



## SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

“SAARC is a people-centric organization. As enshrined in the SAARC Charter, our cardinal objective is to promote welfare of the peoples of our region.”

Amjad Hussain B. Sial,  
Secretary General of SAARC



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### Informal Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers

SAARC Council of Ministers met in an informal session in New York on 21 September 2017 on the sidelines of the Seventy-second Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

H. E. Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Nepal, presided over the deliberations of the meeting, attended by the Hon. Foreign Ministers of the SAARC Member States. In his opening remarks, he highlighted the important initiatives taken by Nepal, as the Chair of SAARC, in pursuance of the directives of the Eighteenth SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in November 2014.

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, in his brief remarks, apprised the Hon. Foreign Ministers of the progress achieved in the implementation of the decisions of the Eighteenth SAARC Summit (Kathmandu, November 2014) and the Thirty-seventh Session of the Council of Ministers (Pokhara, March 2016).

During the meeting, the Hon. Ministers reiterated their full commitment to the SAARC process and stressed the need to promote progress and prosperity of the peoples of the region through the platform of SAARC. In order to enhance economic relations, people-to-people contacts and tourism, the Hon. Ministers emphasised the need to improve connectivity in the region. They commended the work done by the SAARC Secretariat and underlined that it should play even greater role in promoting the objectives of SAARC. They also tasked the SAARC Secretariat to coordinate the dates for the Nineteenth SAARC Summit and its preceding meetings to be hosted by Pakistan.



### Ms. Ishrat Jahan assumed charge as Director, SAARC Secretariat

Ms. Ishrat Jahan joined the SAARC Secretariat in early October 2017 as Director. Ms. Jahan succeeded Mr. MJH Javed. Prior to her current appointment at the SAARC Secretariat, Ms. Jahan served as the Director of different Wings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. A career diplomat, Ms. Jahan joined Bangladesh Civil Service (Foreign Affairs) in 2003 and served in Bangladesh Embassy in The Hague, the Netherlands, and in Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.



### Mr. Zahidullah Jalali assumed charge as Director General, SARCO

Mr. Zahidullah Jalali from Afghanistan assumed charge as the Director General of the SAARC Arbitration Council (SARCO) in October 2017. He succeeded Mr. Thusantha Wijemanna. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Jalali served as Director (SAARC) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.



## SAARC Speakers' and Parliamentarians' Conference

The SAARC Speakers' and Parliamentarians' Conference was held in Colombo on 4-6 October 2017 to further strengthen collaboration among the parliaments of the SAARC region.

Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, inaugurated the three-day Conference in the presence of Hon. Maitripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka.



## Secretary General addresses the Roundtable on Government Action for Nutrition

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Inaugural Session of the Roundtable on Government Action for Nutrition on 7 September 2017 in Kathmandu.

Addressing the Inaugural Session of the Roundtable, the Secretary General stated, "SAARC is dedicated to strengthening regional cooperation to accelerate the implementation of global and regional commitments related to children. Through its Social Charter, Declarations of the SAARC Summits, Ministerial Statements, Conventions and various related forums, SAARC has continued to give high prominence to its agenda on children. Among others, child nutrition remains an important component of SAARC's endeavour to make South Asia a region, where every child can grow to their full potential in a healthy and safe environment."



## Secretary General addresses the International Business Women's Summit

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Inaugural Session of the International Business Women's Summit in Kathmandu on 11 September 2017.

In his address at the Inaugural Session of the Summit, the Secretary General said, "In spite of the general perception that the role of women is confined to household affairs, since the turn of the century, the status of women has been changing rapidly due to growing industrialization and globalization, coupled with conducive social legislations, and international

legal instruments. Moreover, with the changing socio-cultural values and spread of education and awareness, proper exposure and need for additional income, women are increasingly engaged in professional activities, including entrepreneurship. On top of everything, despite challenges, women's perseverance is the cardinal factor in the development of entrepreneurship by women. They have proved that women are also endowed with abundant innate qualities that can make them successful entrepreneurs." He further said, "This Summit is an occasion to commend and rejoice the success stories of entrepreneurial women. This Summit is also an opportunity to dispel the myth that the role of women is confined to household affairs only."



## Secretary General addresses the Workshop on Re-energizing the SAARC Process

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Workshop on Re-energizing the SAARC Process on 21 August 2017 held at Singapore.

The Workshop was jointly organized by the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT), Centre for South Asian Studies, Kathmandu, and the Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore, with the support of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Germany.

