

Noting with concern that developing countries are finding it difficult to address their legitimate environmental and development goals in a situation characterised by rising protectionist tendencies against competitive imports from developing countries,

Noting with satisfaction the successful conclusion of the four International Conventions relating to biodiversity, climate change, desertification and straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, emanating from the Rio Earth Summit,

Concerned that several developed countries are yet to ratify these Conventions which are of primordial interest to the developing countries in this region,

Recognising that low lying countries of SAARC are likely to be the worst affected if the present trends in climate change were to continue,

Concerned that a large number of people in the SAARC countries are affected by the fragility of the Himalayan Mountain eco-system,

Noting the importance of effective information sharing and networking in the SAARC region in environmental areas, strategies and technologies to promote effective cooperation amongst Member States for sustainable development.

Welcoming the progressive development of environmental law in the South Asian countries:

AGENDA - 21

1. **Reaffirm** that environment is a matter of common concern and commit ourselves to support international cooperation in this field.
2. **Commit** ourselves to intensifying greater regional cooperation in all spheres of environment and development.
3. **Stress** that the Special Session of the UN General Assembly should focus on the fulfillment of the international commitments undertaken at the Rio Earth Summit.
4. **Reaffirm** our strong opposition to conditionalities on international trade and financial flows in the shape of "environmental clause" and stressing that

environmental protection cannot be isolated from the general issues of development.

5. **Stress** that trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or disguised restrictions on international trade.

6. **Emphasise** that trade and environment policies should be mutually supportive in a manner that contributes to sustained economic growth and that positive measures such as financial flows, technical and technological assistance are preferable to trade measures for tackling environmental measures.

7. **Stress** that protection of environment requires sustained efforts to change consumption patterns especially in the industrialised countries.

8. **Emphasise** the importance of peaceful application of nuclear technology in overcoming the concerns of developing countries relating to energy, self-sustained growth and environment.

9. **Urge** developed countries to transfer environmentally sound technologies and technical know-how on concessional and preferential terms and also contribute to endogenous capacity building measures in the developing countries.

10. **Strongly urge** the developed countries to provide predictable, adequate, new and additional financial resources and to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as Official Development Assistance **immediately**.

11. **Urge** the developed countries and all relevant international and regional funding agencies and financial institutions to provide adequate funds on concessional terms and/or as grants for micro-credit programmes in the SAARC region to strengthen the role of women and their empowerment for eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

12. **Commit** ourselves to securing the participation of all actors of civil society particularly, women, youth and children, voluntary organisations in the national efforts towards implementation of Agenda-21 and **decide** to promote regional camps of school children and encour-

age their active participation in environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources.

13. **Urge** developed countries to assist the low-lying SAARC countries most vulnerable to negative impacts of climate change in meeting the costs of adaptation and in capacity building.

14. **Agree** to cooperate in mitigating the adverse impact of climate change and sea level rise in the Member countries of SAARC, and identifying appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures.

15. **Stress** that special attention be paid for the protection and preservation of the Himalayan region to minimise the vulnerability of people dependent on the mountain eco-system.

16. **Agree** to establish effective information networking mechanisms to assist Member countries to protect and manage the environment in order to attain sustainable development.

BIO DIVERSITY

Noting that all the Member countries of the SAARC region are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and that the three main objectives of the Convention, namely, conservation of biological diversity, sustainable utilisation of the components of the biological diversity and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of utilisation of biological resources, read with other provisions of the Convention, offer an opportunity to SAARC countries rich in biodiversity to realise the economic value of their biological resources while conserving them in the interest of inter-generational equity,

Noting that the Convention on Biological Diversity is founded upon the principle of equity which is sought to be secured by recognising the rights of the countries of origin of biological resources to the benefits arising out of the utilisation of their resources and the rights of the local people, and indigenous communities to shares in benefits arising out of the utilisation of their knowledge system, innovation, practices and technologies,

Noting that the developed country Parties to the Convention have an obligation to provide additional financial resources to developing country parties to enable the developing countries to meet their obligation

for implementing the Conservation. Also noting that developed countries have a responsibility to create a facilitating environment for transfer of technologies including bio-technologies to the developing countries,

Acknowledging that biological resources could also be region specific, shared by more than one member country, and also acknowledging the difficulties in securing fully effective enforcement of regulations of transfer particularly because very small quantities of genetic material are sufficient for R&D purposes and that there is the possibility that these can cross borders undetected,

Recognising the difficulties that may be encountered by the national Governments in enforcing national legislation and regulation for facilitating access to their biological resources on mutually agreed upon terms based on prior informed consent for the above noted reasons,

Noting the need to have a common approach on access to genetic resources and other related issues, for cooperation in research and development, training and capacity building,

1. **Express** concern at the dwindling of ODA and that the developed country parties to the Convention should provide new and additional financial resources to enable developing country parties to fulfill their obligations under the Convention.

2. **Urge** developed countries to enhance their support and cooperation to the developing countries and create facilitating environment for transfer of technology including bio-technology to the developing countries, and for equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological resources with the countries of origin.

3. **Agree** that SAARC Member countries would make efforts to formulate a common approach for access to genetic resources which are common to more than one member country in this region.

4. **Also agree** to expand cooperation in the region for the protection and conservation of biodiversity.

5. **Agree** to closely cooperate in developing a common stand on IPR related issues and other issues during negotiations at the multilateral fora under CBD.

6. **Agree** to cooperate in taking action for capacity building of Member countries in taxonomy, bioinformatics, and R&D, making use of the existing institutional strengths of Member countries.

HAZARDOUS WASTES MANAGEMENT

Recognising the risk of damage to human health and the environment caused by handling of hazardous chemicals and wastes,

Considering that countries of the region import hazardous chemicals and raw material for recycling, which are hazardous waste products generated by developed countries,

Noting that most of the member countries are parties to the Basel Convention,

Taking into account that there is a need to accelerate the industrial development process in the member countries of the SAARC region in an environmentally sound manner,

Also aware that the environment of the Member countries of the SAARC region is being seriously threatened due to accelerated trade in hazardous waste and eventual dumping, by some parties and non-parties to the Basel Convention, and

Recognising the need to protect human health and the environment by imposing strict control on transboundary movement of hazardous chemicals and wastes,

1. **Stress** the need for collection and dissemination of information on commonly used chemicals and sharing knowledge on risk assessment.

2. **Underscore** the importance of regulation of transboundary movement of chemicals and wastes in accordance with internationally adopted agreement and guidelines and obligation of developed country parties in this regard.

3. **Agree** to take all feasible steps for sound management of hazardous chemicals and waste as well as promote cooperation in bringing out appropriate national legislation, sharing of information and training.

4. **Stress** the need to develop an understanding

among Member countries in the SAARC region regarding transfer of wastes for recycling and re-use taking into account the existing national regulations in this regard.

5. **Emphasise** the need of an effective mechanism and procedure to prevent movement of hazardous waste and toxic chemicals in disguise or in the name of useful products.

6. **Decide** to work towards evolving principles based on sound management of hazardous wastes so as to develop national policies to phase out toxic agricultural and industrial chemicals and trade in hazardous waste.

7. **Pledge** to strive to contract regional and bilateral agreements for adoption of cleaner technology and transfer of appropriate technologies.

SOUTH ASIAN SEAS

Reaffirming the importance of all positive actions taken to protect the ocean, all kinds of seas including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources,

Welcoming the South Seas Regional Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which aims to protect and manage the marine environment and related coastal ecosystems of the region, promotion of sustainable development and sound management of regional marine and coastal resources, taking into account the social and economic aspects thereon,

Recalling the adoption of the action plan for this programme in the meeting of the Plenipotentiaries held in March, 1995 in New Delhi and with reference to Global Programme of Action for preventing degradation of marine environment from land-based activities considered during Inter-Governmental Conference in this regard held in Washington in 1995,

1. **Request** all SAARC countries to take necessary action to make the South Asian Seas programme operational.

2. **Urge** UN Environmental Agencies and Institutions like the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to extend all assistance to

efforts taken to protect and preserve marine environment in our region.

3. **Stress** that no discriminatory environmental instrument or agreement should be enforced regarding elimination of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the absence of viable inputs vital for sustained increase in food production in all developing countries, including the SAARC countries and that all efforts should be made to provide alternative chemicals and technology for production of these alternatives on non-commercial terms to enable developing countries to phase out the elimination of such POPs.

4. **Urge** all SAARC countries to preserve rare, fragile,

ecologically sensitive coastal and marine eco-systems such as mangroves, coral reefs, sea-grass beds etc., for conservation and sustainable use of the resources under national jurisdiction.

In the light of the above common SAARC position highlighted in the present Declaration, heretofore to be known as "1997 - New Delhi Declaration of the SAARC Environment Ministers", **pledge** to maintain regular interaction during the process of preparation for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the implementation of Agenda-21 and to coordinate positions of the SAARC countries at the Special Session to effectively project and secure the interests of our countries.