



## SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

“SAARC is a people-centric organization. As enshrined in the SAARC Charter, our cardinal objective is to promote welfare of the peoples of our region.”



Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC

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### Thirty-third SAARC Charter Day

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) celebrated its Thirty-third Charter Day on 08 December 2017. The Charter establishing the Association was signed on 08 December 1985 by the SAARC Heads of State or Government during their first-ever Summit in Dhaka.

To mark the Day, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States issued special messages, vouching their unwavering support and commitment to the SAARC process.

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, hosted a Reception to mark the Day. Rt. Hon’ble Nanda Bahadur Pun, Vice President of Nepal graced the occasion, which brought together high-ranking officials, resident Ambassadors, civil society representatives, business community and a large number of media personnel.

The Secretary General addressed the guests on the occasion. He extended warmest felicitations to the peoples and Governments of the Member States. He also expressed sincere thanks to Nepal, the host Government, all Member States, Observers, development partners, Diplomatic Missions, regional and international organizations in Kathmandu and elsewhere for extending their valuable cooperation and support to SAARC.

All the Member States, Regional Centres and Specialized Bodies of SAARC also commemorated the Charter Day.

SAARC is the regional body that aims to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through regional cooperation in mutually agreed areas. SAARC today caters to almost every sphere of human activity.

### Mr. Sangye Chewang assumes charge as Director, SAARC Secretariat

Mr. Sangye Chewang joined the SAARC Secretariat in January 2018 as Director.

Mr. Chewang succeeded Mr. Sangye Rinchen.

Prior to his current appointment at the SAARC Secretariat, Mr. Chewang served as the Chief of the Department of SAARC & Regional Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Mr. Chewang joined the Ministry in 1991 and served in the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh and Brussels, Belgium.



## Fifty-fourth Session of the Programming Committee

The Fifty-fourth Session of the Programming Committee was held at the SAARC Secretariat on 12-13 December 2017 with the participation of all Member States.

The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Leader of the delegation of Nepal and the current Chair of the Programming Committee. In his remarks, he stated that the SAARC process should be accelerated to make it more efficient, effective and result-oriented. He also stated that it should be a process capable of meeting the desired objectives, as enshrined in the Charter and also fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples of the region.

In his address, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, updated the Committee on the progress made in regional cooperation in some areas since its Fifty-third Session held in February 2017. He expressed gratitude to the Member States for their cooperation in the discharge of his responsibilities since he assumed office in March 2017. He also expressed full support and cooperation to facilitate the deliberations of the Committee.

The Programming Committee is a Charter Body and works as preparatory body to the Standing Committee, dealing with administrative and financial matters of the SAARC Secretariat, Regional Centres and Specialized Bodies. The Committee also considers the reports emanating from various SAARC mechanisms.



## Secretary General participates in the Seventh Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VII)

RECCA-VII was convened on 14-15 November 2017 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, under the theme “Deepening Connectivity and Expanding Trade through Investment in Infrastructure and Improving Synergy” with participation of ministers and high-level officials of the supporting countries and regional and international organizations. RECCA is a forum that facilitates regional economic cooperation in South and Central Asia so as to assist Afghanistan in its development. SAARC is one of the supporting regional organizations of the RECCA process.

At the invitation of H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, the Foreign

Minister of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, called on him on the sidelines of the Conference. In the meeting, the Foreign Minister expressed keen interest in having institutional linkage with SAARC for promoting cooperation in areas of common interests such as energy, transport and environment.



## Secretary General attends the 7th Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA) was founded on 02 November 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey, to provide a platform for results-oriented regional cooperation by placing Afghanistan at its centre.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of HoA was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 01 December 2017 with the theme “Security and Economic Connectivity towards a Strengthened Heart of Asia Region”.

In his statement at the inaugural session of the Conference, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, commended the contribution of Afghanistan to SAARC and stated that since joining SAARC, it has been actively involved in the SAARC process and has been a generous host to many SAARC events.



## Secretary General Addresses the International Conference of Women Entrepreneurs

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Inaugural Session of the International Conference of Women Entrepreneurs on ‘Innovation, Incubation & Industrialization’ in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India, on 17 January 2018. Addressing the Conference, the Secretary General stated “Women represent almost 50 percent of the population of South Asia, which is

Almost one fourth of the humanity. A large number of women have been meaningfully contributing to the region's socio-economic development, which is one of the important objectives of SAARC. Empowerment of women, therefore, is key to the success of SAARC. It is for this reason, SAARC remains committed to attain this goal."

### Secretary General of SAARC meets with Ambassador of Turkmenistan

The Secretary General of SAARC, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, met with H.E. Mr. P.H. Durdyev, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to India, who visited the SAARC Secretariat on 23 January 2018. The Ambassador has concurrent accreditation to Nepal.

During the meeting, Ambassador Durdyev reiterated keen interest of Turkmenistan in institutionalizing cooperation with SAARC in the areas of common interest and in exploring modalities for substantive and project based engagement.

