



RAWALPINDI RESOLUTION ON CHILDREN OF SOUTH ASIA

WHEREAS:

The development and well-being of children was one of the five original areas of cooperation identified by Member States when they initiated their consultations on the establishment of SAARC in early 1981. The subject continued to receive high priority and remained in focus of Member States after the formal launching of SAARC in Dhaka, in December, 1985;

Two Ministerial Conferences were held - the first in New Delhi in 1986 and the second in Colombo in 1992, to reach a regional consensus on sustainable measures to realize the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation;

The Ministerial Conferences while reaffirming the commitment of Member States on matters relating to children, considered and discussed the challenges, the opportunities, the strategies, the resources and the follow-up through National Plans of Action for 1990s;

In the New Delhi Conference, Member States agreed on the concept, framework and direction for mutual cooperation on child-related issues, Heads of State or Government at the Second SAARC Summit in Bangalore in 1986 placed children on the SAARC agenda under which they recognized that the meeting of their needs was the principal means of human resource development, and decided that children should, therefore, be given the highest priority in the national development planning;

Following the World Summit for Children in 1990, the Colombo Conference took the process forward and set common illustrative goals, taking into account the national goals to be achieved through the 1990s;

In order to create greater awareness in the region Member States observed 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child", 1991-2000 as the SAARC Decade for the Girl Child, and 1993 as the SAARC Year of Disabled

Persons, held SAARC Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons, Islamabad - 1993, and adopted National and Regional Plans of Action on Children, the Girl Child and the Disabled Persons;

Pursuant to the commitment made by Member States to children, to consolidate and to build on the progress made so far, Member States decided to hold the Third SAARC Ministerial Conference on Children, in Pakistan.

2. **Having taken into account the aforesaid, We, the Ministers of SAARC Member States**, having assembled in Rawalpindi, on 20-22 August, 1996, considered and reviewed the implementation of our earlier decisions as well as mid-decade goals contained in the National Plans of Action drawn up within the overall frame work of the World Summit Declaration on Children.

3. While recalling our earlier decisions taken in the context of Children of South Asia, **WE:**

REAFFIRM SAARC's adherence to the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and its commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

TAKE full cognizance of the pioneering work of SAARC focussing on the needs of children and initiation of a series of organized steps in the area of child development;

NOTE the urgency to achieve the goals for children and women with greater commitment of resources and to monitor the progress of the National Plans of Action;

EMPHASISE that future strategies be inter-linked through Government-Community partnership processes and structures that are capable of achieving the declared goals;

REALISE further the need to develop and move towards a Vision for the SAARC Region for the Year 2000 and beyond; and,



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NOTE that the main features of the changing situation of children include:

- Significant progress towards the "survival" goals, such as reduction of infant and child mortality. Maternal mortality remains high despite some decline. Universal access to safe water is within reach. The trend towards a sanitary and hygienic environment is positive, yet there is a long way ahead. At another level, guineaworm disease has virtually been eradicated. Polio can be eradicated with a stronger and more coordinated effort. Control of diseases like neonatal tetanus, measles, diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections is strengthening, while old diseases like malaria, hepatitis, TB and new ones like HIV/AIDS are a cause for concern.
 - Widespread malnutrition in children, especially amongst those under two years of age which is closely linked not only to poverty but also to inappropriate child caring practices and infections.
 - Progress towards universal enrolment in primary education, with a narrowing of the gender gap. However, access to and retention at school, particularly of girls, and the quality of learning achievement continue to pose serious problems.
 - Children requiring special protection - the girl child, working children, children in urban slums and without shelter, children exposed to sexual exploitation and violence, disabled and displaced children and those caught up in socio-political and armed conflicts.
 - An urgent need to accord political priority to investing in and strengthening an enabling environment in terms of health and nutrition, knowledge and skills, protection and active participation of children and women.
 - Continued priority to the public policies in the region affecting the physical and social environments protective of the child.
 - Gender justice and equality as key aspirations for children being pursued collectively by Government as well as Voluntary and Community-Based organizations.
- Discrimination and restricted mobility, being faced by the girl child in spite of several SAARC initiatives in her support. Adolescent girls face double jeopardy on account of gender and social discrimination against them. In order to change the prevalent attitude, not only an integrated plan, which places greater emphasis on gender equality in various socio-economic development programmes is required, but also an organized campaign for generating awareness. In this context, an alliance for children, built around the SAARC concept of 'Government-Community Partnership' can provide a conducive environment for child development.
 - The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by all Member States, obligating them to respect, protect and fulfill children's rights. The realization of the objectives of the Convention, therefore, calls for stringent, cost effective, integrated and inter-sectoral strategies.
 - Collective positions formulated and presented by Member States at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio-de-Janeiro in 1992, the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994, World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen March, 1995, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September, 1995; and Habitat-II, Istanbul 1996. This has given further impetus to solving the problems confronting children and women in the region.
 - The continuing need for developing acceptable monitoring, evaluation and follow-up mechanisms at all levels.
4. To achieve the agreed goals by the Year 2000 **WE, DO HEREBY RESOLVE**, as follows:
- Reduce Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to half the 1990 level or at least below 50 per 1000 live births.
 - Reduce Under - 5 Child Mortality Rate (U5MR) to half the 1990 level or at least below 70 per 1000 live births.
 - Reduce the 1990 Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)



at least by half.

