

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC) :  
DECLARATION AND CHARTER \*

Dhaka Declaration of the Heads of State or Government  
of the Member States of South Asian Association for  
Regional Cooperation ( SAARC)

The President of Bangladesh, The King of Bhutan, The Prime Minister of India , The President of Maldives, The King of Nepal, The President of Pakistan and The President of Sri Lanka met in Dhaka on 7 and 8 December 1985.

2. The Heads of State or Government underscored the historic significance of their first ever South Asian Summit Meeting. They considered it to be a tangible manifestation of their determination to cooperate regionally . To work together towards finding solutions towards their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and mutual understanding and to the creation of an order based on mutual respect, equality and shared benefits.

3. They recognised that periodic meetings at their level were central to the promotion of mutual trust and cooperation among their countries.

4. The Heads of state or government reaffirmed that their fundamental goal was to accelerate the process of economic and social development in their respective countries through the optimum utilization of their human and material resources, so as to promote the welfare and prosperity of their peoples and to improve their quality of life. They were conscious that peace and security was an essential prerequisite

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\*[Copies of these documents were provided by the High Commissioners for India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and the Embassy of Pakistan, Canberra]

for the realisation of this objective.

5. The leaders of the South Asian countries reaffirmed their commitment to the UN charter and the principles governing sovereign equality of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs and non-use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of other states. They reiterated that the United Nations constituted the most important forum for the resolution of all issues affecting international peace and security.

6. They also reaffirmed their deep conviction in the continuing validity and relevance of the objectives of the Non-aligned movement as an important force in international relations.

7. The Heads of state or government acknowledged that the countries of South Asia, who constituted one-fifth of humanity were faced with the formidable challenges posed by poverty, underdevelopment, low levels of production, unemployment and pressure of population compounded by exploitation of the past and other adverse legacies. They felt that, bound as countries were by many common values rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical traditions, regional cooperation provided a logical response to these problems. They were conscious of their individual and regional strengths, their potential as a huge market, their substantial human and natural resources and the complementarities of their economies. They were confident that with effective regional cooperation, they could make optimum use of these capacities for the benefit of their peoples, accelerate the pace of their economic development and enhance their national and collective self-reliance. They were confident that their countries, which had made important

contributions to the enrichment of human civilization, could together play their due role in international relations and influence decisions which affected them.

8. The Heads of state or government emphasised that strengthening of regional cooperation in South Asia required greater involvement of their peoples. They agreed to increase interaction and further promote people-to-people contacts at various levels among their countries. To this end, they decided to take steps to create awareness and public opinion in the region.

9. The Heads of state or government welcome the progress already made in the implementation of the integrated programme of action in the nine mutually agreed areas. They expressed their desire to consolidate and further expand cooperative efforts within an appropriate institutional framework in a spirit of partnership and equality.

10. The leaders were convinced that they could effectively pursue their individual and collective objectives and improve the quality of life of their peoples only in an atmosphere of peace and security. In this context, they expressed concern at the deteriorating international political situation. They were alarmed at the unprecedented escalation of arms race particularly in its nuclear aspect. They recognized that mankind today was confronted with the threat of self extinction arising from a massive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced. The arms race intensified international tension and violated the principles of the UN charter. The leaders called upon the nuclear weapons-states for urgent negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty leading to the complete cessation of testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons. In this connection they welcomed the recent meeting between

expressed the hope that the meeting would have a positive effect on international peace and security.

11. The Heads of state or government expressed deep concern at the continuing crisis in the global economy. They underscored that deteriorating economic and social conditions had seriously retarded development prospects in South Asia and other developing countries. Sharply falling commodity prices, deterioration in the terms of trade, intensification of protectionist measures, spiralling debt burden and decline in the flow of external resources especially concessional assistance, had caused a serious setback to the economic development of the developing countries. These had been compounded by natural disasters and precarious world food security situation affecting developing countries. They also expressed concern over the diminishing capacity of international financial and technical institutions to respond effectively to the needs of the disadvantaged and poorer countries and regretted that the spirit of multilateral cooperation had begun to falter and weaken. This was particularly disturbing in the face of increased inter-dependence of developed and developing countries and the fact that economic revival of north was closely linked to economic progress in South. They believed that developments during the past decades had clearly demonstrated the structural imbalances and inequities inherent in the existing international economic system and its inadequacy to deal with problems of development.

12. They strongly urged that determined efforts should be made by the international community towards realization of the goals and targets of the International Development Strategy as well as the Substantial New Programme of Action for the least developed countries. They called for urgent resumption of the north-south dialogue and early convening of an international conference on money and finance for development with universal participation.

13. The Heads of state and government were conscious of the historic importance of the Dhaka summit and reiterated their conviction that the launching of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which they had established at this meeting, would place regional cooperation on a firm foundation, play an important role in accelerating the pace of economic and social development of their self-reliance and further the cause of peace, progress and stability in their region and the world.

14. The Heads of state or government of Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were deeply appreciative of the exemplary chairmanship of their meeting by the President of Bangladesh. They expressed their profound gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to them by the government and the people of Bangladesh and for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

Charter of the South Asian Association  
For Regional Cooperation ( SAARC )

We, the Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh,  
Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka :

1. DESIROUS

of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principle of the United Nations Charter and Non-Alignment, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of all disputes.

