

**Message from Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the 40th SAARC Charter Day**

On the auspicious occasion of 40<sup>th</sup> SAARC Charter Day, Pakistan joins SAARC Member States in commemorating the landmark adoption of the Charter of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on 8 December 1985.

South Asia is home to over one-fifth of humankind. Regrettably, it is one of the least-developed regions of the world as it is beset with multi-faceted challenges, ranging from poverty, disease, hunger to climate change. Against this context, SAARC symbolizes collective resolve and hope of the region to overcome these common challenges through greater enhanced cooperation and collaboration.

Pakistan, as a founding member of SAARC, remains fully committed to the promotion and protection of this organization's principles, purposes and priorities. Pakistan has always engaged with all SAARC processes and activities and strived to make constructive contributions to enhancing its mandated work.

It is unfortunate that SAARC has yet to realize its true potential. We remain hopeful that current hindrances to the organization's smooth functioning will be removed, enabling the South Asian countries to forge ahead on the path of mutually beneficial regional cooperation.

Pakistan strongly believes that it is only through adhering to the principles of sovereign equality and mutual respect among Member States that SAARC will achieve our cherished goal of a prosperous, economically integrated and developed South Asia. Pakistan stands ready as a willing partner in this regard.

On this occasion, Pakistan also appreciates SAARC Secretariat's contribution towards developing SAARC into a well-functioning and a forward-looking organization.

I wish the people of South Asia durable peace and everlasting prosperity.