- Reduce severe and moderate malnutrition among under five children at least by half of the 1990 level.
- Achieve universal access to safe drinking water.
- Achieve near universal access to sanitary means of excreta disposal.
- Achieve the target of universal access to and completion of primary education at required levels of learning by at least 80 percent of primary school age children.
- Accelerate family based and community based activities for early childhood development.
- Reduce the level of adult and adolescent illiteracy to at least half the 1990 level with emphasis on female literacy.
- Eliminate gender imbalance in the social parameters within a fixed time-frame.

5. For accelerating progress towards the goals, **WE AGREE TO:**

- Emphasise the need to respond to the changing requirements in the life stages of the girl child, keeping in view the impact of the mother's reproductive rights on the child's health and development as well as the capacity to address her own basic health issues.
- Establish social support systems at the community level for children particularly those with special needs - for example, the girl child, the working child, the refugee and the internally displaced child, the child in conflict with law, the child in institutions, the child in disaster situations, the child from broken families, the street child, the unprotected and neglected child, child as victim of war and armed conflicts, the disabled child, the tribal child and the child in urban slums.
- Launch a comprehensive nutrition initiative in South Asia, supported by measures such as: adoption of the SAARC Code on Breast Feeding

and young child nutrition; fortification and supplementation of micronutrients like iron, iodine and vitamin A; adoption of a SAARC Convention of Iodized Salt.

- Strengthen safe motherhood programmes for reduction of maternal mortality.
- Combat inter and intra country trafficking in children and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and sexual exploitation and evolve administrative, legal and rehabilitative structures both within and between Member States.
- Strengthen further the ongoing SAARC process to assess the extent and causes of all forms of violence against children, especially the girl child, in order to galvanize legal and other interventions to prevent such violence at all levels.
- Promote the planned use of media for advocacy and social mobilization for child development.
- Establish inter-sectoral cooperation among Government, NGOs/CBO's, and private sector within each Member State on key areas relating to the child.
- Refine the strategy for prevention, early detection and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, emphasising family based and community based approaches.
- Invest more resources in improving basic services for children, consistent with the inter-sectoral, community based approaches.
- Institute SAARC Immunization Day, synchronizing National Immunization Days, supported by other child health strategies, with the aim of making South Asia polio-free and eliminating neonatal tetanus and measles deaths by the year 2000.
- Place the rights of the child firmly on the socio-political agenda and at the centre of the social development process.
- Strengthen the means of change and accelerate the pace of implementation of the SAARC Decade Plan for the Girl Child.



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- Encourage the exchange of information and technologies on child related issues through existing SAARC mechanisms.

6. In the context of Vision Beyond the Year 2000 WE FURTHER RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

- As the century closes and another begins, we see children as the human bridge between what the community is and what it aspires to be. The continuing challenge is to link public policy with family and community behaviour in support of children.

- South Asia can have no higher collective ambition than to work for a social, physical and ethical environment that enables every child to realise his or her full creative potential for the common good.

- In responding to a situation in which all children, especially girls, are the worst victims of prejudices and poverty, the means of change must now strengthen and the pace must quicken as the year 2000 draws closer.

- The political commitment further needs to be strengthened and reflected in:

- Recognising that children and women development is inseparably linked, the emerging support for Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the region should be given impetus, and taken further.

- Inter-sectoral, integrated local planning to meet the multiple needs of children.

- Partnership of the local government, organized communities centered on women's groups, voluntary organizations, professional groups and all other resources in society.

- The promotion of universality of child rights, as well as of the social obligation to respect, protect and fulfil them at all levels.

- Flexibility of strategies to respond to community-specific cultures and situations, consistent with

agreed principles, especially the rights of the child and the obligations of society.

- National policies and planning frameworks, to assure the achievements of goals endorsed by the earlier SAARC Conferences on Children and the SAARC Summits.

In this Vision, it should be possible, during the first decade of the new century to attain sustainable measures to realise the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation.

7. Accordingly **WE AGREE ON AND RESOLVE** to achieve the following set of goals by the year 2010:

- Establish a sustainable social and physical environment in both rural and urban settings.

- Reduce fertility rate to or below replacement levels.

- Reduce under - 5 child mortality rate to below 35 per 1000 live births and maternal mortality rate to 100 per 100,000 live births.

- Reduce severe and moderate malnutrition of under - 5 children by half of the level of the years 2000.

- Enable all children of primary school age to complete school at the required level of learning.

- Child labour, in bondage or otherwise, working in hazardous occupations should be eliminated by the year 2000.

- SAARC Member States should eliminate the evil of child labour from the SAARC region by the year 2010.

- Initiate and strengthen community based social support systems focussed on women and children responding to children in need, drawing on the financial, human, technical and organizational resources of the State and society.

8. The Vision Beyond the Year 2000 includes the real-



isation of a deeper sensitivity to human rights in general and women rights and child rights in particular at the level of the State and the society.

9. In the context of Vision Beyond the Year 2000, **WE** recommend that the years 2001-2010 be declared as "the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child".

10. **WE, THE MINISTERS OF MEMBER STATES** further recommend that the above Resolution be placed before the Ninth SAARC Summit at Malé to be held in 1997, for endorsement.

Rawalpindi
August 22, 1996
