

COLOMBO DECLARATION ON A COMMON ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

(Adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Environment Ministers)

Colombo, 30 October – 1 November 1998

We the Environment Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation having met in Colombo during 30 October – 1 November 1998,

Recalling the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992,

Noting the outcome of other major world Conferences on Environment and the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity, the Basel Convention, Ramsar Convention and the Montreal Protocol,

Recalling the Declaration of the Heads of State or Government during the Ninth SAARC Summit in Male 1997 and the Tenth SAARC Summit in Colombo in 1998,

Recalling the 1997 New Delhi Declaration and the 1997 Male Declaration of the SAARC Environment Ministers,

Reaffirming the commitment to the implementation of international and regional agreements for the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources in the region,

Expressing concern that nearly one fourth of the poor of the world live in the SAARC region and poverty is one of the major contributory factors to environmental degradation in the SAARC1 region,

Emphasizing the need for an enabling international environment to support the efforts of the SAARC Countries for eradication of poverty, and, in this context, the need for the international community to increase their support and assistance for these efforts,

Reiterating that alleviation of poverty is the over riding priority in all member countries of SAARC,

Mindful that the majority of our people are directly dependent on natural resources and accelerated economic growth, population control, education and awareness are fundamental to reducing the pressure on natural resources,

Expressing concern at the lack of progress made since the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in providing new and additional resources and technologies by industrialized countries, the countries in the region have taken initiatives for the protection and preservation of the environment while meeting the development needs of the people,

Recognizing the need for collaborative action and the importance of enhanced regional cooperation to address common and trans-boundary environmental problems.

Expressing satisfaction that the SAARC member countries adopted a common position during the Third Session of the Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Kyoto,

Noting the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol,

Reiterating the importance of common SAARC positions at international fora on environment in the future and the need for pursuing these common positions in a consistent manner,

Noting the importance of enhanced regional cooperation for sharing of information and networking in the SAARC region on environment matters, strategies and technologies to promote effective management of the environment for the benefit of all member countries,

Emphasizing the need to adopt measures, programmes, policies and standards for environment protection and natural resource management in the SAARC region.

1. Decide to take further measures to expedite the implementation of the SAARC Action Plan on the Environment adopted in Male in 1997.
2. Decide to direct their focus on a single theme in each of their future meetings with a view to identifying specific environmental projects within the region and accordingly agree that bio-diversity be the theme for the year 1999.
3. Decide that the Technical Committee on Environment and Meteorology consider the compilation of a regional directory of science and technological institutions in the field of the environment and a State of the Art Report on eco-friendly technologies.
4. Agree to exchange information and share experiences to promote activities in the use of new technology, to improve the understanding of the nature and extent of the potential threats related to climate change and the provision of timely warning on the regional and local climate systems and their impacts.
5. Promote awareness for disaster prevention and preparedness.
6. Decide to enhance regional cooperation for the exchange of information and technology on urban environment management with particular attention to air, water and noise pollution, and waste management.
7. Decide to enhance regional cooperation including exchange of information in regard to adopting regional frameworks for protecting the genetic resources from being exploited without adequate compensation to those owning the resource. In this regard, member countries agree to exchange information on the legal measures required to protect genetic resources.
8. Agree to enhance cooperation for the promotion of forestry management in the region for multiple uses including increased research and development and training.
9. Reiterate the importance of harmonization of policies in relation to sound fishery management, increased collaboration among fisheries and shipping sectors of member countries and to address issues such as marine, pollution. In this regard, member countries agreed to explore the feasibility of setting up a coastal zone management centre.
10. Decide to enhance regional cooperation to address problems related to the transboundary movement of hazardous waste including exchange of information and harmonisation of policies and procedures.
11. Agree to present a common SAARC position at the Buenos Aires meeting on Climate Change, as attached to this Declaration.
