

THIMPHU STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

(Adopted by Heads of State or Government, Sixteenth SAARC Summit)

Thimphu 28-29 April 2010

The Sixteenth Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Thimphu, Bhutan, on 28-29 April 2010,

Recalling the high priority attached by the Leaders of SAARC at successive Summits towards preserving and sustainably managing the rich, fragile and diverse ecosystems of South Asia;
Expressing deep concern about the adverse effects of climate change and its impact on the region, particularly on the lives and livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people of South Asia;

Recognizing that effective responses, both on mitigation and adaptation should be formulated and implemented at regional and international levels;

Mindful that while South Asia's contribution to climate change is minimal, the impacts of this global phenomenon transcends national boundaries;

Also Mindful that the Member States of SAARC as developing countries face the dual challenge of addressing the negative impacts of climate change and pursuing socio-economic development;

Emphasizing the overriding importance of socio-economic development and poverty eradication in our region, and convinced that reducing dependence on carbon in economic growth and promoting climate resilience will promote both development and poverty eradication in a sustainable manner;

Determined that South Asia should become a world leader in low-carbon technologies and renewable energy;

Reiterating the principles of equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities as enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to be the basis for an agreed outcome in the global negotiations on climate change;

Also underlining that an agreed outcome of the global negotiations must emerge from an inclusive, transparent, open and democratic process of negotiations;

Noting that South Asia is particularly prone to climate change and related disasters making the need for a regional response to meet the challenge of climate change more urgent and compelling;

Welcoming the adoption of Climate Change as the theme of the Sixteenth SAARC Summit as an important initiative to galvanize and consolidate regional endeavours with the objective of making South Asia climate change resilient;

Also Welcoming the signing of the SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment as a significant step towards promoting and strengthening regional cooperation;

Convinced that South Asia could benefit from cooperative regional initiatives and approaches, exchange of experiences, knowledge, transfer of technology, best practices to address the challenges posed by climate change;

Aware that preservation of environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change are mutually reinforcing;

Determined to address the adverse effects of climate change in accordance with the purposes and principles of regional cooperation enshrined in the SAARC Charter;

Hereby adopt the Thimphu Statement on Climate Change and agree to undertake the following:

i. Review the implementation of the Dhaka Declaration and SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change and ensure its timely implementation;

ii. Agree to establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group on Climate Change to develop clear policy direction and guidance for regional cooperation as envisaged in the SAARC Plan of Action on Climate Change;

iii. Direct the Secretary General to commission a study for presentation to the Seventeenth SAARC Summit on 'Climate Risks in the Region: ways to comprehensively address the related social, economic and environmental challenges';

iv. Undertake advocacy and awareness programs on climate change, among others, to promote the use of green technology and best practices to promote low-carbon sustainable and inclusive development of the region;

v. Commission a study to explore the feasibility of establishing a SAARC mechanism which would provide capital for projects that promote low-carbon technology and renewable energy; and a Low-carbon Research and Development Institute in South Asian University;

vi. Incorporate science-based materials in educational curricula to promote better understanding of the science and adverse effects of climate change;

vii. Plant ten million trees over the next five years (2010-2015) as part of a regional afforestation and reforestation campaign, in accordance with national priorities and programmes of Member States;

viii. Evolve national plans, and where appropriate regional projects, on protecting and safeguarding the archeological and historical infrastructure of South Asia from the adverse effects of Climate Change;

ix. Establish institutional linkages among national institutions in the region to, among others, facilitate sharing of knowledge, information and capacity building programmes in climate change related areas;

- x. Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Marine Initiative to strengthen the understanding of shared oceans and water bodies in the region and the critical roles they play in sustainable living to be supported by the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Center;
- xi. Stress the imperative of conservation of bio-diversity and natural resources and monitoring of mountain ecology covering the mountains in the region;
- xii. Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Mountain Initiative on mountain ecosystems, particularly glaciers and their contribution to sustainable development and livelihoods to be supported by SAARC Forestry Center;
- xiii. Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Monsoon Initiative on the evolving pattern of monsoons to assess vulnerability due to climate change to be supported by SAARC Meteorological Research Center;
- xiv. Commission a SAARC Inter-governmental Climate-related Disasters Initiative on the integration of Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to be supported by SAARC Disaster Management Center;
- xv. Complete the ratification process for the SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment at an early date to enable its entry into force; and
- xvi. The Inter-governmental Expert Group on Climate Change shall meet at least twice a year to periodically monitor and review the implementation of this Statement and make recommendations to facilitate its implementation and submit its report through the Senior Officials of SAARC to the SAARC Environment Ministers.
