



SECRETARY GENERAL

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT

**Message from Her Excellency Uz. Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed
Secretary General of SAARC
SAARC Charter Day
8 December 2011**

On the historic occasion of the Twenty-sixth Anniversary of the founding of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), I am pleased to extend, on behalf of the SAARC Secretariat and on my own behalf, my warm felicitations to the people and Governments of Member States.

SAARC was established to promote regional cooperation and integration to improve the well being and quality of life of the people of South Asia. Our Association was founded on the firm conviction that South Asia shares a common future and destiny shaped by our close historical, cultural and geographical ties. Indeed, since its inception, SAARC has engendered mutually beneficial cooperation in many diverse areas and promoted greater understanding, goodwill and cooperation among the people and Governments of South Asia. It has served as an important platform to build mutual trust, confidence and sustained interaction and engagement to address and overcome the common challenges faced by the region and seize opportunities.

Today, it is a matter of great satisfaction to state that SAARC has made significant progress to realize the purposes and objectives enshrined in its Charter. The South Asian Free Trade Agreement, SAARC Development Fund, SAARC Food Bank and the South Asian University are some of the notable achievements of SAARC.

The Association has institutionalized cooperation at all levels and set up a number of mechanisms and institutions to facilitate and guide the agenda of cooperation. Indeed, through its diverse activities over the past two and half decades, SAARC has sought to engender a distinct South Asian identity and a culture of peace, cooperation and partnership for the collective benefit of our peoples.

Successive Summits have served to revitalize the SAARC process and make regional cooperation more meaningful. The Seventeenth Summit held in Addu City, Maldives in November this year provided renewed impetus and momentum to the agenda of cooperation being pursued by the Association. The Summit witnessed the signing of the SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters; the SAARC Seed Bank Agreement; the SAARC Agreement on Multilateral Arrangement on Recognition of Conformity Assessment; and the SAARC Agreement on Implementation of Regional Standards.

As we mark SAARC Charter Day this year, it is an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the SAARC Charter and its purposes and principles. At the same time, we must pay tribute to the founding fathers of SAARC for their vision and foresight in establishing SAARC as a means for realizing the hopes and aspirations of the people of South Asia.

I commend all Member States for the steadfast commitment and leadership shown to strengthen the SAARC process and make it more meaningful. I am confident that Member States will continue to work in a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility to achieve the objectives of the Association and make SAARC a truly vibrant and robust Association.



(Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed)
Secretary General of SAARC
8th December 2011