



SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

Meeting of the Core Group of SAARC Immigration Authorities convenes

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Meeting of the Core Group of the SAARC Immigration Authorities and Visa Experts at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu today.

As mandated by the Eighth Meeting of the SAARC Immigration Authorities (Colombo, 11 July 2017), the meeting has been convened to develop a security software for electronic visas under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme. The representatives from the Immigration Authorities of the Member States of SAARC participated in the meeting.

In his Inaugural Statement, H. E. Mr. Sial said, "I firmly believe that people-to-people contacts are essential for effective regional integration and in order to achieve that, connectivity is the key." He stated that the SAARC Air Service, SAARC Motor Vehicles and SAARC Railways Agreements are under consideration by the Member States. He further said, "The people will be able to benefit from these Agreements only when we ease visa and immigration regimes and develop infrastructure. The facilitation of visas will not only help enhance economic relations and intra-SAARC trade, but it will also facilitate the attainment of the ultimate goal of the South Asian Economic Union."

The Fifth SAARC Summit held in November 1990 in the Maldives had launched the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme with the eventual goal of establishing a visa free regime in the region. The Scheme that became operational in 1992 is seen as an important milestone for enhancing people-to-people contacts.

Kathmandu, 10 October 2017