



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

Secretary General's Activities

International Conference on Human Rights

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, attended International Conference on Human Rights in Islamabad on 19 May 2018. The Conference was devoted to the theme, ‘Owning Human Rights for a Better World’.

Addressing the Inaugural Session of the Conference, the Secretary General said, “The primary objectives of SAARC are to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia, improve their quality of life, and provide them the opportunity to live in dignity and realize their full potentials. The promotion and protection of human rights, therefore, is at the centrestage of the SAARC process.”

Organized by the Federal Ministry of Human Rights of Pakistan, the three-day Conference brought together representatives from both government and civil society groups, including

human rights organizations around the world.

During his stay in Islamabad, the Secretary General also called on H. E. Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. He apprised the Foreign Secretary about the progress in the SAARC process.



Prime Minister of Pakistan visits SAARC Headquarters

Hon. Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, visited the SAARC Secretariat on 06 March 2018 during his bilateral visit to Nepal. H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial,

Secretary General of SAARC, received the Hon. Prime Minister. He made welcome remarks in honour of the visiting Prime Minister.

During his visit, the Hon. Prime Minister planted a tree in the Secretariat premises.

In his address, the Hon. Prime Minister expressed firm commitment of Pakistan to the strengthening of the SAARC process. He also expressed his Government’s willingness to host the Nineteenth SAARC Summit at the earliest.



Sixth SAARC Business Leaders' Conclave

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed

the Inaugural Session of the Sixth SAARC Business Leaders' Conclave in Kathmandu on Friday, 16 March 2018.

The Conclave was inaugurated by Rt. Hon. K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

In his address at the Inaugural Session of the Conclave, the Secretary General highlighted the importance of regional economic integration. He lauded the role being played by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), an Apex Body of SAARC, in promoting economic relations among the Member States.

Devoted to the theme, "Unleashing Shared Prosperity through Economic Integration", the three-day sixth edition of the Conclave was organized by the Government of Nepal and Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) in partnership with Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF).

During the consultations, ADB agreed to provide support to SAARC in (i) economic integration studies; (ii) infrastructure; (iii) connectivity; and (iv) energy.

Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2004, SAARC and ADB has had fruitful engagement in the areas of mutual interest. Particularly, ADB's technical and financial support in undertaking comprehensive studies on trade, connectivity and energy has opened up ample avenues for regional collaboration in these areas.



World TB Day - 2018

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, issued a special message in commemoration of the World TB Day-2018 on 24 March 2018.

In his message, the Secretary General acknowledged that TB continued to remain the world's leading disease accounting for the deaths of nearly 1.7 million people each year. He said, "With an estimated annual incidence of 3.8 million TB cases, the SAARC region carries 36% of the global burden of TB."

"As we observe the World TB Day-2018, I wish to call upon the Member States to redouble their efforts to address the challenges that impede the control of TB in the region," the Secretary General said. In his message, he also appealed to regional and international development partners to support the Member States of SAARC in their fight against TB.

The World TB Day is also observed as the SAARC TB Day across the region to raise awareness about the deadly facets of the disease as well as its curability and available treatment options.

SAC-Donor Consultation Meeting

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Inaugural Session of the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)-Donor Consultation Meeting on SAARC Regional Agricultural Projects in Kathmandu on 05 April 2018, as the Chief Guest.

In his address at the Inaugural Session, the Secretary General appreciated the coming together of the development partners to support SAARC's endeavours in promoting project-based collaboration in agriculture. He said, "This meeting assumes considerable significance in our bid to intensify project-based collaboration in agriculture."

The two-day Consultation Meeting, which was organized jointly by the SAC, Dhaka, and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), brought together representatives of the Member States of SAARC and development partners to further promote regional engagement in the field of agriculture.

While IFAD agreed to develop a US \$ 3.5 million regional grant project on Consortium for Scaling-Up Climate Smart Agriculture in South Asia, several other development partners expressed their willingness to participate in some of the projects presented by SAC during the Meeting.

SAC, which is one of SAARC's Centres of Excellence, has been operational in Dhaka, Bangladesh, since 1988. It facilitates research and development and project-based collaboration in agriculture in the region.



SAARC-ADB Consultations

As a part of regular consultations between SAARC and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, led a two-member delegation to the ADB Headquarters in Manila on 20-21 March 2018.

The Secretary General was accompanied by Mr. Ali Haider Altaf, Director.

During the visit, the Secretary General called on Mr. Nakao, President of ADB, and discussed measures to enhance SAARC-ADB collaboration.

The Secretary General also met other high officials of ADB and discussed areas for possible collaboration between SAARC and ADB.



Eleventh Police Conference

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, addressed the Inaugural Session of the Eleventh SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters on 11 April 2018.

The Conference was preceded by the Sixth Meeting of Focal Points of SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) and the Sixth Meeting of Focal Points of SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) on 10 April 2018. All Member States attended these meetings.

Addressing the Inaugural Session of the Conference, the Secretary General said that law and order remained crucial to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the region. He said, "Fundamentally, therefore, SAARC represents the desire of our leaders to promote mutual trust, confidence and cooperation among the Member States. This is possible only when the region is safe and secure, on which depend the success and sustainability of every human endeavour."

Mr. Prem Kumar Rai, Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of Nepal, and Mr. Prakash Aryal, Inspector General of Nepal Police and leader of the delegation of Nepal, also addressed the Inaugural Session of the Conference.



Video Conferencing facility at STAC

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, inaugurated a Video Conferencing facility at the SAARC Tuberculosis and

HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) in Bhaktapur, Nepal, on 12 April 2018. He also launched the digital library of STAC the same day.

