



**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
SECRETARIAT**

**SECRETARY GENERAL**

**THIRTY-SIXTH SAARC CHARTER DAY  
08 DECEMBER 2020**

**MESSAGE**

On the occasion of the Thirty-sixth Charter Day of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (08 December 2020), I wish to extend warm felicitations to the peoples and Governments of the Member States of SAARC.

At the First Summit in Dhaka in 1985, the South Asian Heads of State or Government launched SAARC by adopting its Charter on 08 December. As enshrined in its Charter, the primary objective of SAARC is to promote the welfare of the people and improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth and social development in the region. In its over three and a half decades of existence, SAARC has made steady progress toward attaining these objectives.

We commemorate the SAARC Charter Day this year amid the unprecedented threats posed to the region by the COVID-19 pandemic. I wish to take this opportunity to express heartfelt condolences to the people and Governments of the Member States of SAARC over the loss of life triggered by the pandemic.

Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, SAARC has managed to hold several important meetings in the past several months. Most importantly, at the initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the SAARC Leaders held a Video Conference in March this year and agreed to set up the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund to contain the further spread of the Coronavirus and mitigate the after effects of the pandemic. In April this year, the SAARC Health Ministers met virtually to carry forward the aspirations of the SAARC Leaders in combating the pandemic. Likewise, senior trade officials and health professionals from the Member States also met in the aftermath of the pandemic to devise measures to safeguard the region from its adverse socio-economic impacts.

The SAARC Foreign Ministers and SAARC Finance Ministers also met virtually in the wake of the pandemic. Likewise, the SAARC Ministers of Education and SAARC Ministers of Planning held virtual meetings to carry forward regional cooperation in these important areas. Besides, the SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres continued to hold their activities in virtual mode in order to keep the SAARC process active in these challenging times.

As we commemorate the Thirty-sixth SAARC Charter Day, I express the confidence that with their firm resolve and strengthened regional cooperation, the Member States will be able to contain the virus as well as overcome the challenges posed to the region by the pandemic. In the meanwhile, it is imperative to make available affordable and effective vaccines to our citizens to protect their health from this deadly virus.

(Esala Ruwan Weerakoon)

**Post Box No. 4222, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel.: 4-221785, Fax : 4-227033, 4-223991  
E-mail : saarc@saarc-sec.org  
Web-site: <http://www.saarc-sec.org>**