are gathered here to set a seal on a Charter establishing an institutional framework for deliberations and decisions on what we can do among ourselves to promote the welfare of the peoples of this region by upholding, at the same time, the ideals and purposes of the United Nations Charter, the five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence together with those of the Non-Aligned Movement of Which we all are sovereign members. While it is our common concern to preserve the independence and security of each country in the region, we have also a common commitment to promote the cause of peace and development for our people. The escalating arms race is draining world's precious resources. The world and, above all, our region urgently needs a new wisdom capable of striking a balance between the claims of security and those of basic needs.

The choice for us in the region is clear. After a long winter of mistrust, coldness and suspicion this region of South Asia certainly looks forward to a new spring giving birth as it were to a new era of enlightened self-interest based on a common desire to replace conflict with cooperation, to substitute discord with harmony, and finally, move from an attitude of self-centeredness to a widening horizon of contacts in the region in a spirit of reciprocity, give and take, live and let live. May God grant us all such a vision and statesmanship to meet this challenge of making the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation a vibrant reality with our people for their wellbeing, peace and joy.

Thank you.

Statement by
His Majesty Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

King of Nepal, Second SAARC Summit, 16-17 Nov. 1986, Bangalore, India

Mr. Chairman
Your Majesty
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

I should like to begin first by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the office of the Chairmanship of the Second Conference of the Heads of State or Government of the countries of South Asia. I do so not only because it is part of the customary rituals but more because in assuming this role, Mr. Prime Minister, you represent a country which has a contiguous border in land or sea with all countries of our region. Indeed it reminds me also of the burden of responsibilities placed on your shoulders which, I feel, must be shared by all of us if we are to make headway to the goals of our infant association.

It is true that as a large country with vast population and resources India has the capability to transform herself into one of the leading industrial nations of the world. In point of fact she is already forging herself ahead in that direction. But the pace, indeed in the entire region, can be quickened if a condition of uninterrupted peace and stability can be built in our sub-continent. This would entail among other things a genuine respect for integrity no less than a scrupulous observance of the principles of sovereign equality to which we are all firmly committed. But it would also call for a larger vision, magnanimity, understanding and a spirit of give and take. In a word, it is cooperation which we all seek in common for our mutual benefit.

I am sorry that His Excellency President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan has not been able to join us here this time. But I feel confident that Pakistan's interest in SAARC continues unabated. I am happy to note that she is being represented

by no less a distinguished person than her able Prime Minister, Mr. Junejo. As each of us has an obligation to fulfill the commitments we all have pledged together in Dhaka, I am happy to be reminded of the first Summit we all had the honour to attend there last December under the Chairmanship of President Ershad of Bangladesh. I have no doubt that in the history of South Asia, he will be remembered for the pioneering role he has played in bringing the SAARC from concept to reality. I deem it appropriate therefore to record my sincere gratitude to him for the contributions he has made to our common cause.

Mr. Chairman, since we met in Dhaka less than a year ago, we have set out on a road that is not only long but can also be toilsome and difficult. We have adopted the Charter and thereby formalized the birth of SAARC. As directed by the Summit, our Ministers and representatives have met and made recommendations about the setting up of a permanent secretariat. They have also made some important suggestions about international economic issues. They have discussed about the participation of women in development activities. They have talked about drug abuse and their trafficking. They have also sat and deliberated upon the problems of terrorism which plague us in the same way that they can plague any one, any country and at any time. Not long ago, in the spirit of SAARC our representatives also met in New Delhi and made recommendations as to the ways and means to tackle the problems of the children of our region. Looking back from the point of view of SAARC the year, on the whole, has been fairly eventful. The way the governments of India, Bangladesh and Nepal decided to sit and talk about the sharing and multiple use of the water resources of the region for the benefit of all shows that a trend towards cooperation can be set in motion.

Given mutual goodwill, a constructive approach and a spirit of accommodation there is little that can be left unaccomplished. Let us not forget that united we form a major part of the Old World that gave birth to a rich civilization and culture. The richness of our soil, rivers and climate produced wealth and attracted many peoples at different times giving birth to a number of languages, beliefs and cultures. Wrongly perceived and while played by others they can act as dark forces of division and dissension among us. Each of us can be subject to destabilization. Each of us can be prone to instability. It was perhaps this fact that also prompted us to follow a policy of non-alignment. But in such a situation there could hardly be a greater wisdom than to have an organization like the SAARC that does provide us with a framework for peace and cooperation in our region. The SAARC is a sober contact point from where, I believe, any gap in perception, if there be any, can be bridged slowly but surely through a process of mutual trust and confidence for the benefit of

our people. Which is why I think we decided to meet annually so that contacts at this level could contribute to smoothen the sharp edges of differences in perceptions should there be any.

May I, therefore, repeat what I said only eleven months ago in Dhaka . After a long winter of mistrust, coldness and suspicion this region of South Asia certainly looks forward to a new spring giving birth as it were to a new era of enlightened self-interest based on a common desire to replace conflict with cooperation, to substitute discord with harmony, and finally, move from an attitude of self centeredness to a widening horizon of contacts in the region in a spirit of reciprocity, give and take, live and let live. May God grant us all such a vision and statesmanship to meet this challenge of making the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation a vibrant reality with our people for their wellbeing, peace and joy. It is on the same note that I wish to conclude my statement for the day.

Thank you.

Inaugural Statement by
His Majesty Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

King of Nepal, Third SAARC Summit, 2-4 Nov. 1987, Kathmandu, Nepal,

Mr. Chairman

Your Majesty

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

May I begin by extending, on behalf of the Nepalese people, the Government and on my own, a warm welcome to you all in Kathmandu. We in Nepal are conscious of the honour bestowed upon our country in hosting this Summit. For us, holding a Summit of this nature is a new experience. We, therefore, seek your understanding for our shortcomings. This is the third time that we have assembled for the SAARC Meeting of Heads of State and Government. We thus have with us an experience of two years when we had met earlier in Dhaka and then in Bangalore for the same purpose. We still have fond memories of the fruitful interactions we had on both occasions.

I also recall the warm hospitality accorded to us by President Ershad in Dhaka and by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Bangalore. There is no doubt that SAARC has provided us with a welcome opportunity to meet with each other at least once a year and this has helped us to understand each other better. Indeed by now the understanding we have developed among ourselves should prove more helpful in the future. While I wish you all a pleasant and fruitful stay in Nepal, may I hope that you will find time, however brief, to look around the cities in Kathmandu valley in this part of the orient, blended in their own tradition and modernity against the backdrop of the Himalayas.

Straddling across the South and Central Asia, Nepal as you already know is largely made up of mountain terrain making it forbiddingly difficult to develop. Besides, with a view to guard her independence Nepal chose to remain a hermit kingdom for nearly tow centuries. As a result, with little or

no communication with the outside world she fell behind times. Such at least was the price we had to pay for our freedom and independence. But the picture is now changing. In a world that is getting smaller every day through the fast means of communication, it is important that the countries of South Asia living in close proximity to each other forge ties that are beneficial to all. Viewed in this light the birth of SAARC naturally marked a momentous event.

It is appropriate for me on this occasion to express on behalf of us all our gratitude to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India for the contributions he made as Chairman of SAARC in steering us through yet another fruitful year since the Bangalore Summit. Since our meeting in Dhaka and Bangalore, we have covered some distance and made progress in the agreed areas of cooperation. There have also been fruitful exchange of ideas and information at various levels involving people from many walks of life and vocations. The Integrated Programme of Action has been expanded to include such important areas as Women in Development and Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse. I am happy to note that our Foreign Ministers will sign during this Summit the Agreement establishing South Asian Food Security Reserve and the Final Act of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

I believe that the Agreement will provide us with a much needed cushion against the contingencies of food in our region. I am also hopeful that the signing of the Final Act of the Convention against Terrorism will take us a step closer to free this region of Asia from the scourge that can afflict us all. The SAARC Audio Visual Exchange Programme is being launched to coincide with the present Summit. Soon the SAARC Chairs, Fellow-ships and Scholarships will be instituted and organized Tourism among the SAARC member countries will also begin. Likewise, efforts are underway to establish the SAARC Documentation Centre and launch the SAARC Youth Volunteer Programme at the earliest possible dates.

Proposals for the establishment of regional institutions in several areas are now under consideration. The Council of Ministers has already agreed upon the common criteria and procedures relating to the administrative structuring and financing of such institutions. The establishment of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, as envisaged in our Charter, took place in January this year. I recall with fondness the privilege I had in inaugurating the SAARC Secretariat in the presence of our Foreign Ministers. I said then, and I do so now, that it was an occasion of historic significance. I wish to reiterate the heartfelt gratitude of all Nepalese for the honour given to us to host this institution.

There is no doubt that the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat marks an important milestone in the journey we have undertaken. Today, SAARC kindles

our dreams and excites our imagination. But I also feel that there is a danger here to move along with a piecemeal approach only taking up one issue today and adding another tomorrow. I fear such a diverse approach may lead us nowhere near our goal. Instead, the mounting proliferation of subjects each year may land us into a morass of ad hocism. It may also confuse us about priorities and goals. It is, therefore, important that we hold on to a common vision with clarity of thought and a distinct perception of the goals we set out for our people.

In reality, this would come to drafting something like a periodic plan followed by an integrated programme of action. A clear picture of this nature will bring together not only different strands of thoughts or subjects into a composite whole but will also serve to reflect upon our total vision for the future. Besides, the agreed plan will have to be coordinated with and integrated into our respective national plans. Once endorsed, this document will also provide the SAARC Secretariat with something substantial to coordinate, to monitor and to follow-up urging our respective governments for steady and common endeavors.

Mr. Chairman, this august gathering will agree with me that our deeds must match our words. In the end, it is the result that counts far more than words or seminars. Surely, we cannot talk tall and then deliver so little. We live in a region where want and poverty, dearth and destitution are common. There is no doubt that these socio-economic realities make heavy demand on us. The problems of poverty and population growth cry out for solutions that are far more complex, difficult and time-consuming than we would imagine at first. This year South Asia faced severe flood and drought to which we cannot turn a blind eye. While our hearts go out in sympathy for those who suffered losses in life and property, we should explore the reason for these sufferings and come out with enduring solutions.

Each year during the summer the seas in our neighbourhood in South Asia send their monsoon clouds towards the Himalayas. They cool off, precipitate, supply and make provision for water which is the source of sustenance for the millions of people in our region. Their failure causes drought. Their fury causes flood. Precisely, this is what happened this year. For years, we in Nepal have been consistently stressing the need for a comprehensive plan to tackle the problem through a common endeavor, maximizing the benefits through the optimal use of this, the most important of our natural resources in this part of our region. The time has therefore come for us to see the light of reality and think in terms of broader interest.

Despite many tantalizing problems, united we hold in common one fifth of humanity. But put together we also share among ourselves the most fertile of natural endowments-rich soil and abundantly rich water. It is their proper use that will help our lands to grow rich in farming and fishing, in energy and industries enabling our people to move forward to fulfill their basic needs and find dignity that is their due. Surely, there could be other areas worth exploring, fields such as tourism or exploitation of the sea-bed resources for common benefit. Let us not forget that Nature has made us inter-dependent and that we in concert, can accomplish and achieve what we cannot do by going it alone. In short, we need to cultivate and nurture the spirit of SAARC which is no other than the spirit of cooperation, the spirit of give and take.

We all know for centuries the countries of South Asia have seen many divisions and discords among themselves. Communal hatred fanaticism and mutual hostilities have torn our societies apart; sometime even casting shadows over inter-state relations making the air distrustful and murky. Indeed even now as we gather here to talk of peace and concord, terrorist may be gunning down innocent victims. Conscious that terrorism can pose danger to peace and stability in the region, we must actively ensure that it receives no support or sanctuary within or without. Nepal is firmly opposed to the idea of balkanization of states as she has consistently opposed all forms of occupation of one country by another.

Mr. Chairman, from the towering peaks of the Himalayas to the placid water of the Indian Ocean, the countries of South Asia form a coherent geographical entity. Within this region, the earliest of human civilizations have bloomed and blossomed. From the soil of Nepal alone rose the Philosopher King of Videha, Janak and his daughter Sita. From Lumbini in Midwest Nepal came the Buddha who continues to inspire the millions across the lands. Their message constitutes a fitting basis for SAARC spirit of cooperation characterized by temperance, a larger vision and, above all, a feeling for the greater good of the greatest number. Once we are able to rouse this spirit among all of us, peace and prosperity, health and happiness will run through South Asia, a dream and a vision nurtured by all men, women and children of our region, people whom we have the honour and privilege to represent at this gathering.

Thank you.

Statement by
His Majesty Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

King of Nepal, Fourth SAARC Summit, 29-31 Dec. 1988, Islamabad, Pakistan

Madam Chairman
Your Majesty
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

We gather here today in this magnificent city that blends beauty with proportion, harmony with order. Set against the background of the rolling hills, plains and mountains, Islamabad looks to the future symbolizing the hopes and aspirations of Pakistan and her people. No doubt, it is a recent city but behind it lies a history of over five thousand year when invaders came and went, empires rose and fell and civilizations blossomed and withered away.

Over this millenia of history we also notice how people from different places descended upon this part of South Asia through the formidable passes in the Hindukush and the Himalayas. They spoke many languages and followed different faiths. At times their encounters led to conflicts followed by wars leaving behind a trail of ruin and destruction on a colossal scale. But no sooner had they begun to settle down making this land their permanent home than peace and prosperity returned enriching the culture and civilization of south Asia.

To us in Nepal, Pakistan over the year, has come to mean good taste, elegance and refinement, be it in music or language, costume or cuisine. Indeed in the making of our own language and culture in Nepal much has been contributed by the beauty and delicacy of the language and culture that in the past had been developed to a point of finesse in this part of South Asia. Therefore it only goes to show how a situation of give and take can help two different peoples to gain from each other. The more so since geography has put us all

together in the same region sharing the same skies, the same mountains and the same seas.

It is therefore with a feeling of close ties and warmth that I take this opportunity to congratulate you. Your Excellency Banazir Bhutto, upon your election as the Chairman of the Fourth SAARC summit. With you wearing the mantle of leadership I have every reason to hope that we will achieve much in our march towards mutual cooperation. To the people of Pakistan I bring the greetings and good wishes of the Government and people of Nepal. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us ever since our arrival to this Capital city.

When I look back upon the achievements made by our Association, SAARC, since the Third SAARC Summit in Kathmandu I feel that, however modest, we have taken some significant steps. I am happy to note that the Regional Convention on suppression of Terrorism has now been ratified by all Member States. We wish the Convention to contribute as an important landmark in the relations between countries of South Asia. Indeed, if we follow it in letter and spirit I have no doubt that it will prevent terrorism raising its ugly head in our region. Its importance becomes the more clear when we look back upon how in November this year terrorists, to the shock and dismay of all, struck the friendly Republic of the Maldives holding the people as their hostages in an attempt to topple a democratically elected Government by force. Naturally we were all equally concerned until India under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the request of President Gayoom came to assist the Maldives.

The incident, however sad, highlights further how important it is to coordinate our approaches to tackle similar problems from recurring elsewhere. The end conclusion with incident like this naturally raises the question of devising within the framework of the Convention on Suppression of Terrorism an acceptable mechanism capable of dealing with the destabilization of a fellow Member State by terrorists and hired assassins. As for Nepal we believe that once we refuse to aid, abet shelter or recognize terrorists and terrorism in any form or manifestation, this scourge of our times can at least be rendered ineffective in our region.

I am happy also to note that the Agreement establishing the SAARC Food Security Reserve has now come into effect. In fact, only a few days ago it was here in Islamabad that the first meeting of SAARC Food Security Board took place. We feel that, however modest, an important beginning in the right direction has been made in a region so prone to floods and droughts. When we think of the ordeals the friendly people of Bangladesh had to face repeatedly this year we can realize how significant a Reserve like this can come to be in the hour of need. I hope we will be able to continue to improve upon it as we move ahead to meet the growing needs in the future.

It is also worth noting that the Integrated Programme of Action will be further consolidated along the lines suggested by the third Meeting of Planners held last month in Kathmandu. It has recommended that the Technical Committees should select only well-defined, time-bound and target-oriented programmes to ensure that the objectives are realized for the benefit of our people. Similarly the five areas of cooperation as agreed in Bangalore are now at different stages of implementation. In short, SAARC is moving progressively ahead.

This reminds me, however, of a baffling problem we each face in common. It is an issue from where I see no escape unless one resorts into a world of fancy. In our region of SAARC every one minute nearly 70 children are born, every one hour over 4000 children are added and at the end of each day the number grows well over 100,000. Sadly, a number of them die even before they see the light of the next day. Demographers, not without alarm, point out that each year adds to a nearly 24 million people over and above the existing population of a billion people that already overcrowd our land.

This explosion of population on an unprecedented scale poses a threat no less serious than the fear of a nuclear holocaust. There is no doubt that it has deep and varied ramifications. A vast number of those who are born go hungry suffering from malnutrition. Many of them become sick but many more suffer from want of an opportunity to be literate. But even those with education find it hard to get suitable employment. As a result, the pressure on land grows, forest resources get dwindled, the more so as encroachment increases in ever greater scale resulting in droughts, floods, erosions and landslides. Over and above these incidences, strifes and conflicts in society grow as more and more people compete for the relatively lesser number of jobs. This brings in its trail the problem of spillover effects of people who migrate legally or illegally in search of green pastures heightening the tensions in societies that traditionally had enjoyed peace and relative prosperity.

Since the plight of the poor and the destitutes in our society is known to all of us I feel I need hardly dwell on it at length. Nonetheless one thing seems certain. Many of them live below the level of absolute poverty. Indeed it is to address to the needs especially of this unfortunate section in our society that we in Nepal have launched a programme to meet the basic needs for all before the close of the century. We know it looks like a modest goal but it is just as hard and difficult to achieve in the face of a population whose number multiplies more than our ability to match the need for food, clothing, shelter, education, health and security. But in a world where people produce mountains of bread and butter along with goods and machines, South Asia cannot and need not starve. The programme of minimum human needs is a moral imperative from where there can be no turning back. It is true that the

responsibility of fulfilling such basic needs lies with each individual member country concerned but regional cooperation within the framework of SAARC could go a long way to complement the national efforts.

When we met last year in Kathmandu at the Third SAARC Summit we reaffirmed, among other things, that measures for expanding regional cooperation should be progressively carried out within a broad framework of a long-term perspective and that such cooperation should be expanded in concrete areas in order to ensure more tangible benefits from SAARC to the people of our region. As a follow-up on that the third Meeting of Planners agreed to formulate a broad framework of a long-term perspective of regional cooperation with a clear vision of a strategy of growth for the region as a whole. In line with yet another decision of the Third Summit the SAARC Secretary General has already initiated a study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment.

While we wait for their recommendations I am reminded of the proposal that we on behalf of Nepal have consistently been making since a meeting of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee was held in Kathmandu in December 1977. Last year in Kathmandu we reiterated the same appeal seeking the goodwill, support and understanding of all the countries in the region. And from this rostrum, once again, we wish to declare that Nepal is willing to cooperate in any venture for the multipurpose development of her water resources bilaterally, trilaterally or multilaterally for the mutual benefit of the people in the region. I wish also to add that Nepal is willing to cooperate in whatever way she can within her competence to tackle the problem of rise in the sea level.

It seems to me that every age calls upon its leaders to pay heed to the demands it makes on them. There was a time, for example, when many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America sought freedom from the clutches of foreign domination. In continuation, recent events in countries not far from our borders unequivocally point out that no matter what the odds are against a people, no country can indeed be coerced into submission. One wonders if the time has not really come when each country should come to terms with one another in peace, harmony and amity with a view to achieve the new frontiers of cooperation in a spirit of give and take despite differences or divergences of views in this day and age. I feel that unless we are able to overcome the inhibitions we each have inherited from our past we will not really be able to forge new bonds and new relationships which the times demand of us. May I conclude in the hope that this Summit which reflects the conscience of the entire people of this region will further the cause of peace, goodwill and cooperation in South Asia with a secured identity and justice for all.

Thank you.

Statement by
Right Honourable Krishna Prasad Bhattarai

Prime Minister of Nepal, Fifth SAARC Summit, 21-23 Nov. 1990, Malé, Maldives

Mr. Chairman

Your Majesty, Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very glad that I am one of those new comers here in this conference to speak something and time has been given to me for it. The refreshing remarks that the Indian Prime Minister has made during his speech is such that it demands further thinking and I would therefore say that SAARC should be a little more action oriented instead of indulging so much in formalities it should be rather a little more action oriented, a little more economic minded and programs should be there which would go along way to help us, all the SAARC countries and I think that it is high time now that we take up which we had shunned so far because of the fear and perhaps found it fear that it may harm the organization itself that bilateral matters should not be at all touched upon. I think Mr. Chandra Shekhar, the new P.M. has set a tone that we can touch this matter also now to some extent so that it may not harm the organization.

Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to associate myself with my colleagues in congratulating you Mr. Chairman on your well deserved election as the Chairman of our Association. You, Mr. Chairman, personally and your country in general have made enthusiastic and significant contribution to promoting and strengthening its noble causes and principles. While cordially congratulating you, I wish also to add that we have been deeply touched by the warm and thoughtful hospitality to which we have been treated since our arrival here. On behalf of my delegation and myself, I take this occasion to express my grateful thanks. If the flight from the snowy Himalayas to the blue rolling waters of the Indian Ocean has been exciting, the arrival itself in the

Maldives with its magnificent seascape and its enterprising people has been, personally for me, a very very refreshing experience.

I must pay a word of tribute to the Government of Pakistan in particular Mohatrama Benazir Bhutto, Chairperson of the Fourth SAARC Summit, for having successfully led our Association for an unusual period of two years. One cannot help recalling the exhilarating atmosphere of youthful optimism of the Islamabad Summit. It was an expression of common democratic aspirations among the SAARC countries. Struggling through the fragility of our Association, Pakistani officials and particularly, the tireless Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan have worked hard and patiently to keep it irreversible and steady in the current storms and stresses of the region. I wish to record our sincere appreciation of the dedicated work they have done.

I wish also to extend my cordial welcome to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan who, like me, is leading his country's delegation to a SAARC Summit for the first time, although we recall with pleasure his participation in the Kathmandu Summit three years ago as a member of the Pakistani delegation.

My sincere welcome goes to my good personal friend of long standing, Shri Chandra Shekhar, the new Prime Minister of India, whose dedication to the cause of the common people and the peace and cooperation in the region is well known. The Government of India headed by Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh was also categorical in its support for SAARC. I must pay our tribute to Shri Rajiv Gandhi who together with other founding fathers led our nascent Association through four Summits. I cannot put recall the contributions of former President of Sri Lanka, J. R. Jayewardene, to our Association.

May I welcome Prime Minister Wijetunge of Sri Lanka who is also attending the Summit for the first time.

I consider it our good fortune that we continue to benefit from the active cooperation, invaluable experience and sagacity of President Hussian Muhammad Ershad of Bangladesh, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan and our gracious host and Chairman, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives. To all the participating Heads of State or Government of member countries and the distinguished delegates, it is my honour and privilege to convey the greetings and best wishes of the King of Nepal, His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

Mr. Chairman

I feel it is necessary in the changed democratic context of Nepal to reaffirm our faith in South Asian cooperation. Following a successful popular

movement, we are working hard towards democratic stabilization through a new constitution and early general election. Even when we were struggling for democratic rights in our country to which we continue to be pledged always and everywhere, we believed that the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is a step in the right direction. The Association is primarily addressed, I believe rightly, to pursuing economic, social and cultural goals of cooperation. Even then, to be successful, it would require member countries, on their own and step by step, to move towards harmonization of larger political values which distinguish their societies. One must recognize that the dominant policy trend for the last several decades in South Asia in political, economic and cultural matters has been an expensive quest either for protectionist self-sufficiency or for divergence for its own sake. Acknowledging as desirable such divergence as reflects the inherent differences of history, geography and objective over-all economic possibility, we believe that within the existing rich diversity the motivating sentiment in the region should be cooperation, peace and convergence and no longer confrontation, friction and divergence, SAARC, developed as a community of sovereign states, could and should reconcile the opposing pulls of modernization and traditionalism. These pulls have reacted with each other to stratify South Asian societies at a point which is neither stable nor progressive. For this reason, I reaffirm our commitment to SAARC as a necessary and desirable initiative for getting out of this stalemate.

Mr. Chairman

Since we met in Islamabad two years ago, great political changes, bearing global implications for governing ideas and traditional institutions, have taken place in the world. Traditional thinking in politics, economics and security is under strain. The Soviet Union with what it calls new thinking is struggling towards a new political and economic equilibrium. Eastern Europe has been convulsed with the collapse of communist parties and governments. German Unification is now a reality opening up a great vista of the unknown not only for Western and Eastern Europe but also perhaps for the world. It looks as though world history is still made in Europe. As a result, superpower tension has diminished greatly. In the Middle East and elsewhere, too, there are even signs of cooperation. Progress in arms control and reduction, thought still reflecting struggle between old and new thinking, is already considerable. But nuclear arms with their inevitable logic of proliferation still hover over the head of humanity. North-South disparity continues to grow wider. In addition, new economic challenges have come into being in the North itself in the aftermath of these great political changes. The Middle East stands today as

a litmus test between continued improvement in the international situation and a new sharp deterioration.

Mr. Chairman

I must apologize to you for this somewhat laboured exposition of the current international developments. My submission is justification is that South Asian is unlikely to remain unaffected by their political and economic consequences. Individually we stand the real risks of being overwhelmed by their consequences. But regionally we may be able to do better and convert the changes into opportunities. This would argue that SAARC should get stronger than it is and that we should take it more seriously than we have done so far. It is a sombre reflection that the SAARC region during a year of such decisive changes on the world scene became so over occupied with its own internal problems that even the regular annual summit could not be held. None of these problems is insurmountable in cooperation. The present meeting, for this reason, should reassert the primacy of our commitment to SAARC.

Mr. Chairman

The Integrated Programme of Action which has been developed over the years under SAARC for regional cooperation was adapted for confidence building. Given wide and deep distrust among member countries, that was admittedly the most practical approach. A more ambitious programme, even with the best of intentions, could be counterproductive. Progress and consolidation of IPA, within the designed limits, give grounds for satisfaction. Participation at the non-governmental level which has been rightly encouraged is considerable though there is a danger of such participations lapsing into mere exercises if they only proliferate and fall out of step with political commitment. Non-governmental participation, too, builds up confidence among members. Somewhat different but no less important, however, is the proposed Regional Convention on Drug Control because it envisages cooperation not merely at the level of confidence, not merely at the level of specific projects marginally relevant to overall policy but at the level of policy itself. This is, in my opinion, which, when a substantial number of such policies are reconciled, likely to cause a break-through in regional cooperation. Nepal is already to go ahead with the signing of the Convention. Another proposal awaiting the decision of our meeting is the establishment of a SAARC Regional Fund. This Fund, too, will require regional cooperation for its management and proper use at the level of national policy. Cooperation in trade, manufacturing, energy and services which has been on the agenda for some time will advance the same trend to

a point where it will be seen to be effective by the people. National studies on these important subjects are now in different stages of maturation and should be expedited so that they are all ready for coordination. In addition, inter-sectoral coordination of all SAARC activities has received the attention of our Association for some time. When effective, it will also strengthen the trend towards policy coordination. It is my belief that decisions which have already been made and which are likely to induce cooperation at the policy level should receive priority over new disparate specific projects.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion, I want to assure Your Excellency of the support and cooperation of my country in the discharge of your duty as the Chairman of our Association.

Thank you very much.

Statement by
Right Honourable Girija Prasad Koirala

Prime Minister of Nepal, Sixth SAARC Summit, 21st Dec. 1991, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairman
Your Majesty
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me, first of all, to associate myself with my distinguished colleagues to warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous election as the Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. You, Mr. Chairman, and your country, Sri Lanka, have made significant efforts for the establishment of SAARC. Therefore, it is only natural that you have been chosen to head the Association at this moment of history when our region is faced with new opportunities and challenges. Mr. Chairman, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to me and other members of my delegation by the Government and the people of Sri Lanka. We are indeed overwhelmed by the warmth of their friendly feelings and affection for which I am grateful.

Mr. Chairman, may I take this opportunity to express my warm welcome to Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, who, like me, is participating in this Summit for the first time. Begum Zia has the distinction of being well known for her excellent leadership qualities and dedication to the values of democracy and human rights. I would also like to express my warm welcome to Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, who is participating as Prime Minister for the first time. Shri Narasimha Rao is no stranger to our Association. I am fully convinced that our meeting will greatly benefit from his mature vision and wisdom. Similarly, I feel honoured to share this forum with His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wanchuck of Bhutan and His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz

Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan, whose valuable contribution to the SAARC process is deeply appreciated by all of us.

Mr. Chairman, we also owe a debt of gratitude to our outgoing Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the President of the Maldives, for his guidance and tireless efforts to invest into SAARC greater substance in the pursuit of its avowed goals.

Mr. Chairman, it will be a miss on my part if I fail to compliment His Excellency Mr. K. K. Bhargava for his diligence and competence as our Association's Secretary General. He earns our appreciation for the distinction with which he has served his office for more than two years. I also take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Maldives by the Council of Ministers as the next Secretary General of SAARC. I wish to assure him of full cooperation of my Government in the discharge of his duties.

Mr. Chairman, and Distinguished Delegates, I have brought with me from the land of Gautam Buddha, the Apostle of Peace, warm greetings and good wishes of the people of Nepal to all of you. At this hour I also feel it incumbent to reiterate and reaffirm Nepal's full commitment to the principles and policies of SAARC and our resolve to work together for the collective interest and benefit of the SAARC members as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, at this moment while we are gathered here to deliberate on SAARC activities, my mind is naturally drawn to the tragic and grievous loss sustained by India and the region, in the death of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India, at the hand of an assassin in May this year. Shri Rajiv Gandhi was a young and charismatic leader and was long associated with the evolution and shaping of SAARC. On behalf of my delegation as well as on my own, I pay sincere tribute to the memory of the departed soul.

Mr. Chairman, much has happened both in the regional canvas as well as in the world since we met last in Malé in 1990. The spectrum of East-West relations which had been characterized by a long legacy of cold war now appears to be an event of the past. The dismantling of ideological barriers has unfolded a new situation fraught with promises of peace, tranquility and harmony. The triumph of liberal democracy and reassertion of fundamental human rights characterize the dominant trend.

In the last Summit, my distinguished predecessor had mentioned about the successful mass movement in Nepal and the efforts being made for stabilizing democracy in the country. Today, I am pleased to state here that Nepal's transition to democracy was smooth and impressive.

The May 1991 election in Nepal has demonstrated our love for freedom and democracy, while, at the same time, making us more responsive and sensitive

to the rising aspirations of the people. Unless we address the economic problems of our people and alleviate their miseries, the nascent democracy could be endangered. This, I think, is a common problem for other countries too in the similar state of democratic transition.

Mr. Chairman, I have ventured to raise this issue just to remind ourselves that we have a common destiny. The spirit of cooperation and complementarity would have to be inculcated through various ways underlined in numerous SAARC exercises. I sincerely hope that SAARC would be used as an instrument of peace, stability, progress and prosperity, in addition to giving a greater thrust for institutionalizing democracies in the region. And only by strengthening these institutions, leaders imbued with confidence, vision and determination can emerge and contribute to the spirit of regional cooperation.

Let me also point out that a few new initiatives to be taken by us today would be in harmony with the emerging global trends which are likely to shape the world order both in the economic and political sense. Today's international order is becoming more cooperative with the resolution of deep-rooted conflicts, and reliance on greater interdependence. This reality has given added impetus to the continuing relevance of regional cooperation. As the new international order is being arranged with new perspective and directions, there is no reason why the countries of South Asia cannot free themselves from their past prejudices. Nationally most countries of the region have adopted democracy which make the government more accountable and sensitive to the people. The security perceptions of the regional states should also undergo a change in view of the less conflict-prone strategic relations envisaged by SAARC.

Mr. Chairman, the SAARC process has also to strike a balance between the expanding economic interactions of some big Member Countries and the less developed ones. Though both the production planning and market planning are entirely dependent on a country's national decision, SAARC as a group can work on this agenda for mutual benefits. The current level of economic relations within the region does not create conditions for greater regional cooperation giving rise to doubts about the prospects of SAARC itself. One cannot, however, underestimate the progress made over the last ten years or so, because the SAARC forum has brought us together here in Colombo to discuss some burning issues facing the region. Yet for making any decision a success, courage and political will of SAARC members become paramount.

I strongly feel that the current international situation should encourage us for taking new initiatives for the evolution of SAARC. Since we share a common civilization our task ahead should be less difficult. The Colombo Summit, I believe, would go a long way towards representing some humble efforts in reinvigorating our enthusiasm and hopes for the evolution of SAARC. If

democracy and human freedoms are the current themes of the world today, relations based on cooperation and friendship are likely to constitute yet another wave of regionalization.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we shall be able to cope with the new situation if we develop a competitive edge in areas where we possess natural advantages. The best way of accomplishing it, to my mind, is through institutionalization of intra-SAARC cooperation in core economic areas. The Regional Study on Trade, Manufactures and Services and the measures recommended by the committee on Economic Cooperation in relation to the study, deserve our serious consideration. I do hope that the recommended trade liberalization policy with appropriate safeguards for special interests of economically weaker partners, will inevitably promote our economies, and the countries in the region will collectively reap benefit from such trade expansion. The Association is thus poised to enter into a new and dynamic phase with its move towards such core areas as trade, manufactures, services and environment.

Mr. Chairman, we must recognise that the degradation of the environment has become a matter of global concern today. The greenhouse effect, depletion of forests and soil erosion resulting in the ecological distortion warrant our urgent attention. It is now being increasingly realised that it is the man who is endangering nature through his own thoughtless actions. While it is poverty which causes degradation of the environment in the developing countries, in the developed countries it is unchecked affluence which is largely responsible for ecological problems. I hope that the proposed Study of Greenhouse Effect and its Impact on the Region will strengthen our hands in combating the environmental problems confronting the region. In this context, it is heartening to note that 1992 has been designated as the SAARC Year of the Environment.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, while I stand before this august gathering, I cannot lose sight of the fact that we together represent more than one-fifth of humanity, the majority of which is economically poor and under-privileged. Unless we focus our attention on their plight and channelize resources to improve the quality of their lives, we will have failed in our goals. Nepal would, therefore, like to see concrete and coordinated programmes for the alleviation of poverty accorded highest priority in the framework of our regional cooperative efforts. This is by no means an easy task but our resolve to work in unison based on realisation of our shared interests will undoubtedly make the task easier.

Before I leave, I will like to state a few words - only one sentence because that is the theme of religion - every religion. The theme is and I quote it "Love thy neighbour".

Thank You.