2. CONSCIOUS.

that in an increasingly inter-dependent world, the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful cooperation among the member states which are bound by ties of history and culture.

3. AWARE

of the Common problems, interests and aspirations of the peoples of South Asia and the need for joint action and enhanced cooperation within their respective political and economic system and cultural traditions.

4. CONVINCED

that regional cooperation among the countries of South Asia is mutually beneficial, desirable and necessary for promoting the welfare and improving the quality of life of the peoples of the region.

5. CONVINCED

further that Economic, Social and Technical Cooperation  
cently to their national and collective self-reliance.

6. RECOGNISING

that increased cooperation, contacts and exchange among the countries of the region will contribute to the promotion of friendship and understanding among their peoples.

7. RECALLING

the Declaration signed by their Foreign Ministers in New Delhi on August 2, 1983 and noting the progress achieved in regional cooperation.

8. REAFFIRMING.

their determination to promote such cooperation within an institutional framework.

DO HEREBY

Agree to establish and organisation to be known as South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, hereinafter referred to as the Association, with the following objectives, principles, institutional and financial arrangements:

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SAARC:

ARTICLE-I

1. The objectives of the Association shall be :-
  - a) To promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life,
  - b) To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potentials.
  - c) To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.
  - d) To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems.
  - e) To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.
  - f) To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries.

G) To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests, and

H) To cooperate with international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes.

ARTICLE-II

1. Cooperation within the frame-work of the Association shall be based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit,

2. Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.

3. Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.

ARTICLE -III

Meetings of the heads of state or government.

1. The heads of state or government shall meet once a year or more often as and when considered necessary by the member states.

ARTICLE-IV.

A council of ministers consisting of the Foreign Ministers of the member states shall be established with the following functions :

- a) Formulation of the policies of the association.
- b) Review of the progress of cooperation under the Association.
- c) Decision on new areas of cooperation.
- d) ~~Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the Association as deemed necessary.~~  
association as deemed necessary.



- e) Decision on other matters of general interest to the Association.

2. The council of ministers shall meet twice a year. Extraordinary session of the council may be held by agreement among the member states.

ARTICLE-V

STANDING COMMITTEE

1. The standing committee comprising the foreign Secretaries shall have the following functions:
  - a) Overall monitoring and coordination of programme of cooperation,
  - b) Approval of projects and programmes, and the modalities of their financing,
  - c) Determination of inter-sectoral priorities.
  - d) Identification of new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies.
2. The standing committee shall meet as often as deemed necessary.
3. The standing committee shall submit periodic reports to the council of ministers and make reference to it as and when necessary for decisions on policy matters.

ARTICLE-VI

TECHNICAL COMMITTEES.

1. Technical committees comprising representatives of member states shall be responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the programmes in their respective areas of cooperation.
2. They shall have the following terms of reference :
  - a) Determination of the potential and the scope of regional cooperation in agreed areas,

- b) Formulation of programmes and preparation of projects,
- c) Determination of financial implications of sectoral programmes,
- d) Formulation of recommendations regarding apportionment of costs,
- e) Implementation and coordination of sectoral programmes,
- f) Monitoring of progress in implementation.

3. The technical committees shall submit periodic reports to the standing committee.

4. The chairmanship of the technical committees shall normally rotate among member states in alphabetical order every two years.

5. The technical committees may, inter-alia, use the following mechanisms and modalities, if and when considered necessary:

- a) Meetings of heads of national technical agencies,
- b) Meetings of experts in specific fields,
- c) contact amongst recognised centres of excellence in the region.

ARTICLE-VII.

ACTION COMMITTEES.

1. The standing committee may set up action committees comprising member states concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all member states.

ARTICLE-VIII.

SECRETARIAT.

There shall be a secretariat of the Association.

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ARTICLE-IX

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

1. The contribution of each member state towards financing of the activities of the Association shall be voluntary.
2. Each technical committee shall make recommendations for the apportionment of costs of implementing the programmes proposed by it.
3. In case sufficient financial resources cannot be mobilised within the region for funding activities of the Association, external financing from appropriate sources may be mobilised with the approval of or by the standing committee.

ARTICLE-X

GENERAL PROVISIONS.

1. Decisions at all level shall be taken on the basis of unanimity.
2. Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations.

In faith whereof we have set our hands and seals hereunto.

Done in Dhaka Bangladesh, on this the eight day of December of the year of one thousand nine hundred eighty five.

Hussain Muhammad Ershad  
President of the People's  
Republic of Bangladesh.

Maumoon Abdul Gayoom  
President of the Republic  
of Maldives.

Jigme Singye Wangchuck  
King of Bhutan

Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev  
King of Nepal,

Rajiv Gandhi  
Prime Minister of the  
Republic of India

Muhammad Zia-Ul-Haq  
President of the Islamic  
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4 The Heads of state or government reaffirmed that their fundamental goal was to accelerate the process of economic and social development in their respective countries through the optimum utilization of their human and material resources, so as to promote the welfare and prosperity of their peoples and to improve their quality of life. They were conscious that peace and security was an essential prerequisite

for the realisation of this objective.

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Hussain Muhammad Ershad  
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Rajiv Gandhi  
Prime Minister of the  
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Muhammad Zia-Ul-Haq  
President of the Islamic  
Republic of Pakistan

Junius Richard Jayewardene/President  
of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka