

Dhaka Declaration

The Dhaka Declaration of The Heads of State or Government of the Member States of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, 7-8 December 1985.

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, equity and shared benefits.

3. They recognized that periodic meetings at their level were central to the promotion of mutual trust, confidence 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 for the realization 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 Nonaligned 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 their 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

convinced 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 welcomed 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 frame work 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 President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Geneva and 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 crises in the global economy. They underscored that deteriorating economic and social conditions had seriously retarded developing countries. Sharply falling commodity prices, deterioration in the terms of trade, intensification of protectionist measures, spiralling debt burden and a 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 interdependence 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 or 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 countries, promote the objectives of individual and collective 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.

Joint Press Release

Joint Press Release Issued at the Conclusion of the First SAARC Summit in Dhaka on 7-8 December 1985

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.

The Heads of State or Government signed a Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation on the 8th of December, 1985. They also adopted the Dhaka Declaration.

They approved that the Standing Committee should set up a Study Group to examine the problem of terrorism as it affects the security and stability of Member States of SAARC. They further directed the Council of Ministers to consider the report of this Study Group and submit recommendations to them as to how best the Member States could cooperate among themselves to solve this.

They also approved that a similar exercise be carried out with regard to the problem of drug trafficking and abuse.

They decided that the Member Governments should concert their views on the ongoing discussions on New International Economic Order and the improvement of the World Trading System through GATT taking particularly into account the interest of the least developed among the developing countries. For this purpose it was decided to convene a Ministerial level meeting. The Standing Committee should convene a meeting to prepare for it. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of the President of Pakistan to host both these meetings.

The Heads of State or Government emphasized that women should increasingly participate in activities at the regional level within the framework of SAARC and that Programmes and Projects should be devised to ensure their active participation in the development process. They therefore directed the Standing Committee to convene a Ministerial Level Conference on the subject to identify the areas of activities and plan a Programme of Action. They gratefully accepted the offer of the Prime Minister of India to host such a conference.

The Heads of State or Government who have decided that the Association shall have a Secretariat directed the Foreign Ministers to consider details regarding its location, structure, functions and financing and submit those for the consideration of Heads of State or Government.

The Heads of State or Government decided to hold their next meeting in November, 1986. They gratefully accepted the offer of the Prime Minister of India to host that meeting. They also gratefully accepted the offer of the King of Bhutan to host the Annual SAARC Summit of 1987.

The Heads of State or Government unanimously accepted the recommendation of the Fourth Meeting of Foreign Ministers on the emblem of SAARC.