Statement by
Right Honourable Girija Prasad Koirala

Prime Minister of Nepal, Seventh SAARC Summit, 10-11 April 1993, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Madam Chairperson
Your Majesty
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be invited to take part at the Seventh SAARC Summit in this historic city of Dhaka. This great city was the home of the SAARC initiative and you, Madam, if I may recall, were close to that event. It is only appropriate that we start our second round with Dhaka. May I congratulate you, Madam, on your well-deserved election as Chairperson of our Association for the year. I believe your profound commitment to the cause of SAARC will stand us in good stead in further advancing and achieving our common objectives. I assure you of my full cooperation. I also take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Government and people of Bangladesh for the warm feelings of friendship with which we have been received and liberal hospitality that has been accorded to us.

Before I proceed, I wish to add my special word in appreciation of our outgoing Chairman, His Excellency President Ranasinghe Premadasa, who provided our Association with his enthusiastic and dedicated leadership during the past year. We have benefited from his wisdom and several initiatives.

Madam Chairperson

This Seventh Summit in Dhaka marks the beginning of the second cycle of our exchanges and cooperative endeavours. The occasion calls for a review of the progress we have made so far and also for some fresh look into the future.

Madam

It is a matter of satisfaction that our association has withstood wide skepticism that preceded and accompanied its establishment. It has overcome many obstacles that stood in its way. It has asserted and re-asserted itself through vicissitudes of fortune. It has acquired an element of irreversibility. But the recent events in the subcontinent which necessitated the postponement of this annual session warn us that this irreversibility is fragile. Confidence in the future of our Association is under strain in the prevailing climate of fear and suspicion. Remedy, in my opinion, is not retreat which we must avoid but a renewed commitment to the SAARC ideal and objectives in the wider politico-economic context. SAARC should become a way of life and thought in South Asia. A South Asian regional identity which has been built on our steady efforts of cooperation for over seven years and which has invited increasing international interest is slowly emerging. SAARC reflects awareness of the international economic environment with regard to both economic laws and trends and recognizes the hard fact of interdependence in the modern world. Above all, a promising high forum functions today as a part of our political and economic life where economic issues formally and political issues informally can be discussed in the interest of peace and progress in the region. Results in our opinion, though not spectacular, have been considerable and suggest that at the present moment of apparent drift the SAARC spirit is even more necessary. Reforms in the procedure that we have recently introduced should impart seriousness in our functioning. A more businesslike and functional approach in our transactions has been adopted aimed at expediting our work. Overall impact on our work would be accelerated with timely renewal of our unequivocal commitment to the ideal of regional cooperation.

Madam Chairperson

We started with modest areas of cooperation designed more for confidence-building than ambitious cooperative undertaking. Given the overall complexity of the South Asian situation, no other course was practical to us. The Integrated Programme of Action embodied this modest approach when it started. The Programme has expanded over the years to cover more areas of our social and economic life. Today the field of cooperation encompasses agriculture, education, health, transport and communication.

In most of the areas so covered satisfactory progress has been reported. Further, it has been recognized by the Association that building up the edifice of regional cooperation, brick by brick, from below is a necessary but not a sufficient approach. So our Association is moving now into core

major economic areas involving policy changes. These areas include trade liberalization, mobilization of regional and extra-regional resources, poverty alleviation and environment.

Madam Chairperson

The most important measure of South Asian Cooperation is the volume of regional trade. Trade operates not on subsidies nor on charity but on the hard laws of economics. This demands both meaningful competition and meaningful cooperation. In this perspective the state of regional trade at the moment is far from satisfactory. In these circumstances, it is a matter of satisfaction that this subject has engaged the serious attention of our Association. A draft agreement on SAARC preferential trading arrangement which addresses this question and envisages a time-bound progress of exchange of trade concessions is ready before us. Members of the group who worked out such a fine document deserve our appreciation. Expedient adoption and ratification of this draft by Member States would initiate a new era of greater regional engagement on this important subject.

Madam Chairperson

SAARC was not conceived as a substitute for hard national effort. On the contrary, it presupposes even more committed efforts on the part of Member Countries. Our own political experience tells us that no member state will be helped regionally or internationally unless it helps itself. In terms of cooperation and values underlying it politics and economics go together. For the reason the SAARC Fund for Regional Projects was based on internal regional resources. Its purpose was to carry out feasibility studies of promising projects. It measures up our earnestness. It is our view that the Fund should continue to hold priority in our attention. Two other Funds with wider aims have also been proposed and are at different stages of maturation but the progress made so far is far from adequate. The subject needs to be pursued because South Asia's development requires more than regional resources. Poverty alleviation is an activity which is intimately linked with the use of regional resources. Attack on poverty constitutes the central theme of our Eighth Plan which has recently been embarked. In this Plan we have tried to keep the people at the centre of our attention with a priority on rural development including drinking water, education, housing and basic health. South Asia has no greater resource than its people in whom it abounds and to whom development is addressed. Besides, our Eighth Plan is informed by awareness that Nepal's hydro-electric potential is nationally vital and regionally significant. As all the Member Countries have poverty alleviation

programmes of their own, we believe there is promising scope for sharing of ideas, experiences and techniques in a cooperative manner.

Madam Chairperson

Population control is one area where adequate attention does not seem to have been focused on a regional basis. In most countries of the region a greater part of our efforts on development is negated due to a high rate of population growth. There is, therefore, a need for greater degree of cooperation among us in the field of population activities.

Madam Chairperson

It is often said that child shows the man as morning shows the day. But the condition of children in South Asia is very unsatisfactory. Abuses and exploitations are common. Occasions where a child is obliged to do an adult's full job are disturbingly too numerous. Nepal has acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. But much practical work remains to be done. In this context the Ministerial Conference on Children in South Asia held in Colombo last September was a welcome development. It should impart impetus to our efforts to address issues affecting children.

Madam Chairperson

Threat to environment is a growing international concern. It is a matter of equal concern to us in South Asia. This wide concern was recently expressed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio in Brazil. Decisions made there need to be pursued and also advanced. Developing countries have reason to be reassured that the international community no longer regards environment and development as exclusive of each other but believes that both can be pursued together.

Madam Chairperson

SAARC is a sufficiently focused regional undertaking, more practical than emotional. It has been widely accepted and looked up to with expectations by the people. Streams of cultural and professional teams have been exchanged in growing number. SAARC legislators have recently adopted a charter of their own. While all this is welcome and encouraging, we should ensure nevertheless that the basic focus of practical economic cooperation is not obscured in emotion and euphoria.

Madam Chairperson

When SAARC was founded the world situation was very different. Nations were divided into ideologies and military blocs. The Cold War was on. The problems of developing countries lay simmering under the dominating climate of mortal confrontation. Today with the end of the Cold War there is not only a welcome lowering of international tension but also, positively, a new awakening to values of freedom, justice, human rights and democracy. Our region's destiny is more in the hands of the region itself. But regional tensions all over the world have stepped up. We have a world now with reduced superpower tension but increased regional tensions. South Asia is no exception in this pattern, but underlying it all there is a welcome trend politically in this region towards a vision of society unfolded by democratic values. It is not uniform but unmistakable. Economically, Member Countries are currently engaged in radical restructuring and readjustment of their economic policies and institutions. There is more compatibility now in basic economic philosophy. A shared system of political and economic values essential to the evolution of South Asian community seems in sight. This should be matter of hope. Of course, there are uncertainties. The most immediate uncertainty in most Member States individually and in the region collectively is the current state of unrest and heightened tension. While values are being recognized as universal, selective use of such values for political purposes remains.

Madam Chairperson

The dominant contradiction in the international economic system is the theory market-oriented free trade and enterprise and the practice of overt or disguised protectionism. Complex issues of development have not received the attention they deserve. It is highly desirable that SAARC adjusts its own perception of the future in recognition of these changes and of the fact that the post-Cold War South Asia is freer and less externally incumbered to shape its own destiny.

Thank You.

Statement by
Right Honourable Man Mohan Adhikari

Prime Minister of Nepal, Eighth SAARC Summit, 2-4 May 1995, New Delhi, India

Mr. Chairman
Your Majesty
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I begin by extending my warm felicitations and that of my delegation to you, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of the Republic of India, on Your Excellency's unanimous election as Chairman.

I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to preceding chairperson Madam Khaleda Zia of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for her able stewardship of SAARC.

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to Your Excellency, the friendly Government and people of India for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in New Delhi. We also greatly appreciate the excellent arrangement made for this meeting.

I also have the pleasure to express my appreciation to the Secretary General of SAARC, His Excellency Mr. Yadav Kant Silwal, for his dedication to the objectives, principles and activities of SAARC. His able Directors and staff also deserve our commendation.

Mr. Chairman, peace and development are two essential goals of all states. The adoption of SAARC Charter and the Dhaka Declaration have been instrumental in achieving these twin goals. This has come while searching for new development strategies for South Asian Region. And ever since the inception of the SAARC it has gained a fast momentum in a very short span of time. This has created a new power equation in the region and paved the way

for regional cooperation. Cooperation based on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs of the other states and mutual benefit provides the fair guidelines for resolving new challenges.

Mr. Chairman, in the past decades we have seen the process of decolonization and emancipation of colonized and dependent countries. Cold War has calmed down. A kind of Socialist pattern and practices of government collapsed in East European countries. There is a great break-up of the Soviet Socialist Republic. Not only that but we have also witnessed the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa and we can see and hope for the lasting peace in Middle East.

With these major political upheavals at the geopolitical level we can see the manifestation of globalization specially on economic and social fields. Scientific and technological advances are the basis of the manifestations of globalization. But even at this time of globalization we find the utmost necessity of regional cooperation. We take regional cooperation as complementary and interdependent rather than contradictory to globalization. Therefore, the role we can play as regional personality to the global peace and development is self explanatory.

During the last ten years SAARC has built infrastructure on all concerned fields of regional cooperation, especially on economic, social and cultural sectors. Extensive studies have been undertaken on possibility of cooperation in areas such as agriculture, rural development, telecommunication, meteorology and health and population activities and other three additional areas of Transport, Postal Services and Scientific and Technological Cooperation. Cultural and Educational Exchange Programme, Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and establishment of the SAARC Food Security Reserve are highly noteworthy. Now the time has come to go into full fledged action for which our Secretariat, Council of Ministers and various committees be directed accordingly.

For this, SAARC Headquarters at Kathmandu must also be strengthened, equipped and modernized according to the tune of the time.

In expanding our activities it would be better to account for positive experiences from already established regional institutions like the EU, ASEAN, NAFTA etc. To maintain good relationship and frequent interactions with such institutions would of great help.

Mr. Chairman, as peace is very much important for development similarly, development is also important to keep peace. Therefore, economy plays a

dominant role almost on every issue of this economic world. To promote, sustain and develop cooperation, trade, industry and commerce, the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries at the Sixth SAARC Summit held in Colombo in December 1991 consented to the liberalization of trade for sharing the benefits of trade expansion equitably. Heading towards this concept SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) has been made. SAPTA would be the first major step for accelerating the pace of trade and economic cooperation in the region. This will also give impetus to promote intra-regional trade.

The provision to take appropriate steps and measures for developing and improving communication system, transport infrastructure and transit facilities is vital for growth of trade within and outside the region. By using the provision of special treatment for the least developed countries they can have special benefit over and above mutual benefit of reciprocity. We, on our side therefore, are firmly committed to this SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). Mr. Chairman, we would like to see this agreement come into force as soon as possible after the ratification by the contracting states.

Besides liberalization of trade, SAARC may reasonably look for harnessing and exploiting the vast resources of the region for mutual benefit. By properly exploiting water resources Nepal can contribute a lot to the development of the whole region. We believe that the increasingly unequal economic progress arises out of faulty system not out of any scarcity of natural and human resources.

Mr. Chairman

Your Majesty

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

To conclude, on the occasion of the tenth year of SAARC, I would like to take this opportunity to express my feelings that SAARC should move to face various challenges ahead, go beyond economics and create opportunity to discuss bilateral and political issues also. Periodic contacts between the Heads of State or Government can make an honest effort to overcome past prejudices and enhance peace in the region. Nepal honestly offers any kind of services to such pious aim.

Thank You.

Statement by
Right Honourable Lokendra Bahadur Chand

Prime Minister of Nepal, Ninth SAARC Summit, 12-14 May 1997, Malé, Maldives

Mr. Chairman
Your Majesty
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

For a person like me from a country in the Himalayas, it is a pleasure to be in a beautiful country like the Maldives lying on the deep Indian Ocean. I am happy to be here and extend our hearty congratulations on the assumption by Your Excellency, Mr. President, of the chairmanship of our Association. You are, Mr. President, one of the founding leaders of SAARC and have a clear perception of the vision that led to the founding of our Association. You have pursued closely its achievements and dealt with its shortcomings in the last eleven years. You are also well acquainted with the problems and challenges facing us. Your inaugural address has, while reaffirming the commitment of the Maldives to the process of regional cooperation in South Asia, also made the task before this meeting clear. We are confident that under your wise and able leadership, SAARC will move forward in a collective endeavour to bring changes for the better in the lives of our peoples.

My delegation joins me in expressing our appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us by the friendly Government and people of this beautiful country. We greatly appreciate the meticulous care that has gone into the preparation for this meeting.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our outgoing Chairman, His Excellency, the Prime Minister of India, for the able leadership provided to SAARC during the important occasion of the

Association's entry into the second decade. May I also take this opportunity to extend hearty welcome to their Excellencies Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan amongst us whose association in SAARC is well known. I am confident that their farsighted vision, wisdom and statesmanship will make invaluable contribution for the cause of SAARC.

The dedication with which the Secretary General of our Association, Mr. Naeem U.Hasan has placed himself at the service of the Association has earned our warm regards and appreciation.

Mr. Chairman, the countries of South Asia share commonalities that give it a distinct identity. We have, to a great extent, very similar problems of and challenges to development. Our resource endowments are amenable to harnessing through regional cooperative ventures. And yet, we have been rather late in taking up regional cooperation in a structured manner. Like all similarly placed regions, South Asia has its share of contentious issues in interstate relations. For decades, we allowed ourselves to be misled by the assumption that contention was the only south Asian reality. For decades, we kept our eyes closed to the other equally compelling imperative of cooperation in sorting out most of the contentious issues in interstate relations. Realizing this has been an important achievement of SAARC.

Mr. Chairman, the perseverance of the people of South Asia with SAARC, despite its unsteady progress in the first decade, speaks of their determination to clarify misunderstandings and resolve doubts and of their aspiration to develop a foundation for realistic and practical cooperation at the regional level. We are now receiving some benefits from that perseverance. SAARC has started to address core economic issues. With the operationalization of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement, we have set a higher goal. We have agreed that full and timely realization of the benefits of SAARC's economic cooperation requires an eventual progression to a free trade area. We have set a time-frame for the establishment of a free trade area. The mechanisms we have set up to achieve that target are well in place making mutual trade concessions under SAPTA wider, deeper and meaningful.

Although trade is very important, it is only one component of a possible mutually beneficial regional cooperation. Other components include promotion of inter-regional investment and establishment of joint ventures. The private sector has an important role to play in this endeavour. It is heartening to note the increasing interest of the private sector in bringing about a meaningful regional economic development.

Mr. Chairman, while speaking about cooperation in core economic areas, we cannot remain indifferent to the fact of asymmetry in terms of resources and levels of development among ourselves. The least developed members of SAARC need particular attention in terms of regional investment for infrastructure development. This alone can ensure a systematic pursuit of balanced development for regional economic growth and create growth poles in the least developed member states and the least developed region of a member state. When they reach a point of economic take-off, they will be able to participate in sustaining growth in the whole region and participate meaningfully in a free trade arrangement. It is for this reason that Nepal has advocated sub-regional cooperation for specific projects within the larger framework of SAARC.

Mr.Chairman

Distinguished Delegates

South Asia is home to the largest number of people living in absolute poverty in intolerable conditions. Poverty cripples human creativity and engenders strife and destabilization. SAARC has set a target to eradicate poverty, preferably by the year 2002, and has agreed on a pro-poor agenda and plan of action to achieve that goal. We have also set up a mechanism for consultation and coordination at the regional level. Solutions to the massive problems of poverty, malnutrition, unemployment and other manifestations of socio-economic disadvantages lies in an accelerated economic development that transcends national frontiers. The fight against poverty requires a clear objective, coherent strategy, and steadfastness in pursuit. For this, economic and social development programmes need to be conceived in terms of a process which enables human beings to realize their potential. It requires and vision of development that can inspire and mobilize people. The vision must be centred on the people. It has to be a participatory process wherein people at each level of the community make decisions regarding programmes meant to give them a life of dignity and fulfillment. Only sustained and balanced economic growth which creates productive employment can effectively eradicate poverty. At the same time, growth and increasing unevenness in distribution of income is not socially viable. The challenge is to find ways of sustaining economic growth which also fosters improvement in distribution of income without acting as a disincentive for the productive sector. Additionally, what is produced? How it is produced? At what social and environmental costs? By whom and for whom? All these are as important questions as higher economic growth.

SAARC has moved beyond technical cooperation to social agenda. Poverty eradication is our first and foremost goal. We have also been concentrating on other vulnerable sections of our populations. Child welfare, especially the welfare of the girl child in especially difficult circumstances, is high one our list of priorities. Likewise, making women full partners in development is another challenging goal we have set for ourselves. The national strategies for social sectors being pursued by member states in areas of health, mass literacy, maternal and child programmes, and status of women need to be interwoven with regional cooperation in these vital areas of concern.

Mr. Chairman, along with evolving strategies for social development and poverty eradication, we have been working together against drug trafficking and terrorism. In the two SAARC Conventions, we have a framework for collaborations, we have a framework for collaboration in the fight against these twin scourge. Completion of national legal formalities regarding these two Conventions will enable us to effectively carry out the obligations we have undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, under SAARC, we have initiated some actions to promote people-to-people contacts. This meeting could ask the Council of Ministers to undertake a thorough review of the achievements thus far and come up with recommendations to widen and facilitate the people-to-people contacts. With the trend towards inter-regional dealings and dialogue, we need to add momentum to our search for closer cooperation with other sister regional organizations. All this adds to the work of the SAARC Secretariat, and the Council is already considering ways and means to strengthen the Secretariat and make it more effective. This has assumed urgency in the light of our widening social agenda and by the move towards a fast track approach to economic cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, in SAARC, we have a sound mechanism for frequent interactions at high political levels. This has contributed considerably to the growth of mutual trust and confidence. The resulting harmony has helped us to embark on some important and tangible areas of cooperation. We have to build on this with an earnestness of purpose. I am convinced that all seven of us are determined to go forward resolutely. I would like to reaffirm that Nepal will not be found lacking in this collective endeavour.

Thank you.

Statement by
Right Honourable Girija Prasad Koirala

Prime Minister of Nepal, Tenth SAARC Summit, 29-31 July 1998, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Madam Chairperson
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be here in this beautiful capital city of Colombo for the second time. I recall with pleasure, memories of my previous visit to this country to attend the Sixth SAARC Summit in 1991.

Sri Lanka is an honoured member of the international community with well-known commitment to the ideals of Non-alignment and the United Nations. It has made significant contributions to the evolution of SAARC. Our meeting in Colombo coincides with the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence of this friendly country. On this happy occasion, we greet you, Madame President, and extend our best wishes for peace, progress and prosperity of Sri Lanka.

Allow me to extend our warm felicitations to you, Madam President, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of our Association. We are confident that under your able leadership, the Association will make significant progress towards achieving the fundamental goal of promoting the welfare of the people of South Asia by advancing cooperation in the core areas of economy.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Your Excellency, and through you to the Government and people of Sri Lanka for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and my delegation ever since our arrival here. We are deeply impressed by the excellent arrangements made for our meeting.

I also take this opportunity to place on records our sincere appreciation to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Maldives, Mr. Maumoon Abdul

Gayoom, the outgoing Chairman, for successfully guiding the Association during the past one year. He is one of the founding leaders of SAARC and we hold his dedication to the ideals and objectives of the Association in high esteem.

Mr. Naeem U. Hasan, Secretary General of the SAARC, has earned our appreciation for the dedication and ingenuity with which he has been serving the Association.

Madam Chairperson

Globalization has not benefited all countries equally owing to lack of level playing field and technological gap between the rich and poor. The technological revolution is having a profound effect on the nature of world economic activities. Knowledge intensive and information processes have become increasingly important in determining the material composition of products. It has become urgent for us to attain, accommodate and manage qualitative technological development, products mix and marketing strategies to enhance our international competitiveness.

Madam Chairperson

Greater regional economic integration and collective capacity building are imperative needs to promote our collective competitiveness. South Asia's share in global production and trade is far from commensurate with its size and potential. Technical cooperation and sharing of experience which constitute bulk of SAARC activities now are no doubt essential and important but not sufficient to generate trade, investment, jobs and better life through shared endeavours. The immediate goal for us is to facilitate a smooth transition from SAPTA to SAFTA. If the progress in the present negotiations is any indication, we will have to redouble our efforts for SAFTA to materialize as promised earlier.

In our journey to deeper economic integration, we all have to make concerted efforts to harmonize and stabilize macro-economic policies to spur investment and trade in the region. We need to address urgently matters relating to transport, infrastructure, banking and insurance, trade and payment mechanisms. Cooperation in the field of tourism is also significant. An open sky policy linking SAARC capitals by air will facilitate cooperation in this area. As we accelerate cooperation in the core economic areas, the special needs and concerns of the least developed members of the Association need to be kept in clear perspective.

Nepal sincerely believes that the South Asian Growth Quadrangle which aims to promote project-based cooperation will contribute significantly to the SAARC objectives of accelerating cooperation in the core areas of economy and infrastructure.

Madam Chairperson

Poverty eradication constitutes urgent and priority agenda for us. It requires a clear and determined objective, coherent and sustained strategies and steadfastness in pursuit. Poverty is as much the consequence of lack of economic opportunities as it is the product of social structure. A holistic approach is thus required to address this problem. We need to undertake comprehensive measures to empower the individual, strengthen gender equality, execute pro-poor growth strategies and ensure a participatory decision making process. As poverty has its roots in inequalities in income and denial of opportunities, ensuring distributive justice is equally essential to eradicate poverty.

Even though the primary responsibility for poverty eradication lies with the national governments, the SAARC three-tier mechanism has been serving useful purposes in terms of sharing information and experiences and providing useful policy inputs.

Environmental degradation in our region is closely linked with the persistence of poverty. The fragile Himalayan ecology and the serious risk of a rise in the sea level caused by global warming call for a renewed commitment and concerted efforts. Economic development has to be synchronized with the environment protection measures, sustainability and poverty.

Madam Chairperson

Enhancing the status of women is a major problem before SAARC. There have been serious efforts both at the national and regional levels aimed at the empowerment of women. Experience, however, tells us that there is a need to go beyond the legalistic approach. We should work for attitudinal change that accepts women as an equal partner. We believe that women related issues can be best handled through synergistic partnership among government agencies, the private sector and non-governmental agencies. An early finalization of the Draft Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution will be an important achievement in this respect.

The state of children in South Asia is a matter of serious concern. Legal and administrative remedies alone are not sufficient. Deeper social recognition

of the rights of the child is essential to make a difference. To give up a fillip to SAARC cooperation in this vital area, we have decided to observe the first decade of the 21st century as the Decade of the Rights of the Child.

Human resource development is of high priority for all countries and more so in the case of countries like ours. We should think of developing high-tech educational institutions and centres of excellence in the region that will encourage sharing of experiences and knowledge, thus widening the prospects for making South Asia a reservoir of skilled and trained manpower.

Madam Chairperson

SAARC Regional Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances constitute important building blocks in our cooperation. Early coming into force of these Conventions will further reinforce our commitment to fight against these twin evils.

Madam Chairperson

Enhanced cooperation in the economic and social fields requires an effective technical back-up and better services. This will place a growing demand on the SAARC Secretariat. Scarcity of resources imposes serious obstacles to our desire to endow the Secretariat with the needed human and material resources. Therefore, while making the optimal utilization of the resources, we should concentrate on consolidating the existing areas of cooperation. Changes in the existing institutional structure of SAARC, recommended by the Group of Eminent Persons, should be examined seriously.

The success of SAARC and its vitality depend on the active cooperation of the South Asian community. The people-to-people contact programmes nurture the SAARC spirit. We should continue to widen the scope of these activities. In this context, we appreciate the efforts being undertaken by the apex bodies, the Group of SAARC Parliamentarians, the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry and SAARC Law.

Madam Chairperson

Excellencies

Despite the enabling environment based on shared cultural and social heritage and geographical contiguity, South Asian is still far from being a vibrant economic region. Even as we enter into the core areas of economy, trade and finance, we have to reckon with new and emerging forces. The challenge of geo-economics is a compelling factor calling upon us to rise above the legacy

of mistrust and to foster economic cooperation. We have to live with the neighbourhood realities, sharing space with neighbours. Recent events have given rise to the fear of an arms race in the region. Statesmanship and vision is required to counter this fear of a setback to painstakingly created atmosphere of confidence in our region essential for cooperation. To advance our collective interests globally, we must pay attention first to the region. A cohesive and resurgent region will find itself a rightful place in the international arena. Strengthening our collective advancement should, therefore, constitute the foundation for our cooperative efforts. We should try hard to overcome the difficulties, both real and perceived, that lie in the way of constructive cooperation. What we need is a mature understanding and appreciation of each other's aspirations and concerns.

Our vision for the next millennium is of a peaceful, stable and prosperous South Asia. Realization of this vision requires sustained, concerted and mature efforts backed by a strong political will. We should rid ourselves of the past anomalies and try to exert our efforts and resources for a better collective and future for our peoples. The historic opportunity and challenge to achieve our goal is before us.

Thank you.

Inaugural Statement by
Right Honorable Sher Bahadur Deuba

Prime Minister of Nepal, Eleventh SAARC Summit, 4-6 Jan. 2002, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Madam Chairperson
Excellencies
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is great pleasure for Nepal to host the SAARC Summit for the second time. It is more so because this is the first summit of the new century. I extend the heartiest welcome to you all in Kathmandu and wish you a very happy New Year. I also have the honour to convey the best wishes of His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev for the success of the SAARC Summit.

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the President of Sri Lanka. Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranike Kumaratunga, for the outstanding manner in which she has steered SAARC since the Tenth Summit in Colombo. Under her visionary and active leadership, SAARC has taken several new and creative initiatives in economic, social, and cultural fields, enriching the contents of our cooperation.

Madam Chairperson

Kathmandu, as many other cities in South Asia, has been an entrepot since times immemorial. The intermingling of ideas, beliefs and peoples find a strong resonance here. It brings together peoples and ideas to form a mosaic on the large canvas of South Asia. It is in this spirit that our people have taken the SAARC process. Therefore, Nepal attaches a great significance to the SAARC.

We have come a long way since SAARC was established sixteen years ago. Founded on the strength of shared culture, aspirations and interests, SAARC has established our regional identity in the international arena. It has also

raised the level of consciousness about our common destiny and opened the prospects of realizing the full potential of South Asia. During this period, regional initiatives have been launched in core economic areas of poverty eradication and trade liberalization, together with social and cultural activities.

South Asia has proved that states, asymmetric in size, capacities, and levels of development, can successfully embark upon a journey of regional economic integration and interdependence. This has been possible because the leaders and peoples have the vision for a better future and the will to act accordingly.

The founding fathers of SAARC had the wisdom and foresight to harness the strengths that unite us, so that the welfare of the people is ensured through regional cooperation. The successive leaders, including those I have the privilege to sit with today, have continued to uphold these virtues and to work for the consolidation of regional cooperation with resolve and commitment. I take this opportunity to pay my profound tributes to all these great statesmen. I wish to particularly recall the outstanding commitment and contribution of one of the founders, His late Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, whose tragic demise last June has profoundly saddened us all.

This summit held at a distinctive juncture and environment, convinces us that the SAARC is going to stay and strive forward as an important forum to advance the cause of regional cooperation in South Asia. We believe that this forum can significantly contribute to nurture further understanding among us and to unite us with our commonalities. We can also benefit from the informal consultations to promote mutual trust and understanding.

South Asia is a region of tremendous potential that is yet to be realized. It has the one-fifth of humanity, largest pool of human resources and abundant natural resources. But paradoxically, it is also the part of the world where the largest number of the poor, illiterate and sick reside. Its human development indicators and percapita incomes rank among the lowest. Its share in global trade is negligible. An enhanced level of cooperation is the only way for this region to secure results and respect commensurate to its potential.

In Nepal's view, poverty reduction must be our foremost priority. To eradicate persistent poverty, we must have economic performance at a higher trajectory of growth. We must expand production and markets, increase trade, raise incomes and consumption, as well as adopt pro-poor policies. Empowerment of people with better education and health services for all, widening of job market and other opportunities, and promotion of human work and dignity should receive special focus.

While we seek to expand trade outside the region, efforts must be exerted to stimulate the regional trade. To achieve that, we should finalize the SAFTA framework treaty, and fix the priority and sequencing of its execution. In view of the severe structural constraints they face, the least developed countries should be given special concession to help them address their serious disadvantages. As this summit is the first in this century, it is time to adopt a visionary goal of establishing the South Asian Economic Union, as proposed by the eminent group of experts, and to start taking gradual and incremental steps towards that objective.

Nepal stresses the imperative to deepen technical cooperation in the broad areas already identified and believes water resources should be a major component under the energy sector. Some of these areas have been also picked up for sub-regional cooperation. SAARC ought to explore all these avenues to consolidate economic cooperation and promote regional complementarities and the economies of scale.

It is Nepal's conviction that economic growth must be accompanied by social progress in order to attain balanced development. For realizing the social goals, there is the need to raising social awareness and tolerance, respecting human rights, and removing discrimination and exclusion. Effective measures should be taken to prevent violence and discrimination against women, children, and the disadvantaged, and to create an inclusive environment. Favourable conditions should thus be put in place for these segments of population to participate effectively in all walks of national life. Since the proposed SAARC Social Charter will help advance these objectives, we should encourage this with the seriousness it deserves.

Women constitute half of our populations. I believe the vitality and progress of South Asia will be largely determined by how effectively we educate, empower and mobilize women as equal partners in progress. Children are the standard bearers of the future. They should be given space and opportunities to rise to their full potential. I hope that the signing of the SAARC conventions on trafficking in women and children and on the welfare of children will make major contribution to their welfare and protection.

While our region already is burdened with so many socio-economic problems, terrorism has emerged as a major threat to development and peace. This scourge has begun to negate whatever achievements we have made in strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, and creating momentum for social and economic change. Its increasing viciousness and sophistication in unleashing indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians and the destruction of the property has indeed been a matter of great concern for all of us. In

my own county Nepal, we are fighting terror, which has forced us to divert our attention and limited resources from the much-needed development activities.

To root out the growing menace of terrorism, we should collectively and resolutely fight against this crime and should block drug trafficking and organized crimes that finance and support it. We need to expedite enabling legislations that will facilitate the implementation of SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. This should be complimented with the effective implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which all of us have supported.

Apart from terrorism, the SAARC members hold similar views on most issues like official development assistance, debt relief, foreign investment, trade and market access, information technology, reforms in international financial architecture and HIV/AIDS. It is also a matter of satisfaction that common South Asian position is emerging on WTO issues.

The need to articulate the common views and positions of the South Asian countries has become further pronounced in various international issues and events, in order to strengthen our collective role in the international arena, increasing our visibility and influence. In this regard, the year 2002 offers unprecedented opportunity, as we prepare for world conferences on Financing for Development, Food Security, Sustainable Development, and children and the elderly. By having a united voice, we can more effectively pursue new patterns of partnerships and advance our shared interests. Then only, we can benefit from the process of globalization, turning this into an opportunity as positive force for change in our counties.

Madam Chairperson

Governments cannot do everything that we wish to achieve in regional cooperation. Comprehensive and sustained partnership between governments, the private sector, and civil society will be necessary to achieve our socio-economic goals. A strong and broad based public support will remain the most critical element to make our endeavors successful. The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries has been doing a commendable work for promoting regional economic cooperation. We welcome their initiatives for a partnership between the private sector and the government to reach the important milestones the SAARC has set to advance socio-economic progress of the people of South Asia.

It is encouraging to note that SAARC has become part of the common people's vocabulary. This has also been augmented by the increasing role

and visibility of the Civil Society, which has become an increasingly important stakeholder and key catalyst in steering the SAARC agenda forward. Nepal highly appreciates their tremendous contribution and believes that we should urge them to continue with their good work.

A series of commitments have been made under SAARC, both in economic and social fields, raising people's expectations. Nepal believes that mechanisms for implementation and monitoring should be streamlined and strengthened so that our commitments translate into performance. One way of doing that would be the further strengthening and empowering the SAARC Secretariat, which Nepal is proud to host since it was established. As the Secretariat is gearing up for a change in its leadership, I would like to welcome the appointment of Mr. Q.A.M.A Rahim of Bangladesh as next Secretary General of our Association and pledge Nepal's full support to him. Let me also express my thanks to the outgoing Secretary General Mr. Nihal Rodrigo of Sri Lanka for the exemplary commitment and distinction with which he served the SAARC process. I wish him success in the future.

South Asians have always celebrated diversity and cross-fertilization of cultures, as well as learned to live in peace and harmony with one another. The region has also been the birthplace of Lord Buddha, philosophers, sages, monks, and Sufis, who have inspired the region and beyond with the message and deeds of peace, non-violence and tolerance. As the search for peace is perennial, we need to continue encouraging people to live by examples. Nepal, committed to peace as it is, would like to propose that we establish a SAARC Peace Award to honour the exemplary work of individuals and organizations to promote peace, understanding, friendship and development in the region. I hope this idea will find favour with our friends, all of whom as I know are equally dedicated to these values.

Regional cooperation can flourish only when we pursue it with vigour and dedication. You may agree with me that the SAARC has been able to create a regional space for all of us. Our peoples cherish the ardent desire to see a more coherent, stable and prosperous South Asian community. We must move regional cooperation forward focusing on what is doable and achievable, and pursuing it with resolve and determination. It calls for political will and commitment at highest level. Nepal remains committed to work with our friends to invigorate SAARC and accelerate its journey to collective prosperity and peace.

Thank you.

Statement by
Right Honourable Surya Bahadur Thapa

Prime Minister of Nepal, Twelfth SAARC Summit, 4-6 Jan. 2004, Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be in this beautiful city of Islamabad to attend the Twelfth SAARC Summit. We have been highly impressed with the excellent arrangement made and warm hospitality extended to us by the Government and people of Pakistan since our arrival in Pakistan. I have also the honour to convey the best wishes of His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal for the success of the event.

I extend my warm felicitations to His Excellency Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, Prime Minister of Pakistan, on his assumption of the Chairmanship of the SAARC. I am fully confident that your wisdom, leadership and experience will go a long way in further strengthening the organization and promoting regional cooperation. While wishing you all success in the discharge of your responsibility, let me assure you that His Majesty's Government of Nepal will extend all possible cooperation in the endeavours to further consolidate enhanced cooperation among the Member Countries.

