

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**Vote of Thanks**  
**by**  
**His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,**  
**President of the Republic of Maldives,**  
**at the**  
**Concluding Session**  
**of the**  
**Fifteenth SAARC Summit**

**BMICH Convention and Exhibition Centre, Colombo**  
**Sunday, 3 August 2008**

*Your Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka and Chairman of the Fifteenth SAARC Summit, Excellencies, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is indeed a great privilege for me to express, on behalf of all the member delegations participating in this historic Fifteenth SAARC Summit, our sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, and to the Government and friendly people of Sri Lanka, for the overwhelming welcome and generous hospitality extend to us over the past few days.

I am sure that all of us at this Summit will take home with us fond memories of the picturesque surroundings both in Colombo and in Sri Jayawardenepura, as well as the smiling faces of the Sri Lankan people.

We are all delighted to have visited Sri Lanka during the auspicious occasion of your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence. It is definitely yet another feather in your cap, Mr. President, that Sri Lanka has successfully hosted this most important regional forum to coincide with the country's 60<sup>th</sup> year of Independence.

I salute you, Mr. Chairman, on the excellent manner in which you have guided our deliberations during this memorable Summit. Your great experience was most evident during our retreat today. We were able to dispose of our business in no time in order to enjoy a sumptuous light.

*Mr. Chairman:*

The four agreements that our Foreign Ministers put pen to paper today is further proof of the growth and development of SAARC. It is also a clear indication of what the future holds.

The growing stature of SAARC is also evident in the increasing interest in our region among our partners in the international community. With the rapid increase in the list of observer partners of SAARC, we can now proudly acknowledge that our association has outreach to all corners of the globe.

*Mr. Chairman:*

Having had the good fortune of personally witnessing and experiencing the growth of SAARC from its very inception, through adolescence and now into maturity, I firmly believe that our Association's future is very bright indeed.

The commitment of all member states to further cultivating the SAARC ideal was clearly on show at yesterday's Inaugural Session, where every address by the Heads of State or Government contained honest assessments of the Association's current status, as well as inspiring ideas for future implementation and rally calls for greater regional cooperation on issues of critical importance for our peoples. What also struck me was the commonality of issues raised and the unanimity of vision. SAARC can indeed become an Association of consensus!

*Mr. Chairman,*

Recalling some of the highlights of this historic Summit, I wish to point out the inspiring sentiments expressed by you Mr. President in your opening statement. Your commitment, Mr. President, to rid the region of the curse of terrorism, while promoting greater economic integration, will serve as a yardstick for the Association's development in the year ahead.

President Hamid Karzai's call for SAARC member countries to focus on comparative advantages in realizing our true potential is sound advice that we cannot and must not ignore.

Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is one of the most eminent economists in South Asia, must be commended on the strategic proposals that he presented to us on the important areas of alleviating poverty and ensuring food security for our peoples.

I thank Prime Minister Jigme Thinley for eloquently highlighting the importance of making the SAARC process result-oriented.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's advice to focus on virtual cycles of growth was, in my opinion, a very innovative approach that SAARC must adopt in facing up to the challenges facing us today.

We must all heed Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gillani's call for South Asia to increase its utility of alternative energy sources and to enhance regional economic and financial cooperation.

My remarks will not be complete without paying a special tribute to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. His commitment to the SAARC ideal is evident from the fact that, for the second Summit running, he has defied medical advice to be here with us. May you have a long life, Mr. Prime Minister.

*Mr. Chairman,*

I recall a comment that I made in my statement at the Concluding Session of last year's New Delhi Summit. I said that it was time to make SAARC truly a people's association. The deliberations at this Fifteenth SAARC Summit have amply demonstrated that.

*Mr. Chairman,*

On behalf of Heads of State and Government, I thank our Foreign Ministers, Foreign Secretaries and Senior Officials for the hours of hard work that they have put into making this Summit such a singular success.

May I also thank them for doing the bulk of the work so that, we, the Heads of delegations can as usual take all the credit.

For the second Summit running, I have been entrusted with the honour of delivering the vote of thanks.

However, I don't wish to find a place in the Guinness Book of Records as the first Head of State to deliver a hat-trick of consecutive vote of thanks statements!

In concluding my vote of thanks at last year's Summit in New Delhi, I said that I was looking forward to welcoming you in Male' next year. Yet again, I will conclude my remarks with the same sentiment. I thank you all, and look forward to welcoming you in Male' in 2009!

*Thank you!*