The Secretary General welcomed the Ambassador to the SAARC Secretariat and appreciated the interest of Turkmenistan in collaborating with SAARC.



### Special Session of the Technical Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

A Special Session of the Technical Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (TCARD) was held in Dhaka on 27 November 2017. The Session reviewed the draft of the SAARC Food and Nutrition Security Framework (SFNSF) and Strategic Plan of Action (SPA) and four project outlines developed under the SAARC-FAO Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) on "Strengthening the Capacity of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the Development, Co-ordination and Monitoring of a Regional Food Security and Nutrition Framework, Strategies and Programmes (2015-2017)."

### SAARC Development Fund (SDF) Board of Directors Meets

The Twenty-eighth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) was held on 20-22

December 2017 in Thimphu. The Board approved the Credit Policy and Policy Guidelines for Economic and Infrastructure Windows. The Board formed a Project Appraisal Committee for considering project proposals submitted to the SDF Secretariat. The Board also approved the project on "Livelihood Enhancement of Small Farmers in SAARC Region through Small Scale Agro-business focusing on value chain development" proposed by the SAARC Agriculture Centre.



### SAARC Internship Programme

The SAARC Secretariat offers internship to under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate students from South Asia and researchers of any nationality working in South Asian research institutes based within the region. The overall objective of the Programme is to promote awareness about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in and beyond South Asia. Under this programme, interested students or researchers are placed at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu for a period of two weeks to six months, depending on the need and nature of the research work.

During November 2017 - January 2018, four students successfully completed their internship at the Secretariat.

### JENESYS-2017

The Government of Japan has been offering Japan-SAARC Network Programme of the People to People Exchange (JENESYS) from 2007-08. The SAARC Secretariat has signed a Revised Memorandum of Guidelines for implementation of the JENESYS 2017 Youth Exchange Programme on 16 October 2017.

The Government of Japan has allocated JPY 105,397,000 (US \$ 926,974.49) for the programme. Under this programme, a total of 240 youths in two batches will visit Japan for a week. Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICE) is the implementing agency for the programme. Economic Cooperation and Connectivity has been chosen as the theme for JENESYS 2017.

### SAARC Secretariat participated in the following events:

- ◇ ‘Technical Meeting on Labour Migration Statistics in South Asia’ towards a regional approach to labour migration data collection and management at Colombo on 28-29 November 2017 organized by the International Labour Organization Decent Work Team for South Asia based in New Delhi.
- ◇ 8th Republic of Korea-SAARC Partnership Seminar on the topic ‘South Asia: the Investment Climate and Opportunities’ from December 19 to 22, 2017 at Seoul.
- ◇ “Diplomacy and Regional Integration” course for diplomats from SAARC Member States and the SAARC Secretariat from 23 October to 03 November 2017 at The Hague, Netherlands, organized by the Clingendael Academy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.
- ◇ Asia-Pacific Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition (Bangkok, 10-11 November 2017), jointly organized by FAO & UNESCAP.
- ◇ Nepal Power Investment Summit, Kathmandu, 27-29 January 2018.

### List of Activities conducted by SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres

#### South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO)

- ◇ Fifth Meeting of the Sectoral Technical Committee on Building Materials, Colombo, 21-22 November 2017.

#### SAARC Development Fund (SDF)

- ◇ Inception meeting for the project “Networking and Capacity Building of Women Entrepreneurs from SAARC Countries” through video-conference, 18 December 2017.
- ◇ Meeting of counterpart Agencies of SDF, Colombo, 26-28 December 2017.
- ◇ Combined Project Meeting for the Implementing Agencies of the Project, Strengthening the Livelihood Initiatives for Homebased Workers in the SAARC Region, Colombo, 28 December 2017.
- ◇ Combined Project Meeting for the Implementing Agencies of the Project, Strengthening of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in selected areas of SAARC Member States, Colombo, 27 December 2017.

#### South Asian University (SAU)

- ◇ Tenth Meeting of the Governing Board of SAU, New Delhi, 18 December 2017.

#### SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC)

- ◇ SAARC Handicraft Exhibition and Workshop, Dhaka, 30 November to 03 December 2017.
- ◇ SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance, Dhaka, 30 November to 03 December 2017.
- ◇ SAARC Film Festival at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017.
- ◇ Ninth Governing Board Meeting of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, 3-4 October 2017.

#### SAARC Energy Centre (SEC)

- ◇ Dissemination Workshop on “Potential for Energy, Storage Technologies in Electricity Sector of SAARC Member States”, Nepal, 13-14 November 2017.
- ◇ Dissemination Workshop on the study report “Assess the Present Situation, Gaps in Capacity, Technology and Policy & Regulatory Instruments in Coal sector in SAARC Member States”, Nepal, 13-14 November 2017.
- ◇ Training on System Operation and Settlement Mechanism, Cross Border Trade/Regional Power Market in South Asia, Bangladesh, 10-11 December 2017.
- ◇ Training workshop on “Simulated Power Trading Market System/Power Exchange”, India, 21-22 December 2017.

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