



**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT**

SECRETARY GENERAL

**THIRTY-SEVENTH SAARC CHARTER DAY
08 DECEMBER 2021**

MESSAGE

I extend warmest felicitations to the peoples and the Governments of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on the auspicious occasion of the Thirty-seventh Charter Day.

This Day reminds us of the historic First Summit held in Dhaka in 1985, which saw the establishment of SAARC through adoption of its Charter by the South Asian Heads of State or Government on 08 December. As enshrined in its Charter, the primary objective of SAARC is to promote the welfare of the peoples and improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth and social development in the region.

SAARC represents the manifestation of the determination of its Member States to promote peace, stability, amity and progress in the region. SAARC is based on the premise that in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved in the South Asian region by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful cooperation among the Member States which are bound by civilizational ties.

We observe the SAARC Charter Day this year in the face of the protracted pandemic, which has entailed high cost in human lives and setbacks in human development, triggering major imbalances and structural changes across the region. South Asia, being home to almost a quarter of humanity and one third of the global poor, is more prone and vulnerable to disasters of this scale.

The pandemic has seen the loss of precious lives of the peoples across the region. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express heartfelt condolences to the peoples and the Governments of the Member States of SAARC on this tragedy. The efforts made by the Member States in vaccinating the peoples in their respective countries are noteworthy.

As we commemorate the Thirty-seventh SAARC Charter Day, I am confident that with firm resolve and commitment, the Member States will overcome the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic.

(Esala Ruwan Weerakoon)