

**INAUGURAL SESSION**  
**(17 JUNE 2019)**

**SAARC Technical Consultation on Early Childhood & Women's Nutrition:  
Improving the nutrition situation of young children and women in South Asia**

June 17-18, 2019 | Kathmandu, Nepal

OPENING STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. AMJAD HUSSAIN B. SIAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC

**Distinguished Participants,  
Representatives of UNICEF ROSA,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I wish to extend very warm welcome to the distinguished participants to the SAARC Secretariat and to this Technical Consultation.**

**We wish to express sincere appreciation to UNICEF ROSA for its valuable support in organizing this event.**

**The promotion and protection of women and children of South Asia has been a priority for SAARC. We are committed to ensure that children grow well to be able to make meaningful contribution to the society. As a manifestation of our sustained commitment, we observed 2000 to 2010, as the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child. More importantly, the SAARC Social Charter, adopted by our leaders in 2004, puts forth specific targets to be achieved across the region in the development of children and empowerment of women. The Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children pursues the implementation of this Charter.**

**Our collaboration with UNICEF has been particularly fruitful in improving the nutrition situation of women and children in the region. Our collective efforts have culminated in the adoption of the South Asia Regional Framework on Nutrition. This Consultation is yet another testimony to our sustained endeavours in improving the health of women and children through regional interventions in nutrition.**

**As you are aware, in 2017, SAARC and UNICEF organized a Regional Conference to Stop Stunting. In 2018, the two organizations co-hosted a Regional Conference on Nutrition: Power of Maternal Nutrition. The outcome document of the 2017 Conference “Call for Action”, containing 10-point recommendations, was adopted by the SAARC Health Ministers in their meeting in Colombo in July 2017. This Consultation is the outcome of one of the recommendations of the ‘Call for Action’.**

**With so much of focus being given to improving the nutritional status of children and women globally, we hope that we will be able to create a separate inter-governmental mechanism within the ambit of SAARC to deal with the issues of nutrition.**

**The convening of this Consultation is very timely. I am confident that this Consultation will prove useful not only in reviewing the progress made in the implementation of the**

**recommendations of the 2018 SAARC-UNICEF Conference, but also in preparing the preliminary spadework for the Third SAARC-UNICEF Conference that we intend to co-host with UNICEF in September this year.**

**We greatly value the ongoing collaboration between SAARC and UNICEF. We look forward to working closely with UNICEF in achieving the universal goals on children and women.**

**I wish the distinguished participants fruitful deliberations and an enjoyable stay in this beautiful city of Kathmandu.**

**Thank you.**

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