

Islamabad Declaration

The Islamabad Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 31st December, 1988.

The President of Bangladesh, the King of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, the President of Maldives, the King of Nepal, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka met at the Fourth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at Islamabad from 29-31 December, 1988.

2. The Heads of State of Government expressed their deep satisfaction at the progress achieved by the Association since the last Summit. They reiterated their commitment to the SAARC Charter and renewed their determination to cooperate in promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improving their quality of life by eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and environmental degradation.

3. They recalled that their countries were linked by cultural, social and historical ties and they had at their disposal substantial human and natural resources. They recognised that these provided a sound basis as well as immense opportunities for regional cooperation. They therefore expressed their determination to make optimal use of their resources for the benefit of their people by working jointly to pursue their shared objectives. They were aware that by acting in concert they could realise the full potential for regional progress, taking into account complementarities and growing inter-dependence.

4. The leaders endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers that any country in the region subscribing to the objectives and principles of the SAARC Charter may be admitted as a member of the Association by a unanimous decision of the Heads of State of Government.

5. The Heads of State of Government expressed satisfaction at the progress so far made in the implementation of the SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. They underlined the need for closer cooperation in the activities undertaken under this programme. They took note of the measures to streamline and re-orient various SAARC activities to make them more action-oriented so as to improve the quality of life of their peoples. They directed that the Secretary General may submit recommendation to the Standing Committee which should in turn decide how to streamline SAARC activities and make them more effective. They welcomed the establishment of the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC), as well as the steps being taken for the establishment of other regional institutions.

6. The Heads of State of Government lauded the smooth functioning of the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme which had proved to be a useful medium for promoting a South Asian consciousness amongst the peoples of the region. They decided that SAVE Programmes should also emphasise social, economic and technical themes. They also noted with satisfaction the successful launching of the Youth Volunteers Programme and the SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme. They decided that Education may be included as an agreed area of cooperation.

7. The Heads of State of Government expressed satisfaction that the South Asian Food Security Reserve had become operational on 12 August 1988. The Reserve would serve as a cushion against food shortages and was a tangible manifestation of the spirit of cooperation in the region.

8. The Heads of State of Government noted with satisfaction that the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism had been ratified and had come into effect on 22 August 1988, thus reflecting the sincere desire on the part of the Member States to enter into meaningful cooperation to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the South Asian region. They called for the adoption of enabling measures by Member States to implement the Convention at the earliest.

9. The Heads of State of Government expressed grave concern over the growing magnitude and the serious effects of drug abuse, particularly among young people, and drug trafficking. They recognised the need for urgent and effective measures to eradicate this evil and decided to declare the year 1989 as the "SAARC Year for Combating Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking". They agreed to launch a concerted campaign, as suited to the situation in their respective countries, to significantly augment SAARC efforts to eliminate drug abuse and drug trafficking. These included closer cooperation in creating a greater awareness of the hazards of drug abuse, exchange of expertise, sharing of intelligence information, stringent measures to stop trafficking in drugs and introduction of more effective laws. They directed that the Technical Committee concerned should examine the possibility of a Regional Convention on Drug Control.

10. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep sense of sorrow and profound sympathy at the loss of valuable lives and extensive damage to property suffered during the year by Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan as a result of unprecedented floods, cyclones and earthquakes. In this connection, they recalled their earlier decision at Kathmandu in November, 1987 to intensify regional cooperation with a view to strengthening their disaster management capabilities and took note of the recommendations of the meeting of the SAARC Group of Experts on the Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment, that met in Kathmandu in July 1988. They expressed the conviction that identification of measures and programmes as envisaged by the Group of Experts would supplement national, bilateral, regional and global efforts to deal with the increasingly serious problems being faced by the region as a result of the recurrence of natural disasters and the continuing degradation of the environment. They urged that the study should be completed in the shortest period of time so that it could provide a basis for the member countries to draw up an action plan for meaningful cooperation amongst the Member States. They decided that a joint study be undertaken on the "Greenhouse Effect" and its impact on the region.

11. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that modalities for studies to be carried out for cooperation in the areas of trade, manufactures and services had been worked out by a Group of Experts, which met in Islamabad recently. They emphasised the need for the completion of the studies within the agreed time schedule. They directed that the Fourth Meeting of Planners should examine the possibility of cooperation in agreed areas of trade, manufactures and services, which would promote the objectives of meeting the basic needs of the peoples of the region. The

report of the Planners should be considered at the next Council of Ministers meeting, with a view to making specific recommendations to the next Summit.

12. The Heads of State or Government reviewed the progress on the Situation of Children in SAARC countries. They reiterated their commitment made in the Bangalore Declaration to accord the highest priority to the needs of children in national development planning and stressed that the concept of Human Resource Development should lay particular emphasis on the welfare and well-being of children, especially in the literacy and health spheres. They called for the conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. They decided to declare 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child".

13. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the effective functioning of the SAARC Secretariat and its role in coordinating SAARC activities. They also noted that a Headquarters Agreement had been signed between the Secretariat and the host Government. They thanked His Majesty's Government of Nepal for the assistance and cooperation extended to the Secretariat.

14. The Heads of State or Government noted that the decision to involve regional NGOs or professional bodies in SAARC activities, taken at the Fifth Session of the Council of Ministers, pursuant to the direction given by the Kathmandu Declaration, was an important step towards the promotion of people-to-people contact which has always been emphasised by the Association.

15. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need for closer and more frequent contacts among the peoples of SAARC. As a beginning, they decided that Supreme Court Judges and Members of the National Parliaments of each member State would be entitled to a special SAARC travel document which would exempt them from visas. They further directed the Council of Ministers to examine what other categories of persons should be given this facility and to submit their recommendations.

16. They further noted with satisfaction the mandate given to the Secretary General by the Council of Ministers at its Fifth Session on the question of contacting organisations with similar aims and purposes.

17. The Heads of State or Government expressed their determination to give concrete shape to the objectives of SAARC. In this context they emphasised the need to progressively carry out SAARC activities within a broad framework of a long-term perspective and to harmonize their efforts to ensure tangible benefits to the peoples of South Asia as a whole. They were conscious of the fact that all South Asian countries faced problems in varying degrees in areas such as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection. Towards this end they were of the view that all Member States should identify areas of core interest in their national perspective plans or prepare such plans and consolidate them into a regional plan to be called "SAARC-2000 : A Basic Needs Perspective", with specific targets to be met by the end of the century.

18. They recognised that Human Resource Development is one of the means of realizing these objectives. In this context they welcomed the offer of the Government of Pakistan to host a Centre for Human Resource Development and directed the Secretary-General to set up a Group of Experts from Member States to examine the proposal on the basis of a paper to be prepared by the Government of Pakistan and to submit its recommendations to the Standing Committee.

19. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their abiding commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, particularly those enjoining respect for the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and national independence, non-use or threat of use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of all disputes. They reiterated their faith in the United Nations as the most important forum for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the promotion of international cooperation aimed at the progress and prosperity of mankind.

20. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the relaxation of global tensions through intensified super-power dialogue on a broad range of international issues and welcomed the progress towards the resolution of protracted regional disputes and conflicts. They agreed that these developments had enhanced the prospects for disarmament, security, peace and progress for all peoples of the world. They appreciated the important role played by the United Nations in bringing about these positive changes in the international political environment. They also called upon all States to strengthen the capacity of the UN system in all respects to achieve the purpose of the UN Charter.

21. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their deep commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement as an important force for strengthening world peace and harmony as well as for promoting development with justice and equity. In this context they expressed satisfaction over the results of the Ministerial Conference of the Non-aligned Movement held in Cyprus in September 1988 and expressed the hope the decisions of the Conference would contribute to the reduction of tensions and to the promotion of development. They hoped that the current discussions on the improvement in the methodology of the Non-Aligned Movement would result in strengthening the movement and enable it to play its role with greater effectiveness.

