MESSAGE

THIRTY-FIFTH SAARC CHARTER DAY

We are happy to commemorate the Thirty-fifth Charter Day of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on 08 December 2019.

At the First SAARC Summit in Dhaka, the Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka adopted the SAARC Charter on 08 December 1985, reaffirming their resolve to promote regional collaboration under the auspices of the Association. Afghanistan became the eighth member of SAARC in April 2007.

SAARC was created primarily to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life. Since its inception in December 1985, SAARC has made steady progress in promoting regional collaboration in agreed priority areas. In the meanwhile, strenuous inter-governmental efforts are underway to achieve the coveted objectives enshrined in the Charter, as well as the goal of the South Asian Economic Union (SAEU), as envisioned by our leaders.

Improved intra-regional connectivity is sine qua non for effective regional integration, including for promoting economic relations, people-to-people contacts and tourism. In order to attain this objective, three important agreements, namely, SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement, SAARC Railways Agreement, and SAARC Air Services Agreement are under consideration of the Member States. It is earnestly hoped that the SAARC Passenger and Ferry Services will be operational in the near future.

The SAARC process has been making steady progress. Besides five SAARC ministerial meetings and many other activities held this year, the Economic and Infrastructure Windows of the SAARC Development Fund were operationalized, in addition to the Social Window, which has been operational since 2010. SAARC’s Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres also remained very active in 2019 in pursuance of their mandates. In the meanwhile, SAARC’s collaboration with regional and international organizations is progressing well. Moreover, the Member States are in the process of conceptualizing proposals for substantive project-based collaboration with the Observers of SAARC.

As we commemorate the Thirty-fifth SAARC Charter Day, I wish to extend warmest felicitations to the Member States of SAARC and their peoples. On this auspicious occasion, I also wish to reaffirm our conviction and commitment to make SAARC more robust and dynamic, amply capable of attaining the Charter objectives.

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