**South Asian Regional Standards Organisation (SARSO)**

1. The South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO), a SAARC Specialized Body has been established to achieve and enhance coordination and cooperation among SAARC Member States in the fields of standardization and conformity assessment and is aimed to develop harmonized standards for the region to facilitate intra-regional trade and to enhance access to the global market.
2. The Agreement on the Establishment of South Asian Regional Standards Organisation (SARSO) entered into force on 25 August 2011 after ratification by all Member States. The SAARC Agreement on Multilateral Arrangement on Recognition of Conformity Assessment; and the SAARC Agreement on Implementation of the Regional Standards were signed during the Seventeenth SAARC Summit. The Agreements have been ratified by all Member States.
3. The Second Meeting of Governing Board of SARSO (Dhaka, 2-3 April 2014) decided to operationalize SARSO Secretariat, a SAARC Specialized Body, in Dhaka w.e.f. 3 April 2014. The Governing Board appointed Dr. Syed Humayun Kabir as the first Director General of SARSO for a period of three years.
4. The Director-General of SARSO made a presentation on the activities of SARSO during the Forty-first Session of Standing Committee held in Kathmandu on 23-24 November 2014. The Standing Committee also took note of the critical importance of SARSO in eliminating all forms of barriers to regional trade and urged for all possible support from all Member States for effective functioning of the Organization.
5. The following Sectoral Technical Committees (STCs) have been established to facilitate harmonization of SARSO Standards. The STCs consists of representatives from the Member bodies and are established to carry out all technical activities for the development of SAARC standards.

i. STC on Food and Agricultural Products

ii. STC on Jute, Textile and Leather

iii. STC on Building Materials

iv. STC on Chemicals and Chemical Products

v. STC on Electrical, Electronics, Telecom & IT

vi. STC on Conformity Assessment

**List of SAARC Standards under discussion of STCs of SARSO:**

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| **S. No.** | **Title of Proposed SARS Standard** |
| **STC on Food and Agricultural Products** | |
| 1 | Instant Noodles- Specification |
| 2 | Food Hygiene - General Principles - Code of Practice |
| 3 | Skimmed Milk Powder |
| 4 | Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil |
| 5 | Black Tea – Specification |
| 6 | Rice |
| 7 | Wheat |
| 8 | Spices - Chillies - Whole and Ground (Powdered) – Specification |
| 9 | Spices - Cumin - Whole – Specification |
| 10 | Spices - Fenugreek - Whole and Ground – Specification |
| 11 | Spices - Curry powder- Specification |
| 12 | Spices - Cardamom – Specification |
| 13 | Spices - Turmeric - Whole and Ground – Specification |
| 14 | Spices - Fennel Seeds - whole – Specification |
| 15 | Spices - Coriander - Whole and Ground – Specification |
| 16 | Mango |
| 17 | Onion |
| 18 | Citrus Fruit |
| 19 | Potato |
| 20 | Fist and Fish Products |
| 21 | Chemical & Micro-biological Standards: Meat & Meat Products |
| 22 | Heavy Metal in Food and Food Preparation |
| 23 | Aflatoxin |
| 24 | Cereals, Pulses and Legumes |
| 25 | MRLS for Spices |
| 26 | Pesticide Residues |
| 27 | Oil Cakes and Solvent Extracted Meal |
| 28 | Fresh Beans |
| 29 | Cucumber [*Kakri / Kheera*] |
| 30 | Celery |
| 31 | Fresh Tomato |
| 32 | Pumpkin |
| 33 | Brussels Sprouts |
| 34 | Artichokes |
| 35 | Fresh Brinjal |
| 36 | Okra |
| 37 | Green Chillies (large) |
| 38 | Asparagus |
| 39 | Arum |
| 40 | Dry Ginger (*whole*) |
| 41 | Dry Garlic (*whole*) |
| 42 | Raw and Steamed Bones |
| 43 | Molasses |
| 44 | Wool (*clipped and pulled*) |
| 45 | Animal Hair |
| 46 | Eggs |
| 47 | Guava |
| 48 | Dates |
| 49 | Raped and Mustarded Seed |
| 50 | Banana |
| 51 | Animal Casings |
| 52 | Sweet Lime |
| 53 | Chowara |
| 54 | Lemon |
| **STC on Chemical and Chemical Products** | |
| 1 | Toilet Soap |
| 2 | Hair Shampoo for Babies |
| 3 | Laundary Soap |
| 4 | Liquid Toilet Soap |
| 5 | Soft Soap |
| 6 | Toilet Soap for Babies |
| 7 | Tooth paste |
| 8 | Hair Shampoo |
| 9 | Household Laundry Detergent Powder |
| 10 | Cosmetic: Classification of cosmetic raw materials and adjuncts: Part 1 Dyes, colors and pigments |
| 11 | Cosmetic: Classification of cosmetic raw materials and adjuncts: Part 2 List of raw materials generally not recognized as safe for use in cosmetics |
| **STC on Electrical, Electronics, IT and Telecom** | |
| 1 | Electrical Cable (PVC insulated/sheathed) |
| 2 | Double capped fluorescent Lamp (safety requirements and performance requirements) |
| **STC on Jute, Textile and Leather** | |
| 1 | Jute Bags for Packing 50 kg Food grains |
| 2 | Jute Bags for packing 50 kg Sugar |
| 3 | Jute Carpet backing Fabric |
| 4 | Jute yarn |
| 5 | Towels and Toweling Fabric |
| 6 | Leather - Glazed kid for shoe uppers |
| 7 | Specification for Full-chrome upper leather |
| 8 | Vegetable tanned sole leather – Specification |
| **STC on Building Materials** | |
| 1 | Steel Tubes and fittings |
| 2 | Hot rolled medium and high tensile structural steel |
| 3 | Ordinary Portland Cement |
| 4 | Steel tubes for Structural purpose |
| 5 | High strength deformed steel bars and wires for Concrete reinforcement |
| 6 | Structural Steel – Ordinary quality |
| 7 | Ceramic Tiles – Method of Testing |
| 8 | Pre-stressing steel wires/strands |
| 9 | Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part I; General Metallurgy, Heat Treatment and Testing Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part II; Steel Making  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part III; Hot-Rolled Steel Products (Excluding Sheet and Strip)  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part IV; Steel Sheet and Strip  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part V; Bright Steel Bar and Steel wire  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part VI; Forging (including drop forging)  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part VII; Wrought Iron  Glossary of terms relating to Iron and Steel: Part VIII; Steel Tubes and Pipes |

