

**40th SAARC CHARTER DAY RECEPTION
(12 DECEMBER 2024)**

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR GOLAM SARWAR
SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC**

**Hon'ble Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Ramsahay Prasad Yadav, Vice President of Nepal;
Hon'ble Ministers, Members of Parliament
Their Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions, SAARC's Observer Missions and
International Organizations;
High-ranking officials from the Supreme Court, Constitutional Bodies and Nepal
Government,
Representatives of civil society and business community;
Media Personnel and Friends;**

A very good evening, Namaste, As Salamu Alaikum!

I extend a very warm welcome to the distinguished guests to this Reception to mark the 40th SAARC Charter Day.

It is a great honour and a privilege for my wife Taslima and me to host this Reception in celebration of the SAARC Charter Day.

We are indeed grateful to the Rt. Hon'ble Vice President of Nepal for gracing this function with his august presence as the Chief Guest.

We are also grateful to all other distinguished guests for making it convenient for themselves to attend the reception on this auspicious day.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

8th December of 1985, when the visionary Leaders of South Asia assembled in Dhaka, Bangladesh and signed the Charter of establishing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). That marked a historic beginning for regional cooperation among its Member States in South Asia.

Over the past four decades, SAARC has made remarkable progress in consolidating and strengthening institutional structure, norm setting in priority areas as well as programmes implementation, which are fundamental to the promotion of the welfare of the peoples and improving their quality of life.

After the modest beginning, SAARC's ambit of cooperation continued to expand over the years. Regional cooperation under the auspices of SAARC today covers diverse areas such as, poverty alleviation, economic and trade, agriculture, education, science and technology, energy, culture, regional connectivity, infrastructure development, climate change, investment, finance, security, disaster risk reduction and management, terrorism and drug trafficking, Youth, Women and Children, promotion of people-to-people contacts and tourism, among others.

Looking back, our journey over the past four decades has been remarkable. We are deeply grateful for the commitments and contributions made by our Member States, Observers of SAARC, and our regional and international partners. Together, we have achieved meaningful milestones, and I am confident that years ahead would provide us with further opportunities to build on and advance towards materialization of our shared vision.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Since commemoration of last Charter Day, a number of inter-governmental mechanisms of SAARC, including SAARC Specialized Bodies and SAARC Regional Centres have been actively pursuing their mandate towards attaining the Charter objectives. In addition, SAARC's cooperation with its Observers Countries and development partners continued to thrive. In this regard, I would like to thank our development partners, particularly the Asian Development Bank, ESCAP, UNICEF, as well as our valued observer state Japan, for their support to various programmes through the SAARC Secretariat in 2024.

It is very heart-warming to see that in the post COVID time, activities of SAARC is gaining momentum and in fact many technical/expert level meetings have been hosted by the Member States during this year. SAARC is making every effort to gear up the regional cooperation under its aegis in the year ahead.

I am very much optimistic that with the active engagements and support of the esteemed Member States, Observer countries and other development partners, SAARC will continue to march forward as one of the most dynamic regional organizations and realize the dream of an integrated and prosperous South Asia.

SAARC represents more than one quarter of global population. Endowed with vast human and natural resources. South Asia has immense potential to go long way, and, even to lead the world in many counts. With sustained endeavours, we will surely be able to realize the region's fullest potential through effective regional cooperation and integration. Essentially, therefore, SAARC is the beacon of hope and aspiration, and a matter of pride for all South Asians. SAARC is our common identity, our inspiration and our future.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

On the auspicious occasion of the 40th SAARC Charter Day, I wish to extend warmest felicitations to the peoples and Governments of our Member States for their unwavering support over the past four decades. I also wish to express sincere thanks to our Observers, development partners, Diplomatic Missions, regional and international organizations in

Kathmandu and elsewhere for extending their valuable cooperation and support to SAARC through all these years. We are confident that we will continue to receive the same support and cooperation in the future as well.

Distinguished Guests,

As we are celebrating the 40th Charter Day this evening, I believe it is a right occasion to acknowledge the immense support and contribution Nepal has made to the SAARC process, not only as an important founding member of the Association and current Chair, but also as the host of the SAARC Secretariat. Availing myself of this opportunity, I must thank the distinguished leadership in Nepal and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, for all the support and cooperation to the Secretariat since its establishment in 1987.

In conclusion, I once again convey our deep gratitude to the Guest of Honour, Rt. Hon'ble Vice President of Nepal, for his inspiring presence with us today. I also want to thank my colleagues in the SAARC Secretariat for their hard work and dedication for SAARC Process and their sincere efforts to make this event possible today.

Thank you once again for joining our celebration of the 40th SAARC Charter Day!

I wish you all a very joyful evening!