Excellencies

After the assumption of the chair, we actively pursued the issues and agenda of regional cooperation as envisioned in the Declaration of the Eleventh SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in January 2002. I am happy that a lot of progress has been made in various areas of cooperation. Nepal hosted the inter-summit session of the SAARC Council of Ministers in August 2002, preceded by the regular session of the Standing Committee. We also hosted a Special Session of the SAARC Standing Committee in July 2003, when the

Twelfth SAARC Summit had remained postponed. The Foreign Secretaries deserve our appreciation for deciding the dates of the Twelfth Summit. The meeting also gave necessary momentum to different SAARC activities.

I had the opportunity to visit all the South Asian capitals for consultation. From my discussion with all the Leaders in the region, I am extremely optimistic of the future of regional cooperation in the SAARC. The recent meeting of the Council of Ministers has given a further fillip to our deliberations.

Nepal had hosted the informal meetings of the SAARC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in 2002 and 2003. It was in this meeting that our Foreign Ministers had come up with a suggestion that the poverty alleviation should be an “overarching goal” of the regional cooperation in the SAARC. I think the Summit should endorse this idea and focus our efforts in implementing tangible cooperation in the field of poverty reduction.

I am very pleased to note the progress in the field of poverty alleviation, especially in the implementation of the tasks mandated by the Eleventh Summit. During the Summit, the Heads of State or Government gave renewed emphasis on poverty alleviation. The reconstituted Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA) under the convenorship of former Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has completed its commendable report. It should be the basis of future cooperation in the field of poverty alleviation. As mandated by the last Summit, the Secretary General has compiled a SAARC Regional Poverty Profile, including the data and the best practices of all the South Asian countries. A number of regional meetings of poverty-related Ministers and Secretaries have been held and a Plan of Action has been ready for our approval. We have to undertake a holistic and sustained approach towards poverty alleviation so that the poor and destitute are brought in the mainstream of development.

Substantive progress has been registered in the area of economic cooperation. The completion of fourth round of negotiations on the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) is an important achievement. In line with our vision of a phased and planned process eventually leading to a South Asian Economic Union, the successful conclusion of the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) will be a big leap in the annals of our regional economic cooperation. This is the result of hard work and intense negotiations of our officials and Foreign Ministers.

Terrorism continues to haunt most of us. Only recently, His Excellency the President of Pakistan fortunately survived a severe terrorist attack. My own country Nepal is facing the wrath of terrorism. The campaign of terror

and violence unleashed by Maoists is targeted against the Constitutional Monarchy, Multiparty Democracy, and Rule of Law, which have remained the hallmarks of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal. Despite our best efforts to solve the problem through negotiation, the terrorists have reverted back to violence. While we are very keen to have a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Maoist problem, we are compelled to maintain law and order and protect the lives of our innocent citizens. His Majesty's Government is committed to handling the problem with expanded development activities, good governance and a forward-looking political, economic and social reforms package.

When we met in Kathmandu two years ago, we reiterated our support to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 for combating terrorism. Our Senior Officials assisted by legal experts were mandated to prepare an Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism in line with the recent developments and the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the international conventions against terrorism. The conclusion of this Additional Protocol is a result of extensive consultations among the officials of the Member States. This landmark Protocol will go a long way in combating terrorism. As terrorists disregard rules of international behaviour, there is the need to redouble our efforts to maximize regional cooperation against terrorism. The terrorists will not yield to words of condemnation and pledges of cooperation. We need to act together resolutely.

Our signing of the Social Charter will be an important step in reiterating our collective commitment to the social sector development. As mandated by the 11th Summit, an Autonomous Advocacy Group of Prominent Women Personalities has been constituted. The Group will advocate gender issues and act as a catalyst in formulating gender responsive policies, promoting equal rights for women and ensuring implementation of international instruments on women's rights. This will help galvanize the innate potentials of women in our development efforts.

We have been trying to evolve common positions on issues of shared interest at the international fora. SAARC common positions were evolved before the World Food Summit in Rome, World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, WTO Ministerial Meetings and the World Summit on Information Society held in Geneva last month. We must continue to work together to respond to the international issues as a bloc. That would give a collective strength in the international arena.

Technical Committees are backbones of our cooperation. The review of the Technical Committees and the formation of Specialized Working Groups on Telecommunications, Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Biotechnology; Intellectual Property Rights; Tourism; and Energy are welcome developments.

We need to give more attention to accelerating the momentum to combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other deadly diseases.

The Foreign Ministers of the SAARC and ASEAN countries, in their informal meeting in New York, have come out with good recommendations. We may encourage them to further engage in constructive dialogue and partnership between the two regional associations. We could also think of having a joint SAARC-ASEAN Summit.

People-to-people relations have continued to grow. Thanks to the very active role played by the civil society, media and “track two” professionals and academicians. In this regard, we may consider the visa-free movement of media persons in our countries. Nepal has recently waived visa fees for the nationals of the SAARC countries. We would like to urge other Members to do so to encourage intra-regional travel and tourism.

It is matter of satisfaction that Nepal’s proposal for establishing a SAARC Award has been accepted. This will be awarded to honour the outstanding work of individuals and organizations within the region in the fields of peace, development, poverty alleviation and regional cooperation. The establishment of this Award will encourage creative and innovative endeavours in various areas of regional cooperation.

Excellencies

We have been very encouraged by positive developments that have recently taken place in improving relations between India and Pakistan. We welcome significant overtures and initiatives taken by His Excellency Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and His Excellency President Pervez Musharraf in this direction. We congratulate both leaders for their far-sighted vision, political acumen and a high degree of statesmanship. Nepal believes that improvement of relations between India and Pakistan will lead to relaxation of tension and help strengthen the SAARC and give a new and meaningful impetus to our search for a sustained and enhanced regional cooperation.

During the Eleventh Summit, we renewed our commitment to further strengthen the SAARC by making it more result-oriented and businesslike. The

endorsement of Nepal's proposals in this regard has been an important step towards institutional reform, simplification of work procedure, and focus on implementation.

There is a clear need for recollection of the past. May be we are giving too much focus on declaring our intents and are slow in implementing our pledges. Instead of continuation of proliferation of documents and institutions, it is about a time that we started focusing on making doable and achievable commitments. Instead of long declarations and commitments, we should rather stress on implementing what had already been agreed upon. Most importantly, we should stick to the deadlines we have set for ourselves. We should continue to allow the Secretary General the required flexibility to fix the meetings in consultation with the hosts and to implement our decisions. We may also consider meeting for our Summit at a fixed date each year, as recommended by our Foreign Ministers.

Excellencies

Ours is a region full of prospects, commonalities, and potentials. It is a cradle and continuum of ancient civilizations, place of origin of world's greatest religions, melting pot of great cultural diversity, and reservoir of vast human and natural resources.

But our region is also beset with problems, paradoxes and differences. We have the largest concentration of poor in the world. Terrorism continues to haunt us. We are among the least integrated regions in the world, yet very slow in regional cooperation.

We should transform it into a region in which peoples, goods, services and technology move freely across the borders; the motor and railways systems are integrated; and pipelines, transmission lines and telephone lines are connected in a grid. We should respond to the world's problems such as the challenges and opportunities of globalization as a united bloc. We should harmonize our economic policies and register a high economic growth. We should utilize and exploit our fullest human, natural and economic potentials and distribute the fruits of development to our peoples evenly and equitably.

In the last 18 years since its establishment, the SAARC has made some significant strides. Today it has created its own identity, space, and position in the world arena. Slow but steady, it has shown repeated resurgence despite delays and postponements. We have developed a huge network of institutions and mechanisms. Key areas of cooperation have been identified and substantive cooperation has begun in poverty alleviation, economic cooperation and

social development. The SAARC has also provided opportunity for informal bilateral discussions between us helping to resolve our problems. The SAARC has traversed a journey with renewed commitments and reiterations for forging a more enhanced level of cooperation in the region.

We should strive to move further ahead for our collective advantage and for raising the quality of lives of millions of our peoples. We have cherished the ultimate goal of pursuing and achieving a roadmap of sustained socio-economic development of our region.

It is in this spirit that I pledge Nepal's renewed commitment to the realization of our common objectives.

Thank You.

Statement by

His Majesty Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

King of Nepal, Thirteenth SAARC Summit, 12-13 Nov 2005, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Madam Chairperson

Distinguished Heads of State or Government

Secretary General of SAARC

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are happy to be here in this beautiful city of Dhaka to participate in the Thirteenth SAARC Summit. We bring with us greetings and best wishes of the people of Nepal for the success of this Summit. We extend our sincere appreciation to Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia and the Government and people of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us and our delegation since our arrival here.

We congratulate you, Madam Prime Minister, on your election as the Chairperson of the Thirteenth SAARC Summit. We have every reason to place our full confidence in Your Excellency's wisdom and statesmanship to steer our association in these defining times. We assure Your Excellency of our full support in your endeavours to make this Summit a success.

Our tributes must also go to His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Shaukat Aziz for the ingenuity and dedication with which he guided our association for the last two years.

We would be remiss without expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General of SAARC His Excellency Lyonpo Chenkyab Dorji and his team at the SAARC Secretariat for their hard work.

It is our great honour and privilege to confer the First SAARC Award on the late President Ziaur Rahman in appreciation of his outstanding contribution

to SAARC and its ideals, despite an inhospitable international climate that prevailed in those formative years.

Madam Chair

We are meeting here today against the backdrop of the recent devastating earthquake in Pakistan and India and also of the tsunami of last year. The pains and sufferings of both catastrophes will continue to reverberate for many years to come. While our brothers and sisters have not yet been fully able to dry their tears, we deem it our bounden duty to express, once again, our solidarity with them in overcoming this irreparable loss. Natural calamities of such scales underline an urgent need for an ever stronger regional partnership and concerted effort not only to mitigate the burden of sufferings but also to take preventive measures to avoid huge loss of lives and destruction of property in the future. We call for a strong and well coordinated regional mechanism to deal with natural calamities and disasters. We hope our meeting here in Dhaka will give a serious thought to it.

Madam Chair

It is with an open mindset that we have come to participate in this Summit. The contemporary trends in international geo-economics dictate that the time has come for us to take bold initiatives and concrete measures to realize SAARC goals and objectives to satisfy the ever-exorbitant expectations of our peoples. We have to move swiftly to recover the lost opportunities and maximize gains by forging regional synergy. Regional cooperation today is not merely a simple political aspiration; it has rather become an economic necessity accentuated by the forces of globalization. If the present reminds us of our duty to bring about qualitative change in the living standard of our peoples, the future demands of us fulfillment of our important responsibility to posterity: the responsibility to handover SAARC to future generations in a much better shape than it is today. We surely want a future that is better and prosperous. While we cannot convince our peoples by borrowing successful historical anecdotes of others alone, we must learn to create success stories strengthened by the glorious inspirations that fortify South Asian values and ethos.

It will not be an exaggeration to mention that South Asia, with one fifth of humanity, is a microcosm of the world. Our region possesses great potential to be a vibrant force in the international arena. What is urgently required is unity of purpose and cooperative resolve to gain collective benefit from our own strengths. We may think of a bigger reflection outside the region, but the

reality is that we have to first rediscover South Asia to find out its inherent strengths. Many countries and peoples around the world have learnt from our rich history and enduring experiences. Unfortunately, we remain deprived of the benefit of our own rich heritage.

It is a stark reality that our region has been mired in terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking and environmental catastrophes as well as unbridled spread of pestilent diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. As these problems are transcendental in nature, we have the daunting challenge to address them mutually by enhancing coordination among us.

Poverty remains the most daunting challenge to our collective wisdom. Our past efforts have certainly helped reduce its intensity. Yet, we have to traverse a long way before this social evil is completely eliminated. We congratulate the South Asian Independent Commission on Poverty Alleviation for having suggested intellectually exciting, yet practically achievable, measures to cleanse this scar from South Asia. We endorse the SAARC Development Goals (SDGs) and call for the galvanising of our visions, ideas as well as efforts and resources to achieve these goals. Success is a matter not so much of talent or opportunity as of concentration and perseverance, where commitments are matched by actions.

Programmes and activities of regional cooperation must contain poverty reduction elements. The SAARC Social Charter must be integrated into the overall SAARC activities to promote an inclusive social development for all - men, women and children. The SAFTA regime needs to be made responsive to the development needs of the poorer countries amongst us. As trade has direct consequences for poverty reduction efforts, we must take adequate measures to ensure that poverty reduction becomes the outcome of a free trade regime.

The success of SAFTA will depend on judicious sharing of benefits by all partners. SAFTA should serve as a forerunner of a more ambitious and deeper economic integration to eventually realize the goal of a South Asian Economic Union. We believe that the signing of the four agreements on Promotion and Protection of Investments, Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters, SAARC International Commercial Arbitration Centre and Avoidance of Double Taxation will further strengthen the SAFTA regime with a positive bearing on the growth of intra-regional trade and investment.

Madam Chair

Regional economic integration entails sound policy measures and capable institutions together with an adequate infrastructural network at the regional

level. As far as infrastructure is concerned, road, air, waterways and railway links across the region are vital for its success. It has become imperative that we introduce and carry out parallel processes of economic integration and infrastructure development. Infrastructure development will obviously require huge investments. The South Asian Development Fund (SADF), which was created, among other things, to mobilize resources for infrastructure development, remains underutilized for lack of adequate resources and common regional projects. We need to revitalize this Fund with required resources and appropriate technological and institutional design.

Our offer that Nepal serve as a transit point between India and China, the two largest emerging markets in the world, has been born out of our deep conviction that, in an era characterized by heightened competition to capture world markets and capital, increased trade and economic interaction between the two up-and-coming economic zones, facilitated by transportation and communication links, would provide a level playing field for both our neighbours to reap benefits of a promising global economic order.

South Asia has a great potential for tourism development. Our rich socio-cultural mosaic adds up to an unparalleled natural beauty to make our region an attractive destination for tourists from both within the region and abroad. Common religious and cultural sites, such as Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, if promoted jointly, will make significant contributions in our efforts to promote tourism at the regional level. The establishment of direct air links connecting major South Asian cities will give a powerful boost to our tourism industry. Promotion of tourism will have a salutary impact on our poverty reduction efforts through a distribution of income among the poor, including those living in rural areas.

We are convinced that with our collective efforts and coordinated positions, the process of globalization can be turned into a force of growth and development in South Asia. Globalization in itself is not right or wrong; the impacts it creates on our way of life should be carefully analyzed. We do not want globalization to upset our harmonious social balance and crumble our rich traditions and cultures.

Knowledge-based economy is emerging as the defining feature of our time. Effective utilization of information and communication technologies will tremendously facilitate our march towards this end. We can no longer afford to see the digital divide widening. An inclusive global information society must be our goal and we must firmly and collectively reject digital domination that seeks to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Madam Chair

Terrorism has emerged as a serious threat to international peace, security, stability and democracy. The growing menace of terrorism, both at home and abroad, concerns us all. Terrorism has metamorphosed our world. My country has been the victim of senseless terrorism for nearly a decade now. The agents of terror are bent on overthrowing a constitutional order and replacing it with a rejected ideology of a one-party communist dictatorship.

We would like to emphasize that, as terrorism knows no geographical boundary, terrorism in Nepal is certain to affect the whole of South Asia. Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, whatsoever and for whatever reasons. We expect a similar attitude on the part of the international community. South Asia must send a clear message that violence cannot be an instrument to further political objectives.

The February First step in Nepal was necessitated by ground realities, mainly the failure of successive governments to contain ever-emboldening terrorists and maintain law and order. It has not come at the cost of democracy, as some tend to project it. We remind the international community of the pre-February First situation in Nepal. Our friends and well-wishers were warning us of the danger of Nepal turning into a failed state.

The security situation is slowly but surely improving and the people have benefited by a growing sense of confidence. We have been touring different parts of the country and have interacted directly with the common man so as to instil in them a greater sense of unity, especially against the malicious designs posed by terrorists. Peace has been their overriding concern. We are convinced that those who believe in people's welfare cannot be debarred by any force to reach the people. There is no place today in the Kingdom where security personnel cannot go at will.

The improved security situation has allowed us to announce a date for municipal elections. The elections are scheduled for February 8, 2006. Believing that successful completion of municipal elections will create an environment conducive to conducting general elections, we have asked the Election Commission to make necessary preparations to hold general elections by April 2007. We believe that there cannot be a meaningful exercise in democracy without elections. We have also asked those who have been misguided to renounce violence and to take part in a competitive democratic political process.

Madam Chair

It is ironical to note that the global war on terrorism is not matched by global action against it. The global war on terrorism has failed to reach every nook and corner of the world, especially in weak and vulnerable countries, as if they do not deserve justice and protection from terrorism. It is this double standard and selective approach that is assuming a dangerous character rather than terrorism itself. We cannot make a distinction between good and bad terrorism; terrorism is terrorism. In our region, the Declaration of the 11th SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu categorically stated 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 any other ground”. We 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”. Nepal has ratified the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and its Additional Protocol with the belief that these instruments provide an effective tool to counter terrorism in the region. We call upon the SAARC member states to forge a strong partnership to eliminate terrorism from the region as well as spearhead a coordinated and earnest action against it.

Madam Chair

SAARC is not an association meant for economic cooperation alone. We visualize it as an embodiment of South Asian identity. We believe the South Asian leaders assembled here have both the vision and courage to define a trajectory to achieve this goal. Central to this idea is increased contacts amongst our peoples to create a strong basis for greater cohesion and solidarity in the region. In order to promote people-to-people contacts on a larger scale, we must think of a visa-free regime in South Asia along with a free trade regime. It will be a flagship among the array of SAARC achievements.

We stand for a South Asia which is free of troubles and tensions. We believe that scrupulous observance by all countries in the region of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence will contribute to developing a healthy pattern of inter-state relationship. We, on our part, have been observing these principles as articles of faith. Peace and stability in South Asia is indispensable for our association to grow and develop. The recent thaw witnessed in relations between our two great neighbours, India and Pakistan, has given us great comfort, rekindling our hope for a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.

Madam Chair

The strength of SAARC lies in our collective wisdom, commitment and dedication. Meaningful regional cooperation is possible only when our goals are clear and achievable, our commitment is backed by requisite political will, our efforts are full of resolve, our course of action is steadfast and our achievements are concrete. Regularity in annual meetings of the South Asian leaders, as the supreme decision-making body, will give continued momentum to the SAARC process. Free and frank exchange of views among the leaders in an environment characterized by a greater degree of informality will help further promote trust and understanding.

From Dhaka, we started our journey two decades ago. We are meeting again in Dhaka at the launch of the third decade. Let us hope our association evolves with the trends of the time. We take this opportunity to renew our profound commitment to the process of regional cooperation under SAARC. And, we believe that SAARC is the only appropriate forum to advance the cohesive voice of South Asia. Let us dedicate ourselves to make SAARC an effective instrument of our shared destiny. After all, thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny. May the Dhaka Summit inspire us to march towards this end!

Thank you.

Statement by
Right Honourable Girija Prasad Koirala

Prime Minister of Nepal, Fourteenth SAARC Summit, 3-4 April 2007, New Delhi, India

Mr. Chairman

**Excellencies the Heads of State and Government of SAARC
Excellencies the Representatives from the Observer States
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is, indeed, a great pleasure for me to come to this historic and vibrant city of New Delhi for the SAARC Summit Meeting. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Government and friendly people of India for the warm reception and friendly hospitality.

I would like to congratulate His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, on his election to the Chair. Nepal places its fullest confidence and trust in your wisdom and experience, Mr. Prime Minister, to lead our deliberations to a successful conclusion and to inject fresh momentum and dynamism into the SAARC process while making it more relevant. Let me also express my appreciation to Bangladesh, for its stewardship of the SAARC process during last year, as a Chair. I commend the Secretary General for providing committed leadership to the SAARC Secretariat and his colleagues for their dedication.

Mr. Chairman

Today, we are welcoming Afghanistan as a member of our family and it is surely a joyful moment for the whole South Asian Region. We extend a hearty welcome to His Excellency Hamid Karzai, President of the Afghanistan, in our midst. Another milestone in this SAARC process is the participation of international community beyond the region as Observers. We would like to warmly welcome them. We are confident that these expansionary steps would instill dynamism in our mission and open new vistas of relationship

with the observer countries. These two important events are the reflection of the recognition of its potentials as well as the commitment to work together, indicating a sign of new confidence in SAARC.

Mr. Chairman

We have completed a journey of over two decades on the path of regional cooperation endeavours. Given the difficult situation, SAARC has been able to cultivate the spirit of cooperation and partnership among its member states to work to improve the life of almost one and a half billion people.

We are aware that the region is inextricably bound by history, culture and geography and more recently by the current social and economic realities. Our challenges and constraints are fundamentally similar in nature though they differ in magnitude indicating that we should concentrate ourselves on areas, which matter most to the people of our region. It is in this context that I wish to outline a few areas, for our focused attention, in order to take SAARC even closer to the lives of the people.

In our efforts to promote economic cooperation within the framework of the Association, SAFTA has already come into effect. Enhanced and effective regional cooperation should lead to an equitable growth and prosperity for all, in particular for the least developed countries among them, because they face special challenges and constraints. Similarly, we have also initiated dialogue on wider economic issues such as investment, services, energy and macro economic policies. We are glad about the Regional Energy Dialogue that has started within the framework of SAARC. We sincerely hope that all sources of energy including hydropower would be harnessed for the promotion of the welfare of the South Asian people through common endeavours. While giving priority to eradicate poverty, we have designated SAARC Development Goals and enhanced cooperation on social sectors. Recently, we have committed ourselves to accelerate concrete work through execution of projects and to expand the areas of our activities with the cooperation of international organizations.

Secondly, the Kathmandu Summit agreed to the ultimate vision of an Economic Union in a gradual and phased manner. We all believe that strong and meaningful cooperation can really touch the lives of the people. Therefore, as the first step, we should all strive to take concrete and interlocking steps in an accelerated pace to operationalize the Free Trade Agreement and enhance the size of the pie for all. We can also further contribute to it by reducing physical barriers in the field of transport and communications, because they

are the foundations upon which economic interactions take place. The recent studies have shown that the South Asian borders are more cumbersome to pass through than many regions. Trade facilitation measures should, therefore, receive as much priority as the implementation of SAFTA in our deliberations.

SAARC process must be geared to free people from the chains of poverty and misery through the efficient, effective and equitable utilization of human and economic potentials. Pervasive poverty, hunger, misery, disease and ignorance are our formidable challenges as stated and this can only be overcome by mutual cooperation. As I stand here on this podium, I think of the genuine hopes and expectations of millions of peoples of the South Asian region for a better and secure future for them and their children. Let us remind ourselves that the main objective of SAARC is to ensure peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity through regional cooperation. Mutual understanding, good neighborly relations and meaningful cooperation should foster these objectives. This is the benchmark against which we should compare our results and actions.

Mr. Chairman

Many countries and various parts of South Asia are suffering from insurgency and deprivation, although in various dimensions and context. It might be worthwhile for SAARC to look into the issues of marginalization, poverty, governance, globalization and violent conflicts in a holistic manner. This could be done while fully respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighborly relations as enshrined in the Charter. As they will have a direct bearing on the lives of the people, a structured and institutionalized work in these areas could open another meaningful chapter of cooperation in South Asia.

Our low social indicators are a stark reminder to us about our situation. Despite a galloping economic growth rate, the incidence of poverty in the region is still one of the highest in the world. Our challenge is thus to confront it with single mindedness and to make sure that there is no trade off to be made between economic growth, equity and reduction in poverty. That could be done through appropriate and inclusive policy interventions, women's empowerment, social mobilization and high rate of sustained growth in all our countries through further consolidation of our common yet shared efforts and cooperation. We should link up SAARC Decade of Implementation with the SAARC Decade of Poverty Reduction. Implementation of projects such as Multi-modal Transport, Telemedicine Project and South Asian University

could go a long way towards providing tangible benefits to the people. We are all cognizant of the fact that enlarged interactions at people-to-people level will further reinforce the regional cooperation and bring it closer to the people of South Asia. We should encourage acculturation through the professionals, media persons, teachers, writers, workers etc., for fostering better understanding and collaboration in the region.

Mr. Chairman

In Nepal, a decade long armed conflict has been transformed into a peace process. While protecting the sanctity, credibility and integrity of the democratic system, we have managed to bring elements opposed to democratic practice into the mainstream competitive politics. I am confident that a new chapter will soon be written out of people's mandate for the first time in the history of Nepal.

Nepal's transformation has established that the "dialogue" could be an instrument for socio-political changes. Though democracy may appear fragile in the beginning, it is my simple but firm conviction that democracy alone creates political and economic space to initiate the process of national reconciliation and unity, produces a representative government, unites different ethnic groups, manages underlying differences, addresses deep rooted social changes and multiple manifestations of conflict, and starts the much needed development process to extricate people from poverty, disease, injustice and various forms of sufferings.

In conclusion, SAARC has now reached a stage where it is capable of taking decisions to make its present better and future realistic and secure. It is time for us to show concrete benefits to our people from a range of existing complementarities in the region. The success of this regional organization is naturally in our own hands. We must make sure that we create and sustain a regional synergy in our efforts, which would contribute to enhance competitiveness and ensure prosperity to all. In this day and age of global interdependence, enhancement of cooperative efforts will develop a win-win situation for all. We should not lose this opportunity. Let us pledge ourselves to take the SAARC process to a new height with a collective vision, firm commitment and effective implementation of programs on a priority basis. Nepal pledges its continued support, expresses its commitment and determination, and offers its readiness to do everything possible to make the SAARC vision a reality.

Thank you so much for your attention, Mr. Chairman.

Statement by
Right Honourable Girija Prasad Koirala

Prime Minister of Nepal, Fifteenth SAARC Summit, 2-3 Aug 2008, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Your Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa
Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Government of SAARC
Your Excellencies the Representatives from the Observer States
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a privilege for me to be here in the historic city of Colombo to participate in the 15th SAARC Summit. On behalf of the Nepalese delegation and on my own, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the warm reception and cordial hospitality.

I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka on his election to the Chair and assure him that my delegation reposes full confidence and trust on his leadership and wisdom to steer the deliberations to a successful conclusion. I would also like to congratulate Sri Lanka on the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of its independence this year. I believe that under the able leadership of the new Chair, SAARC would take further momentum in fulfilling its noble objectives as enshrined in the Charter, while proving its relevance to the people by making them capable to meet the new challenges. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to India, Immediate Past Chair, for the active leadership role it played during the last year. I would also like to record our appreciation for the committed leadership of the Secretary General and the dedication and hard work of his team.

Mr. Chairman

As we stand here to deliberate on the issues of regional integration and collective action within an Association that covers a quarter of the humanity

of the world, we have to do so against the formidable challenges we are confronted with. They are of long term and short term in nature. While promoting an inclusive growth, we should focus ourselves on alleviating poverty, and ensuring employment opportunities to the youths throughout the region. Now, this has to be looked at against the background of an unprecedented rise in the prices of hydrocarbon fuels and food. Whereas the price escalation of fuels has created problems to sustain economic growth needed to promote welfare of the people of South Asia, the rise in food price has put questions on the very livelihood of our people. Our vulnerability to these shocks is more than that of many other countries. These daunting challenges demand that poverty reduction efforts in South Asia should have a comprehensive approach and be focused and result-oriented.

Since our region suffers from energy deficit, we need increased efficiency in our energy use and collective efforts in conservation of energy resources. We must immediately take strategic steps for regional energy connectivity and energy trade for exploitation and use of all energy resources available in the region, while ensuring universal access to commercial fuels. Nepal is ready to utilize the rich hydropower potentials of the country for equitable benefits in the neighborhood. Moreover, we feel that we need to develop a regional strategy for management of waters for all different kinds of uses in the region in view of the increasing problem of water scarcity faced by the people in the region.

The adverse environmental changes induced by climate change is calling on sustainable and judicious use of non-renewable resources and a commitment to an increased use of renewable sources of energy such as hydropower. While there is a larger responsibility of the economically advanced countries to address the problems of global climate change, we must work with a united position to ensure increased resource flow and technology transfer to enhance our capacity in Clean Development Mechanism.

We welcome the preparation for establishment of SMRC Development Fund, which, I believe, will initiate the process of funding regional and sub-regional projects in the areas of social, economic and infrastructure development. From the pilot stage of projects implementation, we need to ensure proper matching of funding requirements in our enormous priority areas with the actual availability of funds for their effective implementation. We should make efforts to tap the growing strength of the private sector of the region in getting involved in projects under Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) scheme and the appropriate involvement of the international and regional financial organizations in consonance with the SAARC objectives and principles.

Implementation of SAFTA is our first major step towards the arduous course of deeper integration of economies. We must always ask how much benefit our people are getting from this joint effort and how much trade expansion it has fostered. I see more role and responsibility of all of us to make SAFTA an engine of growth in South Asia. At the same time, I request all member countries to be responsive to overcoming the hardships and capacity constraints suffered by LDCs like Nepal in a bid to translate into action the provisions envisaged under SAFTA Agreement. We are in favour of including Trade in Services under SAFTA and implementing all agreements and measures designed to facilitate intra-regional trade as early as possible.

The emphasis on connectivity of the South Asian peoples, places, economies and infrastructure must be reiterated with firmer resolve so that we can implement prioritized projects identified for achievement of these goals. As a landlocked country, we attach importance to improvement of multi-modal transport and transit infrastructure of the region, and proper facilitation of transport and transit in order to lower the cost of doing business and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of our trade.

Growing disparity between the haves and have-nots is putting enormous stress on social harmony, peace and security in several parts of South Asia. In addressing this problem, we are all aware that we have to make the socio-economic and political development processes more people-centered, inclusive and based on equality and justice. The social sector issues of South Asia are too many as any other issues. But I think the most important ones at hand are combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, preventing and controlling the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, controlling other transnational crimes and addressing the issues of women and children, including the elimination of worst forms of violence against them. The existing conventions in the social sector will prove their worth if they are backed by enabling national legislations and the mechanisms to address these issues. They have to be promoted in a more harmonized way by, among other things, involving the civil society organizations and the private sector in the process.

Mr. Chairman

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

We in Nepal have made a commitment to bringing all social classes, ethnic groups, and geographic regions into the national mainstream while putting an end to the decade old conflict through the successive consolidation of peace

process. Our main priority is how to ensure inclusiveness of the social class, gender and peoples living in various geographic areas in the governance of the country in order to enable them to shape their own destiny. Following the successful Constituent Assembly elections of April 10, 2008, the country is pursuing the path of socio-economic and political transformation process in an attempt to bring the peace process to a logical conclusion and realize the dream of making a new Nepal based on democratic ideals, equality, justice and inclusive progress.

We have built strong bonds of trust and fraternity within SAARC since its establishment 23 years ago. We believe in collective actions to promote collective prosperity. We must consolidate our work to bring this common vision into reality.

This is a propitious time to attain our objectives, and they are indispensable to take our region to a new height. This is the promise that we have made to the people and we must deliver. And looking at the long-term perspectives, we hold the view that we have no other option than to synergize all our efforts, based on the proven complementarities of South Asia, to realize the noble objectives of SAARC.

Thank you.

Statement by
Right Honourable Madhav Kumar Nepal

Prime Minister of Nepal, Sixteenth SAARC Summit, 28-29 April 2010, Thimpu, Bhutan

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates and Observers
Ladies and Gentlemen

May I, at the outset, express my warm congratulations to Your Excellency for your assumption of the onerous responsibility of the Chairperson of the SAARC. I am fully confident that with your long association in the SAARC process and from your insight, wisdom, and leadership, our Association will receive further momentum and dynamism in the days to come.

I would also like to express our profound appreciation to Your Excellency and through you to the Royal Government of Bhutan for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this picturesque capital Thimpu and for meticulous preparations and excellent arrangements made for the Summit. I hope that the Thimpu Summit will go down in the history of SAARC as the memorable and historic event, since we will be completing one full cycle of Summit level meetings in all the original member states of SAARC. This symbolizes the coming of age of our Association capable to take up added responsibilities as well as to chart future roadmap in tune of emerging realities and challenges.

Mr. Chairman

When we speak about the roadmap of SAARC, the most common denominator is that SAARC is all about regional integration – economically, culturally, and socially. It is about inclusive growth and development of the region. It is about greater connectivity and easier movement of goods and people in the region. It is about eventually an economic union, with a common market and

common currency for optimum utilization of resources in the region and for their shared benefits to our people. Therefore, time has come for us to think and act in a bigger way to address the myriad challenges that we are facing in the region and move ahead to achieve the goals and objectives for a cohesive and prosperous region.

One of the emerging challenges that we face today is imminent calamitous effects from climate change and environmental degradation to our people in the region and beyond. Despite our least contribution to this negative phenomenon, all our countries are prone to devastating effects of global warming in the form of sea level rise, snow melts in the Himalayas and erratic weather patterns, resulting in prolonged droughts sometimes and heavy rainfall at other times causing flash floods and landslides and directly impacting on agriculture and food supply. Retreat of glaciers in the Himalayas and the dangers from glacial lake outbursts pose immense risk to the lives and livelihood of more than one billion people in the region depending upon the rivers flowing down from the Himalayas. Thus, from the high Himalayas to the low lying regions in the Indian Ocean, we all face the imminent dangers from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation.

Given the gravity and multi-dimensional effect of climate change to humanity, concerted actions are urgently required at all levels - national, regional and international. If we fail to act fast and act now on the burning issue of global warming, posterity will squarely blame on us for our failure to protect their precious lives, rare biodiversities, animal species and plants. To avert such unthinkable consequences, we in SAARC, must come forward more vocally for urgent international action to save the planet earth from the effects of climate change. It is, therefore, quite befitting that the Thimpu Summit has recognized the looming threat of climate change with the theme 'Towards a Green and Happy South Asia'.

As a mountainous country with fragile eco-system, Nepal remains extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Kalapathar Declaration our Cabinet meeting adopted at the base camp of the Mt. Everest on the eve of COP 15 on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December 2009, sent a message of the imminent threat of climate change to mountainous countries like Nepal. Therefore, we are working to forge Mountain Alliance Initiative for Climate Change to vigorously push the agenda in regional and global climate change forums. We are making preparations to call a ministerial meeting of such vulnerable countries in Nepal later this year to promote greater and effective cooperation in this direction. I am convinced that by joining hands together, we in SAARC can effectively articulate our shared views and common position on

issues of climate change and environmental degradation. And by our common resolve and backed by concrete action plans, we can better withstand the looming threat from climate change and protect environment. In this context, we are fully supportive of the need for a legal-institutional framework on cooperation on environment within SAARC framework, which will go a long way in our collective efforts to protect environment in the region.

Mr. Chairman

Prevalence of wide-spread poverty and economic deprivation is another critical challenge in the region. While South Asia region has witnessed impressive economic growth in recent years, despite global economic downturn, we are still grappling with the problem of high incidence of poverty. The challenges of poverty eradication from the SAARC region are daunting so are the opportunities before us. Our region is bestowed by abundant natural resources, which are waiting for their full utilization. Also, the region has the most youthful population, full of ingenuity and innovation, capable of changing the socio-economic landscape of the region. By optimal utilization of natural and human resources together, SAARC has the potential to become one of the dynamic and prosperous regions in the world. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to chart regional strategy for poverty alleviation, including the fulfilment of SAARC Development Goals (SDGs), in which every member state has a vital stake.

It is our firm belief that one of the surest ways for a prosperous SAARC is through increased intra-SAARC regional trade. Unfortunately, intra-SAARC regional trade, at present, is significantly low, which means that our people have not been fully benefitted from the dividends of increased trade among our countries. The progress of SAFTA, which is the main instrument and vehicle for intra-SAARC regional trade, has been painstakingly slow due to tariff, non-tariff, and para-tariff barriers. We, therefore, need to be bold enough to remove remaining trade barriers in the path of SAFTA so that we can reap the advantages of complementarities that exist in the region and move ahead to the direction of a common market in South Asia. We should also give due consideration on trade facilitation measures and give special consideration to LDCs and land-locked member states in the SAFTA framework so as to augment their low volume of trade in the region.

Mr. Chairman

Physical connectivity is pre-requisite not only for greater volume of trade but also for increased flow of people in the region. Efficient networks of highways,

railroads, seaports, and connection by air between and among our countries are critical for seamless movement of goods and people. In a globalised world, when space and distance have increasingly becoming inconsequential, in SAARC, we are still handicapped with the problem of adequate physical infrastructure to connect our people. In order to overcome such hindrances and to improve connectivity in the region, we need to urgently focus on efficient development of SAARC multi-modal transport system, by upgrading existing roads, rail networks and air linkages, and creating new ones, as well as by providing adequate transit facilities to land-locked member states. As we are celebrating Nepal Tourism Year in 2011, we will be pleased to organize SAARC Tourism Ministers Meeting in Kathmandu in early part of 2011, which will provide opportunity to chart strategies for developing tourism packages and destination promotion in the region.

Mr. Chairman

The imperative need for SAARC to focus on project-based approach rather than to squander its time, energy, and resources on peripheral matters should be viewed from the above perspective. The success of the whole SAARC process will be judged by our ability to deliver concrete results to our people. Only by articulating cooperative strategies and backed by concrete action plans, we will be able to accomplish the cherished goals and objectives of SAARC. Here lies the importance of the need for investment in SAARC regional and sub-regional projects, which are result-oriented and directly beneficial to the people.

I am happy to note that, with the establishment of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF), SAARC is moving to that direction. Our people have tremendous hopes and expectations from this newly created institution for qualitative transformation in their lives. I am fully confident that SDF, sooner than later, will embark on social and infrastructure projects at regional or sub-regional level for greater economic benefits to our people. In this task, we are favourably disposed to the idea of mobilization of external resources, if need be, besides our own financial subscription to the Fund. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting the permanent SDF Secretariat in Thimpu and congratulate its first CEO and assure Nepal's fullest support to the activities of the Fund.

It is also encouraging that SAARC has been able to establish linkages with many countries and regional and international organizations to foster goodwill, cooperation and understanding. The presence of distinguished representatives of observer states and regional and international organizations in SAARC

gatherings is the testimony of growing interest in the SAARC process and to enhance cooperation within the SAARC framework. I earnestly believe that enhanced level of interactions with our friends and well-wishers of SAARC will create new avenues for dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman

SAARC embodies hopes and aspirations of nearly 1.5 billion people of our region for harmonious and prosperous South Asia. In its 25 years of history, SAARC has made significant stride to realize the objectives enshrined in the Charter. Since its inception, SAARC has laid bricks and mortars of new ideas and fresh approaches to solidify its edifice. Now, SAARC has sufficiently matured and entered to a stage that is able to translate the ideas into concrete actions and deliver tangible benefits to our people. We are fully confident that with our collective resolve and wisdom, SAARC is set to emerge as a vibrant and dynamic reality in the region and beyond, to reckon with. I would like to reiterate Nepal's full commitment to work together with other member states of SAARC in this pursuit.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

Declarations of SAARC

Part II

The Summit Declarations of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of SAARC from 1985-2010

DHAKA DECLARATION

The Declaration of the First SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 8th 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 December 1985.
2. The Heads of State or Government underscored 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, to work together towards finding solutions towards their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and mutual understanding and to the creation of an order based on mutual respect, equity and shared benefits.
3. They recognized that periodic meetings at their level were central to the promotion of mutual trust, confidence and cooperation among their countries.
4. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed that their fundamental goal was to accelerate the process of economic and social development in their respective countries through the optimum utilization of their human and material resources, so as to promote the welfare and prosperity of their peoples and to improve their quality of life. They were conscious that peace and security was an essential prerequisite for the realization of this objective.
5. The leaders of the South Asian countries reaffirmed their commitment to the UN Charter and the principles governing sovereign equality of States, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs and non-use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of other States. They reiterated that the United Nations constituted the most important forum for the resolution of all issues affecting international peace and security.
6. They also reaffirmed their deep conviction in the continuing validity and relevance of the objectives of the Nonaligned movement as an important force in international relations.

7. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that the countries of South Asia, who constituted one-fifth of humanity, were faced with the formidable challenges posed by poverty, underdevelopment, low levels of production, unemployment and pressure of population compounded by exploitation of the past and other adverse legacies. They felt that, bound as their countries were by many common values rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical traditions, regional cooperation provided a logical response to these problems. They were conscious of their individual and regional strengths, their potential as a huge market, their substantial human and natural resources and the complementarities of their economies. They were confident that with effective regional cooperation, they could make optimum use of these capacities for the benefit of their peoples, accelerate the pace of their economic development and enhance their national and collective self-reliance. They were convinced that their countries, which had made important contributions to the enrichment of human civilization, could together play their due role in international relations and influence decisions which affected them.
8. The Heads of State or Government emphasised 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 contacts at various levels among their countries. To this end, they decided to take steps to create awareness and public opinion in the region.
9. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the progress already made in the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Action in the nine mutually agreed areas. They expressed their desire to consolidate and further expand cooperative efforts within an appropriate institutional frame work in a spirit of partnership and equality.
10. 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. In this context, they expressed concern at the deteriorating international political situation. They were alarmed at the unprecedented escalation of arms race particularly in its nuclear aspect. 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 arms race intensified international tension and violated the principles of the UN Charter. 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.

11. 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. These had been compounded by natural disasters and precarious world food security situation affecting developing countries. They also expressed concern over the diminishing capacity of international financial and technical institutions to respond effectively to the needs of the disadvantaged and poorer countries and regretted that the spirit of multilateral cooperation had begun to falter and weaken. This was particularly disturbing in the face of increased interdependence of developed and developing countries and the fact that economic revival of North was closely linked to economic progress in South. They believed that developments during the past decades had clearly demonstrated the structural imbalances and inequities inherent in the existing international economic system and its inadequacy to deal with problems of development.
12. 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.
13. 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), which they had established at this meeting, would place regional cooperation on a firm foundation, 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 and the world.

14. The Heads of 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.

BANGALORE DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Second SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 17th November, 1986.

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 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 Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the will of their peoples and Governments to work together in accordance with the SAARC Charter to devise common policies and approaches for finding common solutions to the shared problems that all of them face. They stressed that mutual trust, goodwill and understanding must animate their cooperative effort under SAARC. Progress and prosperity in each country would redound to the benefit of others. This was what constituted the SAARC spirit.
4. 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 programmes and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potential.
5. The Heads of State or Government recalled that the countries of South Asia had been linked by age-old cultural, social and historical traditions. These had led to enriching interaction of ideas, values, culture and philosophies. These commonalities constituted solid foundations for regional cooperation for addressing more effectively the economic and social problems.

6. 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. They were convinced that the countries of South Asia which had been the cradle of human civilization and culture could, acting together co-operatively and cohesively, once again play their due role in the comity of nations.
7. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the great importance of the increasing involvement of the people for ensuring the success of regional cooperation. 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.
8. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that considerable progress had been achieved in the implementation of SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. They expressed their firm commitment to consolidate and streamline further the implementation of the IPA. 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. The Heads of State or Government emphasized the importance of expanding cooperative endeavours under SAARC. They welcomed the establishment of the Technical Committees on Women in Development, and on the Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse.
9. 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 Kathmandu 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 programmes and projects.

10. The Heads of State or Government recognised that meeting 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. The Heads of State or Government underlined the importance of enhancing public consciousness and building a national political consensus on the rights of the children. In this context they called for an early conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They subscribed to the goals of universal immunization by 1990, universal primary education, maternal and child nutrition, provision of safe drinking water and adequate shelter before 2000 A. D. They also believed that it should be possible to ensure at the end of the century, that no child need die or be denied development, for reasons of material poverty in the family. They directed the Standing Committee to undertake annual reviews of the situation of children in the SAARC countries, monitoring of programmes and exchange of experience.
11. The Heads of State or Government agreed that cooperation 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 cooperation. They recognized the importance of the principles laid down in UN Resolution 2625 which among others required that each State should refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organized activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts.
12. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern at the crisis facing the United Nations system. They reiterated their deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and their support for and faith in the United Nations as the most important international forum for addressing issues of peace, disarmament and development and an essential instrument for bringing about justice and equity in international political and economic relations. They resolved to concert their efforts in all multilateral fora within the United Nations system to preserve and strengthen the Organisation and to prevent erosion of its role, functions and principles.
13. 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 cooperation in all fields. The success of the Harare Summit of the Non-aligned countries was yet another demonstration of the strength and unity of the Movement and the increasing respect that it had come to command in the international community. They affirmed full support for the decisions adopted at the Summit and called for their early implementation.

14. 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 increasingly adverse for the pursuit of their cherished goals. The international political scene was marred by strife and tension due to Great Power policies and practices of domination and intervention as well as the increased resort to the threat or use of force, aggression, occupation, pressure, economic coercion and interference in flagrant violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race, had escalated to a point where it jeopardizes the most fundamental of all human rights - the right to live.
15. The Heads of State or Government noted with deep disappointment that the promise held out by the Reykjavik Summit could not be realized. They, however, noted with satisfaction that the proposals made at the Summit were still on the table. They expressed the earnest hope that the negotiations would be resumed without delay so that a decisive step could be taken towards realizing the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether. The Heads of State or government called for the early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
16. The Heads of State or Government were deeply concerned that the world economy continued to be in the throes of crisis, with particularly harsh and severe consequences for the economies and development prospects and aspirations of the developing countries. They endorsed the Declaration of the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on International Economic Issues held in Islamabad and its analysis of the exceptionally adverse external economic environment which retards the development of the South Asian and other developing countries. These negative factors include depressed commodity prices, rising protectionism, global recession, lower export earnings, net outflow of financial resources from developing countries and an aggravated debt crisis.

17. The Heads of State or Government noted that the rates of growth in the developed countries had turned out to be much lower than what was earlier projected and that the projection for future growth in these countries was not at all encouraging. They expressed their concern at the implications of these trends for the development prospects of the developing countries. They welcomed the recent recognition by the developed countries that the chronic problems of massive payment imbalances, high interest rates, unstable exchange rates and high unemployment are structural in nature. In view of global interdependence, the co-ordination of macro-economic policies, contemplated at the Tokyo Summit of the seven major industrialized countries, cannot be effective in achieving sustained global economic growth unless it encompasses the developing countries.
18. 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. In the search for revival of global growth, priority must be accorded to exploiting the vast potential for expanded production, consumption and trade which exists in the developing countries. In all these endeavours, high priority should be accorded to supporting the development of the least developed countries, in particular, through the full and effective implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1980s.
19. 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 concessional assistance, the doubling in three years of the financial flows for the development of developing countries, melioration of official debts, trade liberalization, especially in textiles and agriculture, commodity price stabilization, transfer of technology and special treatment for least developed SAARC countries. 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 recognised that an important opportunity in this context would be provided by UNCTAD VII.

20. 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. They also expected that the principles of transparency and differential and more favourable treatment for the developing countries would be applied systematically and in concrete terms in the negotiations. They decided to concert their positions in these negotiations with a view to deriving maximum benefits from them in accordance with their national objectives and priorities.
21. The Heads of State or Government expressed their conviction that the Bangalore Summit had helped in consolidating the gains of regional cooperation activities so far undertaken by SAARC while, at the same time, exploring new avenues and possibilities for such cooperation. The Bangalore Summit had made a significant contribution to strengthening and streamlining the institutional basis for such cooperation.
22. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their determination and will to expand and strengthen their cooperation 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. The leaders expressed their deep conviction that South Asian regional cooperation would not only have a salutary effect on bilateral relations between the countries of the region, but also impart strength and stability to these relations.
23. 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 arrangements made for the Meeting.

KATHMANDU DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Third SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 4th November, 1987.

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 Kathmandu on 2-4 November, 1987.
2. 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 renewed their commitment to the SAARC Charter. 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 noninterference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of disputes.
3. 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. They were convinced that the peoples and governments of South Asia could, acting in unison, surmount these challenges.
4. The Heads of 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. They reiterated their concern at the crisis facing the United Nations. They expressed their commitment to the multilateral negotiating process and called upon all states to help strengthen the UN system. They reaffirmed their belief that SAARC will reinforce this process by promoting South Asian cooperation.

5. 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. They also noted that institutionalization and strengthening of regional cooperation in South Asia had further nurtured the spirit of South-South cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equity and common benefit. They expressed satisfaction over the result of the Ministerial Conference on Nonaligned Countries held in Pyongyang in June 1987 and urged the Non-aligned and other developing countries to take action to implement effectively the Pyongyang Declaration and Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation.
6. The Heads of State or Government recognised that the external environment had a critical bearing on the development of the economies of the South Asian Region. They noted with deep concern that growth in the world economy had again slowed down with adverse consequences for South Asia and other developing countries, especially for the least developed and landlocked countries. They observed that equitable participation of the developing countries in international trading and economic systems and in arrangements for the coordination of global macro economic policies was essential for enhancing prospects and performance of the world economy.
7. 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 net export earnings had fallen aggravating payment imbalances in developing countries. The terms of trade had further deteriorated with enormous losses to developing countries. At the same time, the diminishing financial flows to developing countries remained unchanged with contraction in new lendings and growing burden of debt servicing. In fact there had been a reverse flow of resources

from developing to developed countries. The trade conflicts had also sharpened with the rise of protectionism thus further weakening the international trading system and eroding the principle of special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries.

8. 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 called for an early convening of the International Conference on Money and Finance for Development. 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. They hoped that UNCTAD would play an increasingly effective role in promoting harmonious and equitable international economic relations.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.

12. 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. They called for the early conclusion in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a Convention to Ban Chemical Weapons. They declared their intention to continue their efforts to contribute to the realisation of the objective of halting the nuclear arms race and eliminating nuclear weapons. They declared their resolve to support every effort to conclude a treaty prohibiting vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.
13. 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. These natural disasters and the degradation of the environment were severely undermining the development process and prospects of the member 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.
14. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their conviction that the region being most populous in the world and having age-old socio-cultural links, rich and varied human and natural resources, offered immense scope and potential for regional cooperation and that the growing interaction among its people had added stimulus towards this end. They reiterated their determination to pursue their individual and collective efforts for the optimal utilisation of the vast human and untapped natural and other material resources.

15. The Heads of State or Government reviewed with satisfaction the progress made so far in the implementation of the SAARC Integrated Programme of Action and emphasised the need to further consolidate and streamline the process. They were conscious of the need to exercise greater discretion in the selection of activities in different sectors. They took note of the criteria and procedures relating to administrative structuring and financing of regional institutions endorsed by the SAARC Council of Ministers. They directed that the establishment of such regional institutions should proceed only after taking into account their viability and benefits to the member countries with due consideration to economy and efficiency.
16. 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.
17. 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 situations in the region.
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. In this regard, they also reiterated their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practice of terrorism as criminal and expressed their abhorrence of their impact on life and property, socio-economic development, political stability, regional peace and cooperation.
19. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their agreement to expand SAARC activities in other concrete areas of cooperation in order to ensure more tangible benefits from SAARC to the peoples of the region. They were convinced that regional cooperation could be consolidated and expanded on the basis of growing regional complementarities and interdependence. They believed that the SAARC long-term perspective should, therefore, focus on measures to expand and strengthen

such areas of regional complementarities and interdependence not only through formulation and implementation of more concrete and action-oriented programmes but also through coordination of national policies and approaches for finding common solutions to their common problems.

20. 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.
21. 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.
22. The Heads of State or Government were conscious of the aspirations of the peoples of South Asia to communicate and cooperate with each other at the people-to-people level. They recognised that academics, researchers, non-governmental organizations and others have an important role to play in promoting the SAARC spirit and giving impetus to regional programmes and projects. They further observed that the interest and enthusiasm so far demonstrated by the increased interactions and exchange of information at the inter-governmental level should be capitalised and translated into tangible programmes and projects. They recognised the vast potential for the generation of friendship, goodwill and trust through interactions between the peoples which would foster harmonious relations in South Asia.
23. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep conviction that the Kathmandu Summit has further consolidated the gains of SAARC and given a renewed thrust and direction to the future course of regional cooperation. They were also convinced that the Kathmandu Summit has helped to create an atmosphere conducive to strengthening this process, besides generating further goodwill and friendship among the member countries in the larger interest of the region.

24. 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. This, they firmly held, would help bring about a qualitative improvement in the general atmosphere of the region contributing to peace, friendship and cooperation in the areas.
25. 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.
26. 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.

ISLAMABAD DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Fourth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 31st December, 1988.

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 met at the Fourth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at Islamabad from 29-31 December, 1988.
2. 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.
3. They recalled that their countries were linked by cultural, social and historical ties and they had at their disposal substantial human and natural resources. They recognised that these provided a sound basis as well as immense opportunities for regional cooperation. They therefore expressed their determination to make optimal use of their resources for the benefit of their people by working jointly to pursue their shared objectives. They were aware that by acting in concert they could realise the full potential for regional progress, taking into account complementarities and growing inter-dependence.
4. 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 a unanimous decision of the Heads of State of Government.
5. 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 took note of the measures to

streamline and re-orient various SAARC activities to make them more action-oriented so as to improve the quality of life of their peoples. 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.

6. 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. They also noted with satisfaction the successful launching of the Youth Volunteers Programme and the SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme. They decided that Education may be included as an agreed area of cooperation.
7. The Heads of State of Government expressed satisfaction that the South Asian Food Security Reserve had become operational on 12 August 1988. The Reserve would serve as a cushion against food shortages and was a tangible manifestation of the spirit of cooperation in the region.
8. 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.
9. The Heads of State of Government expressed grave concern over the growing magnitude and the serious effects of drug abuse, particularly among young people, and drug trafficking. They recognised the need for urgent and effective measures to eradicate this evil and decided to declare the year 1989 as the "SAARC Year for Combating Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking". They agreed to launch a concerted campaign, as suited to the situation in their respective countries, to significantly augment SAARC efforts to eliminate drug abuse and drug trafficking. These included closer cooperation in creating a greater awareness of the hazards of drug abuse, exchange of expertise, sharing of intelligence information,

- stringent measures to stop trafficking in drugs and introduction of more effective laws. They directed that the Technical Committee concerned should examine the possibility of a Regional Convention on Drug Control.
10. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep sense of sorrow and profound sympathy at the loss of valuable lives and extensive damage to property suffered during the year by Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan as a result of unprecedented floods, cyclones and earthquakes. In this connection, they recalled their earlier decision at Kathmandu in November, 1987 to intensify regional cooperation with a view to strengthening their disaster management capabilities and took note of the recommendations of the meeting of the SAARC Group of Experts on the Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment, that met in Kathmandu in July 1988. They expressed the conviction that identification of measures and programmes as envisaged by the Group of Experts would supplement national, bilateral, regional and global efforts to deal with the increasingly serious problems being faced by the region as a result of the recurrence of natural disasters and the continuing degradation of the environment. They urged that the study should be completed in the shortest period of time so that it could provide a basis for the member countries to draw up an action plan for meaningful cooperation amongst the Member States. They decided that a joint study be undertaken on the "Greenhouse Effect" and its impact on the region.
 11. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that modalities for studies to be carried out for cooperation in the areas of trade, manufactures and services had been worked out by a Group of Experts, which met in Islamabad recently. They emphasised the need for the completion of the studies within the agreed time schedule. They directed that the Fourth Meeting of Planners should examine the possibility of cooperation in agreed areas of trade, manufactures and services, which would promote the objectives of meeting the basic needs of the peoples of the region. The report of the Planners should be considered at the next Council of Ministers meeting, with a view to making specific recommendations to the next Summit.
 12. The Heads of State or Government reviewed the progress on the Situation of Children in SAARC countries. They reiterated their commitment made in the Bangalore Declaration to accord the highest priority to the needs of children in national development planning and stressed that the

concept of Human Resource Development should lay particular emphasis on the welfare and well-being of children, especially in the literacy and health spheres. They called for the conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. They decided to declare 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child".

13. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the effective functioning of the SAARC Secretariat and its role in coordinating SAARC activities. They also noted that a Headquarters Agreement had been signed between the Secretariat and the host Government. They thanked His Majesty's Government of Nepal for the assistance and cooperation extended to the Secretariat.
14. 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.
15. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need for closer and more frequent contacts among the peoples of SAARC. As a beginning, they decided that Supreme Court Judges and Members of the National Parliaments of each member State would be entitled to a special SAARC travel document which would exempt them from visas. They further directed the Council of Ministers to examine what other categories of persons should be given this facility and to submit their recommendations.
16. They further noted with satisfaction the mandate given to the Secretary General by the Council of Ministers at its Fifth Session on the question of contacting organisations with similar aims and purposes.
17. The Heads of State or Government expressed their determination to give concrete shape to the objectives of SAARC. In this context they emphasised the need to progressively carry out SAARC activities within a broad framework of a long-term perspective and to harmonize their efforts to ensure tangible benefits to the peoples of South Asia as a whole. They were conscious of the fact that all South Asian countries faced problems in varying degrees in areas such as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection. Towards this end they were of the view that all Member States should identify areas of core interest in their national perspective plans or prepare such plans and consolidate them into a regional plan to

be called "SAARC-2000 : A Basic Needs Perspective", with specific targets to be met by the end of the century.

18. 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.
19. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their abiding commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, particularly those enjoining respect for the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and national independence, non-use or threat of use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of all disputes. They reiterated their faith in the United Nations as the most important forum for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the promotion of international cooperation aimed at the progress and prosperity of mankind.
20. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the relaxation of global tensions through intensified super-power dialogue on a broad range of international issues and welcomed the progress towards the resolution of protracted regional disputes and conflicts. They agreed that these developments had enhanced the prospects for disarmament, security, peace and progress for all peoples of the world. They appreciated the important role played by the United Nations in bringing about these positive changes in the international political environment. They also called upon all States to strengthen the capacity of the UN system in all respects to achieve the purpose of the UN Charter.
21. 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. In this context they expressed satisfaction over the results of the Ministerial Conference of the Non-aligned Movement held in Cyprus in September 1988 and expressed the hope the decisions of the Conference would contribute to the reduction of tensions and to the promotion of development. They hoped that the current discussions on the improvement in the methodology of the Non-Aligned Movement would result in strengthening the movement and enable it to play its role with greater effectiveness.

22. 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 framework for future action in this vital area. They urged that resources saved through disarmament measures should be diverted in particular to developing countries for development.
23. They welcomed the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on Intermediate Nuclear Force. They hoped this would be a precursor to further accords to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals drastically and to prevent an arms race in Outer Space. They called for the early conclusion in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a Convention to Ban Chemical Weapons. They declared their intention to continue their efforts to contribute to the realization of the objective of halting the nuclear arms race and eliminating nuclear weapons. They declared their resolve to support every effort to conclude a treaty prohibiting vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.
24. The Heads of State or Government noted with deep concern the continued structural disequilibrium from which the world economy had long suffered. This had resulted in slower growth in the developing countries, downward trends in commodity prices, decline in the net export earnings of the developing countries and deterioration in their terms of trade. These developments combined with the overwhelming debt burdens, the reverse financial flows from the developing to the developed countries and the sharp rise of protectionism in the developed world had further aggravated the economic difficulties of the developing countries.
25. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the interdependent character of the economies of the developed and the developing countries. They called for the resumption of the North-South dialogue with a view to restructuring the international economic system and to establishing the New International Economic Order based on justice and equity. They called for coordinated actions by the developed and the developing countries to increase the net flow of developmental assistance, overcome debt difficulties, expand the access of the developing countries to the markets in developed countries, arrest the deterioration in terms of trade of the developing countries and stabilize commodity prices.

26. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the need for preserving and liberalizing the multilateral trading system with renewed efforts both within and outside the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. They also underscored the importance of the developed countries fully respecting and implementing the commitments made in Punta del Este on “standstill and rollback” arrangements. They expressed concern that on account of differences between major trading entities on the question of agricultural subsidies, the Montreal Meeting on the midterm review of the Uruguay round was inconclusive. They particularly regretted that there was no progress in the negotiations on issues of major interest to developing countries such as trade in textiles and a Safeguard System. They were disappointed that on some of the issues of interest to developing countries on which there was agreement, particularly tropical products, it would not be possible even to implement the decisions taken, from the beginning of 1989 as envisaged. They emphasised that the development dimension must be taken into account in the negotiations on new issues, particularly services and intellectual property rights. They agreed to take concerted action to this end in the forthcoming negotiations.
27. 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.
28. 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. They supported the convening of a high level United Nations Conference on the least developed countries in 1990 to review progress and formulate national and international policies and measures for accelerating the development process in the least developed countries during the 1990s, especially in order to help them achieve their long term socio-economic objectives.
29. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which Prime Minister of Pakistan chaired the meeting. They expressed their profound gratitude for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of Pakistan.

MALÉ DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Fifth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 23rd November, 1990.

1. The President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, the King of Bhutan, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Chandra Shekhar, the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Prime Minister of Nepal, The Right Honourable Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif and the Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Dingiri Banda Wijetunga met at the Fifth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at Male' on 21-23 November, 1990.
2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated that cooperation among the countries of South Asia was necessary for improving the quality of life of the peoples of the region. They recalled their conviction that the objectives of peace and stability in South Asia could be best served by fostering mutual understanding, cooperation and good neighbourly relations. They reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and renewed their resolve to intensify cooperation under its aegis in pursuit of their common objectives.
3. 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 Non-aligned Movement, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of disputes.
4. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction that the launching of SAARC in 1985 and the initiatives under the Integrated Programme of Action for strengthening regional cooperation in South Asia had generated much enthusiasm and hope in their peoples, and that the South Asian consciousness necessary for the success of regional

cooperation was gradually permeating the region. They reiterated their resolve to make optimal use of the positive forces of good-will, trust and understanding existing among their peoples and to turn SAARC into a dynamic instrument for achieving its objectives and creating an order based on mutual respect, equity, cooperation and shared benefits.

5. The Heads of State or Government reviewed the status of children in South Asia and noted that the recent World Summit for Children had imparted a new impetus to the ongoing efforts in this field. They believed that relevant recommendations of the World Summit could be usefully incorporated into a Plan of Action in the South Asian context and its implementation should be reviewed annually. The guidelines for such Plan of Action could be prepared by a panel of experts to be appointed by the Secretary-General and examined by the Technical Committee on Health and Population Activities. They also welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its entry into force. They expressed the hope that those Member States, who have not already become party to the Convention, would do so at an early date.
6. 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".
7. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the growing regional cooperation in combating the problems of drug trafficking and drug abuse. They expressed serious concern over the growing linkages between drug trafficking and international arms trade and terrorist activities. They agreed that observance of 1989 as the "SAARC Year for Combating Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking" had had a profound impact in drawing attention to the menace and to the need for its elimination. They expressed satisfaction that following the decision of the Fourth SAARC Summit, the SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances had been signed at Male'. They urged the Member States to take early measures to ratify the convention for its entry into force. They were convinced that the Convention would help in making SAARC efforts in this area more effective.
8. They endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers in regard to the timeframe for completion of the Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation

of the Environment. They noted with satisfaction that the methodology for undertaking the Study on the 'Greenhouse Effect' and its impact on the region was likely to be finalized in the near future and desired that the Study itself be completed for consideration at the Sixth Summit. In this context, they noted that the destruction of rainforests, the world over, was contributing significantly to adverse climatic changes and this aspect should also be covered in the proposed Study. They expressed the hope that these Studies would lead to an action plan for meaningful cooperation in the field of Environment and Disaster Management.

9. Recognizing that environment had emerged as a major global concern, the Heads of State or Government noted with alarm the unprecedented climatic changes predicted by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They 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 fora on this issue. They also decided to observe 1992 as the "SAARC Year of Environment".
10. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that the national studies on Trade, Manufactures and Services had been completed. They underlined the need for expeditious action for completing the Regional Study within the timeframe stipulated by the Council of Ministers. They expressed the hope that it would open new avenues of cooperation for the prosperity of the peoples of the region.
11. The Heads of State or Government approved the recommendations of the Council of Ministers regarding Special SAARC Travel Document and decided to launch the scheme.
12. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern that Member States were compelled to divert their scarce resources in combating terrorism. They called for expeditious enactment of enabling measures for the implementation of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. They also urged Member States to continue to cooperate in accordance with the Convention.
13. The Heads of State or Government noted that as their countries stood on the threshold of the next millennium, the world was undergoing profound transformations characterised by popular upsurge for democracy, liberty and exercise of human rights, lowering of ideological barriers and the relaxation of global tensions and progress towards disarmament and the resolution of a number of regional and global conflicts. There was

also a welcome trend towards the opening up of the global economy and integration of national economies into the mainstream of the world economy. They further noted the trend of increasing integration of the pattern of global production, consumption and trade, growing multipolarity of the world economic structure and integration of the markets of the developed countries in order to maintain their technological lead and competitive edge. These changes presented new challenges and opened up new opportunities to the South Asian countries, as to the rest of the developing world. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that their mutual cooperation can be a critical factor in enabling them to pursue these objectives more effectively.

14. The Heads of State or Government, noting the vital importance of bio-technology for the long-term food security of developing countries as well as for medicinal purposes, decided that cooperation should be extended to this field and, in particular, to the exchange of expertise in genetic conservation and maintenance of germplasm banks. In this connection, they welcomed India's offer of training facilities and agreed that cooperation in the cataloguing of genetic resources stored in different SAARC countries would be mutually beneficial. Taking note of the proposal made by the Group of Fifteen Developing Countries (G-15) for the establishment of a gene bank for developing countries, they agreed to participate in this venture.
15. 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.
16. The Heads of State or Government regarded the recent developments in the Gulf as the most unfortunate aberration from the present trend of detente, cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes. They reaffirmed their adherence to UN Security Council Resolutions on this issue. While emphasizing the need for a peaceful solution of the issue, they called for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the restoration of its legitimate Government. They stated that the Gulf crisis had dealt a severe blow to their economies. They needed massive international assistance to compensate the loss suffered by them due to a sharp decline in remittances, setback to their exports and severe strain

on their balance of payments position imposed by increased oil prices. They recognized the potentiality of cooperation among themselves for mitigating the impact of these adverse consequences.

17. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that the initiative of the Government of the Maldives for the Protection and Security of Small States at the UN in 1989, which they all supported, had also received overwhelming support of the international community. They agreed that, because of their particular problems, small states merited special measures of support in safeguarding their independence and territorial integrity.
18. The Heads of State or Government expressed the hope that the talks between the two Super Powers on arms control would culminate in the conclusion of an agreement for substantial reduction in their nuclear arsenals leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. While welcoming the measures being considered for arms reduction at the global level, they were convinced that the objective could be best achieved through the promotion of mutual trust and confidence among the Member States. They underlined the inherent relationship between disarmament and development and called upon all countries, especially those possessing the largest nuclear and conventional arsenals, to rechannel additional financial resources, human energy and creativity into development. They expressed their support for the banning of chemical weapons and early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. In this context, they welcomed the convening of the UN Conference in January 1991 to consider amendments to the Partial Test Ban Treaty to convert it into a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.
19. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern that the international economic environment for the developing countries had been characterised by negative resource flows, high trade barriers, serious external debt problems and high interest rates. The need of SAARC countries for increased concessional resources and technology as well as access to markets for their exports could not, therefore, be under-estimated. They called for collective efforts based on mutuality of interest and felt that regular North-South consultations were essential for ensuring equitable management of global interdependence.
20. 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.

21. Notwithstanding the continuing efforts on the international economic plane, the Heads of State or Government emphasised the pressing need for the Ministerial Meeting to address itself vigorously to the objective of self-reliance. They directed the Ministers to prepare a strategy for mobilising regional resources which would encourage and strengthen individual and collective self-reliance in the region.
22. The Heads of State or Government expressed their support for the Paris Declaration (1990) and the Programme of Action adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. They called upon the international community to contribute to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action which is of special importance for the socio-economic development of the region.
23. The Heads of State or Government recognized the imperative need for providing a better habitat to the peoples of South Asia through optimum utilization of indigenous technology, know-how and material, and decided that 1991 be observed as the "SAARC Year of Shelter".
24. 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".
25. The Heads of State or Government were particularly happy that the Fifth SAARC Summit coincided with the Twenty Fifth Anniversary of the Independence of the Maldives which provided them with the opportunity to express their solidarity with the people and the Government of the Maldives. They expressed their conviction that the Male' Summit had helped in consolidating the gains of regional cooperation and in strengthening the institutional base of SAARC.
26. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the Sixth SAARC Summit in 1991.
27. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the President of the Maldives had 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 the people of the Maldives and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

COLOMBO DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Sixth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 21st December, 1991.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia; the King of Bhutan, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Shri Narasimha Rao; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Rt. Hon. Girija Prasad Koirala; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mian Mohammed Nawaz Sharif and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Ranasinghe Premadasa met at the Sixth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Colombo, Sri Lanka on 21st December, 1991.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of SAARC. They resolved to promote regional cooperation for the benefit of their people, in a spirit of mutual accommodation, with full respect for the principles of sovereign equality, independence and territorial integrity of all States and in strict adherence to the principles of non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. They also reiterated their commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Non-aligned Movement.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

3. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the vital importance of assessing the nature and extent of international economic inter-dependence and of the need for reviving the North/South dialogue. They noted the recent developments that had radically transformed the international development relationship deeply affecting the prospects for the economies of the seven SAARC countries. The Heads of State

or Government emphasised the need for vigorously promoting South-South economic cooperation to off-set the negative consequences of international economic developments.

4. The Heads of State or Government also exchanged views on the priorities of their respective national economies. They identified, for the further development of their economies, the importance of securing less restrictive trading and marketing opportunities for their products, more extensive technology and resource transfers to South Asia, debt relief and access on favourable and on more concessional terms to resources from multilateral financial institutions. They agreed to keep an open dialogue on these aspects through mutual consultations.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

5. The Heads of State or Government assessed current international developments in the political sphere particularly those that affected the lives of the people of South Asia. They noted the changing power structures in international relations and the reduction of confrontations and tensions, particularly among the Super Powers. These have contributed to the receding of the threat of nuclear confrontation and to agreements on disarmament measures. The Heads of State or Government hoped that these developments would restrain the pursuit of military power in all areas of the world. They expressed the hope that the peace dividend would be used for promoting further development of developing countries. They welcomed the trend towards popularly based democratic governments in different parts of the world including in South Asia.
6. The Heads of State or Government observed however that some political issues in particular the Palestine question, the final elimination of Apartheid as well as other problems remained unresolved despite efforts towards their settlement.
7. In regard to human rights, the Heads of State or Government observed that civil and political rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other are inter-dependent and of equal importance Human rights issues should not therefore be viewed in narrow and exclusively political terms. In this context they underlined the need to view 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 of all persons.

8. The Heads of State or Government while reaffirming their commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, emphasised the need to ensure that development remains at the centre of international attention.
9. The Heads of State or Government agreed to participate in the on-going process of revitalising the United Nations as an effective universal instrument for addressing international issues on an equitable and democratic basis, taking full account of the interests and concerns of all states, including those in South Asia. Issues such as the protection and preservation of the environment and the equitable and sustainable management of global resources, economic development and the alleviation of poverty, the suppression of terrorism, drug trafficking and other international crimes required global responses and solutions calling for action by all states.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

10. In the context of the SAARC Charter-objective to strengthen cooperation among Member-States in international fora, the Heads of State or Government resolved to encourage consultations among delegations of SAARC countries at all international fora and to promote articulation of joint positions where such action would be in the interests of all. They felt that the development of a collective position in international fora would accord them greater credibility and enhance the international profile of South Asia.

STRENGTHENING OF SAARC

11. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the Report presented by the Chairman of the Fifth SAARC Summit, the President of Maldives, and the Head of Government of Bangladesh on the adoption of a more businesslike and functional approach in the conduct of SAARC meetings, as well as the Report submitted by the Chairman of the Ninth Session of the Council of Ministers, the Foreign Minister of Maldives, on rationalizing SAARC activities. The Heads of State or Government also considered other proposals submitted by Member-States and by the Secretariat to make the Association a more effective instrument for the realisation of the aspirations of the people of South Asia.
12. They decided that the Standing Committee should meet in special session in Colombo in April 1992 in order to collate and study all proposals and comments in this respect and to submit a report with its recommendations to the Eleventh Session of the Council of Ministers.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

13. The Heads of State or Government re-emphasised that regional self-reliance should be resolutely promoted through closer cooperation among countries of the Association and that this would help mitigate the adverse consequences of negative international developments operating against them.
14. The Heads of State or Government requested the Standing Committee at its Special Session to study the question of cooperation between SAARC and appropriate international and regional organizations taking into account the evolution of SAARC activities in the core economic areas and to report to the Eleventh Session of the Council of Ministers.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION

15. The Heads of State or Government noted the progress made by the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) in expanding to cover a number of sectors crucial for the economic and social progress of the peoples of South Asia. They were of the view that the challenge facing the IPA was to achieve its identified targets within specific time periods. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the proposals made and the discussions proceeding in SAARC to heighten the effectiveness of the IPA.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

16. The Heads of State or Government accorded the highest priority to the alleviation of poverty in all South Asian countries. They affirmed that South Asia's poor could constitute a huge and potential resource, provided their basic needs were met, and they were mobilized to create economic growth. This requires that the poor are empowered and are irreversibly linked to the mainstream of development. It was noted that each South Asian country has had significant success cases of this approach to poverty alleviation.
17. Recognising that a great majority of these people remain below the poverty line, they evinced keen interest in a "Daal-Bhaat", or assured nutritional standards approach towards the satisfaction of basic needs of the South Asian poor.
18. Deeply conscious that primary education is the cutting edge in the struggle against poverty and the promotion of development, the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the importance of attaining the target of providing primary education to all children between the ages of 6 - 14

years by the year 2000. They agreed to share their respective experiences and technical expertise to achieve this goal.

19. The Heads of State or Government decided to establish an independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation consisting of eminent persons from each SAARC Member State to conduct an in-depth study of diverse experiences of the seven countries on poverty alleviation, and to report to the Seventh Summit, their recommendations on the alleviation of poverty in South Asia.

TRADE, MANUFACTURES AND SERVICES

20. 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. They declared their commitment to the liberalisation of trade in the region through a step by step approach in such a manner that all countries in the region share the benefits of trade expansion equitably.
21. 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

22. The Heads of State or Government recognised that the degradation of the environment has emerged as a major global concern. While the protection of the environment is a common imperative for all humankind, the main responsibility in this regard rests on developed countries since most of the emission of pollutants originates in those countries and since they also have greater capacity for taking or facilitating corrective measures.
23. The Heads of State or Government called on the international community to address the question of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and life-styles which lead to environmental degradation.

They were also of the view that environmental standards applicable to developed countries may have excessive and unwarranted economic or social costs if applied in developing countries.

24. 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.
25. The Heads of State or Government expressed their conviction that the framework could be laid for an equitable global partnership of all countries with a view to safeguarding the environment.
26. The Heads of State or Government noted that in preparation for the SAARC Year of the Environment, SAARC countries had taken various national as well as regional measures for the preservation of the environment.
27. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction at the completion of Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of Environment. They urged the member countries to promote cooperation amongst themselves for enhancing their respective disaster management capabilities and for undertaking specific work-programmes for protection and preservation of the environment. They endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish a Committee on Environment to:
 - examine the recommendations of the Regional Study
 - identify measures for immediate action
 - decide on modalities for their implementation and welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to hold the first meeting of the Committee in Dhaka.
28. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the decision of the Standing Committee concerning the time frame to finalise the regional study on the “‘Greenhouse Effect’ and its Impact on the Region”. They urged member countries to consult each other on key issues concerning climate change, Bio-diversity and Biotechnology, a global consensus on forestry principles, transfer of environmentally sound technology, management of waste and other issues for discussion at Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee and the UNCED in 1992 so that the concerns of SAARC countries could be effectively articulated and projected, keeping in mind their respective national priorities.

29. The Government of India renewed its offer to host a Ministerial Meeting to harmonise the views of SAARC countries on these issues before UNCED 1992. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer.

SHELTER

30. The Heads of State or Government noted the useful activities conducted during 1991 which was observed as SAARC Year of Shelter. They decided to continue to work towards the global objective of "Shelter for All by the Year 2000".

31. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that Governments should play the critical role of facilitator and supporter of the initiatives of the people and non-governmental agencies in the field of shelter. In this role, they should be involved in the provision of affordable sites with secure tenure, making housing finance available on an affordable and sustainable basis, providing infrastructure development such as water supply and sanitation, energy and waste disposal, increasing the supply of building materials at reasonable prices using indigenous resources, removing constraints to building activities, and creating maximum opportunities for public participation in decision making and management of shelter activities in the overall context of poverty alleviation. Such activities would be facilitated by the exchange of experience, personnel, research and information among the SAARC countries.

32. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the recommendation on the establishment of a shelter information network to be called "SHELTERNET".

CHILDREN

33. The Heads of State or Government accorded the highest priority to the question of child survival, protection and development. They welcomed the adoption of a Plan of Action on Children for South Asia which incorporated relevant recommendations of the World Summit on Children.

34. The Heads of State or Government noted in this context that some member countries had completed their national Plans of Action and urged other member countries to complete their respective Plans. They also urged Member States to ensure coordinated follow-up action on their respective Plans.

35. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a Conference on Children in South Asia in 1992 to consider implementation of the regional Plan of Action.

36. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the adoption of the Plan of Action for 1991 - 2000 A.D. as the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child. They requested the Council of Ministers to ensure an annual review of the status of implementation of the Plan of Action during the decade.

TERRORISM

37. The Heads of State or Government expressed serious concern on the spread of terrorism in the region affecting the security and stability of all Member States and unequivocally condemned all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal. They deplored all such acts for their impact on life, property, socio-economic development and political stability as well as on regional and international peace and cooperation.

38. They recognised that cooperation among SAARC States was vital if terrorism was to be prevented and eliminated from the region. In this regard they urged Member States to take all necessary measures to give full effect to their obligations under the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. They stressed in particular, the urgent need for the expeditious enactment of enabling legislation by those Member States which had not yet done so, for the implementation of the Convention and the need for a constant dialogue and interaction among the concerned agencies of Member States, including submission of periodic recommendations to the Council of Ministers.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

39. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Maldives in drawing the attention of the international community to the protection and security of small states. They noted with satisfaction that the resolution submitted by the Maldives to the United Nations during the 46th Session of the General Assembly and co-sponsored by 65 countries including all the members of SAARC was adopted without a vote. They agreed that small states may be particularly vulnerable to external threats and acts of interference in their internal affairs and that they merit special measures of support in safeguarding their sovereign independence, territorial integrity and the welfare of their people.

DRUG TRAFFICKING

40. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the increasing regional cooperation in combating the problem of drug trafficking and drug abuse. They expressed serious concern over the growing linkages

between drug trafficking, international arms trade and terrorist activities. While expressing satisfaction at the signing of the SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances at the Fifth SAARC Summit at Malé, they urged Member States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention for its entry into force. They also recognised the need for greater cooperation, including the submission of periodic recommendations to the Council of Ministers.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

41. The Heads of State or Government recalled that important initiatives had been taken at the Bangalore and Kathmandu Summits which had subsequently resulted in the increased involvement of the peoples of South Asia in the process of Regional Cooperation. They welcomed the steps being taken by business organisations/ professional bodies, scholars, academics, National Cultural Councils and the media in South Asia to form regional entities/ bodies. They called on the Standing Committee to expedite the formulation of guidelines for extending recognition to such groups and bodies.

FUND FOR REGIONAL PROJECTS

42. 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.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

43. The Heads of State or Government requested the Secretary-General of SAARC to set up a panel of experts to examine the proposal of His Majesty the King of Bhutan to undertake a pre-feasibility study for the establishment of a South Asian Development Fund, taking into account the views of all Member States.

SAARC VISA EXEMPTION SCHEME

44. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that the Scheme in regard to the entitled categories of Members of Parliament, Judges of the Supreme Court, Heads of national academic institutions and the accompanying spouses and dependent children will become operational from 1st March 1992. They called for expeditious action to implement the scheme as well as to consider other categories eligible for exemption.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

45. The Heads of State or Government were conscious of the vast potential being afforded by current advances in scientific research for the application of science and technology towards the well-being of the peoples of South Asia. They agreed that for the South Asian region to derive the maximum benefit, scientific and technological cooperation should transcend national frontiers.
46. Recalling the decision of the Malé Summit to institutionalise cooperation in the field of bio-technology, they welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a networking arrangement between Research and Development Centres in the Member States as an important step in advancing such cooperation. They also welcomed the emphasis on organised study tours, workshops and seminars proposed in the identified areas of cooperation in the field of science and technology.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE SAARC HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

47. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of Bangladesh to host the Seventh SAARC Summit in 1992.
48. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the President of Sri Lanka had 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 the people of Sri Lanka and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

DHAKA DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Seventh SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 11th April, 1993.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Rt. Hon. Girija Prasad Koirala, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Nawaz Sharif and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa met at the Seventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10 - 11 April, 1993.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the principles and objectives of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to the five principles of peaceful co-existence, the UN Charter and non-alignment. The Heads of State or Government noted the progress achieved in regional cooperation under the aegis of SAARC. They felt that time was now opportune for SAARC to provide a further dynamic impetus to activities in the core areas of economic, social and cultural cooperation in the SAARC region.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPA)

3. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the recent specific steps taken to consolidate and further streamline IPA-related SAARC activities. They also stressed the need for a progressive movement towards undertaking more well-defined, target-oriented and time-bound projects and programmes to ensure tangible benefits for the peoples of South Asia.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE IPA

4. The Leaders welcomed the recent decisions to institutionalize cooperation in the core areas.

MORE BUSINESS-LIKE AND FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN THE CONDUCT OF SAARC MEETINGS

5. The Heads of State or Government approved the recommendations of the Eleventh Session of the Council of Ministers for adopting a more businesslike and functional approach in the conduct of Summit meetings. They also noted with satisfaction the guidelines and procedures approved by the Eleventh Session of the Council in this respect relating to other SAARC meetings. They decided to meet informally whenever necessary, between Summits.

CONSENSUS ON ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

6. Conscious that the sheer magnitude and complexity of South Asian poverty constituted a major political and economic challenge, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to continue to accord a high priority to its eradication from the region in the shortest possible time.
7. They pledged to overcome this challenge through the implementation of appropriate pro-poor development strategies at macro and micro levels.
8. In this context, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the Report of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation established at the Colombo Summit. The Report provided valuable insight and illustrative examples of successful poverty alleviation programmes in individual Member States.
9. Acknowledging that the abiding human qualities of dignity, creativity and productive potential are eroded by chronic poverty, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to empowering the poor for enhanced growth, consistent with human development and equity.
10. The Heads of State or Government committed their Governments unequivocally to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 A.D. through an Agenda of Action, which would, inter-alia, embody :
 - A strategy of social mobilization involving the building of organizations of the poor and their empowerment through

- appropriate national support mechanisms, with the assistance of respective Governments;
- A policy of decentralized agricultural development and sharply focussed household level food security through universal provision of 'Daal-Bhaat' or basic nutritional needs;
 - A policy of decentralized small scale labour intensive industrialization, with the choice of efficient and cost-effective technology;
 - A policy of human development, including the enhancement of the social role and status of poor women, the provision of universal primary education, skill development, primary health care, shelter for the poor and protection of children;
 - A policy to support the above initiatives with adequate financial resources.
11. The Heads of State or Government stressed that within the overall conceptual approach of 'Daal-Bhaat', the right to work and the right to primary education should receive priority.
12. The Leaders also underscored the critical link between the success of national efforts aimed at poverty alleviation and the external factors affecting growth and development. They urged all major actors in the world economic scene, particularly the industrialized countries and multilateral and regional financial institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations to create an enabling international atmosphere that is supportive of poverty alleviation programmes in South Asia. This would require a new dialogue with donors.
13. The Heads of State or Government agreed to the follow-up action indicated below :
- a national level pro-poor plan to be drawn up by each Member State. This plan is to be harmonized with the open economy and structural adjustment strategies;
 - to share during the next Summit, information regarding the progress achieved.

TRADE, MANUFACTURES AND SERVICES

14. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the need to liberalize trade as early as possible through a step by step approach. They underscored

that this should be done in such a manner that all countries in the region could share the benefits of trade expansion equitably.

15. In this context, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the finalization of the framework Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). They expressed their deep satisfaction over the signing of the framework Agreement. The Leaders stressed that all necessary steps should be taken to begin the first round of trade negotiations to exchange trade preferences among Member States under the Arrangement.
16. The Heads of State or Government further underlined the critical importance of urgently promoting intra-regional cooperation, particularly in the area of manufactures in order to enhance the productive capacity of the Member Countries, and to promote sustained growth and development to prevent the marginalization of South Asia's trade interest in the larger global context.

ENVIRONMENT

17. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep concern at the unabated degradation of the environment and recurrence of devastating natural disasters. They also underscored the risks and dangers involved in overlooking the challenge posed by these problems. They expressed their commitment to implementing at all levels - national, bilateral, regional and global - programmes for the protection and preservation of the environment and prevention of its degradation. The Heads of State or Government recognized that the completion of the Regional Study on the "Greenhouse Effect' and its Impact on the Region" was a significant step forward in promoting regional cooperation in this vital area. They also stressed the importance of continuing the ongoing SAARC activities in the field of environment.
18. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and underscored the imperative need to ensure the flow of resources to successfully implement the wide range of suggested initiatives and actions contained in Agenda 21. The Heads of State or Government noted that all international actions in the area of environment should be based on common but differential responsibilities, collective endeavours and a balanced perspective. Such actions, they stressed, must consider the protection of environment, economic growth and eradication of poverty as mutually reinforcing. All environmental initiatives, they underscored,

must preclude the imposition of arbitrary and one-sided pre-conditions and ensure a harmonious blending of environmental and development concerns. They further noted with satisfaction the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. They urged that the Commission approach environmental problems of developed and developing countries in an equitable manner.

19. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction over the adoption of a common position by Member States prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. They expressed their determination to continue in future the practice of intra-SAARC consultations on matters of common concern.

POPULATION

20. Recognizing the sovereign right of all countries to promote, adopt and implement their population policies and mindful of their cultures, values and traditions, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to integrate demographic objectives and population strategies in the formulation of the development strategies of Member Countries. In this context, they also noted the importance of adequate investment in the health and education sectors for the success of their population programmes. They agreed that cooperation among Member States should be strengthened, both through sharing experiences and in other practical ways, to enhance their capacity to deal with the population problem. The Leaders urged Governments of developed countries, as well as all concerned international and regional organizations, to strengthen their financial and technical support in the areas of health and education as part of their strategy of assistance to developing countries in their development efforts.
21. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Nepal to host a SAARC Ministerial Conference on Women and Family Health in Kathmandu in October/November 1993.

SHELTER

22. The Heads of State or Government reiterated that housing was a basic right for all people and that Governments should act as facilitator and supporter of shelter programmes initiated by the people. They urged Member States to continue to work towards the global objective of "Shelter for All by the Year 2000".

CHILDREN

23. Reaffirming their commitment to accord the highest priority to child survival, protection and development, the Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that all Member States had completed their National Plans of Action on Children. They reiterated their call at the Colombo Summit to continue to ensure coordinated follow-up action by Member States on their respective plans.
24. The Heads of State or Government endorsed the “Colombo Resolution on Children” adopted by the Second SAARC Ministerial Conference on Children held at Colombo in September 1992 and urged Member States to implement programmes as appropriate in their respective national contexts, to achieve the illustrative goals embodied in the Resolution, and the goals of the SAARC Plan of Action on Children.
25. The Heads of State or Government noted, in particular, the need to take effective measures to protect children against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation and agreed to promote cooperation among Member States in devising such measures.

YOUTH

26. 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.
27. 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”.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DISABLED PERSONS

28. The Heads of State or Government while recalling their decision at the Male’ Summit to observe 1993 as the “SAARC Year of Disabled Persons”, adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the Disabled Persons. They urged Member States to take concrete steps to implement the Plan.
29. They welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host a Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons in September 1993.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

30. While reviewing the situation of women in the region, it was noted with satisfaction that over a period of time, the content of regional cooperation which addresses the issue of development, gender and equality for women has steadily grown in SAARC. The Heads of State or Government hoped that the cooperation thus developed will enable Member States to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing women into the mainstream of development with independence and equality.
31. The Heads of State or Government recalled that in pursuance of their collective will expressed in the Male' Summit to observe the 1990s as the " SAARC Decade of the Girl Child", Member States had undertaken to formulate National Plans of Action for the improvement of the condition of the Girl Child giving priority to her survival, protection and development. They expressed satisfaction that some Member States had already completed this task and others were expected to do so soon.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

32. 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.
33. 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.

TERRORISM

34. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal. They strongly deplored the adverse consequences of terrorism.
35. They noted with grave concern that the efforts to combat the growing threat of terrorism had resulted in the diversion of valuable scarce resources from urgent development programmes.
36. The Leaders reiterated the need to give high priority to the enactment of enabling legislation at the national level to give effect to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, while urging the Member States which had not yet done so, to make every effort to finalize this matter before the Eighth SAARC Summit.

37. While recognizing that some progress had been achieved in the fields of consultation and exchange of information, they stressed the need for further enhancing cooperation in these fields as well as for coordinated action. They called for the expeditious implementation of the recommendations formulated for advancing cooperation in this regard in pursuance of their decision at the Colombo Summit.

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND DRUG ABUSE

38. 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.

39. They recognized the devastating impact of drug abuse on the very fabric of society and the serious threat to security and stability posed by drug trafficking through its growing linkages with organized crime, illicit arms trade and terrorism.

40. The Heads of State or Government were gratified to note the expanding cooperation among Member States to combat and eliminate the scourge of drug trafficking and drug abuse.

41. They reiterated the need for further strengthening cooperation in this field and called for the expeditious implementation of the recommendations formulated for this purpose in pursuance of their decision at the Colombo Summit.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

42. 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. They further noted that real protection of small and weaker States should be firmly rooted in the Rule of Law and strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms relating to the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States - big or small. This, they stressed, should be ensured by all countries either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate actions.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

43. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need to further promote people-to-people contact in order to ensure increased involvement

of peoples of South Asia in the process of regional cooperation. In this context, they noted that the formulation of guidelines and procedures for extending recognition to regional apex bodies would facilitate participation of these bodies in promoting regional cooperation at the people-to-people level.

44. The Leaders expressed the hope that the recent recognition of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry would contribute positively to enhancing cooperation in the crucial areas of trade and economic relations.
45. The Heads of State or Government expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of India for hosting the First South Asian Festival of SAARC Countries in 1992. The Festival provided the people of the region the opportunity to share in the rich cultural heritage of South Asia. The Heads of State or Government hoped that the South Asian Festival would become a regular feature.

ASSOCIATION OF SAARC SPEAKERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

46. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the initiative of the Speakers of Parliaments of SAARC Countries in forming an “Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians”. They were of the view that the establishment of this Association would add another important dimension to the process of regional cooperation.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

47. 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.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

48. The Heads of State or Government had wide-ranging discussions on the current global political trends and future prospects, particularly those issues that affect South Asia. In this context, they reiterated their

deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen the United Nations as the central instrument for peace, security, disarmament, development and cooperation among the nations of the world. To this end, the Leaders supported all constructive initiatives aimed at strengthening the United Nations. They, however, underscored that any move to adapt or reform the United Nations must be undertaken with the sole objective of rendering the United Nations more democratic, efficient and effective and not to limit the focus of its attention to a narrow and isolated range of objectives.

49. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement and underlined the continued validity and relevance of these principles and objectives in the contemporary global political and economic context. They recalled the important role the Movement had been playing in strengthening international peace, promoting development and establishing more equitable and just economic relations and enhancing international cooperation in all areas. They expressed their deep conviction that the Movement's innate strength uniquely equipped it to continue to play a most constructive role in laying the foundations and defining the characteristics of a new world order which should be based on the principles of justice, equity and 12 democracy in international relations. In this context, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the success of the Jakarta Summit of the Non-aligned countries and called for the expeditious implementation of its decisions.
50. The Heads of State or Government noted that the end of the cold war presented new opportunities and challenges. They observed that despite many positive developments and recent successes in resolving some regional conflicts, the international political scene was still marred by strife and tension. They expressed their serious concern over the unfortunate and tragic consequences of ethnic conflict and violence afflicting people and communities in many parts of the world. They stressed that efforts must be intensified to find peaceful and viable solutions to conflicts of long standing nature and new problems through greater respect for international law and universally accepted humanitarian norms and standards.
51. The Heads of State or Government noted a number of recent positive developments in the area of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmaments including the agreements on bilateral arms reductions

between the United States and the Russian Federation. They expressed their hope that the implementation of the far-reaching arms reduction agreed in the Washington Agreement of June 1992 and START II signed in Moscow in January 1993 would be successfully carried out. The Leaders urged all Nuclear-Weapon States to collectively endeavour to attain the ultimate goal of complete elimination of nuclear arsenals in the shortest possible time.

52. They also underscored the imperative to further broaden and deepen the dimensions to disarmament and to complement bilateral approaches to disarmament with effective multilateral approaches. While welcoming the recent progress in arms reduction at the global level, the Leaders were convinced that this objective could be best achieved through the promotion of mutual trust and confidence among Member States.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

53. The Heads of State or Government noted that while it was important to build peace and create conditions of stability in the world, it was equally important to promote economic and social development. They underscored that international cooperation for development and eradication of poverty were inextricably linked with the preservation of international peace and security and hence needed to be treated on an equal footing and pursued with equal vigour. The Heads of State or Government expressed their grave concern over the continuing deterioration in economic situation in the majority of developing countries. The economies of developing countries, they observed, continued to suffer as a result of limited market access for their exports, dwindling resource flows, absence of adequate foreign investment, mounting external indebtedness, inadequate transfer of technology and the inequities in the global monetary, financial and trading systems. The Heads of State or Government noted that although the developing countries themselves had the primary responsibility for their economic development, the role of developed countries remained central to the revival of the growth of the world economy - in particular the economies of the developing countries.
54. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the vital importance of economic interdependence among nations and of the need for reviving North-South dialogue. They fully endorsed the view that there should be more equitable economic opportunities for all nations. These should include such important features as the strengthening of a free, open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, effective macro-

economic coordination and fiscal discipline to ensure stable conditions conducive to development in the global economy. They also reiterated their firm support for the broadening of the coordination of international macro-economic policies to take into account concerns of all countries, specially the developing countries. Referring to the competing demands for capital and investment resources, the Heads of State or Government underscored the need to ensure the adequate flow of investment resources to the developing countries through increasing global savings and a more equitable utilization of the peace dividends. In this context the Heads of State or Government also underscored the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for the developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. They emphasized on the need for exceptional finance to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC Countries.

55. The Heads of State or Government also strongly underlined the need to continue efforts to seek a comprehensive, durable and growth-oriented solution to the external indebtedness of the developing countries. This, they stressed, was essential to accelerate the process of growth in these countries. A lasting solution to the debt crisis, the Heads of State or Government noted, must take into account the need to significantly reduce the stock and service of all types of debts of indebted developing countries to augment the concessional aid flows to SAARC Countries and work out anticipatory measures to prevent the recurrence and proliferation of the debt problem.
56. The Heads of State or Government also underlined the importance of a strengthened and liberalized international trading system. In this context, they noted that the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations was a matter of great importance to the developing countries. Failure of the Round, the Leaders noted, would only further impair economic growth and encourage protectionist policy seriously weakening the multilateral trading system. The Heads of State or Government strongly urged the major partners in the Negotiations to demonstrate their political will and take positive steps to ensure without further delay a satisfactory conclusion of the Uruguay Round. They further stressed that although the main thrust of these negotiations in the recent past had been in respect of new issues, there was an imperative need to ensure that the Uruguay Round fully take into account the concerns and interests of developing countries. This, the Heads of State or Government

stressed, was particularly important. The Leaders underscored the need to speedily conclude the current round of negotiations in a transparent, balanced and expeditious manner. They also stressed that before the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, an evaluation of results be held from the point of view of developing countries.

57. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern over the increasing stock of anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations against the exports of developing countries and the new threats to a liberal trading order in the form of measures taken in pursuit of the goals relating to workers' rights and the environment.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

58. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that greater consultations among the delegations of SAARC Countries in all international fora on the major issues of common concern to them would be in the interest of all their countries. They felt that the development of collective positions on such issues in the international fora would enhance the international profile of South Asia and would enable the countries in the region to articulate their position on them more effectively. They reiterated their common resolve to concert their position in all international fora and negotiations with a view to deriving maximum benefits from them in accordance with their needs and common priorities.
59. The Heads of State or Government underscored the vital importance attached by their countries to the forthcoming Second World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the World Population Conference in 1994 and the 1995 World Conference on Women. They also supported the convening of a World Summit for Social Development. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need to develop a common South Asian perspective on the issues to be discussed by these important international conferences. They also underscored the imperative to coordinate the position of SAARC countries in order to ensure a balanced equitable and action oriented outcome of these conferences.

OBSERVER STATUS

60. The Heads of State or Government decided that an Expert Group of the Member States will examine the various requests for observer status at SAARC/SAARC meetings in all its aspects on the basis of a working paper to

be prepared by the Secretariat and make appropriate recommendations to the Nineteenth Session of the Standing Committee. In this respect, they welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host the Expert Group Meeting.

CONCLUSION

61. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep satisfaction over the positive outcome of the Seventh SAARC Summit and expressed their conviction that this Summit would greatly contribute towards strengthening the policies and cooperative actions of the Member States in response to the challenges of the 1990s and beyond in areas where SAARC has a distinct contribution to make. They also reiterated once again 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 all the requisite institutional capacities - so that it can 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.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE SAARC HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

62. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of India to host the Eighth SAARC Summit in 1994.

63. The Heads of State or Government of Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their sincere appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had conducted the Meeting and guided its proceedings in her capacity as Chairperson. They expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and people of Bangladesh and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

DELHI DECLARATION

The Declaration of Eight SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 4th May, 1995.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Rt. Hon. Manmohan Adhikari, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Eighth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at New Delhi, India on 2-4 May 1995.

SAARC DECADE

2. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction on the achievements of the First Decade of SAARC and resolved to celebrate its completion of the First Decade both in the individual Member States and collectively. They endorsed the proposal of the Council of Ministers to convene a Commemorative Session of the Council on the theme "SAARC - Vision for the Second Decade" to identify the areas on which SAARC should focus in its Second Decade.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

3. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their resolve to intensify regional cooperation in order to accelerate the process of promoting the welfare and improving the quality of life of the peoples of South Asia. They reiterated their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the SAARC Charter, particularly, to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. They recalled their conviction

that in an increasingly interdependent world, regional cooperation was a dynamic instrument for promoting economic prosperity, mutual understanding and good neighbourly relations to achieve the objectives of peace and stability in South Asia. In this context, a climate of peace and stability would contribute to the economic growth.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

4. 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.
5. 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. They agreed that this process could be strengthened by sharing and exchanging relevant studies carried out by independent research institutions and experts. This mechanism would be in the form of a three-tier institutional structure as recommended in the Report and would meet once a year. They noted that such a mechanism has been set up enabling the procedures of exchange of information to commence and welcomed the offer of India to host the first round of the three-tier mechanism.
6. The Heads of State or Government directed that the next meeting of Finance/Planning Ministers consider the efficacy of such mechanism towards eradicating poverty in the region and report on the progress achieved to the Ninth SAARC Summit, through the Council of Ministers.
7. In this context, they decided to declare 1995 as the "SAARC Year of Poverty Eradication".
8. Acknowledging that the abiding human qualities of dignity, creativity and productive potential are eroded by chronic poverty, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to empowering the poor for enhanced growth consistent with human development and equity.
9. Recognizing that poverty is a complex multi-dimensional problem with origins in both national and international domains, country-specific programmes to tackle poverty and international efforts supporting national efforts and the parallel process of creating a supportive international

environment conducive to economic growth and social development of developing countries, are crucial for a solution to this problem. Summit for Social Development recognized the need for focusing the attention of the international community on and support the special needs of countries and regions in which there are substantial concentrations of people living in poverty, in particular those in South Asia and which face serious difficulties in achieving social and economic development. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to eradicate poverty and noted with appreciation the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

10. The Heads of State or Government committed themselves to addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and to provide for the basic needs of all. They reaffirmed their commitment to work for guaranteeing the realisation of the rights of all, in particular those of the poor, to food, work, shelter, health, education, resources and information.
11. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to provide expanded opportunities to the poor to enhance their overall capacities and improve living conditions and to adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, disability and old age. While recognising the need to improve, expand and deregulate markets to promote sustained economic growth they felt it was essential to mitigate any negative features created by the market forces and make all efforts to make the markets friendly to the poor. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the necessity to ensure that financial systems and other public policies are geared towards poverty eradication and warned against increase in socially divisive disparities.
12. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the Governments of SAARC countries will have to play a lead role in promoting the support structures needed for poverty eradication, including people's institutions and non-governmental organisations in the context of organising the people and fostering decentralisation and local self-governance and encouraging organisation of the poor, in the context of their social and economic interests.

SAARC PREFERENTIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENT (SAPTA)

13. 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.

14. 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.
15. In view of the fast changing international economic environment, creation of major trading and economic groupings, establishment of the World Trade Organisation subsequent to the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and unilateral economic liberalisation measures being adopted by Member Countries, the Heads of State or Government emphasised the urgency of broadening and deepening cooperation within a specific and rapid time-frame in the core areas of trade and economic relations in the region. These developments call for added urgency to achieve more progress towards operationalisation of SAPTA and intensification of cooperation to expand regional trade. To that end, they decided that the "Components" and "Additional Measures" identified in Articles 4 and 6 respectively of the SAPTA Agreement should be implemented.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION

16. The Heads of State or Government noted the progress made through the Integrated Programme of Action covering a number of crucial areas and activities.

REGIONAL CENTRES

17. 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.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

18. Noting that increased political and social consciousness in the region had highlighted the issues of elimination of gender-disparity and empowerment of women which are essential for their socio-economic development, the Heads of State or Government underlined the urgency of addressing these issues through further affirmative action.
19. The Leaders endorsed the "Kathmandu Resolution on Women and Family Health", adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Women and Family

Health in Kathmandu in November 1993, and expressed satisfaction that appropriate programmes were being undertaken to implement the Resolution at the national level by the Member States.

20. The Leaders noted the progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to mark 1991-2000 as the 'SAARC Decade of the Girl-Child', and requested the Council of Ministers to conduct a comprehensive mid-decade review for presentation to the Ninth SAARC Summit.
21. Recognising the serious threat faced by certain groups of Girl Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (GCEDC) including those orphaned, disabled and exploited, the Leaders decided that an urgent appraisal of the situation of these children be undertaken by the Council of Ministers and specific recommendations be presented to the Ninth SAARC Summit.
22. Considering that the exploitation of the Girl Child is a direct reflection of the status of women in society, the Leaders reaffirmed their resolve to take necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girl-children.

CHILDREN

23. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction that the annual reviews of the situation of children in SAARC countries for the years 1993 and 1994 had been completed which indicated reduction in infant mortality and significant progress in the immunisation programme for children in the region.
24. Recalling the mid-decade goals of the World Summit for Children, the Heads of State or Government resolved to intensify their efforts both at the national and regional levels for attainment of these goals.
25. The Leaders welcomed that all Member States have become party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They felt that the recently held Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in September 1994 and the Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development in March 1995 had imparted fresh impetus to the on-going efforts for the survival, protection and development of children in South Asia.

YOUTH

26. The Heads of State or Government endorsed the Malé Resolution on Youth adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Youth in South Asia

held in the Maldives in May 1994 and noted that the Conference had, inter-alia, served to focus attention on the status of the youth and the challenges faced by them. The Leaders noted with satisfaction that the Agenda for Action incorporated in the Resolution is being implemented by Member States with a view to integrating the youth into the process of national development. They noted with satisfaction that the SAARC Youth Resolution had been adopted and the SAARC Youth Awards Scheme has been established.

27. The Leaders expressed satisfaction on the implementation of the Plan of Action to mark 1994 as the SAARC Year of the Youth in Member States and resolved to continue the momentum generated in Member States.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

28. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that the Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons was held in Islamabad in December 1993. They endorsed the Islamabad Resolution on Disabled Persons and the recommendations of the Conference and noted that the Conference had further increased awareness among the peoples of South Asia regarding the needs and problems of the disabled persons. They welcomed the activities and programmes launched by the Member States in pursuance of the Resolution for the protection and promotion of persons with disability.