1. The following Standards have been approved by the Fifth Governing Board Meeting of SARSO held from 28 February-01 March 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh:

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| SARSO STC on Food and Agricultural Products | 1. Biscuits-Specification  2. Refined Sugar-Specification  3. Code of Hygienic Practice for Dairy Industry |

1. The following Standards are at the final stages of approval:

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| SARSO STC on Jute, Textiles and Leather | 1. Hessian – Specification  2. Cotton Drill – Specification  3. Cotton Twill – Specification  4. Jute twine – Specification |

1. All standards finalized by SARSO will have a distinct identity and will be known as SAARC Regional Standards (SARS) with a specific number like SARS 0001. The first five numbers will be reserved for important symbols of SAARC and SARSO such as SAARC Flag, SAARC Logo, SARSO Mark etc.

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

1. Cooperation Agreements have been signed between SARSO and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) for mutual collaboration and cooperation in the field of Standardization. The ISO Council has also recognized SARSO as the Regional Standards Organization for the South Asian region as per the Council Resolution 24/2015. The cooperation agreement with CEN/CENELEC (European Regional Standards Organization) is being finalized.

**COOPERATION UNDER SAARC-PTB MOU**

1. Within the framework of its international technical cooperation, funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the National Metrology Institute of Germany PTB (Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt) has been supporting the process of regional collaboration in quality infrastructure within SAARC since 2004. Based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the SAARC Secretariat, the ultimate objective of this cooperation is to reduce barriers of trade and facilitate regional economic integration. Since the signing of SAARC-PTB MOU in November 2003, PTB-Germany has been extending useful cooperation to Member States in the field of quality infrastructure which include metrology, standardization, testing, certification and accreditation. PTB has also been making efforts at raising awareness on Standardization in the region. The SARSO has been coordinating the activities under the SAARC-PTB MoU since its establishment.

**Accreditation:**

1. Five Meetings of SAARC Expert Group on Accreditation (SEGA) have been held in Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with the financial and technical support of PTB under the SAARC-PTB MOU. The Meetings of SEGA are followed by National Awareness Workshops on Accreditation. The Fifth Meeting of SEGA was held in Bangladesh on 8-9 October 2016 followed by National Awareness Training for Regulators on Accreditation on 10 October 2016 and an Awareness Training on Halal on 11 October 2016. The Third Review and Planning Meeting of SEGA was held in Bhutan on 06-07 April 2016.

**Metrology:**

1. Metrology is one of the key cooperation areas under the SAARC-PTB MoU, under which a regional planning workshop has been organised in New Delhi, in November 2010. During the workshop, it was agreed that in order to facilitate exchange of information and continuous dialogue among SAARC Member States, regional Coordination Meetings may be held approximately once in a year to provide a forum for mutual update on developments in scientific metrology on national and regional level. The first three coordination meetings were organized in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. The Fifth Coordination Meeting on Regional Cooperation in Metrology was held in Thimphu, Bhutan and was organized by Bhutan Standards Bureau on 13-14 October 2016 with the financial assistance of PTB-Germany and technical assistance of National Physical Laboratory (NPL), India. The Coordination Meeting aimed to review, adapt and update the activities and frame coordination mechanisms in metrology for the next phase of the project.

**Matters relating to cooperation in the field of Customs**

1. The Ninth Meeting of the SAARC Sub-Group on Customs Cooperation (Colombo, 20-21 June 2013) discussed matters relating to harmonisation of requirements of Mandatory and Additional Documents for customs clearance; inter-operability of Systems being followed by customs administrations in Member States; preparation of a simplified form for Customs Declaration for trade in goods in the SAARC region; harmonisation of 8-digit tariff lines in the Member States; and Capacity Building. The Meeting also discussed matters relating to examining the possibility of accepting the electronic copies of the SAFTA Certificates of Origin received from importers for clearance of consignments; exploring the possibility of having a seven-day working week in case of congestion of consignments at the customs border points; and considering the possibility of having a Single Joint Customs Point for speedy movement of consignments across the Member States. Preceding the Ninth Meeting of the Sub-Group, a Training Programme on Customs Matters was conducted on the topic of Application of General Interpretative Rules (GIRs) in Commodity Classification and Amendments in HS 2012. The Tenth Meeting of the Sub-Group on Customs Cooperation will be held in Lahore, Pakistan in 2017, preceded by a Training Programme on Customs Enforcement Matters.

**Cooperation in the field of Statistics**

1. In accordance with the decision of the Thirtieth Session of the Standing Committee (Islamabad, 18-19 July 2004), cooperation among the Member States commenced in the field of statistics. So far eight Meetings of Heads of SAARC Statistical Organisations have been held with a view to finalize standard formats for exchange of statistical data in various economic and social fields. In order to effectively promote cooperation in the field of statistics in a structured manner, seven SAARCSTAT Technical Sub-Groups have been formed in various fields.
2. The Meetings of SAARCSTAT review the progress, inter-alia, in SAARCSTAT website, publication of SAARC Statistical Yearbook, publication of SAARC Catalogue of Statistical Publications, SAARC Directory of Statistical Experts, SAARC Classification, Project on Concepts, Definitions and Standards of Health Statistics for the SAARC region, development of institutional framework for Data Collection on Trade in Services and discussion on SAARC forum for Disability Statistics.
3. As mandated by the Thirty-eighth Standing Committee, a Study for development of web-based, user-protected interface and institution of a designated Statistics Cell in the SAARC Secretariat was finalized with the financial and technical assistance of ADB. The Consultant appointed for SAARCSTAT Study completed the second phase of the work relating to SAARCSTAT Web Portal Development as per the recommendations contained in his earlier Study which have been approved by the Fifth Meeting of SAARCSTAT (Maldives, 4-5 November 2012). The SAARCSTAT Web Portal was launched during the Sixth Meeting of SAARCSTAT (Kathmandu, 12-13 June 2014).
4. In order to enable Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PSB), the Coordinator of Web Portal, to maintain and update the SAARCSTAT Web Portal in an effective manner, PBS requested for a Meeting of concerned officials with the former Lead Consultant on SAARCSTAT Web Portal appointed by ADB for exchange of views and understanding modalities of transfer of data and other technical issues. ADB agreed to extend financial assistance for the Meeting in Kathmandu at the SAARC Secretariat headquarters. Accordingly a SAARCSTAT Web Portal Meeting was held at the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu on 29-30 June 2015.
5. The Forty-first Standing Committee held in Kathmandu on 23-24 November 2014 considered and approved the Report of the Sixth Meeting of Heads of SAARCSTAT held in Kathmandu, 12-13 June 2014. It noted that for expansion of cooperation in the field of statistics (i) a Study on SAARCSTAT Website has been completed by Consultant Dr. S.K. Nath with financial and technical assistance of ADB and that the Website is being hosted and updated by Pakistan with inputs from all Member States; (ii) SAARC Statistical Yearbook 2012 has been published by Bangladesh; (iii) a Leaflet “SAARC in Figures” has been published by Nepal; and (v) Directories of Statistical Publications and Statistical Experts have been compiled and published by the Maldives.
6. As recommended by the Seventh Meeting of SAARCSTAT, SAARC-ADB First Training Programme/Workshop of Nodal Points on Updating the SAARCSTAT Web Portal was held in Pakistan on 15-16 February 2016. The Meeting also recommended that India, being the Coordinator of SAARCSTAT Technical Sub-Group on Capacity Building, may conduct such training programmes on a yearly basis at its facilities in India, preferably at DGCIS, Kolkata. This would immensely help the statistical organizations of SAARC Member States in updating the trade and other statistical databases on the SAARCSTAT Web Portal. The Meeting underlined the importance of making fast progress towards enabling Focal Points in all Member States in uploading the updated data in respect of their countries on the Web Portal so that it can serve its mandated purpose of providing latest statistical information and data of all Member States. SAARC-ADB Second Training Programme/Workshop of Nodal Points on Updating the SAARCSTAT Web Portal is expected to be held in Kolkata, India in 2017.
7. The Eighth Meeting of SAARCSTAT was held in New Delhi on 29-31 August 2016 which reviewed the progress of cooperation in the field of statistics.