

MALÉ DECLARATION

(Adopted by a Special Session of the SAARC Environment Ministers)

Malé, 25 June 2005

We, the Ministers of the Environment of the Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) gathered in Malé, Maldives on 25 June 2005, for the Special Session of SAARC Environment Ministers in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004, which had caused unprecedented loss of life and property in the South Asian region,

Recognizing that the earthquake and the tsunami caused irreversible damage to the environment and the eco-systems;

Recognizing that the Member States have demonstrated the collective spirit of regional cooperation in providing relief assistance in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami disaster;

Expressing our deep appreciation for the prompt and generous assistance and contributions by some of the Member States, other countries and the international community and agencies;

Appreciating the work carried out by international community and agencies in undertaking rapid environmental assessment of the tsunami impacted countries;

Realizing also the need for further rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas where damage to social, economic and environmental infrastructure has been extensive;

Recalling the decisions of SAARC Heads of the States or Governments to intensify regional cooperation with a view to strengthening disaster management capabilities in the region, and the urgent need to devise a regional mechanism in South Asia for early warning, preparedness and management of natural disasters;

1. Express our deep sense of sorrow and profound sympathy to the people of the affected countries in the region for the loss of many lives and extensive devastation, which rendered thousands of people homeless;
2. Express our deep sense of sorrow and profound sympathy also for the people of other countries who have lost many of their nationals in the disaster;
3. Express full solidarity with the Governments and the peoples of the affected countries in their efforts to provide immediate relief to the victims of the disaster, and towards long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts;
4. Encourage the international community to ensure assistance in continuing efforts of Member States requiring assistance towards rehabilitation and reconstruction.

5. Recognize that the tragic impact of the tsunami further reiterates the urgent need for effective disaster risk reduction, disaster management, provision of emergency relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction;
6. Reinforce the capabilities within the Member States to tackle similar disasters in the South Asian region, which is quite prone to natural disasters;
7. Reaffirm to come together in the event of such disasters to alleviate the suffering of the people in the affected areas in the region;
8. Decide to undertake the following:
 - a. communicate their existing early warning capabilities through the SAARC Secretariat, which can be used as an early warning system for natural disasters in the region in the interim period before a regional system is developed in the region;
 - b. develop a strategy to integrate the disaster recovery and reconstruction activities into the national sustainable development strategies of the Tsunami-impacted SAARC countries;
 - c. identify their national focal points for early warning, disaster preparedness and management, who should attend the proposed Expert Group Meeting in Dhaka to formulate a Comprehensive Framework on Early Warning, Disaster Management and Disaster Prevention, prior to the Seventh Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Bangladesh.
 - d. further enhance the capacity of the existing SAARC institutions, namely, the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre in Dhaka and the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre in Malé to carry out their mandated tasks;
 - e. call upon the international donor community to fulfill their commitment in providing pledged aid for the early recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation programme for Tsunami affected Member Countries requiring assistance;
 - f. cooperate in the promotion of the tourism sector as a way of reviving the economies of the Member Countries that are severely affected by the Tsunami; and
 - g. develop SAARC regional programmes/projects for early warning, preparedness and management of Tsunami and other natural disasters.