SHELTER

29. The Heads of State or Government, recognising that housing was a basic right for all people and that, in addition to governmental efforts, private initiatives of the people and non-governmental agencies should be supported, reaffirmed their commitment to work towards the global objective of "Shelter for All by the Year 2000."

LITERACY

30. 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".

ENVIRONMENT

31. Reaffirming the need for a concerted action for the protection and preservation of the environment, the Heads of State or Government

expressed their satisfaction over the formulation of a common position by Member States prior to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and the presentation of the collective position at the Yokohama Conference. They recognised that international cooperation is vital for building up national capabilities, transfer of appropriate technology and promotion of multilateral projects and research efforts in natural disaster reduction.

32. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep concern at the unabated degradation of the environment and recurrence of devastating natural disasters. They also underscored the risks and dangers involved in overlooking the challenge posed by these problems. They expressed their commitment to implementing at all levels - national, bilateral, regional and global - programmes for the protection and preservation of the environment and prevention of its degradation. The Heads of State or Government stressed the importance of continuing the on-going SAARC activities in the field of environment.
33. The Heads of State or Government noted that although some work has been carried out in the area of disseminating information on the problems of environmental degradation and their impact on the region, progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the SAARC Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment and the Regional Study on Greenhouse Effect and its Impact on the Region, which were completed in 1992, had been slow. They stressed the importance of effective and speedy implementation of the recommendations of the two Studies and requested Member States to take all necessary steps without further delay in vital areas such as sharing and developing scientific capabilities to protect and manage the environment. They further directed the Technical Committee on Environment to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the two Studies, and submit a report to the Ninth Summit through the Council of Ministers.
34. The Heads of State or Government recalled the decisions expressed in the Dhaka Declaration of April, 1993 on the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of June, 1992 and reiterated the urgent need to ensure the flow of new and additional resources that are adequate and predictable to successfully implement the programmes of Agenda 21. They also recalled the United Nations minimum target for developed countries of 0.7 percent of GNP as Official Development Assistance, a target which is yet to be approximated by

most developed countries. The Heads of State or Government also noted that international actions in the area of environment protection should be based on partnership and collective endeavours and should reflect the principle enunciated in the UNCED, of common but differentiated responsibilities. Integral to such actions is the promotion of economic growth in developing countries, that is both sustained and sustainable and direct action in eradicating poverty.

35. The Heads of State or Government also noted that the Commission on Sustainable Development set up to monitor the implementation of the Rio agreements has met thrice since their earlier meeting and expressed the hope that the Commission would be able to facilitate the necessary flow of resources and technology.
36. The Heads of State or Government also noted that the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have both come into force and the first meetings of the Conferences of Parties to each Convention have been held. Welcoming these developments they urged that developing countries should be assisted in meeting their commitments under the Conventions. The establishment of the restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a beginning in this direction. However, the Heads of State or Government urged that funds of a much larger order would be necessary if the needs of the Conventions are to be met.

TERRORISM

37. The Heads of State or Government expressed serious concern on the spread of terrorism in and outside the region and reiterated their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal. They deplored all such acts for their ruinous impact on life, property, socio-economic development and political stability as well as on regional and international peace and cooperation.
38. The Heads of State or Government once again emphasised that highest priority should be accorded to the enactment of enabling legislation at the national level to give effect to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. They urged Member States, which had not yet done so, to enact expeditiously enabling legislation at the national level to implement the convention and reiterated the need for a constant dialogue and interaction among the concerned agencies of Member States, including submission of periodic recommendations to the Council of Ministers.

39. They underlined that cooperation among SAARC Member States was vital if the scourge of terrorism was to be eliminated from the region.

DRUG TRAFFICKING

40. The Heads of State or Government recognised that drug abuse and drug trafficking with its linkages with organised crime, illicit arms trade and terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to the security and stability in the region.
41. While noting the efforts made by Member States as well as the regional cooperation underway to combat this pernicious trade, the Leaders stressed the urgency of further strengthening the process of cooperation.
42. 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.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

43. The Heads of State or Government reiterated that cooperation in the area of Science and Technology should be accorded high priority. Noting that some progress had been made towards establishment of networking arrangements, inter-alia, in the fields of Bio-Technology, Genetic Engineering, Energy Modelling Techniques and Low-Cost Housing and Building Technologies, the Leaders called for further acceleration of this process.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

44. Reiterating their earlier resolve to further promote people-to-people contact through increased involvement of the peoples of South Asia in the process of regional cooperation, the Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that such interaction has been taking place through various fora both within and outside the SAARC framework and has contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding in the region.
45. The Leaders noted that SAARC LAW (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.

46. The Leaders noted with satisfaction that the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has been functioning satisfactorily. They expressed hope that the SAARC Chamber and its constituent units in the Member States will do their utmost to promote trade and economic cooperation in the SAARC region. The Leaders commended the SAARC Chamber for disseminating information on the scope, content and potentials of SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) among the business community in the region.
47. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction that the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme is being implemented smoothly and has enhanced the scope of people-to-people contacts.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND (SADF)

48. The Heads of State or Government endorsed the establishment of a three-window South Asian Development Fund with the merger of SAARC Fund for Regional Projects and the SAARC Regional Fund and a third window for social development and infrastructure development.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

49. The Heads of State or Government recalled their decision taken at the Seventh SAARC Summit regarding development of collective positions in international fora on such issues as would enhance the international profile of South Asia and would enable the Member States to articulate their position on them more effectively. They noted that Council of Ministers had formulated a procedure for projection of SAARC collective positions at such international fora.
50. They noted with satisfaction that pursuant to the decision at the Seventh SAARC Summit, collective positions were formulated by Member States which were presented at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and the World Summit for Social Development. The Leaders also noted with satisfaction that a SAARC collective position will also be presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

51. The Heads of State or Government reaffirming their commitment to universally accepted principles and norms relating to the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States, recognised that small States, because

of their particular problems, required special measures of support for safeguarding their independence and territorial integrity. They reiterated that real protection of small and weaker States should be firmly rooted in the rule of law. This, they stressed should be ensured by all countries either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate actions.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

52. 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.
53. The Heads of State or Government had wide ranging discussions on the current global political trends and future prospects, particularly those issues that concern South Asia. In this context, they reiterated their deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen the United Nations as the central instrument for peace, security, disarmament, development and cooperation among the nations of the world. While pledging their support to all constructive initiatives aimed at strengthening the United Nations, the Leaders emphasised that such initiatives must be undertaken with the sole objective of rendering the United Nations and all its organs more democratic, efficient and effective and not to limit the focus of its attention to a narrow and isolated range of objectives.
54. 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.
55. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement and underlined the continued validity and relevance of these principles and objectives in the contemporary world. They recalled the stabilising role played by the Movement in global affairs since its inception. They expressed their deep conviction that the Movement's innate strength equipped it to continue to play a most constructive role in laying the foundations of a new world order based on the rule of law, non-discrimination, equity and cooperation.

56. The Heads of State or Government noted that while the international community had successfully created the norm against chemical and biological weapons, it had, unfortunately, been unable to do the same with regard to nuclear weapons. The Leaders were convinced that more needs to be done and at a far greater pace. Reiterating that the utmost priority was to be given to nuclear disarmament, given the danger posed by nuclear weapons, they urged the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances and undertake negotiations for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time bound framework.
57. The Heads of State or Government expressed their strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. They agreed to take all necessary steps to achieve this objective.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

58. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and reaffirmed their commitment to implement fully and as scheduled, the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations. They also welcomed the coming into existence of the WTO and expressed the hope that it would help to expand international trade, particularly that of the developing countries. They reaffirmed the immediate need to elaborate policies to enable developing countries, to take advantage of expanded international trading opportunities, in the context of the full implementation of the Round. They called on all countries to refrain from any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and enlightened regionalism and globalism that creates obstacles to trade relations among States and thereby impedes the full realisation of social and economic development.
59. Recognising that the promotion of mutually reinforcing broad-based sustained economic growth on a global scale, as well as a non-discriminatory, and multilateral rule-based international trading system, provided a basis for social development, the Heads of State or Government called for the establishment of an open, equitable, cooperative and mutually beneficial international economic environment. They also called for a reduction of trade barriers and promotion of expanded access to global markets.
60. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to safeguard the basic interests of workers. They called upon countries to refrain from erecting trade barriers in the guise of promotion and

protection of workers' rights. They deplored the tendency to impose any conditionalities on international trade, whether as a "social clause" or as the "environmental clause", while reiterating their commitment to ensuring workers' rights as well as protection of the environment.

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES

61. 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.

DATES AND VENUE OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE SAARC HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

62. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of Maldives to host the Ninth SAARC Summit. The dates would be finalised in consultation with Member States.
63. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the Prime Minister of India had 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 the people of the Republic of India and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

MALÉ DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Ninth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 14th May, 1997.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina; the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the Prime Minister of Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Lokendra Bahadur Chand; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Malé, Maldives on 12-14 May 1997.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to SAARC and resolved to accelerate regional cooperation in order to realise the aims and objectives of the Association. They reaffirmed their commitment to the principles enshrined in the SAARC Charter, especially to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in each others' internal affairs. They were convinced that regional cooperation was indispensable in an interdependent world for the realisation of the full potential of the South Asian region.
3. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the holding of the Commemorative Session of the Council of Ministers in New Delhi in December 1995 to mark the First Decade, on the theme "SAARC - Vision for the Second Decade". They observed that over the past decade SAARC has matured as an institution and the scope and volume of cooperative activities have expanded. They expressed satisfaction that in addition to continued cooperation in agreed areas, SAARC has now moved into the core areas of economic cooperation.

4. 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. This Group, to which the SAARC Secretary-General will be invited, will undertake a comprehensive appraisal of SAARC, and identify measures including mechanisms to further vitalise and enhance the effectiveness of the Association in achieving its objectives. They further 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.
5. 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.
6. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their determination to reinforce the unity and cohesion of SAARC. With the objective of enhancing regional solidarity and promoting overall development within SAARC, the Heads of State or Government encouraged, under the provisions of Articles VII and X of the Charter, the development of specific projects relevant to the special individual needs of three or more Member States.
7. They agreed that a climate of mutual accommodation and purposeful cooperation was needed to impart further impetus to the SAARC process during the second decade of SAARC in order to address the developmental challenges facing the region.

ENHANCING POLITICAL COOPERATION

8. The Heads of State or Government recalled 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, SAARC/SUMMIT.9/11 3 agreed that a process of informal political consultations would prove useful in this regard.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

9. The Heads of State or Government were unequivocal in their commitment to the eradication of poverty in South Asia at the earliest, preferably by the year 2002 A.D. through an Agenda of Action. They noted with satisfaction the establishment of a three-tier mechanism on poverty eradication and endorsed the recommendations of the two rounds of meetings under this mechanism hosted by India and Pakistan, respectively. They desired that the Ministers of Finance / Planning should meet again in the near future to give further impetus to this process.
10. 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”.
11. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the successful holding of the Micro-credit Summit in Washington, D.C. in February 1997 and its Declaration of support to launch a global campaign to reach 100 million of the world’s poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services, by the year 2005 A.D.
12. Recognising that micro-credit programmes have successfully demonstrated their usefulness toward achieving many goals of socio-economic upliftment, including the eradication of poverty and empowerment of women, the Leaders agreed to intensify endeavours in their respective countries so that the outreach of these programmes becomes widespread.
13. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that an enabling international environment to support poverty eradication efforts of the SAARC countries is an essential element in attaining success for these efforts. They urged all donor countries, international institutions and other bodies engaged in eradication of poverty to increase their support and assistance to these efforts.

ACCELERATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

14. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the entry into force of the Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) on 7 December 1995. They recognised the importance of achieving a free

trade area by the year 2001 A.D. and reiterated that steps towards trade liberalisation must take into account the special needs of the smaller and the Least Developed Countries and that benefits must accrue equitably.

15. While expressing satisfaction at the conclusion of the two Rounds of Trade Negotiations under SAPTA, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the decision to launch the Third Round of Trade Negotiations shortly. They agreed that preferential tariff concessions should cover products which are being actively traded amongst Member States. They further agreed that the Third Round should deepen tariff concessions along with the removal of non-tariff barriers and structural impediments in order to move speedily towards the goal of SAFTA.
16. The Leaders welcomed the holding of the First Meeting of the Commerce Ministers and the First SAARC Trade Fair in New Delhi in 1996 and noted the decision of the Commerce Ministers to meet annually. They further welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host the second SAARC Trade Fair to coincide with the SAARC Commerce Ministers' Meeting.
17. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the efforts to enhance trade and economic cooperation in the region would be further strengthened by initiating specific steps to promote and protect investment, increase complementarities in economic activities of Member States and other measures supportive of promotion of SAARC joint ventures. They also welcomed the offer of India to host a meeting on promotion and protection of investment and the offer of Pakistan to host a meeting on avoidance of double taxation. They also welcomed measures of cooperation in the areas of customs standardisation, arbitration and enhancing industrial economy and management.
18. The Heads of State or Government agreed that in intensifying economic cooperation the interests of smaller countries, especially the least developed among them, should be taken into account through the implementation of special measures in their favour.
19. The Heads of State or Government noted that inadequate communications facilities amongst the Member States were a major hindrance to closer economic cooperation. They stressed the importance of developing infrastructure and adequate communication networks among Member States to reinforce the process of economic cooperation. In this regard, they highlighted the need for the simplification of complex documentation procedures and transactional software to facilitate economic interaction across the region. They welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a Meeting of the Communication Ministers of the Member States.

20. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their determination to encourage the private sector in the region to contribute increasingly to the strengthening of intra-SAARC links in key areas of trade, investment and finance. They welcomed the decision by the SCCI to convene annually an Economic Cooperation Conference in conjunction with the annual meeting of SAARC Commerce Ministers and SAARC Trade Fairs.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPA)

21. 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 cooperation 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

22. 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.

23. They stressed that Regional Centres should implement action and result-oriented programmes and highlighted the importance of rationalising the functioning of these Centres.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

24. The Heads of State or Government recognised that increased social and political awareness in the region had brought positive contributions to the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women. They further emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation to achieve the desired objective of bringing women into the mainstream of socio-economic development in the region. In this context, they emphasised the urgency to effectively implement the recommendations of the “Dhaka Resolution on Women”, issued at the conclusion of the SAARC Ministerial Conference on Women and presented to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

25. Taking note of the mid-decade review of the SAARC Plan of Action on the Girl-Child, the Heads of State or Government expressed their determination to accelerate efforts at reduction of malnutrition and mortality rates, raising

education and literacy rates, reduction of the proportion of early marriage among girls, and the postponement of the age of first pregnancy, thereby contributing to the increased welfare of the girl-child and reduction of population growth rates.

26. 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.
27. Expressing grave concern at the trafficking of women and children within and between countries, the Heads of State or Government pledged to coordinate their efforts and take effective measures to address this problem. They decided that existing legislation in Member States should be strengthened and strictly enforced. This should include simplification of repatriation procedures for victims of trafficking. They also decided that the feasibility of establishing a Regional Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution be examined by the relevant Technical Committee.

CHILDREN

28. 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".
29. The Heads of State or Government resolved to implement appropriate policies at the national level to achieve the targets and objectives set out in the Rawalpindi Declaration issued at the end of the Third Ministerial Conference on the Children of South Asia held in August 1996, including the call to eliminate the evil of child-labour from the region by the year 2010 A.D. They called for stringent measures to protect children from all forms of exploitation. To this end, the Leaders agreed to set up a Study Group at an appropriate level to examine the social compulsions that create the problem.

30. They reaffirmed their commitment to improve the status of children in disadvantaged circumstances in the SAARC region. They recognised that the problems of these children are inextricably linked to the prevailing socio-economic conditions and problems of the region, and therefore, called for a holistic approach to address them. They expressed the need to formulate a Convention on Regional Arrangements on the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia in launching the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child, from the year 2001 A.D. to 2010 A.D.

NUTRITION

31. Noting that malnutrition, often severe, is a serious concern in South Asia, the Heads of State or Government agreed to launch an Initiative on Nutrition aimed at promotion of availability of food of essential nutritional value to individual household and evolving policies for supplementing and fortifying essential micro-nutrients, deficiencies of which have affected the well being of the most vulnerable sections of the population, particularly women and children.

32. 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.

YOUTH

33. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the operationalization of the SAARC Youth Awards Scheme and noted that the Scheme will be reviewed in the near future with the purpose of expanding it. They also welcomed the initiative to organize Youth Camps in the region on various themes.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

34. Conscious of the continuing problems faced by disabled persons, the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their resolve to continue the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons held in Islamabad in December 1993.

SHELTER

35. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that housing was a basic right of all people and reiterated their determination to sustain efforts to

improve the condition of human settlements in the region, with a view to achieving the global objective of “Shelter for All by the Year 2000”.

LITERACY

36. The Heads of State or Government recognised that illiteracy is one of the major causes impeding the development of the vast human resource potential of the region and a major factor contributing to the region’s economic backwardness and social imbalance. They noted that the Member States had observed “1996 as the SAARC Year of Literacy” and reiterated their commitment to continue endeavours to eradicate illiteracy from the region.
37. Recognising the resource, manpower and infrastructural constraints to the promotion of vocational and higher education in the region, the Leaders agreed that new and innovative methods like Open Learning and Distance Education can play an effective role in meeting regional needs in a cost effective and flexible manner. Accordingly, they agreed that the institutional facilities in such education available in the region should be utilised on a regional scale. The possibility of the creation of a Consortium of Open Universities in the region should also be explored.

ENVIRONMENT

38. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern about the continuing degradation of the environment in different parts of the world including the SAARC region. While recognizing that collective initiatives were required urgently to address the challenge posed by such degradation, they noted that unsustainable consumption patterns in the developed countries and widespread poverty in the developing countries are major factors contributing to ecological degradation in different parts of the world. In this regard, they noted that although both developed and developing countries were required to undertake specific initiatives to face environmental concerns, stress should also be laid on the acceleration of development in developing countries to enable them to face environmental challenges.
39. Reviewing the work carried out in the area of disseminating information on the problems of environmental degradation and their impact on the region, the Heads of State or Government expressed the urgent need for the implementation of the recommendations of the SAARC Regional Study on the Greenhouse Effect and its Impact on the Region, and the Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the

Protection and Preservation of the Environment. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host a meeting of the SAARC Environment Ministers to focus more directly on the Environment concerns of the region including the formulation of a Plan of Action for immediate implementation of recommendations contained in the two Studies, taking into account the recommendations made by the Meeting of the Environment Ministers in New Delhi in April 1997. The Leaders felt that the meeting may also consider the feasibility of drawing up a Regional Treaty on Environment in the context of existing international Conventions on the subject. They reiterated their view that Member States should take all necessary steps in vital areas such as sharing and developing scientific capabilities to protect and manage the environment.

40. The Heads of State or Government agreed on the urgent need for cooperation through exchange of information, strategies and technologies for combating pollution of air and water and for evolving common minimum standards which could be applied region-wide in this regard. Recognising the wealth of bio-diversity in the South Asian region and expressing concern at the threat of its progressive depletion through degradation and fragmentation, they affirmed their commitment to take steps towards the protection and conservation of these genetic resources. They noted that many areas rich in bio-diversity in South Asia lay along shared borders and agreed to cooperate in the creation of contiguous protected areas where identified. They also agreed to cooperate in the prevention of illegal trafficking in flora and fauna and devise an appropriate mechanism for this purpose, including the possibility of concluding a Convention. They decided that the meeting of SAARC Environment Ministers should be institutionalised henceforth as an annual event.
41. While expressing concern at the slow progress in the implementation of the Agenda 21, the Heads of State or Government called for the urgent implementation of the commitments, recommendations and agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. In particular, they also called for the early implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the adoption of a Protocol or another legal instrument for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries within an early timeframe, but not later than the year 2005 A.D.
42. The Heads of State or Government underlined the importance of projecting an effective, and coordinated collective position of SAARC at

the forthcoming Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21. In this regard, they fully endorsed the New Delhi Declaration issued at the end of the SAARC Ministerial Conference on Environment held from 2-3 April 1997, as amended at the Eighteenth Session of the Council of Ministers.

TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

43. Recognising that terrorism and drug trafficking pose a serious threat to security and stability of Member States, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to combat these activities in the region. They emphasised the urgent need to complete enabling legislation in order to implement the SAARC Regional Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.
44. The Heads of State or Government recalled the adoption of the 1996 UN Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism and urged all Member States to work towards its implementation. They called for international action to prevent the abuse of Refugee Conventions and to halt activities which help terrorist groups to collect funds for their activities in South Asia.
45. 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.
46. The Heads of State or Government noted with appreciation the convening of the First SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters in Colombo during July 1996. They endorsed the outcome of the Conference, particularly, the call for sharing of expertise with regard to the different areas of police investigation and investigation of organised crime and drug related crimes. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host the second Conference in 1997.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

47. 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

48. 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.
49. The Heads of State or Government noted that organised tourism in South Asia has not yet achieved its full potential, and recommended that appropriate measures to promote tourism be given priority, and in this regard, welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Colombo in 1997.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

50. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their conviction that enhanced people-to-people contact would contribute to strengthening mutual understanding and goodwill among the people in the region. In this context, they noted the positive contribution made by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and SAARCLAW.
51. They observed that SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme should be increasingly used to facilitate greater interaction among students, scholars and academics in the region.
52. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the inclusion of new categories of persons from different walks of life in the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme and believed that this would further promote people-to-people contact.
53. They noted the offer of Sri Lanka to host the First SAARC Film Festival in Colombo in 1998 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka.
54. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the SAARC countries possess enormous tourism potential that should be properly utilised for the benefit of the people of the region. In this context, they decided that the civil aviation authorities of Member States should meet in the very near future with a view to establishing direct air services between SAARC

capitals which would promote people-to-people contact and encourage tourism. They welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to host the first meeting of the civil aviation authorities.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND (SADF)

55. 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

56. 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 21.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

57. The Heads of State or Government recognised that small states, because of their particular vulnerabilities, require special measures of support from the international community for safeguarding their sovereign independence and territorial integrity. They further reaffirmed their view that such support should be firmly rooted in the scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, the rule of law and strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms related to sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States irrespective of size. This, they emphasised, may be ensured by all countries either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate action.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

58. The Heads of State or Government had wide ranging discussions on current international issues, particularly those that affect South Asia.

In this context, reiterating their deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, the Heads of State or Government recalled that the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in October 1995 had highlighted the need to strengthen, revitalize and reform the Organization. They reiterated their support to the on-going process of restructuring and revitalizing the Organization and reaffirmed their resolve to make it a more effective universal instrument for addressing international issues on an equitable and democratic basis, taking full account of the interests and concerns of all states.

59. Addressing the question of reform of the United Nations, the Heads of State or Government laid particular emphasis on the principle of sovereign equality of States and on equitable geographical representation in regard to the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council. They recognised the need to make the Security Council more representative, democratic and transparent, so that it is better equipped to uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
60. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and underscored the continued validity and relevance of these principles and objectives in the contemporary world. They expressed their deep conviction that the Movement's innate strength equips it to continue to play a most constructive role in laying the foundations of a new world order based on the rule of law, non-interference, equity and cooperation.
61. The Heads of State or Government while expressing support to the continuation of the peace process in the Middle East, expressed concern at the setback to the peace process and unleashing of violence against Palestinian people in occupied territories and the resulting threat to the peace process due to policies of the Government of Israel in establishing and enlarging existing Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. They were convinced that the peace process should be continued by honouring previous commitments made by all parties involved. They also called for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of self determination and the establishment of a sovereign State under the leadership of PLO, their sole legitimate representative, which could co-exist with its neighbours in peace and harmony.
62. Noting that the end of the Cold War had created unprecedented opportunities in the field of disarmament, the Heads of State or

Government recognised the need for the international community to pursue nuclear disarmament as a matter of highest priority. In this regard, they recognised the need to start negotiations through the Conference on Disarmament and to establish a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

63. While reiterating their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, the Heads of State or Government resolved to take all necessary steps to achieve this objective.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

64. The Heads of State or Government noted that current trends of globalisation and liberalisation were imposing a heavy burden on developing economies, in particular, the least developed countries (LDCs) which are becoming marginalised from the mainstream of the world economy. They also expressed concern over trends to erect new protectionist barriers by linking imports from developing countries to politically motivated social and environmental values and concerns, such as human rights. They observed that the impact of these trends is compounded by new challenges relating to issues of access to markets, capital and new technologies. They also noted with regret the overall decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) over the years which has contributed to the aggravation of the condition of the LDCs.
65. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the promotion of a non-discriminatory and multilateral rule-based global system of economic relations in order to engage the developing countries constructively and on the basis of reciprocal shared benefits in the process of liberalisation, as well as to assist them integrate into the global economy.
66. The Heads of State or Government called on the developed countries to assist the developing countries through the creation of a favourable and supportive global economic environment, in particular, through domestic action in their countries for purposes of accelerating investment flows to developing countries thereby generating a positive impact on the developmental efforts of developing countries as well as assisting their integration into the multilateral trading system. They also called on the developed countries to substantially reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers and desist from restrictive trade practices, which would negatively affect the access of developing countries to global markets.

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES

67. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the need for priority action on various international development commitments, such as the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s.
68. While noting with deep concern that economic growth in the Least Developed and Land-Locked Countries is not progressing well, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to take special measures for accelerating the process of development. They emphasized the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for ensuring accelerated and sustained economic growth in developing countries particularly in the Least Developed Countries. They stressed on the need for adequate resources to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC countries.
69. The Heads of State or Government emphasised that the review of the criteria for the determination of LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly this year, must take into account the special significance of the extent and magnitude of incidence of poverty in the poorest countries and the special vulnerabilities of small island states.

DATES AND VENUE OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT.

70. The Heads of State or Government accepted with deep appreciation the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the Tenth SAARC Summit. They further decided that the Eleventh and Twelfth Summits will be held in Nepal and Pakistan, respectively.
71. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their sincere appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the President of the Republic of the Maldives had conducted the Meeting and guided its proceedings in his capacity as Chairman. They expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of the Maldives and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

COLOMBO DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Tenth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 31st July, 1998.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina; Chairman, Council of Ministers and Head of Government of the Royal Government of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, Rt. Hon. Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif; and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Tenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Colombo from July 29 to 31, 1998, in the year of the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Sri Lanka.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government re-affirmed their firm commitment to the objectives, principles and provisions of the Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and to the pursuit of regional cooperation on the basis of their acceptance of the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity of States, political independence, non-interference in each others internal affairs, non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of all disputes and mutuality of benefit.
3. The Heads of State or Government recognised that the rich potential for productive, equitable regional cooperation among the Governments and people of South Asia which accounts for a fifth of humanity should be fully realised.

CULTURAL UNITY

4. The Heads of State or Government recognized that South Asia, while reflecting a rich, complex and varied plurality of cultural and religious traditions, was heir to a profound common civilizational continuum of great antiquity which constitutes a historical basis for sustaining harmonious relations among the people of the region. They acknowledged that the SAARC process could draw more deeply from the vitality and strength of South Asia's shared cultural heritage as a source influencing and enhancing creative energies in all fields.
5. 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

6. 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. The Heads of State or Government 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.

APPRAISAL OF SAARC ACTIVITIES

7. The Heads of State or Government continued their review of the nature, extent, and effectiveness of the cooperative activities of SAARC. They considered the Report and Recommendations of the Group of Eminent Persons mandated by the Ninth Summit in Malé to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of SAARC and to develop an Agenda for 2000 and beyond. They expressed appreciation for the Chairman of the Ninth Summit, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the President of the Maldives for convening the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) and encouraging them to complete their work within the time frame given to them by the Ninth SAARC Summit.

8. The Heads of State or Government directed the Council of Ministers to examine the Report of the Group of Eminent Persons in depth at their next Session, taking into consideration the views of Member States with regard to the viability of the recommendations and the method of their implementation.

SAARC IN THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

9. The Heads of State or Government assessed the implications of current global economic developments on the economies of South Asia and other developing countries. They 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 challenges and opportunities inherent in these fast evolving developments could best be met and the full potential of South Asia realized through effective practical regional and bilateral cooperation among Member States.
10. They noted that the benefits of the so described “liberalization” have been disappointingly asymmetrical with the process proceeding at a much slower pace in areas of special interest to developing countries. Increased opportunities in trade and investment have bypassed many developing countries. The Least Developed Countries have in particular been marginalised through a series of developments including the shrinking of ODA, concessional and other financial flows to these countries.
11. The Heads of State or Government noted the initiation of links between SAARC and economic unions and trading groups that were emerging in the wake of globalization and liberalization and considered how best relationships of mutual benefit could be established.
12. 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. The Heads of State or

Government, therefore, resolved that SAARC countries would endeavour to coordinate their decisions on these issues in areas of common concern so as to protect and promote the interest of the developing countries. They expressed concern about the erection of protectionist barriers and the tendency to impose arbitrary “norms” relating to labour conditions, environmental regulations, governance and other extraneous issues to regulate trade exchanges, which would amount to additional non-tariff barriers, that would have the effect of restricting market access for developing countries including preferential access by Least Developed Countries (LDCs) into markets of developed countries. They agreed on the need for collective strategies to promote a rule-based, non-discriminatory and equitable international trading system in which the interests and concerns of developing countries would be fully safeguarded and served.

13. The Heads of State or Government noted that emerging issues relating to copyright, patents and marketing franchises including on foodgrains, plants and herbs indigenous to South Asia require firm collective responses to preserve these bio-resources from unregulated commercial exploitation by extra-regional interests. They emphasized in this regard, the principle of sustainable development of bio-resources and the provisions of the UN Convention on Bio-diversity which provided for regulated access to such resources on terms and conditions to be agreed upon with the State in which such resources are located.
14. The Heads of State or Government cautioned that potential efforts to formulate a new Multilateral Investment Agreement should not overlook the need to ensure the continued independence of developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to formulate specific investment policies appropriate to their stage of development.
15. While reviewing the beneficial effects of globalization, the Heads of State or Government stressed the fact that systemic crises are becoming unpredictable with increased globalization. They expressed their concern about the shortcomings of the international monetary and financial system, and its tardiness in anticipating impending financial market crises sufficiently in advance, so that pre-emptive remedial action be adopted. They noted that the problem is systemic, and not unique to Asia, nor confined to emerging economies, and that it can have global ramifications, unless more fundamental reforms are put in place.
16. They recognized the risk that ad-hoc approaches, however prompt, once crises supervene, may lead to excessive social costs in the attempt

to restore financial discipline. More effective social safety nets would, therefore, need to be devised for protecting vulnerable groups and a more appropriate balance between financing and adjustment found in a reformed international system or architecture, if both the economic and social aspirations of SAARC countries are to be realized. They acknowledged the need to strengthen the individual financial systems of SAARC countries through enhancing institutional capacity, surveillance mechanisms as well as through closer consultations on, and coordination of macro-economic policies where appropriate.

17. The Heads of State or Government recognized that notwithstanding all national and regional endeavours for economic development and financial stability, the pervasive global economic environment continued to exert a major, sometimes negative influence on the outcome of these endeavours.
18. Against this background of the need to address systemic issues, they agreed on the vital imperative for strengthened cooperation among SAARC Members to identify, analyze and effectively contend with the complex multi-faceted challenges inherent in the global economic environment that is changing so radically, particularly in this last decade preceding the new millennium. They acknowledged the need to enhance the collective capacity of SAARC in respect of policy analysis, with a specific emphasis on international financial, monetary, trade and investment issues and their domestic ramifications.
19. The Heads of State or Government also expressed their abhorrence over the practice of imposition of unilateral coercive economic measures as an instrument of policy against developing countries. They called for their immediate cessation.
20. They stressed the need for more efficient capacity building to enable informed decision-making in these areas to enable innovative collective intervention to safeguard South Asian interests in international negotiations, as well as to develop some edge for effective leverage in such negotiations. The Heads of State or Government agreed on the urgent need for harnessing the rich intellectual and resource capacity of South Asia for this purpose.
21. The Heads of State or Government requested Sri Lanka, as Chairperson of the 10th Summit, to conduct consultations with Member States for the convening of a network of researchers comprising members of the Private Sector, Central Banks, Planning Ministries, Research Institutes and eminent

economists nominated by Governments to identify, analyse and help SAARC faced up to current global, financial and economic developments affecting the region. They requested Sri Lanka to co-ordinate on necessary practical measures while keeping Member States informed in the matter. Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a meeting in Colombo of representatives of SAARC, nominated by their Governments to study the matter further and report with practical recommendations on the matter in advance of the 21st Session of the Council of Ministers to facilitate early decisions.

ACCELERATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

22. The Heads of State or Government assessed progress made in the two rounds of negotiations already undertaken under SAPTA. They decided that the third round should be concluded well before the Twenty-first Session of the Council of Ministers. The Heads of State or Government decided that to accelerate progress in the next round of SAPTA negotiations, deeper preferential tariff concessions should be extended to products which are being actively traded, or are likely to be traded, among Members; that discriminatory practices and non-tariff barriers should be simultaneously removed on items in respect of which tariff concessions are granted or have been granted earlier. Measures to remove structural impediments should also be taken in order to move speedily towards the goal of SAFTA. They also directed that domestic content requirements under SAPTA Rules of Origin should be reduced and that the SAPTA Committee of Participants should meet by mid-October '98 in Colombo to finalise the extent of reduction in keeping with the decision of the Second SAARC Commerce Ministers' Meeting. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed that measures to enable smaller and Least Developed Countries to benefit equitably from economic liberalization were specially important.
23. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the importance of achieving SAFTA as mandated by the Ninth SAARC Summit. To this end they decided that a Committee of Experts, in consultation with Member States, be constituted with specific Terms of Reference (TOR) to work on drafting a comprehensive treaty regime for creating a free trade area. The Heads of State or Government expressed the view that such a treaty must incorporate, among other things, binding time-frames for freeing trade, measures to facilitate trade, and provisions to ensure an equitable distribution of benefits of trade to all states, especially for smaller and least developed countries, including mechanisms for compensation of

revenue loss. They emphasised the importance of finalising the text of the regulatory framework by the year 2001.

24. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the benefits of economic liberalization would be more extensive and better balanced through the promotion of trade- creating joint ventures, investment and trade in services such as tourism.
25. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the outcome of the Second Meeting of the SAARC Commerce Ministers in Islamabad and welcomed their decision to coordinate SAARC's position on issues of common concern at the WTO. They welcomed in this connection the Declaration issued by the SAARC Commerce Ministers on the eve of the Second WTO Ministerial Meeting in Geneva, setting out a SAARC approach on these issues. Recognizing that critical issues would be decided at the Third WTO Ministerial Conference in the USA in 1999, the Heads of State or Government urged SAARC Commerce Ministers to work closely with a view to evolving better co-ordinated positions on all issues. They directed the Consultative Group of SAARC Permanent Representatives to the WTO at Geneva to consult closely with like-minded countries to advance the interests of developing countries at all WTO Conferences.
26. The Heads of State or Government noted the progress made in preparations for the Second SAARC Trade Fair to be held in Sri Lanka from September 8-15, 1998. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to host the Third Meeting of SAARC Commerce Ministers in 1999 and the offer of Pakistan to stage the Third SAARC Trade Fair in 1999.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE CONTACT

27. The Heads of State or Government noted arrangements being finalized by Sri Lanka to host the First SAARC Film Festival in Colombo in 1998 in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka.
28. The Heads of State or Government stressed that more convenient travel connections between SAARC countries were essential to facilitate fruitful interaction among people in the region, in particular, professional groups, creative artistes, pilgrims and journalists.
29. The Heads of State or Government considered means of encouraging more productive cooperation and collaboration between governments and the private sectors, including in the commissioning of studies relating to regional economic interaction.

30. They welcomed the contribution made by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry in facilitating the engagement of the private sector in regional economic interaction as well as initiating linkages with other regions for the purpose of promoting SAARC exports. The Heads of State or Government noted that a document entitled "Road Map to SAFTA" was presented by the President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to the Chairperson of the Twentieth Session of the Council of Ministers.

LINKS WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

31. The Heads of State or Government noted links initiated between SAARC and other international and regional organizations. They considered the prospects for the development of SAARC projects and programmes in association with such organizations with which SAARC has cooperative arrangements as well as through other forms of cooperation. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that priority needs to be given in establishing contact with those regional groupings which have experience in economic cooperation and functional regional cooperation.
32. The Heads of State or Government also noted proposals for developing cooperation between SAARC and individual States outside the region. They requested the Council of Ministers to consider such proposals with a view to developing such contacts on the basis of mutual benefit and for the advancement of SAARC objectives.

PROJECTION OF COMMON POSITIONS

33. 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

34. 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.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

35. The Heads of State or Government recognized that due to their particular vulnerability, small States require special measures of support from the international community for the safeguarding of their sovereign independence and territorial integrity. They reiterated that real protection of small States should be firmly rooted in scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, the rule of law and 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.

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES

36. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the need for priority action on various international development commitments, such as the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s.

37. While noting with deep concern that economic growth in the Least Developed and Land-Locked Countries is not progressing well, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to take special measures for accelerating the process of development. They emphasised the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for ensuring accelerated and sustained economic growth in developing countries particularly in the Least Developed Countries. They stressed on the need for adequate resources to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC countries.

38. The Heads of State or Government emphasised that the review of the criteria for the determination of LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly this year, must take into account the special significance of the extent and magnitude of incidence of poverty in the poorest countries and the special vulnerabilities of small island states.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

39. The Heads of State or Government were in agreement that illiteracy was a major impediment to economic development and social emancipation and that the eradication of illiteracy in the Region including through co-operative endeavours within SAARC must continue to be pursued resolutely.

40. 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.
41. The Heads of State or Government urged the Forum, to spearhead the development of distance education outside the Open University System as well, drawing on the advances in Information Technology, to reach out to the remote and under-privileged sections. They welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a meeting of Vice-Chancellors of SAARC Open Universities during the last quarter of 1998 to discuss the modalities for the establishment of the Forum and to draw up a programme to achieve the objectives identified by the Heads of State or Government. The Heads of State or Government requested the Forum to report to the Standing Committee on a continuous basis on its programmes.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

42. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the commitment of SAARC to the eradication of poverty in the Region at the earliest possible, preferably by the year 2002. They emphasised the need to encourage maximum participation by target groups in the formulation and implementation of poverty eradication programmes. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that such participation is essential for success of efforts in this field. They stressed the need for effective utilisation of the SAARC Three-Tier Mechanism on Poverty Eradication and in that context welcomed the offer of the Government of Pakistan to host the next meeting of the SAARC Finance/Planning Ministers under the Mechanism in October 1998.
43. The Heads of State or Government noted that the South Asian countries have provided leadership in developing and implementing Micro Credit Programmes, which have immense potential to contribute to the eradication of poverty. They were of the view that their respective programmes in this regard have proven to be effective and Member States would benefit by sharing experiences and exchanging information and expertise in this important area.

44. The Heads of State or Government noted that Human Resource Development is a key element in any poverty eradication programme. The Heads of State or Government, therefore, agreed that once the SAARC Centre for Human Resource Development in Islamabad is established, it could look in to the possibility of its contributing to the strengthening of the human resource development components of the regional poverty eradication programmes.

SOCIAL CHARTER

45. 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

46. 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.

TOURISM

47. The Heads of State or Government recognized that further efforts were required for South Asia to effectively tap the economic potential afforded by the global tourist industry as well as to encourage intra-SAARC tourism. They welcomed the convening of the First SAARC Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Colombo as a step towards this end and called for the effective implementation of its decisions, including the encouragement

of active private sector participation in the promotion of tourism, both intra-regionally and internationally, simplification of visa-procedures for tourists and pilgrims, more convenient air and other travel links among SAARC countries including special regional fares and the co-ordination of activities of tour operators.

48. The Heads of State or Government identified the need to strengthen the existing air services between their respective Capitals, with a view to both facilitating tourism as well as people to people contacts. They called in this regard, for an early meeting of the Chairpersons/Chief Executive Officers of the national air lines.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

49. The Heads of State or Government noted that the development of a regional self-reliance capability for South Asia in scientific research and development was essential, given a global context in which barriers to the free flow of technology still remained in place. The Heads of State or Government appreciated the efforts to foster under the SAARC umbrella, collective cooperation in this field.
50. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer by the Government of India to hold a Special Meeting of SAARC Science and Technology Ministers to consider a SAARC Technology Initiative to Identify and implement specific regional projects in rural areas which would have the direct impact in improving the day-to-day life of people there. Such an initiative could include rural telecommunications, drinking water and sanitation and improvement of life standards.
51. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their earlier call for the effective and rapid institutionalization of SAARC cooperation in the field of bio-technology. They pointed out that South Asia with its vast reservoir of bio-diversity and tropical climate, has substantial potential for bio-industry development on a sustainable basis. Many of the food and nutritional needs of the SAARC region could be met by the application of bio-technology. Contemporary developments in intellectual property and patent law, moreover, heightened the need for vigilance against encroachment on the regional bio-diversity heritage by external entities.
52. The Heads of State or Government accordingly requested the Standing Committee, with assistance of the SAARC Secretariat, to report to the forthcoming Twenty-First Session of the Council of Ministers on practical and cost effective measures towards rapidly operationalising SAARC cooperation in bio-technology.

ENVIRONMENT

53. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep satisfaction at the positive outcome of the Environment Ministers' Conference held in Malé in October 1997, and called for the effective and early implementation of the SAARC Environment Action Plan. In this context, they welcomed the offer of Maldives to prepare a feasibility study on the establishment of a Coastal Zone Management Centre. The Heads of State or Government also committed their governments to prepare National Environment Action Plans and State of the Environment Reports before the end of 1998.
54. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction over the adoption of a common position by Member States prior to the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Kyoto, Japan and welcomed the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 1997, and underscored the importance of the Protocol for the protection of the climate system. They urged all industrial countries to ratify the Protocol and to undertake urgent and effective steps to implement the commitments undertaken by them to reduce their emissions of green-house gases.
55. The Heads of State or Government also emphasised the need for complementary action by organisations and institutions in the region in their efforts to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development in the region.
56. The Heads of State or Government noted that the SAARC Environment Ministers would be meeting in Sri Lanka in late 1998. They urged that the Ministers should at this forthcoming meeting also mandate any specific measures required for SAARC to further strengthen cooperation on environment issues, with other international or regional organizations engaged in the same field.

YOUTH

57. The Heads of State or Government affirmed the importance they attached to providing adequate opportunities to youth in South Asia to participate productively in national development and underscored the need for developing programmes in this regard at the national and regional levels.

CHILDREN

58. Recalling targets and objectives set out in the Rawalpindi Declaration of 1996, the Heads of State or Government noted that the 1997 Review of the

Situation of Children in South Asia had revealed progress in the reduction of infant mortality and increased coverage of immunization programmes. They stressed, however, that continued efforts required to be sustained in these areas. Serious efforts were also required in respect of education for all children and the reduction of gender disparities. In addition to national programmes, the Heads of State or Government called for the identification of practical regional programmes which could benefit from cooperation with relevant regional and international organisations with which SAARC has cooperative arrangements for the promotion of the welfare of children.

59. The Heads of State or Government condemned the exploitation of children by terrorist groups in hostilities and called for special measures for the psychological, physical and social rehabilitation of child victims. In this respect, the Heads of State or Government noted the initiative taken by Maldives in pursuance of their directive at the Ninth SAARC Summit in drafting the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. They welcomed the offer of Maldives to hold an Expert Group Meeting to finalise the draft Convention for its adoption at the Eleventh SAARC Summit.

SITUATION OF WOMEN AND THE GIRL CHILD

60. The Heads of State or Government noted that many groups of women and girl children in South Asia continue to be in disadvantaged positions and lack equal opportunities for economic and social development. They were of the view that sustained efforts and practical affirmative action was required to offset the effects of discriminatory, social and psychological perceptions and to empower women through affirmative action, including where necessary, legislative measures. The Heads of State or Government condemned in particular violence against women and acts of discrimination and humiliation which tend to depress the status of women. They also expressed concern over the plight of women and girl children in situations of conflict. Equal opportunities in education, health facilities and nutrition were vital for the integration of women in the mainstream of national development. They agreed to work in close association, where possible, with professional and other women's groups in the region to ameliorate their conditions.
61. The Heads of State or Government recalled that the Ninth SAARC Summit expressed concern at the trafficking of women and children within and between countries and pledged to coordinate efforts of Member States

to take effective measures to address this problem. In this context, they welcomed the finalisation of the draft text on the Regional Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and noted that this would be a vital instrument in dealing with this problem. They approved that the Convention be signed at the Eleventh SAARC Summit.

62. The Heads of State or Government also recommended that the feasibility of establishing a Regional Fund for Rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution on a voluntary basis may be explored.
63. The Heads of State or Government were also of the view that the scope of the Convention should be broadened to cover purposes other than prostitution.
64. The Heads of State or Government noted that a gender disaggregated data-base on the basis of data provided by Member States would be a valuable means of assisting the formulation of national and regional policies and programmes in respect of women and the girl child.

HEALTH

65. 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.
66. The Heads of State or Government urged that the regional pharmaceutical industries should strengthen cooperation. They were further of the view that the Member States could establish Action Committees in terms of Article VII of the SAARC Charter for such cooperation, if required.

DISABLED PERSONS

67. The Heads of State or Government recalled the Islamabad Resolution on Disabled Persons and underscored the importance of having a very definite humanistic approach to ensuring the welfare of the 100 million disabled persons of this region. In this respect, the Heads of State or Government accepted the proposal of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the establishment of a SAARC Voluntary Fund for Disabled Persons.

INFORMATION

68. 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.
69. 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. Such action would help promote deeper understanding of issues common to the region, as well as to project a more balanced view of developments in the region. They welcomed the offer of India to host the First Meeting of SAARC Editors and Journalists.

TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

70. The Heads of State or Government recognized that the Member States and peoples of South Asia continue to face the serious threat of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and drug trafficking. They reiterated their firm commitment to combat these activities in the region. They emphasized the urgent need to complete enabling legislation in order to implement the SAARC Regional Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.
71. The Heads of State or Government urged all Member States to enhance cooperation against terrorism, wherever, by whomever, against whoever it occurs and to fully observe and implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism.
72. The Heads of State or Government affirmed that criminal acts intended to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons, for whatever purposes, are unjustifiable in any circumstances.
73. The Heads of State or Government recalled the adoption of the 1996 UN Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism and urged all Member States to work towards its implementation. They called for international action to prevent the abuse of Refugee Conventions and to halt activities which help terrorist groups to collect funds for their activities in South Asia.
74. The Heads of State or Government noted that two SAARC Conferences on Cooperation in Police Matters had been held since 1996. They called for

the continued sharing of expertise with regard to the different areas of police investigation, and investigation of organized crime and drug related crimes.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

75. The Heads of State or Government taking note of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reaffirmed their commitment to the further promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms by strengthening the respective national institutions in South Asia in this field. The Leaders agreed that tolerance and mutual accommodation, combined with the strengthening of participatory governance, constituted the foundation for the sustainable economic and social development of the SAARC region.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

76. The Heads of State or Government consulted informally on a range of international issues, particularly those which have a bearing on South Asia. They re-affirmed their strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and agreed that their delegations would work closely in the ongoing negotiations for the reform and strengthening of the UN system, so that the Organisation could be more democratic, efficient and financially viable and responsive to the interests of its membership, especially developing countries.

77. The Heads of State or Government also underscored the importance of the role of the Non-Aligned Movement in promoting a just and equitable global order and called for the further enhancing of the efforts of the Movement to influence positively contemporary international relations. In this context, they expressed full confidence that the Twelfth Summit of the Movement scheduled to take place in South Africa would contribute towards augmenting the Movement's effectiveness.

78. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that stability, peace and security in South Asia could not be considered in isolation of the global security environment. Although great power rivalry which the NAM had consistently opposed, no longer posed a serious threat and the danger of a global nuclear conflagration had abated, yet some States had sought to maintain huge arsenals of nuclear weapons. The NPT and the CTBT, to which some SAARC members were signatories, had not led to any progress towards nuclear disarmament nor prevented proliferation.

They underscored their commitment to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the need for promoting nuclear disarmament on a universal basis, under effective international control. They recognised that global non-proliferation goals cannot be achieved in the absence of progress towards nuclear disarmament and in this context called upon all nuclear weapon states, whether party or non-party to the NPT to engage constructively through a transparent and credible process of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament.

79. The Heads of State or Government therefore urged the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory international instrument prohibiting the use or the threat of nuclear weapons as well as eliminating such weapons in existing arsenals.
80. The Heads of State or Government noted the outcome of the recent UN Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an International Criminal Court and the fact that the Conference had not addressed such issues as the crime of drug trafficking and the crime of terrorism with its use of indiscriminate violence aimed at innocent civilians and use of weapons of mass destruction. They emphasised the need to ensure that the proposed Court should respect the sovereignty of States consistent with the principle of complementarity with national jurisdiction on which the Statute of the Court is based.
81. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the enhanced status accorded to Palestine at UN fora. They however expressed growing concern at numerous setbacks affecting the peace process in the Middle East, including illegal attempts to change the jurisdiction and borders of Jerusalem. They re-affirmed their support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973) to restore the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.
82. The Heads of State or Government called for intensification of efforts for promoting peace and stability at the global and regional levels for realising universal progress and prosperity.

DATES AND VENUE OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

83. The Heads of State or Government accepted with deep appreciation the offer of His Majesty's Government of Nepal to host the Eleventh SAARC Summit in the second half of 1999.
84. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan expressed their appreciation for the skilful manner in which the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka had conducted the meeting and guided its deliberations, in her capacity as Chairperson. They also expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of Sri Lanka and the excellent arrangements made for the Summit and the meetings preceding it.

KATHMANDU DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Eleventh SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 6th January, 2002.

The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia; the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, Right Honourable Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba; the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf; and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Eleventh Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Kathmandu, Nepal from 4 to 6 January 2002.

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. Meeting for the first time at the dawn of the new millennium, they solemnly renewed their pledge to strengthen the Association and make it more cohesive, result oriented, and forward looking, by adopting clearly defined programs and effective implementation strategies in line with popular expectations. To give effect to the shared aspirations for a more prosperous South Asia, the Leaders agreed to the vision of a phased and planned process eventually leading to a South Asian Economic Union.
2. 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. To this end, they expressed their commitment to a speedier process of harmonizing their policies and practices and imbibing regional goals and strategies in their national development programs.

3. 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. They also pledged to enhance transparency and accountability in governance and to encourage effective participation of the peoples and civil societies in the formulation as well as implementation of the programs of cooperation.
4. 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

5. The Heads of State or Government agreed to accelerate cooperation in the core areas of trade, finance and investment to realize the goal of an integrated South Asian economy in a step-by-step manner. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. The Heads of State or Government renewed their commitment to encourage the participation of the private sector and assured their full support for their socially responsible economic initiatives. While welcoming the practice of holding trade fairs in cooperation with the private sector at the regional level, they appreciated the efforts of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote regional economic cooperation in the spirit of public and private sector partnership.
9. 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.
10. 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

11. 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. Conscious of the magnitude of poverty in the region, and recalling also the decision of the UN Millennium Summit 2000 to reduce world poverty in half by 2015, and also recalling the commitments made at the five year review of the World Summit for Social Development to reduce poverty through enhanced social mobilization, the Heads of State or Government made a review of the SAARC activities aimed at poverty alleviation and decided to reinvigorate them in the context of the regional and global commitments to poverty reduction.
12. 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. They reaffirmed their pledge to undertake effective and sustained poverty alleviation programs through pro-poor growth strategies and social as well as other policy interventions with specific sectoral targets. The Leaders also agreed to take immediate steps for the effective implementation of the programs for social mobilization and decentralization, and for strengthening institution building and support mechanisms to ensure participation of the poor,

both as stake-holder and beneficiary, in governance and the development process.

13. 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. They specifically instructed that the Technical Committees should identify programmes and activities that impact on poverty alleviation. They urged the need to create gainful employment and promote cooperation in vocational training.
14. The Heads of State or Government emphasized the need to promote sharing of the best practices and experiences among the Member States and to this end, instructed the Secretary General to disseminate such information to the Member States on a regular basis. 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.
15. 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.
16. The Heads of State or Government agreed that a Special Session on poverty alleviation at the Ministerial level should undertake a comprehensive review and evaluation of the status of implementation of poverty eradication policies and programs carried out so far, and to recommend further concrete measures to enhance effective cooperation at the regional level to the Twelfth SAARC Summit. They also directed the Council of Ministers to take necessary steps to fully activate the existing three-tier mechanism for poverty alleviation.
17. 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.

18. Expressing concern at the region's special vulnerability in the slowdown in world economy and its negative impact on the poor and the marginalized, the Heads of State or Government called for a supportive international environment and an enhanced level of assistance by the international community for poverty alleviation programs in South Asia.

COOPERATION IN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SECTOR

19. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the need for an early finalisation of the SAARC Social Charter and instructed the Inter Governmental Expert Group to expedite their work on the basis of the draft to be submitted by the Secretary-General, as a working paper for its consideration and to complete the draft framework of the Charter as early as possible for consideration at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers. In drawing up the Charter, they also directed the Council of Ministers to include the important areas of poverty eradication, population stabilization, the empowerment of women, youth mobilization, human resources development, the promotion of health and nutrition and the protection of children as decided at the Tenth Summit.
20. 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.
21. In accordance with the Colombo Declaration, the Heads of State or Government decided to mandate the Meeting of Ministers of Cultural Affairs in Sri Lanka to finalise the details relating to the establishment of the SAARC Cultural Centre including its financing and to submit its report to the next session of the Council of Ministers

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

22. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. The Heads of State or Government recognized the need to actively pursue and promote social development through empowerment of women and to achieve their full participation in decision making at all levels. They reaffirmed their commitment to uplift the social status of the people, women and children in particular, in the region and expressed their common resolve to accord the highest priority to promoting social development through specific and targeted programs. The Leaders directed the Council of Ministers to take necessary measures to ensure the enjoyment by women and girl children of their inherent potential. They also directed the Council of Ministers to constitute a Task Force to review the status of implementation of past decisions related to the social sector and to suggest guidelines for their effective implementation in the future.

26. 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.
27. 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

28. 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. While emphasizing the importance of mutual recognition of the educational institutions, they agreed to give the necessary impetus to realize the goal of a common regional educational standard through uniform methods of instruction and teaching aids. They were unanimous in recognizing the benefit of introducing SAARC in the national curricula at appropriate levels of study in order to enhance the awareness about Association's goals and objectives.
29. 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

30. 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.
31. 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. They underscored their commitment to general and complete disarmament including nuclear disarmament on a universal basis, under effective international control. They agreed that global non-proliferation goals could not be achieved in the absence of progress towards nuclear disarmament and in this context called upon all nuclear weapon states, whether party or non-party to the NPT, to engage constructively through a transparent and credible process of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. The Leaders also recognized the linkage between disarmament and development.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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 co-ordinated 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.
35. The Heads of State or Government noted with serious concern the adverse impact of the shrinking Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other concessional financial flows on developing countries in general, and the least developed among them in particular. They further noted with concern the current trend of the global economic slowdown and its adverse effects on these economies. Taking into account the interdependent nature of the global economy, the Leaders urged the developed countries to enhance the level of ODA flows to meet the internationally agreed targets.
 36. 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.
 37. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the initiative of the donor countries to relieve the external debt burden of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries. They urged the international donor community and financial institutions to widen the scope and extent of debt relief initiatives to cover all those developing and the least developed countries, which are facing developmental difficulties particularly due to the current global recession. In the context of growing global interdependence, they underlined the importance of forging cooperative partnership between the developed and the developing countries to ensure equitable benefits to all.
 38. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern over the continued violence and bloodshed in the Middle East, and the set backs suffered by the peace process. They reaffirmed their support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973) and the establishment of a sovereign Palestine State under the leadership of PLO, which could coexist with its neighbours in peace, security and harmony.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

39. 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

40. 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.

41. 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 cooperation to combat terrorism should be conducted in conformity with the UN Charter, international law and relevant international conventions.

42. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their support to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 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. In this context, they called on all states to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts by criminalizing the collection of funds for such acts and refraining from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in states or acquiescing in organized activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts. The Leaders reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations has to be comprehensive and sustained.

43. 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. They called upon the international community to assist Member States of SAARC to deal effectively with the adverse economic effects of terrorism in general and to meet the rising insurance and security related costs in particular.
44. 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. They also reiterated their firm resolve to accelerate the enactment of enabling legislation within a definite time-frame for the full implementation of the Convention, together with strengthening of SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk and the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk in an effective manner.

REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

45. 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

46. 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

47. 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)

48. 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

49. 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.

50. The Heads of State or Government also felt a strong need to devise a mechanism for cooperation in the field of the early warning on as well as preparedness and management of natural disasters, along with programs to promote conservation of land and water resources.

51. The Heads of State or Government also stressed the need to develop a cooperative mechanism for the protection, enrichment and utilization of bio-diversity as provided for in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and to establish a regional bio-diversity database with a view to providing equitable benefits to all Member States. They also underscored the importance of protecting associated knowledge and other indigenous intellectual manifestations for the advancement of the region. They also directed the Council of Ministers to explore the possibility of establishing a SAARC Seed Security Reserve to strengthen cooperation in the field of agriculture and to protect IPRs of the seeds of the Reserve.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

52. 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 SAARCLAW 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

53. 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. They directed the Chairman of the Council of Ministers to undertake a review of the functioning and operation of SAARC Secretariat, and to make recommendations to advance the process of rationalisation and to make SAARC more functional and business-like, to the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.

SAARC AWARD

54. 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

55. 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.

56. 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.

ISLAMABAD DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Twelfth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 6th January, 2004.

We, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Lyonpo Jigmi Yoezer Thinley, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the President of the Republic of Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, Surya Bahadur Thapa, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga:

Having met at the Twelfth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Islamabad, Pakistan on 4-6 January 2004;

Guided by the vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and proud of its rich culture and traditions;

Deeply conscious of the growing interdependence within and amongst nations and regions in an increasingly globalizing world;

Desirous 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 the states and peaceful settlement of all disputes;

Reaffirming the centrality of SAARC for promoting regional cooperation and emphasizing the need to enhance its efficacy;

Strongly reaffirming our commitment to the objectives, principles and provisions of the Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC);

DECLARE THAT: REGIONAL COOPERATION ECONOMIC

1. We renew our commitment to the objectives and principles of SAARC and pledge to reinvigorate cooperation to realize peace, amity, progress and prosperity of all peoples of South Asia.

2. We affirm our determination to create an inclusive, just and equitable partnership for peace, development and prosperity. Satisfactory progress has been made in the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). The signing of the Framework Agreement on the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) is a major milestone. It is important to maintain this momentum and move towards further broadening of economic cooperation and to ensure equitable distribution of benefits of trade and cater to the special needs of the small and LDC Member States by providing them special and deferential treatment.
3. We reiterate our commitment made at the 11th SAARC Summit at Kathmandu in January 2002 for the creation of a South Asian Economic Union. In this context, we underline that creation of a suitable political and economic environment would be conducive to the realization of this objective.
4. A study on creating a South Asian Energy Cooperation including the concept of an Energy Ring should be undertaken by the Working Group on Energy.
5. For accelerated and balanced economic growth it is essential to strengthen transportation, transit and communication links across the region.
6. Public and private sector cooperation, particularly joint ventures, holds great promise. It is important to move towards project cooperation under SAARC. Prospects for setting up of a South Asian Development Bank should be examined by the SAARC FINANCE and report through the Council of Ministers.
7. Priority attention should also be given to the need for harmonization of standards, simplification of custom procedures, as well as cooperation among the central banks.
8. Development of tourism within South Asia could bring economic, social and cultural dividends. There is a need for increasing cooperation to jointly promote tourism within South Asia as well as to promote South Asia as a tourism destination, inter alia, by improved air links. To achieve this and to commemorate the twentieth year of the establishment of SAARC, the year 2005 is designated as "South Asia Tourism Year", for the success of which, each member would individually and jointly organize special events.
9. SAARC members should continue to safeguard their collective interests in multilateral forums by discussing, coordinating and exchanging information with a view to adopting common positions, where appropriate, on various issues.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

10. We recognise poverty alleviation as the greatest challenge facing the peoples of South Asia and declare poverty alleviation as the overarching goal of all SAARC activities. It is imperative to relate regional cooperation to the actual needs of the people.
11. Provision of basic needs, promotion of literacy, and better health care are regional priorities. It is important to undertake effective and sustained poverty reduction programmes through pro-poor growth strategies and other policy interventions with specific sectoral targets.
12. The Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation, prepared by the meeting of Finance and Planning Ministers in Islamabad in 2002, is hereby approved.
13. The reconstituted Independent South Asian Commission for Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA) has done commendable work. An effective strategy should be devised to implement suggestions made in its Report "Our Future Our Responsibility". In this context, ISACPA should continue in an advocacy role. It should prepare and submit to the next SAARC summit a comprehensive and realistic blue-print setting out SAARC Development Goals for the next five years in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, health and environment giving due regard, among others, to the suggestions made in the ISACPA report.
14. The SAARC Secretariat should periodically update and submit Regional Poverty Profiles.
15. SAARC should continue to collaborate with international organizations and UN agencies in the field of poverty alleviation. Arrangements for SAARC Food Security Reserve should be made more effective. We also recommend the establishment of a Regional Food Bank for which a concept paper should be prepared.
16. Investment in human resources is critical for future development of South Asia. It is, therefore, essential to establish a network of centres of higher learning and training, and Skill Development Institutes (SDIs) across South Asia. In this context, the role of the SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) is important.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

17. Strengthening of scientific and technological cooperation across the region is fundamental to accelerating the pace of economic and social development. Sharing of scientific and technological expertise, joint research and development and industrial application of higher technology should be encouraged and facilitated.

SOCIAL ISSUES

18. 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.
19. Progress has been made in the constitution of SAARC Autonomous Advocacy Group of Prominent Women Personalities (SAWAG). To enable women to contribute to the socio-economic development, there is a need for SAARC to encourage women entrepreneurs in the region.
20. Member States should move towards an early ratification of the two Conventions on Child Welfare and Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.
21. 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". The SAARC Secretariat should effectively implement the proposed programmes on the observance of the SAARC Awareness Year and develop a regional strategy through a consultative process and collaborate closely with the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other international organizations and civil society.
22. The important initiative taken by the Maldives in hosting the Emergency Meeting of the SAARC Health Ministers on SARS Epidemic in Male' on 29 April 2003, was a welcome development.
23. As agreed by the SAARC Health Ministers' Conference held recently in New Delhi, a SAARC Health Surveillance Centre and a Rapid Deployment Health Response System should be set up to deal with the emerging and re-emerging diseases as well as to establish a network between various institutions dealing with malaria and other vector borne diseases in the Member States. Also, documentation of traditional knowledge to safeguard Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in medicine needs attention.
24. The importance of cooperation in medical expertise and pharmaceuticals as well as in the field of traditional medicine requires elaboration of a SAARC Plan of Action that should be developed in the shortest possible time.

CULTURE

25. We take pride in the rich cultural mosaic of the peoples of South Asia and underline the need for preservation of traditional skills and crafts, and promotion of cultural exchanges between nations.
26. We welcome the establishment of a SAARC Cultural Centre in Kandy, which will serve as a symbol of South Asian shared cultural heritage.

ENVIRONMENT

27. It is important to undertake and reinforce regional cooperation in the conservation of our water resources and environment, pollution prevention and control as well as our preparedness to deal with natural calamities. We welcome the early establishment of the Coastal Zone Management Centre in the Maldives.
28. The early and effective implementation of the SAARC Environment Plan of Action is important. We further stress the early submission of country state of the environment reports to expedite the preparation of a SAARC state of environment report and the commissioning of the work on drafting a Regional Environment Treaty.

COMBATING TERRORISM

29. We condemn terrorist violence in all its forms and manifestations and note that people of South Asia continue to face a serious threat from terrorism.
30. We are 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 any ground, whatsoever. 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. We agree to fully implement the relevant international conventions to which we are parties.
31. We reaffirm our commitment to the 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.
32. The signing of the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism to deal effectively with financing of terrorism is a further manifestation of our determination to eliminate all forms and manifestations of terrorism from South Asia.

SAARC AWARD

33. We welcome the institution of the SAARC Award on the basis of a concept paper drawn up by His Majesty's Government of Nepal and decide to present the award during the Summits in future. The Award will honour and encourage outstanding individuals and organizations within the region in the fields of peace, development, poverty alleviation, and in other areas of regional cooperation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

34. 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.

35. 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)

36. 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

37. 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.

SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

38. We encourage 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.

INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION

39. We express our determination to develop mutually beneficial links between SAARC and other regional and international organizations, bodies and entities and agree to establish dialogue partnership with other regional bodies and with states outside the region, interested in SAARC activities.

ENHANCING POLITICAL COOPERATION

40. We envision South Asia to be a peaceful and stable region where each nation is at peace with itself and its neighbours and where conflicts, differences and disputes are addressed through peaceful means and dialogue.

41. We reaffirm our pledge to promote good neighbourly relations on the basis of the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and national independence, non-use of force, non-intervention and non-interference and peaceful settlement of disputes and recognize the importance of informal political consultations in promoting mutual understanding and reinforcing confidence building process among Member States.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

42. We are particularly mindful of the security concerns of small states that arise, inter alia, from their particular vulnerabilities, which should be firmly addressed by scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, rules of international law and strict adherence to the universally accepted principles and norms related to sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all states. This should be ensured by all, both severally and collectively, through appropriate actions.

43. We endorse the recommendations made by the Council of Ministers at its Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Sessions.

THIRTEENTH SAARC SUMMIT

44. We appreciate the offer of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to host the Thirteenth SAARC Summit in January 2005.

DHAKA DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Thirteenth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 13th November, 2005.

1. 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.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. 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.
3. 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 region's peace, progress and stability.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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 alleviation by a two-tier one, comprising the Ministers and the Secretaries dealing with Poverty Alleviation at the national level.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

11. 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.

12. 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

13. 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. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.

16. 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.
17. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the following Agreements during the thirteenth SAARC Summit:
 - o The Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters
 - o The Agreement on the Establishment of SAARC Arbitration Council
 - o The Limited Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.

21. 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.
22. 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'S SOCIAL CHALLENGES

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.

26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.

30. 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.
31. 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'S ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND NATURAL DISASTERS

32. 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

33. 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.
34. 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.
35. 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.
36. 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.

COMBATING TERRORISM

37. 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.

38. 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.
39. They decided that SAARC Interior/Home Ministers would meet annually preceded by a meeting of the Interior/Home Secretaries.
40. 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 regional mechanism.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

41. 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

42. 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 entities in promoting understanding and harmony in the region.

43. 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

44. 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.

45. The Heads of State or Government stressed that promotion of global peace and security inter alia called 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.
46. 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.
47. 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

48. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the growing importance being placed by all Member 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

49. 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 People's 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.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS OF SAARC

50. The Heads of State or Government agreed that with the 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

51. 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 discernible impact can be felt across South Asia. They 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

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

DELHI DECLARATION

The Declaration of the Fourteenth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 4th April, 2007.

1. The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai; the Chief Adviser of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk; 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 Prime Minister of Nepal, Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala; 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, His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, met at the Fourteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in New Delhi, India on April 3-4, 2007.
2. 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.
3. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the SAARC Charter. With the welfare of the peoples of South Asia uppermost in their mind, they agreed to build a Partnership for Prosperity and work towards shared economic cooperation, regional prosperity, a better life for the people of South Asia, and equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities of integration among the peoples and the nations.
4. The Heads of State or Government recognised the importance of connectivity in fulfilling these objectives. It was vital to first have better connectivity within South Asia and then with the rest of the world. They agreed to improve intra-regional connectivity, particularly physical, economic and people-to-people connectivity. They agreed to the vision

of a South Asian community, where there was smooth flow of goods, services, peoples, technologies, knowledge, capital, culture and ideas in the region. The SAARC Car Rally, in the run-up to the Fourteenth SAARC Summit, had vividly symbolized this connectivity.

5. The Heads of State or Government recognised that the remarkable growth of the economies of SAARC countries has opened new opportunities to pursue the fight against poverty with firm resolve. They called for deepening of pro-poor orientation of growth process, including through enhancing investment in human capital and infrastructure, increasing budgetary allocations for relevant sectors and improved delivery of services. They reiterated their commitment towards project-based cooperation to strengthen collective efforts in the region.
6. 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.
7. The Heads of State or Government recognised that the implementation of the Social Charter needs focused attention and directed the National Coordination Committees (NCCs) to formulate concrete programmes and projects to complement national implementation efforts. They underscored that civil society organizations have a vital role to play in driving forward the implementation of the Social Charter and directed the NCCs to mobilize civil society organizations to achieve this end.
8. The Heads of State or Government appreciated the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA) for its elaboration of the SAARC Development Goals (SDGs), which reflect the regional determination to make faster progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They agreed that the national plans for poverty alleviation should appropriately mirror the regional consensus reached in the form of the SDGs and the Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation. Deciding that resource mobilization for achieving the SDGs would remain a high priority in the Decade of Poverty Alleviation, the Leaders directed translation of the highest regional level political commitment into action for creating opportunities for productive employment and greater access to resources for the poor that are essential for them to enhance their livelihood and

realize their potentials. They entrusted the Two-tier Mechanism on Poverty Alleviation to monitor the progress and fine-tune the approaches towards pro-poor growth process.

