

**Message from the Prime Minister of Pakistan  
On the Thirty-Sixth SAARC Charter Day**

(08 December 2020)

On behalf of the people and the Government of Pakistan, I wish to felicitate the Governments and the citizens of the Member States of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as we commemorate the 36<sup>th</sup> SAARC Charter Day.

The SAARC Charter was envisioned to promote regional cooperation and to accelerate the pace of social and economic development in South Asia. The Association encapsulates the hopes and aspirations of one fifth of humanity. It symbolizes the hope that the challenges faced by the region can be overcome through regional cooperation.

The global Pandemic is a grim reminder to all of us that we need to work together and cooperate on issues of common interest more than ever. The onset of the Pandemic has further underscored the importance of poverty alleviation for the national governments in a region that is home to one of the world's largest poor populations and remains one of the least integrated globally. Now is the time to come forward to pool our resources, rather than look inwards, for providing a better future to the vulnerable segments of our societies through the platform provided by SAARC.

Pakistan, being a founding member of SAARC, attaches great importance to the Organization's success and reaffirms its commitment to the objectives and purposes of its Charter. It is only through adhering to the principles of sovereign equality and mutual respect among Member States, that we would be able to utilise the true potential of SAARC and achieve our cherished goal of a prosperous and developed South Asia.

Pakistan's pivotal geo-economic location offers a great opportunity for the region. My government's vision for Pakistan is to leverage our location to act as a trade and transit hub to benefit the peoples of region and beyond. It is unfortunate that due to longstanding unresolved disputes amongst the Member States, SAARC countries have been unable to take advantage of Pakistan's potential as a melting pot for positive economic interest and consequently the region has not been able to achieve the desired socio-economic cooperation and prosperity in the region so far. I hope that the SAARC Process would be allowed to move ahead without artificial obstacles being erected in its progress and SAARC would be enabled to function as an effective instrument of regional cooperation.

It is the need of the hour that we move forward with the spirit of cooperation that was instrumental in the formation of SAARC.

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