Addressing the gathering present on the occasion, the Secretary General lauded the initiative taken by the Centre in creating the Video Conferencing facility. He expressed the hope that the facility will enable the Centre to carry out its functions more efficiently in a cost-effective manner.

The Secretary General also appreciated the launching of the digital library, which he described as the "state-of-the art" facility in today's world of Information Age. He expressed the hope that the digital library, which is accessible through a password, will be of great use to students and scholars in the pursuit of their learning.

Since its establishment in 1994, STAC has been playing an important role in the control of Tuberculosis, particularly through the launch of the SAARC Regional Strategy for Control of TB in 2013.



Secretary General calls on dignitaries

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, called on the Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun, Vice President of Nepal on 05 April 2018.

During the meeting, the Secretary General congratulated the Hon. Vice President on his unanimous re-election. He appreciated important role played by the Government of

Nepal in strengthening the SAARC process. He also thanked the Government for continued support extended to the SAARC Secretariat.

The Hon. Vice President appreciated the leadership provided by the Secretary General in successfully steering the work of the SAARC Secretariat. He also underlined the need to convene the Nineteenth Summit as soon as possible to provide renewed impetus to the SAARC process for which, he added, Nepal, as the current Chair of SAARC, will play its due role.



On 23 April 2018, the Secretary General called on Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

The Secretary General felicitated the Hon. Minister on his appointment and expressed good wishes for his success. He briefed the Hon. Minister on the ongoing SAARC activities and lauded Nepal's continued support to the SAARC process and the Secretariat.

The Hon. Minister stated that SAARC should reinvigorate efforts to achieve economic integration through improved connectivity and enhanced trade. He also stressed the need for further strengthening the SAARC process in order to address common problems and challenges, including poverty. While expressing Nepal's firm commitment to the SAARC process, he underscored the need for early convening of the Nineteenth SAARC Summit.



Second PPR Regional Roadmap Meeting

The Second *Peste des Petits Ruminants* (PPR) Regional Roadmap Meeting for SAARC was held on 20-22 March 2018 in Dhaka. The Meeting was organized in collaboration with the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Meeting reviewed the progress made since the First Meeting in April 2016 and set new targets and strategies for controlling the disease to free the region from PPR by 2028, the year by which the SAARC Chief Veterinary Officers' (CVOs) Forum also agreed in May 2017 to free the region from PPR.

First SAARC Annual Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases

The First SAARC Annual Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases was held on 31 March–01 April 2018 in Colombo. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Health, Nutrition & Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka.

In a message read out at the Inaugural Session by his representative, the Secretary General of SAARC, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, conveyed gratitude to H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for gracing the occasion with his august presence as the Chief Guest.

SAARC Internship Programme (SIP)

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 SIP 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. During the period, February to April 2018, one student successfully completed

internship programme at the Secretariat.

Joining of New Director

Mr. Dadhi Ram Bhandari joined the SAARC Secretariat on 16 April 2018 as Director. Mr. Bhandari succeeded Ms. Rita Dhital.

Prior to his current appointment at the SAARC Secretariat, Mr. Bhandari served as Under Secretary, SAARC Section, Regional Organization Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal. He joined the Ministry in April 2003 and served in different divisions of the Ministry and the Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa, the People's Republic of China, and Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations and other International Organizations, Geneva.



List of Activities conducted by SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres

South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO)

- ◇ Sixth Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) of SARSO, 08 - 09 March 2018, New Delhi.
- ◇ Fifth Meeting of the Technical Management Board (TMB) of SARSO, 07 March 2018, New Delhi.
- ◇ Third Sectoral Technical Committee (STC) Meeting on Chemical and Chemical Products (CCP), 26-27 March 2018, Lahore.
- ◇ Eighth Meeting of the Sectoral Technical Committee (STC) on Food and Agricultural Products (FAP), 28-29 March 2018, Lahore.

SAARC Development Fund (SDF)

- ◇ Second Meeting of the Project Appraisal Committee of SDF Board of Directors, 16 March 2018, SDF Secretariat, Thimphu.
- ◇ Eighth Meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee of the SAARC Development Fund, 17 March 2018, SDF Secretariat, Thimphu.

◇ Twenty-ninth Meeting of SDF Board of Directors, 18-19 March, SDF Secretariat, Thimphu.

SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC)

- ◇ Preparatory Meeting for the Second SAARC Cultural Capital, 12-13 February 2018, Thimphu, Bhutan.
- ◇ SAARC International Women's Day, in collaboration with the Department of Culture of Sri Lanka District Secretariat, 08 March 2018, Kalutara, Sri Lanka.

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)

- ◇ SAC-Donor Coordination Meeting on SAARC Regional Project Proposals, 5-6 April 2018, Kathmandu.
- ◇ SAARC Regional Consultation Meeting on "Development of Country Specific Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) Standards and Harmonization of SAARC GAP for Vegetables and Fruits", 8-10 April 2018, Kathmandu.
- ◇ Regional Expert Consultation Meeting on Animal Breeding Policies and Strategies for the Genetic Improvement of Indigenous Animal Resources, 11-13 April 2018, Pokhara, Nepal.
- ◇ Regional Consultation on Climate smart Agricultural Policies and Strategies, 17-19 April 2018, Hyderabad, India.

SAARC Energy Centre (SEC)

- ◇ Dissemination Webinar on the "Study Report to Assess the Resource Potential and Planning for a Demonstration Project using Run-of-River Submersible Water", 8 February 2018, Islamabad.
- ◇ Dissemination Webinar on the "Study to Investigate the Difficulties for Household Solar Systems in SAARC Region", 6 March 2018, Islamabad.
- ◇ Dissemination Webinar on "Study for Deployment of Electric Road Transportation in South Asia", 6 March 2018, Islamabad.