9. The Heads of State or Government recognized the full benefits of an integrated multimodal transport system in the region. They emphasized that this would not be realized unless physical infrastructure and matters relating to customs clearance and other facilitation measures, including multimodal transport operations, were addressed comprehensively. They called for an extension of the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS) to include Afghanistan as well. They also called for early implementation of the recommendations contained in the Study in a phased manner. In this context, the Heads of State or Government directed the Inter-Governmental Group on Transport to identify and develop sub-regional and regional projects based on the prioritised recommendations of the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS) and to develop appropriate regional agreements. They noted the offer of India to hold the Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Transport in New Delhi in 2007. They also directed that pilot projects for improving connectivity be identified and implemented through mutual consultations among the Member States.
10. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that in its third decade of existence, there was an urgent need to move SAARC from declaratory to implementation phase. They directed that the focus of SAARC should be on implementing collaborative projects that are concrete and effective. The SAARC Development Fund (SDF) is an important pillar that would bring concrete benefits to the people of the region. They directed that the SDF be made operational at the earliest. They agreed that the resources for SDF would be mobilised both from within and outside the region. They stressed the importance of decision making and working of the SDF being consistent with the SAARC Charter. They called for early identification and implementation of regional and sub-regional projects under the SDF.
11. The Heads of States or Governments recognized the region's rapidly increasing energy demands for meeting the developmental needs of SAARC countries. They also acknowledged the need of expediting development of conventional sources of energy in a sustainable manner and for strengthening renewable energy development such as in hydropower, bio-fuel, solar and wind. They welcomed the organizing of the first ever South Asia Energy Dialogue in March 2007 in Delhi. They called for early implementation of the recommendations of the Second SAARC Energy

Ministers' Meeting to enhance regional cooperation.

12. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their deep concern at the continued degradation of environment and reaffirmed the need to further strengthen cooperation towards protection and conservation of the environment as a priority area. In this regard, while noting the progress in the implementation of the SAARC Plan of Action on Environment, they called for concerted efforts to implement various initiatives under the Plan in a timely manner.
13. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction at the launching of 2007 as the 'Year of Green South Asia'. They reiterated that collaboration in addressing the problem of arsenic contamination of groundwater, desertification and melting of glaciers and assistance to affected peoples should be deepened. They expressed deep concern over global climate change and the consequent rise in sea level and its impact on the lives and livelihoods in the region. They emphasised the need for assessing and managing its risks and impacts. They called for adaptation of initiatives and programmes; cooperation in early forecasting, warning and monitoring; and sharing of knowledge on consequences of climate change for pursuing a climate resilient development in South Asia. They agreed to commission a team of regional experts to identify collective actions in this regard.
14. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need for closer regional cooperation in the field of information and communication technology. They noted with appreciation the establishment of a collaborative health care project involving a regional telemedicine-network. They directed that steps be taken to extend it to other ICT enabled fields such as education. They agreed to take steps to facilitate rationalization of telecom tariff on a reciprocal basis. They also agreed that national and regional telecom infrastructure should be upgraded to boost people-to-people connectivity in the region.
15. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction timely ratification of SAFTA Agreement by all member countries. They stressed the need for ensuring effective market access through smooth implementation of trade liberalization programme and directed the SAFTA bodies to review the progress on a regular basis. They emphasized that SAFTA should be implemented in letter and spirit. Successful implementation of SAFTA will catalyse other areas of regional economic cooperation. They stressed that to realize its full potential, SAFTA should integrate trade in services.

They called for a finalisation of an Agreement in the services sector at the earliest. They also directed that the Agreement on Investment Promotion and Protection be finalized.

16. The Heads of State or Government underlined the importance of implementing trade facilitation measures, especially standardization of basic customs nomenclature, documentation and clearing procedures. They directed that a comprehensive agreement on harmonizing customs procedures be finalised. They also noted that harmonization of technical and phyto-sanitary standards and their implementation in a trade-friendly manner is important in boosting intra-regional trade. They appreciated the establishment of the SAARC Standards Coordination Board that would function as a precursor to the SAARC Regional Standards Body.
17. The Heads of State or Government complimented the SAARC Finance Ministers for finalising the framework of cooperation on financial issues in the region. They expressed satisfaction at the work of the Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Financial Issues.
18. 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.
19. 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 acknowledged the importance of intra-regional tourism and increased exchanges, particularly among the youth, civil society, and parliamentarians. They launched the SAARC Agenda for Culture and directed that annual SAARC Festivals for cultural exchange be institutionalized. 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.
20. The Heads of State or Government decided to establish the South Asian University in India. They welcomed the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement establishing the University. They further directed that the

Intergovernmental Steering Committee be set up at the earliest to complete its tasks relating to the Charter, bye laws, rules and regulations, curriculum development, business plans and other issues. They also decided to strengthen cooperation and dialogue on educational matters through development of exchanges between academics, experts, policymakers, students and teachers. They called for inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships, and other regional initiatives in the field of education.

21. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that women's full participation in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process are fundamental for the achievement of equality and development. They noted that many sections of women and children continue to be in disadvantaged positions and lack equal opportunities for economic and social development. They emphasized that women's empowerment should be a major objective of regional cooperation. Regional projects should focus on addressing issues relating to women and children.
22. 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.
23. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that countries of South Asia face challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition. In order to manage emergencies caused by natural and manmade calamities and food shortages, they 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.
24. The Heads of State or Government noted the challenges confronted by the countries of South Asia in ensuring food and nutritional security as well as in maintaining vibrant rural economy for agricultural development. They underscored the need for enhancing productivity and real wage in rural sectors, and for creating adequate non-farm employment to sustain the progress made in reducing poverty. Noting the constant decline in land availability and biodiversity, depleting soil and natural resources, lowering ground water levels, shrinking farm holdings as well as low and stagnating productivity, they recognized the imperative of reducing the

wide gap between yields at the research and the farm level. They stressed, in particular, that South Asian agriculture must benefit from collaborative efforts within and among SAARC countries in developing an effective agriculture research, extension and farmers' linkages, and exchange of farm technology.

25. The Heads of State or Government underlined that terrorism is a threat to peace and security in the region. They condemned the targeted killing of civilians and terrorist violence, in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and against whomsoever committed. The Heads of States or Government affirmed that terrorism violates the principles of the Charters of the United Nations and SAARC and is a clear and present threat to international peace and security. They reaffirmed their commitment to implement all international conventions relating to combating terrorism, to which SAARC Member States were respectively parties, as well as the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention dealing with the prevention and suppression of financing of terrorism. While urging continued efforts to combat terrorism, the Heads of State or Government also called for urgent conclusion of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
26. The Heads of State or Government agreed to work on the modalities to implement the provisions of the existing SAARC Conventions to combat terrorism, narcotics and psychotropic substances, trafficking in women and children and other trans-national crimes. They expressed their commitment to take every possible measure to prevent and suppress, in particular, financing of terrorist acts by criminalizing the provision, acquisition and collection of funds for such acts, including through front organizations and also to counter illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, trafficking in persons and illicit arms. They reiterated the need for law enforcement authorities of Member States to enhance cooperation in the prevention, suppression and prosecution of offences under these Instruments. They noted the initiative of India to prepare a draft of SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to hold a meeting of Legal Advisers to examine the idea of a draft convention, before the Second Meeting of SAARC Interior/Home Ministers scheduled to be held in October 2007 in India. They also directed them to ensure regular follow-up and implementation of the decisions taken.

27. The Heads of State or Government recognised that corruption was an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption to effectively address this problem.
28. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to a rule-based multilateral trading system. They recalled that the Doha Round was premised on the centrality of development. They directed the Commerce Ministers to work closely to co-ordinate their positions to ensure that the centrality of the development dimension in all areas of negotiations for creating new opportunities and economic growth for developing countries was fully realized. They called upon all members of WTO to show commitment for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round.
29. 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.
30. The Heads of State or Government welcomed with appreciation the offer of the Maldives to host the 15th Summit Meeting of the Heads of States or Governments of the South Asian Association for the Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

COLOMBO DECLARATION

“Partnership for Growth for Our People”

The Declaration of the Fifteenth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 3rd August, 2008.

INTRODUCTION

1. The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai; the Chief Adviser of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley; 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 Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Rt. Hon’ble Girija Prasad Koirala; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani; and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, met at the Fifteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on August 2-3, 2008.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government 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.
3. The Heads of State or Government recognized that SAARC has been making steady and incremental progress over the years, in particular since the last Summit held in New Delhi in April 2007, towards realizing the objectives of the Charter. They accordingly emphasized the importance of maintaining the momentum, through clear links of continuity between

the work already underway and future activities. The Heads of State or Government recognized the need for SAARC to further strengthen its focus on developing and implementing regional and sub-regional projects in the agreed areas on a priority basis. Each Member State may consider taking up at least one regional/ sub-regional SAARC project as the lead country.

4. The Leaders noted with satisfaction the considerable progress made in various domains of partnership among SAARC Member States and emphasized the need to consolidate and ensure effective implementation of all SAARC programs and mechanisms by rationalization and performance evaluation on a regular basis. A Partnership for Growth for the Peoples of South Asia.
5. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that the process of regional cooperation must be truly people-centered, so that SAARC continues to strengthen in keeping with expectations as a robust partnership for growth for the peoples of South Asia. They accordingly directed all SAARC mechanisms to abide by the Charter objective of promoting the welfare of the people and improving their quality of life. In this regard they directed the Council of Ministers to ensure that SAARC mechanisms identify further areas of cooperation where people-centric partnership projects could be initiated.
6. The Heads of State or Government observed that an effective and economical regional tele-communication regime is an essential factor of connectivity, encouraging the growth of people-centric partnerships. They stressed the need for the Member States to endeavour to move towards a uniformly applicable low tariff, for international direct dial calls within the region.

CONNECTIVITY

7. The Heads of State or Government recognized the importance of connectivity for realizing the objectives of SAARC. They accordingly directed the SAARC mechanisms to continue to embody in their programs and projects a strong focus on better connectivity not only within South Asia, but also between the region and the rest of the world. They further stressed the necessity of fast-tracking projects for improving intra-regional connectivity and facilitating economic, social and people-to-people contacts.

ENERGY

8. The Heads of State or Government noted that increased access to energy is critical for fulfilling the legitimate expectations of growth and development

in South Asia. They observed in this regard that the escalation of oil prices threatens both the energy security of the region, as well as the economic growth witnessed in South Asia. In this context, they recognized the need to expeditiously develop and conserve the conventional sources of energy and to build up renewable alternative energy resources including indigenous hydro power, solar, wind and bio, while introducing energy reforms, energy efficiency and the trade and sharing of technology and expertise. They also noted that there is tremendous potential for developing regional and sub-regional energy resources in an integrated manner and noted the efforts being made to strengthen regional cooperation in capacity development, technology transfer and the trade in energy. While expressing satisfaction at the progress over the recent years to strengthen energy cooperation, the Leaders directed that the recommendations of the Energy Dialogue be implemented through an appropriate work plan.

9. The Heads of State or Government stressed the urgent need to develop the regional hydro potential, grid connectivity and gas pipelines. They noted that the possibility of evolving an appropriate regional inter-governmental framework may be explored to facilitate such an endeavour. They welcomed Sri Lanka's offer to host the Third Meeting of SAARC Energy Ministers in Colombo in 2009.

ENVIRONMENT

10. Being increasingly aware of global warming, climate change and environmental challenges facing the region, which mainly include sea-level rise, deforestation, soil erosion, siltation, droughts, storms, cyclones, floods, glacier melt and resultant glacial lake outburst floods and urban pollution, the Heads of State or Government reiterated the need to intensify cooperation within an expanded regional environmental protection framework, to deal in particular with climate change issues. They were of the view that SAARC should contribute to restoring harmony with nature, drawing on the ancient South Asian cultural values and traditions of environmental responsibility and sustainability.
11. The Leaders expressed satisfaction at the adoption of SAARC Action Plan and Dhaka Declaration on Climate Change by the SAARC Environment Ministers at the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change held at Dhaka on 3 July 2008. In this context they stressed the need for close cooperation for capacity building, development of CDM projects and promotion of programs for advocacy and mass awareness raising on climate change. They also expressed satisfaction at the adoption of a SAARC Declaration on Climate Change for the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by the Twenty-ninth Session of the Council of Ministers.

12. The Heads of State or Government expressed deep concern over global climate change and its impact on the lives and livelihoods in the region. They also noted the urgency of the immediate need for dealing with the onslaught of climate change including sea level rise, on meeting food, water and energy needs, and taking measures to ensure the livelihood security of the peoples in the SAARC region. They resolved to work together to prevent and address the threats to the livelihoods of the peoples and to provide access to remedies when these rights are violated and also to find an equitable distribution of responsibilities and rights among the Member States. They also emphasised the need for assessing and managing its risks and impacts. In this regard, they called for an in-depth study on “Climate Justice: The Human Dimension of Climate Change,” to come up with a rights-based approach that would highlight the human impact when responding to the impacts of climate change.
13. The Heads of State or Government affirmed that every citizen of this planet must have an equal share of the planetary atmospheric space. In this context, they endorsed the convergence of per capita emissions of developing and developed countries on an equitable basis for tackling climate change. They were of the view that any effort at addressing climate change should take into account historical responsibility, per capita emissions and respective country capabilities.
14. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern at the human loss suffered through natural disasters in the region and stressed the need for the timely provision of relief in humanitarian emergencies. In this regard they directed that a Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism be created to adopt a coordinated and planned approach to meet such emergencies under the aegis of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre.

WATER RESOURCES

15. The Heads of State or Government expressing their deep concern at the looming global water crisis, recognized that South Asia must be at the forefront of bringing a new focus to the conservation of water resources. For this purpose they directed initiation of processes of capacity building and the encouragement of research, combining conservation practices such as rain water harvesting and river basin management, in order to ensure sustainability of water resources in South Asia.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

16. The Heads of State or Government while acknowledging the significant steps taken to alleviate poverty in the region, resolved to continue to combat poverty through all available means, including especially through people's empowerment. They committed themselves to continuing to share each other's experiences and success stories of pro-poor poverty reduction strategies such as micro-credit systems, community-driven initiatives and the raising of the consciousness of the poor on their right to resources and development.
17. In this respect, they emphasized on undertaking sustained efforts, including developing and implementing regional and sub-regional projects towards the attainment of SAARC Development Goals (SDGs). They noted the decision by the Ministers on Poverty Alleviation to obtain an inter-governmental mid-term review of the attainment of the SDGs to be completed by 2009.
18. The Leaders welcomed the offer of Nepal to host next Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation.

SAARC DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF)

19. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction at the signing of the Charter of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF), and finalization of its Bye-laws, and called for an early ratification of the SDF Charter. They also welcomed early operationalization of the Fund from the available funds. They expressed satisfaction at the launching and identification of the projects on women empowerment, maternal & child health and teachers' training under the social window of the SDF, as directed by the Finance Ministers. They reiterated their commitment to expedite their financial contributions to the Fund. In this regard, the Heads of State or Government accepted with appreciation the offer of the Kingdom of Bhutan to host the SAARC Development Fund Secretariat in Thimpu.

TRANSPORT

20. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction at the progress through the Meetings of the Ministers of Transport. They reiterated the critical importance of an efficient multi-modal transport system in the region for integration and for sustaining the region's economic growth and competitiveness. They urged early implementation in a gradual and phased manner of the proposals of the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS).

21. They noted the progress made in the consideration of the draft Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) by Member States. They also noted that technical inputs related to Regional Transport and Transit Agreement and Regional Multilateral Railway Agreement were being examined by the Member States. In this context, they directed the next Transport Ministers Meeting to expedite work in this regard. They appreciated the offer of Sri Lanka to hold the Second Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Transport in Colombo in 2008.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) DEVELOPMENT

22. The Heads of State or Government urged the need for even more expeditious and close regional cooperation in information and communication technology. They welcomed the enhanced digital connectivity among the Member States and the ongoing work to upgrade the regional telecommunication infrastructure. They directed that the arrangements needed to implement the proposed collaborative tele-projects such as those for health care and education, be expedited.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

23. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged the ongoing contribution of Science & Technology including cutting edge technology in information and bio-technology in improving the quality of life of the peoples of South Asia. They noted the offer of India to host the Ministerial Meeting on Science & Technology on September 15-16, 2008 for development of a roadmap on identifying implementable focused regional and sub-regional projects in SAARC.

TOURISM

24. The Heads of State or Government underscored the vital contribution that tourism could afford to the economic development of the SAARC region. They agreed to make every effort to implement the comprehensive action plan adopted by the Second Ministerial Meeting held at Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. These efforts would include facilitating the movement of people through improved travel infrastructure and air, sea and land connectivity among the SAARC countries, collaboration in human resource development and the promotion of SAARC as a common destination through public-private partnerships and joint campaigns.

CULTURE

25. The Heads of State or Government emphasized the role of cultural connectivity in bringing the peoples of South Asia closer, while reinforcing and projecting a distinct South Asian identity. They directed that the Agenda for Culture be implemented in full.

SAFTA AND TRADE FACILITATION

26. The Heads of State or Government emphasized their commitment to implement SAFTA in letter and in spirit, thereby enabling SAARC to contribute as well to the dynamic process of Asia's emergence as the power house of the world. Recognizing the need to continue to address the major barriers hindering effective trade liberalization in the region, which include sensitive lists of items and Non-Trade Barriers (NTBs), they directed that the decision to revise the sensitive lists by the SAFTA Ministerial Council (SMC) be implemented early. They also recommended that while revising the Sensitive Lists, special consideration be given to the LDCs. The Leaders directed that SAFTA Committee of Experts (SCoE) to expeditiously resolve the issue of Non Tariff Measures (NTMs) and Para Tariff Measures (PTMs) in order to facilitate and enhance the trade under SAFTA.

27. The Heads of State or Government underlined the need for taking concrete measures to improve trade facilitation in terms of the mutual recognition of standards, the adoption of common tariff nomenclatures, the harmonization of customs procedures. They directed the relevant SAARC bodies to expedite their work in these areas. They also recognized the importance of development of communication system and transport infrastructure and transit facilities specially for the landlocked countries to promote intra-SAARC trade.

28. The Heads of State or Government observed that the SAARC legal instruments on trade liberalization and the measures and initiatives for trade facilitation are increasingly affording significant openings for mutually beneficial trade, investments and economic cooperation within South Asia. These openings are complemented by the uniformly sound levels of national economic growth being attained by the Member States of SAARC. The Leaders accordingly noted the growing and urgent need for enhancing capacity within SAARC dedicated to encouraging national and regional strategies that would further maximize the positive trade, investments and economic cooperation climate in South Asia. In this regard they welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to prepare a Concept Paper and a Working Paper on the subject and directed that the Paper be discussed at

a Session of the Standing Committee specially convened for this purpose, to enable the adoption of appropriate follow-up measures.

29. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the text of the Agreement on the Establishment of the South Asian Regional Standards Organization. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the signing of the Protocol on Afghanistan for Accession to SAFTA.

TRADE IN SERVICES

30. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction at the conclusion of the Study on Trade in Services and welcomed the decision of SAFTA Ministerial Council to commence negotiation on the Framework Agreement on Trade in Services. Towards achieving further economic integration, they directed that the Draft Agreement on Investment Promotion and Protection be finalized early and the SAARC Arbitration Council be operationalized.

SAARC SOCIAL CHARTER

31. The Heads of State or Government underscored the imperative to make steady progress in the implementation of the SAARC Social Charter and directed the Member States to complete the National Plans of Action with a perspective of seeking to transform current challenges into opportunities. They further directed the National Coordination Committees (NCCs) to recommend activities in conformity with the Social Charter and to introduce an efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism for reviewing the progress in the implementation of the Social Charter. The Leaders emphasized the need to implement the selected regional and sub regional programs and projects to complement national implementation efforts. They urged that such activities be suitably accommodated in the SAARC Calendar. They called for people's participation in strategy initiatives, planning and implementation to ensure people's responsibility and ownership. The Leaders directed to develop a policy on the protection of rights of the senior citizens for their geriatric care taking into account existing national policies of the Member States.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

32. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the increased cooperation in the region towards achieving the all important goal of bringing women fully into the mainstream of development, on the basis of gender equality. They called for focused attention on women's economic

empowerment and skills development, while addressing key health issues and violence against women. The Leaders directed to work for a regional cooperation for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and abuse against women in general and widows in particular and guarantee their rights to live in the society in a dignified manner.

EDUCATION

33. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the substantial progress made in the establishment of the South Asian University in New Delhi and directed that the University should begin its Session from 2010. They also directed that increased interaction between students should be encouraged through institutionalization of students, academics, teachers and youth exchange programs. They further directed early institutionalization of an elaborate SAARC Scholarship Scheme in ICT and related areas.

COMBATING TERRORISM

34. The Heads of State or Government strongly condemned all forms of terrorist violence and expressed deep concern over the serious threat posed by terrorism to the peace, stability and security of the region.

35. They further recognized the growing linkages between the phenomenon of terrorism, illegal trafficking in narcotic and psychotropic substances, illegal trafficking of persons and firearms and underscored the need to address the problem in a comprehensive manner. They reiterated their commitment to strengthen the legal regime against terrorism, including by undertaking to implement all international conventions relating to combating terrorism to which Member States are parties, as well as the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. The Head of States or Government while recalling United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) emphasized the importance of criminalizing any act for the provision, collection and acquisition of funds for the purpose of committing terrorist acts.

36. The Heads of State or Government recognized in this regard the value of the proposed UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. They noted the progress made during recent rounds of negotiations and called for an early conclusion of the Convention.

37. They emphasized the need for strongest possible cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime amongst the relevant agencies of the Member States especially in the area of information

exchange. The Heads of State or Government further emphasized the importance of completing all legislative and other relevant measures to implement within Member States, the provisions of the Regional Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The Leaders noted the considerable work done to promote cooperation in Police matters. They appreciated the offer of Pakistan to host the Third Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Interior/Home in Islamabad during 2008.

38. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction on the finalization of the text of the SAARC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters at the Fifteenth Summit and its signing. They expressed appreciation at the accommodating manner in which the negotiations were conducted by the Member States to provide each other the widest measures of mutual assistance in criminal matters to ensure a greater sense of security within the region, the Heads of State or Government urged for early ratification and implementation of the Convention.

JOINT POSITIONS

39. The Heads of State or Government resolved to encourage consultations among delegations of SAARC Member States at the appropriate international forums and agreed to cooperate accordingly.

OBSERVERS

40. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the Observers namely the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, the United States of America and the European Union and appreciated their participation in the Summit. They also welcomed Australia and Myanmar to be associated as Observers to SAARC. They approved the guidelines for cooperation with Observers and looked forward to working with them in the common pursuit of the partnership for growth for our people.

SIXTEENTH SUMMIT

41. The Heads of State or Government welcomed with appreciation the offer of the Maldives to host the Sixteenth Summit Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

THIMPU SILVER JUBILEE DECLARATION “Towards a Green and Happy South Asia”

The Declaration of the Sixteenth SAARC Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 29th April, 2010.

1. The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai; the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Yoeser Thinley; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Nasheed; the Prime Minister of Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani; and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, met in Thimpu, Bhutan, on 28-29 April 2010 for the Sixteenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
2. The Leaders expressed satisfaction that SAARC had achieved a number of important milestones with the completion of twenty five years of its establishment. The Leaders underscored the relevance and importance of the Association in providing a platform for regional cooperation to accomplish the Charter objectives.
3. In this Silver Jubilee Year of SAARC, the Leaders emphasized the need to develop a ‘Vision Statement’. They agreed to form a ‘South Asia Forum’ for the generation of debate, discussion and the exchange of ideas on South Asia and its future development. The Forum will consist of eminent personalities of diverse background including from all SAARC Member States. The Forum would provide inputs, based on a comprehensive understanding, for charting out the future course of SAARC in the medium and long run and recommend, if required, the necessary improvements required in the existing mechanisms. Such a forum could function on public-private partnership lines, and allow for multiple inputs beyond governments into the consideration of the future of SAARC.

4. In order to commemorate the 25th anniversary, the Leaders laid emphasis on effective communications and public diplomacy. They drew attention in this regard to the need to reach out to different sections of the South Asian community, particularly its students and youth, private media, private sector, think tanks, civil society, and institutions of economic development.
5. The Leaders agreed that the scope and substance of cooperation had expanded to diverse fields, providing a firm basis for genuine partnership. However, a number of these had not translated into meaningful and tangible benefits to the people. They, therefore, highlighted the need for more efficient, focused, time-bound and people-centric activities and called for appropriate reflection of all the SAARC decisions into the national policies and programmes of Member States. They resolved that the Silver Jubilee Year should be commemorated by making SAARC truly action oriented by fulfilling commitments, implementing declarations and decisions and operationalizing instruments and living up to the hopes and aspirations of one-fifth of humanity.
6. The Leaders, while appreciating that all the Member States had evolved into multi-party democracies, underlined the challenges faced by them in ensuring effective, efficient, transparent and accountable governments. In this regard, they emphasized the need for regional cooperation to strengthen good governance through sharing of experiences, best-practices and establishing institutional linkages. They noted the proposal by Bangladesh to convene an Inter-governmental Meeting in Dhaka on the idea of a SAARC Charter of Democracy on which Bangladesh offered to circulate a Concept Paper.
7. The Leaders recognised the need to draw on the democratic and participatory tradition collectively represented by the Parliamentarians of South Asia for the progress of SAARC. In this context, the Leaders recommended the convening of a “Conclave of SAARC Parliamentarians” in line with the SAARC Charter and directed the SAARC Secretariat to convene a Working Group, comprising nominees of the Member States, to workout the modalities for establishment of such a Conclave.
8. The Leaders emphasized on a greater focus to pursue people-centric development with due emphasis on socio-cultural progress and upholding traditions and values and in that regard, noted the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) pursued by Bhutan, inter alia, in ensuring people-centric development, culture, preservation of environment, better

- governance. They further noted that other Member States might consider Bhutan's experience with the concept and welcomed Bhutan's offer to host a SAARC Workshop on GNH in 2010.
9. The Leaders emphasized on deepening regional efforts on poverty alleviation, the overarching objective of SAARC. They called for the expeditious mainstreaming of the SAARC Development Goals (SDGs) in the national processes and completion of the Mid-term Review of the SDGs as scheduled. They further noted the useful finding and recommendations made by successive regional studies through the Regional Poverty Profiles (RPPs) and directed the relevant SAARC mechanisms to act on them. In this regard, they welcomed the offer of the Government of Nepal to host the Third Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in 2011.
 10. The Leaders welcomed Climate Change as the theme for the Summit and reaffirmed their commitment to address this challenge. In this context, they adopted the Thimpu Statement on Climate Change and directed that the recommendations contained therein be implemented in earnest.
 11. The Leaders noted that while climate change impacted every country, the SAARC Member States as developing countries were shouldering a major burden, in spite of having contributed least to the problem. They emphasized that global negotiations on climate change should be guided by the principles of equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities as enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and should be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.
 12. The Leaders, underscored the need to initiate the process to formulate a common SAARC position for COP16 and thereafter, including on issues such as separate financing for adaptation and mitigation as well as technology transfer. In this regard, they welcomed the offer of Bhutan to host an Inter-governmental Expert Group meeting.
 13. The Leaders welcomed the Government of Nepal's initiative to organize a Ministerial Meeting of Mountainous Countries in Kathmandu later this year.
 14. In pursuance of the recommendation contained in the SAARC Ministerial Statement on Environment on conservation of aquatic ecosystem, trans-boundary bio-diversity zones, automated network of weather stations and regular and systematic sharing of scientific data, the Leaders called for focus on water management and conservation and development of

- cooperative projects at regional level in terms of exchange of best practices and knowledge, capacity building and transfer of eco-friendly technology.
15. The Leaders, deeply concerned by the extent of environmental degradation in the region, reiterated the importance of sustainably managing environment and development through adoption of eco-friendly approaches and technologies and that South Asia should become a world leader in low-carbon technology and renewable energies. They welcomed the signing of the SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment and called for its early ratification and implementation.
 16. The Leaders, concerned by the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, called for effective regional programmes in early warning, preparedness and management including response and rehabilitation while remaining within their respective national laws and procedures. They called for further negotiations and early finalization of the SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters.
 17. The Leaders noted with satisfaction the ongoing initiatives in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through regional cooperation. In this regard, the Leaders welcomed the announcement by the Government of Maldives to nominate a Woman Secretary General as the Tenth Secretary General of SAARC.
 18. The Leaders appreciated the comprehensive directives of the Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia, specially highlighting the importance of the in-depth assessment of the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child (2001-2010) and its follow up. Recognizing the important role young people play in the region, the Leaders directed the development of a SAARC Youth Action Plan, in line with the SAARC Youth Charter, to guide regional cooperation in this area. To achieve this end, the Leaders directed to organize SAARC Youth Summit, involving policy makers and youth leaders from all Member States.
 19. The Leaders underlined the important role of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) for financing regional and sub-regional programmes and projects. They welcomed the ratification of the SDF Charter. The Leaders also welcomed the inauguration and operationalization of the Permanent Secretariat of the SDF including the appointment of its first Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Leaders also urged the importance of projects being funded through SDF are demand-driven, time-bound and aligned with the developmental priorities of the region. The Leaders also emphasized the need for the Member States to take full advantage of the mechanism

of the SDF through expeditious clearance and implementation of the projects and programmes to promote the welfare of the people of the SAARC region, to improve their quality of life and to accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the region.

20. The Leaders reiterated their commitment to implement SAFTA in letter and spirit. They emphasized the need to realize the full potential, through reduction of the size of the sensitive lists, acceleration of trade facilitation measures, and removal of non-tariff, para-tariff and other barriers. They directed the SAFTA Ministerial Council to work in earnest in these areas in a time-bound manner.
21. The Leaders welcomed the signing of the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services and expressed that this will open up new vistas of trade cooperation and further deepen the integration of the regional economies. They called for the early ratification of the Agreement. The Leaders also called for the early conclusion of negotiations on the specific schedule of commitments under the Agreement.
22. The Leaders emphasized the need to strengthen the role of private sector in regional initiatives through appropriate mechanisms including through Public-Private Partnership as well as the need for greater intra-SAARC investment promotion efforts.
23. The Leaders underlined the need for taking concrete measures to improve trade facilitation. They directed the relevant SAARC bodies to expedite their work in these areas. They also recognized the importance of development of communication system and transport infrastructure and transit facilities specially for the landlocked countries to promote intra-SAARC trade.
24. The Leaders noted with appreciation that SAARC Commerce Ministers had coordinated SAARC position on WTO Issues and Doha Development Agenda during the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference and agreed on the SAARC Ministerial Communiqué. They directed the Commerce Ministers to continue the process.
25. The Leaders emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation in education and directed greater interaction among the universities in the region towards undertaking of joint programmes on collaborative research and exchange programmes. They underscored the imperative of recognition of degrees, and where possible facilitation of credit transfers for open and distance education etc. They directed the expeditious finalization of mutual

recognition of academic and professional degrees as also harmonization of educational curriculum in South Asia.

26. The Leaders took note of the Reports of the Steering Committee of the South Asian University, and appreciated the progress being made towards establishing the University. They also underscored the importance of establishing regional campuses of the South Asian University. They appreciated the announcement of the CEO of the SAU project office to initialize the first academic session of the University with effect from August 2010. Further they asked the Steering Committee to work towards finalizing the modalities of the University.
27. The Leaders called for collaborative efforts to achieve greater intra-regional connectivity and endorsed the recommendation to declare 2010-2020 as the “Decade of Intra-regional Connectivity in SAARC”. They agreed on the need to expedite negotiations with a view to finalizing the two agreements on Motor Vehicles and Railways.
28. The Leaders, reiterating the centrality of connectivity to further deepen and consolidate regional integration, mandated the Chair to convene an Inter-Governmental Meeting to recommend specific measures to enhance multi-modal connectivity including air, sea and surface transport.
29. Acknowledging the enormity of the challenges related to food insecurity and poverty, the Leaders directed the SAARC Agriculture Ministers to vigorously pursue regional cooperation in agriculture covering all sub-sectors to enhance overall agricultural productivity. They called for regional efforts on increased sharing of best practices, technologies, techniques, and materials. Given the importance of quality seeds in enhancing productivity, they further directed early consideration of the concept of a regional seed bank, regional testing and certification of seeds, and a framework for transfer of plant genetic material and seeds. They agreed that South Asian agriculture must benefit from collaborative efforts from within and among SAARC countries by undertaking specific initiatives and projects.
30. The Leaders underscored the need for promotion of tourism to enhance greater people-to-people contacts in the region and called for the creation of tourism-friendly environment. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Nepal to host the Third SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Kathmandu in 2011 which coincides with the Nepal Tourism Year 2011.

31. The Leaders recognized the need to enhance cooperation in the energy sector to facilitate energy trade, development of efficient conventional and renewable energy sources including hydropower. They emphasized the need to undertake studies to develop regional energy projects, promote regional power trade, efficiency, conservation and development of labeling and standardization of appliances, and sharing of knowledge and technologies.
32. The Leaders agreed that an Action Plan on Energy conservation would be prepared by the SAARC Energy Centre (SEC), Islamabad with inputs from the Member States and submit to the inter-governmental mechanism for consideration. They called for the creation of a web portal on Energy Conservation for exchange of information and sharing of best practices among SAARC Member States.
33. The Leaders noted the proposal from India for preparing a Roadmap for developing a SAARC Market for Electricity (SAME) on a regional basis, as SAARC is considering electricity trading, supported by enabling markets in the Member States.
34. The Leaders strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and expressed deep concern over the threat which terrorism continues to pose to peace, security and economic stability of the South Asian region. They reiterated their firm resolve to root out terrorism and recalled the Ministerial Declaration on Cooperation in Combating Terrorism adopted by the Thirty-first Session of the Council of Ministers in Colombo. They emphasized that the linkages between the terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substance, illegal trafficking of persons and firearms all continue to remain a matter of serious concern and reiterated their commitment to address these problems in a comprehensive manner. The Leaders emphasized the need to strengthen regional cooperation to fight terrorism and transnational organized crimes. They reaffirmed their commitment to implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and its Additional Protocol and SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. They re-emphasized the importance of coordinated and concerted response to combat terrorism. The Leaders also recognized in this regard the value of the proposed UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and noted the progress made during the recent rounds of negotiations and called for an early conclusion of the Convention.

35. The Leaders welcomed the hosting of the Third Meeting of SAARC Home/Interior Ministers and related Meetings in Islamabad to review the implementation of relevant SAARC Conventions. They underscored the importance of the SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and called for its ratification.
36. The Leaders welcomed the Observers from Australia, the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, the Union of Myanmar, the United States of America and the European Union and appreciated their participation in the Summit. They acknowledged that Australia and Myanmar were attending the Summit for the first time. They appreciated the interest shown by the Observers to work with SAARC.
37. The Leaders welcomed the offer of the Government of Maldives to host the Seventeenth Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2011.