In his Key-Note address delivered through video-conferencing, the Secretary General said, "... SAARC is a people-centric organization. As enshrined in its Charter, promotion of welfare and wellbeing of the peoples is the cardinal objective of SAARC. It is, therefore, essential that all endeavours in the SAARC process should be geared toward the attainment of this objective."

The Workshop brought together representatives of think-tanks from the SAARC region.

## Supreme Court delegation visits the Secretariat

The Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, His Lordship Priyasath Dep PC, led an eleven-member delegation to the Secretariat on 17 August 2017.



During the meeting, the Secretary General briefed the delegation about the on-going activities of SAARC, including regional connectivity, people-to-people contacts, economic relations, tourism, and the role of SAARC Apex and Recognized Bodies. The Conferences of SAARC Chief Justices and SAARCLAW, which were to be held in Colombo in October 2017, also came under discussion.

The Secretary General hosted a luncheon at the Secretariat in honour of the visiting delegation.

### SAARCLAW Commemorates its Silver Jubilee

SAARCLAW, an Apex Body of SAARC, commemorated its twenty-fifth anniversary by organizing the Fourteenth SAARCLAW Conference in Colombo on 27 October 2017. The SAARCLAW Conference was followed by the Eleventh SAARC Chief Justices' Conference on 28 and 29 October 2017.

In his Address at the Inaugural Session of the SAARCLAW Conference, H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, stated that, "... Law and order contributes to peace, security, welfare of the peoples, and happiness in our societies. Law and order is equally important for the dispensation of justice to protect people's rights, liberties and freedoms. The legal community has the cardinal role to play in promoting law and order and to address the challenges in this regard. SAARCLAW provides a useful regional platform to collectively reflect on the challenges and opportunities within its domain."

The Secretary General also launched during the Inaugural Session a book entitled "SAARC and SAARCLAW."

### Fourth Meeting of SAARC Expert Group on Renewable Energy

The Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Expert Group on Renewable Energy was held on 12-13 September 2017 in Islamabad.

The Group approved the creation of a "Revolving Fund" for the promotion of renewable energy in the SAARC region. The Fund would be utilized for renewable energy projects within the SAARC region (solar, wind, geothermal, small hydropower, biogas/biomass and hybrid) upto a maximum capacity of 2MW in each country. The Group also adopted its Work Plan for the year 2018.



### Meeting of the Core Group of SAARC Immigration and Visa Experts

The Meeting of the Core Group of SAARC Immigration and Visa Experts was held on 10 October 2017 at the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu.

The Meeting was opened by H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC. In his remarks, he underscored that the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) was an important step taken by the SAARC leaders towards enhancing people-to-people contacts in the region. While referring to the SAARC Motor Vehicles, SAARC Railways and SAARC Air Services Agreements, the Secretary General stated that the people will be able to benefit from these Agreements through conducive visa and immigration regimes, and improved infrastructure. He further stated that this will also help in making speedy progress towards the ultimate goal of the South Asian Economic Union, as envisioned by our Leaders during the Eighteenth SAARC Summit.



The Meeting approved the Request for Proposals (RFPs), prepared by the Secretariat, for development of security software for SVES.

### Second Meeting of the SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity)

The Second Meeting of the SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators (Electricity) was held on 24-25 October 2017 in Islamabad. The Meeting was organized with the technical and financial support of the Asian Development Bank.

The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the Member States of SAARC and its international partners (ADB and SARI/EI). The Meeting discussed the draft roadmap, prepared by the SAARC Secretariat, for the implementation of the SAARC Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation (Electricity).



## Second SAARC-ADB Workshop of the Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Climate Change

The Second SAARC-ADB Workshop of the Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Climate Change to finalize the Study on “Climate Risks in the Region: Ways to Address Social, Economic and Environmental Challenges” was held in Colombo on 16-17 October 2017.

The Workshop was attended by representatives from all Member States, SAARC Secretariat and ADB, and Consultants. The Study was conducted with the financial and technical assistance of ADB.

## SAARC Internship Programme

The SAARC Secretariat offers internship to under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate students from South Asia and researchers of any nationality working in South Asian research institutes based within the region. The overall objective of the programme is to promote awareness about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in and beyond South Asia. Under this programme, interested students or researchers are placed at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu for a period of two weeks to six months, depending on the need and nature of the projected research work. In August 2017, two students successfully completed their internship programme, while two students are undergoing internship at the Secretariat.