22. The Heads of State or Government believed that the escalation in military expenditure was a major constraint on world development. In this regard they noted that the UN Conference on Disarmament and Development had clearly established a link between disarmament and development and had provided a valuable framework for future action in this vital area. They urged that resources saved through disarmament measures should be diverted in particular to developing countries for development.

23. They welcomed the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on Intermediate Nuclear Force. They hoped this would be a precursor to further accords to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals drastically and to prevent an arms race in Outer Space. They called for the

early conclusion in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a Convention to Ban Chemical Weapons. They declared their intention to continue their efforts to contribute to the realization of the objective of halting the nuclear arms race and eliminating nuclear weapons. They declared their resolve to support every effort to conclude a treaty prohibiting vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

24. The Heads of State or Government noted with deep concern the continued structural disequilibrium from which the world economy had long suffered. This had resulted in slower growth in the developing countries, downward trends in commodity prices, decline in the net export earnings of the developing countries and deterioration in their terms of trade. These developments combined with the overwhelming debt burdens, the reverse financial flows from the developing to the developed countries and the sharp rise of protectionism in the developed world had further aggravated the economic difficulties of the developing countries.

25. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the interdependent character of the economies of the developed and the developing countries. They called for the resumption of the North-South dialogue with a view to restructuring the international economic system and to establishing the New International Economic Order based on justice and equity. They called for coordinated actions by the developed and the developing countries to increase the net flow of developmental assistance, overcome debt difficulties, expand the access of the developing countries to the markets in developed countries, arrest the deterioration in terms of trade of the developing countries and stabilize commodity prices.

26. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the need for preserving and liberalizing the multilateral trading system with renewed efforts both within and outside the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. They also underscored the importance of the developed countries fully respecting and implementing the commitments made in Punta del Este on "standstill and rollback" arrangements. They expressed concern that on account of differences between major trading entities on the question of agricultural subsidies, the Montreal Meeting on the midterm review of the Uruguay round was inconclusive. They particularly regretted that there was no progress in the negotiations on issues of major interest to developing countries such as trade in textiles and a Safeguard System. They were disappointed that on some of the issues of interest to developing countries on which there was agreement, particularly tropical products, it would not be possible even to implement the decisions taken, from the beginning of 1989 as envisaged. They emphasised that the development dimension must be taken into account in the negotiations on new issues, particularly services and intellectual property rights. They agreed to take concerted action to this end in the forthcoming negotiations.

27. The Heads of State or Government fully supported the call for the initiation of a comprehensive process for the preparation of an International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade as well as the proposal of the Group of 77 for convening a Special Session of the General Assembly in 1990 to revive growth and development in the developing countries.

28. The Heads of State or Government reemphasized the need for increased resource flows and special measures in favour of the least developed countries within the Framework of the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for these countries. They supported the convening of a high level United Nations Conference on the least developed countries in 1990 to review progress and formulate national and international policies and measures for accelerating the development process in the least developed countries during the 1990s, especially in order to help them achieve their long term socio-economic objectives.

29. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka expressed their deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which Prime Minister of Pakistan chaired the meeting. They expressed their profound gratitude for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of Pakistan.

Joint Press Release

Joint Press Release Issued on December 31, 1988 at the End of Fourth SAARC Summit, Islamabad.

The President of Bangladesh, the King of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, the President of Maldives, the King of Nepal, the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the President of Sri Lanka met at the Fourth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at Islamabad from 29-31 December, 1988. The meeting was marked by an atmosphere of mutual understanding and spirit of accommodation.

2. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives of the Association enshrined in the SAARC Charter and renewed their determination to work collectively towards the attainment of these objectives. They issued the Islamabad Declaration.

3. The Heads of State or Government were deeply shocked at the armed attack on the Republic of Maldives on 3rd November, 1988 aimed at destabilising the Government and taking over the country. They strongly condemned these acts of violence which disrupted the peace and security of a Member State. They expressed full solidarity with the Government of Maldives.

4. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern at the high incidence of drug production, trafficking and abuse. They decided to declare 1989 as the "SAARC Year Against Drug Abuse" in order to focus attention on drug-related problems facing the region. They called upon Member States to prepare and implement national programmes in this regard.

5. They welcomed the launching of SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships schemes and the Youth Volunteers programme. They recognised that Education was one of the principal areas requiring urgent attention in the region and decided to include Education among the agreed areas of cooperation. For this purpose they decided to set up a Technical Committee and accepted the offer of Bangladesh to chair the Committee.

6. The Heads of State or Government agreed to launch "SAARC-2000-A Basic Needs Perspective" which calls for a perspective regional plan with specific targets to be met by the end of the century in areas of core interest such as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection. In this context they welcomed the offer of the Government of Pakistan to host a Centre for Human Resource Development and directed the Secretary-General to convene an Expert Group Meeting of member countries to work out modalities for the realization of "SAARC 2000 - A Basic Needs Perspective".

7. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the idea of holding South Asian Festivals from time to time and accepted the offer of India to host the first such festival.

8. The Heads of State or Government directed the Standing Committee to examine the desirability of establishing a regional body to promote cultural links among Member States.

9. They welcomed the coming into force of the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. They stressed the importance of the adoption of enabling measures at the national level that would be necessary in order to fully implement the provisions of the Convention.

10. They welcomed the Agreement regarding the establishment of a South Asian Food Security Reserve in August this year which marked a major breakthrough in the common endeavours of the Governments of member countries of SAARC to assist each other in food emergency situations.

11. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction at the progress achieved in the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA). They recognised the need for focusing attention on more concrete and result-oriented activities within the SAARC framework.

12. They welcomed the establishment of the SAARC Agriculture Information Centre (SAIC) at Dhaka and were of the view that proposals for the setting up of regional institutions, focusing on problems of common concern in the region, should be given priority.

13. They reiterated their earlier commitment to accord priority to the needs of children in national development plans. They decided to declare 1990 as the "SAARC Year of the Girl Child" and directed that specific programmes and activities be undertaken to increase public awareness of the problems of the girl child.

14. They expressed satisfaction at the progress in the studies underway regarding the feasibility of cooperation in areas of trade, manufactures and services. In the meanwhile they directed the Secretary-General to convene a special meeting of the Group of Coordinators to identify any specific areas where cooperation may be feasible immediately. They directed that the report of the Group should be presented to the next sessions of the Standing Committee and the Council of Ministers.

15. The Heads of State or Government expressed profound sorrow at the natural disasters suffered by Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan in 1988 and urged that the study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment be completed in the shortest period of time so as to provide a rational basis for identifying areas keeping in view the potentials and possibilities of evolving a regional plan of action, particularly to strengthen disaster management capabilities and to protect and preserve the environment.

16. They expressed satisfaction at the concrete steps being taken for the implementation of the SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme. They directed that social, economic and technical themes should be given emphasis by the SAVE Programme.

17. Recalling the usefulness of the earlier Ministerial meeting on Women in Development held in India in 1986, the Heads of State or Government called for the holding of a second Ministerial level meeting and welcomed the offer of the Government of Pakistan to host the meeting.

18. They expressed satisfaction that pursuant to the direction given by the Kathmandu Declaration for enhancing people-to -people contact, concrete steps had been taken by including regional NGOs and professional bodies in SAARC activities.

19. They decided that any country in the region subscribing to the objectives and principles of the Charter may be admitted as a member of the Association by a unanimous decision of the Heads of State or Government.

20. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the effective functioning of the SAARC Secretariat and its role in coordinating SAARC activities. They appreciated the work of the SAARC Secretary-General in the discharge of his responsibilities and thanked His Majesty's Government of Nepal for the assistance and cooperation extended to the Secretariat.

21. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the Fifth SAARC Summit in Colombo in 1989.

22. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep appreciation for the outstanding manner in which the Prime Minister of Pakistan had conducted the meetings as the Chairperson of the Fourth SAARC Summit. They also expressed profound gratitude for the gracious hospitality extended to them by the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference.