* **Open and Distance Learning**

The Ninth SAARC Summit (Male’, April 1997) agreed that Open Learning and Distance Education could play an effective role in meeting regional needs in a cost effective and flexible manner.  The leaders have directed the possibility of creation of a Consortium of Open Universities in the region should be explored.

In accordance with the decision of the Tenth Summit (Colombo, 29-31 July 1998), the Vice Chancellors of Open Universities met in Colombo in January 1999 and made recommendations for the establishment of SACODiL to strengthen cooperation in the joint development of educational programs, credit transfers, and promotion of equal opportunities and access to knowledge. The proposal was endorsed by the Twenty-sixth Session of the Standing Committee (Nuwara Eliya, March 1999).

The Second meeting of Vice Chancellors of Open Universities/Heads of National Distance Learning Institutions held in New Delhi on 2-3 December 2002 decided to operate SACODiL through a rotational Secretariat till arrangements were made to establish a permanent Secretariat. The rotational Secretariat acts as a central point for correspondence, maintaining SACODiL records, monitoring the progress of assignments, convening meetings, taking follow-up action and any other functions conferred upon it by the Board of Governors.

The meeting decided to establish the Board of Governors of SACODiL comprising the Vice Chancellors of National Open Universities or Heads of major open and distance learning institutions or educational bodies as well as National Focal Points of SAARC in the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of the SAARC Member States and representation of the Secretary General, SAARC.

The First Meeting of the Governing Board of SACODiL was held in New Delhi on January 2005.

The Second Meeting of the Board is to be held in Colombo on 23-24 January 2006.

The Third Meeting of the SAARC Consortium on Open and Distance Learning (SACODiL) was held in Islamabad in February 2007. The Meeting discussed matters relating to granting equal status to the degrees/diplomas granted by Open Universities/Distance Learning Institution, creation of SACODiL Resource Centres in Member Institutions/States in the areas of ICT enabled distance education, ODL staff development and training, regional collaborations and networking and innovations in distance education.

At the 31st Programming Committee held in New Delhi in December 2007, it was decided for the mandate of SAARC Consortium on Open and Distance Learning (SACODiL) to be assumed by the Heads of University Grants Commissions/Equivalent Bodies. At the First Meeting of SAARC Education/Higher Education held in Colombo in March 2009, the Ministers recommended that the Member States may continue to implement the decisions of the Third Meeting of the SAARC Consortium on Open and Distance Learning (SACODiL) and as directed by the Ministerial Meeting on Education/Higher Education, these decisions were considered by the Fifth Meeting of the Heads of University Grants Commissions/Equivalent Bodies held in Male, 1 -2 June 2009.

During the Ninth Meeting of the Committee of Heads of UGCs/Equivalent Bodies (Colombo, 12-13 May 2014), Pakistan offered the host for the meeting to discuss Monitoring and Evaluation of ODL Degree Programs of SAARC Member States.

The Government of Pakistan announced the dates in 2014 (09 December 2014) and in 2015 (14-15 December 2015) was postponed due to lack of confirmation.

When the Government of Pakistan announced that the meeting was scheduled to be held on 14-15 Dec 2015 in Lahore, the Royal Government of Bhutan has informed the Secretariat that they are not yet decided to start ODL Degree programs. Therefore, Bhutan unable to participate for the programme. However, the meeting was postponed due to none of response received from other Member States. New dates to be announced in 2017.