## JENESYS-2017

The Government of Japan has been offering the Japan-SAARC Network Programme of the People-to-People Exchange (JENESYS) from 2007-08. The Secretariat has signed the Revised Memorandum of Guidelines for implementation of the JENESYS-2017 Youth Exchange Programme on 16 October 2017.

Under the Programme, the Government of Japan has allocated JPN 105,397,000 (US\$ 926,974.49@ JPY 113.7/US\$). A total of 240 youths in two batches will visit Japan for a week. Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICE) is the implementing agency for the programme. Economic Cooperation and Connectivity have been chosen as the theme for JENESYS 2017.

## SAARC Friendly Badminton Competition

The SAARC Secretariat organized a SAARC Friendly Badminton Competition in Kathmandu on 26 August 2017. The competition brought together a large number of players from the SAARC Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Embassy of Bangladesh, Embassy of India, Embassy of Pakistan and Embassy of Sri Lanka. Opened for entry in two categories, Men’s Doubles and Mixed Doubles, 27 teams participated in the event.

The event was inaugurated jointly by H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, and Mr. Mani Prasad

Bhattarai, Joint Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Amjad Hussain B. Sial and Wajih-ul-Hassan A. Sial, who represented the SAARC Secretariat, won the Men’s Doubles’ title, defeating Yogendra Singh and Jai Prakash Yadav from the Embassy of India in Kathmandu.

Wajih-ul-Hussain A. Sial and Fehmida A. Sial from the SAARC Secretariat were the winners of the Mixed Doubles’ event. They defeated Amjad Hussain B. Sial and Najam-us-Sehar. Sehar represented the Embassy of Pakistan in the Competition.



Chief Guest of the event, Mr. Singha Bahadur Shrestha, Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, distributed certificates to the players, while the Secretary General presented trophies to the winners and runners-up.

## List of Activities conducted by SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres

### SAARC Arbitration Council (SARCO)

1. Seminar on “SARCO's role in acting as a catalyst for promoting ADR and Cross Border Trade & Investment” held in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), 16 August 2017, Islamabad.
2. Eighth Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Arbitration Council, 21-22 September, Colombo.
3. Seminar on “SARCO's role in acting as a catalyst for promoting ADR and Cross Border Trade & Investment”, 23 September 2017, Kandy.

### SAARC Development Fund (SDF)

1. Combined Meeting of the Project, Post-Harvest Management and Value Addition of Fruits in Production Catchments in SAARC Countries, 4-5 October, Paro, Bhutan.
2. Visit of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry to SDF Secretariat, 4 September 2017.
3. SDF team led by CEO visited SDF funded projects sites in Bangladesh to ensure speedy implementation of projects, 23-26 October 2017.

### **SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)**

1. SAARC-CGIAR Consultative Meeting on Agricultural Research and Development for Food and Nutritional Security in the SAARC, 2-3 August 2017, India.
2. Regional Consultation on “Facilitating use of Microbial Pesticides in South Asia” 21-23 August 2017 Bengaluru, India.
3. Regional Consultation on Sustainable goat farming for livelihood improvement in South Asia: Opportunities, Constrains and Potentials, 22-24 August 2017 Islamabad, Pakistan.
4. Regional Consultation on community-based non-wood forest products enterprise: A suitable business model, 24-26 August 2017, Thimphu, Bhutan.
5. Regional Expert Consultation on Conservation Agriculture in SAARC Member Countries, 28-30 August 2017, Paro, Bhutan.
6. Regional Consultation on Technology sharing of spice crops in SAARC Countries, 11-13 September 2017 Kerala, India.
7. Video Conference on “Regional Consultation on Proven Technology Sharing of Maize in the SAARC Countries” 18 September 2017.
8. Regional Consultation on Best Management Practices in Aquaculture: Capacity Building and Policy Development, 19-21 September 2017 Negambo, Sri Lanka.
9. Regional Consultation on Farm-made feed for Sustainable Aquaculture Development in South Asian Region, 10-12 October 2017, Kathmandu, Nepal.
10. Regional Consultation on “Risk Management for Small Farmers” 29-31 August 2017, Kathmandu.
11. Regional Consultation on “Export Promotion and Market Access for Agriculture and Food Products in Major Global Markets” 19-21 September 2017, Colombo.

### **SAARC Energy Centre (SEC)**

1. SAARC Regional Expert Consultation on Water, Energy and Food Nexus, 3-6 July, Bhutan.
2. Twelfth Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Energy Centre, 30-31 October 2017, Islamabad.

### **SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC)**

1. Ninth Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre, 3-4 October 2017, Colombo.

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