



Declaration of the Seventh SAARC Summit

Dhaka, 10-11 April 1993



THE Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Rt. Hon. Girija Prasad Koirala, the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Nawaz Sharif and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa met at the Seventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10-11 April, 1993.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the principles and objectives of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the UN Charter and non-alignment. The Heads of State or Government noted the progress achieved in regional cooperation under the aegis of SAARC. They felt that time was now opportune for SAARC to provide a further dynamic impetus to activities in the core areas of economic, social and cultural cooperation in the SAARC region.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPA)

3. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the recent specific steps taken to consolidate and further streamline IPA related SAARC activities. They also stressed the need for a progressive movement towards undertaking more well defined, target-oriented and time bound projects and programmes to ensure tangible benefits for the peoples of South Asia.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE IPA

4. The Leaders welcomed the recent decisions to institutionalize cooperation in the core areas.

MORE BUSINESS-LIKE AND FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN THE CONDUCT OF SAARC MEETINGS

5. The Heads of State or Government approved the recommendations of the Eleventh Session of the Council of Ministers for adopting a more business-like and functional approach in the conduct of Summit meetings. They also noted with satisfaction the guidelines and procedures approved by the Eleventh Session of the Council in this respect relating to other SAARC meetings. They decided to meet informally whenever necessary between Summits.

CONSENSUS ON ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

6. Conscious that the sheer magnitude and complexity of South Asian poverty constituted a major political and economic challenge, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to continue to accord a high priority to its eradication from the region in the shortest possible time.

7. They pledged to overcome this challenge through the implementation of appropriate pro-poor development strategies at macro and micro levels.

8. In this context, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the Report of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation established at the Colombo Summit. The Report provided valuable insight and illustrative examples of successful poverty alleviation programmes in individual Member States.

9. Acknowledging that the abiding human qualities of dignity, creativity and productive potential, are eroded by chronic poverty, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to empowering the poor for enhanced growth, consistent with human development and equity.

10. The Heads of State or Government committed their Governments unequivocally to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the Year 2002, A.D. through an Agenda of Action, which would, inter-alia, embody:

— a strategy of social mobilization, involving the building or organizations of the poor, and their empowerment through appropriate national support mechanisms, with the assistance of respective Governments;

— a policy of decentralized agricultural development and sharply focussed household level food security through universal provision of 'Daal-Bhaat' or basic nutritional needs;

— a policy of decentralized small scale labour intensive industrialization, with the choice of efficient and cost effective technology;

— a policy of human development, including the enhancement of the social role and status of poor women, the provision of universal primary education, skill development, primary health care, shelter for the poor and protection of children;

— a policy to support the above initiatives with adequate financial resources.

11. The Heads of State or Government stressed that within the overall conceptual approach of 'Daal-Bhaat', the right to work and the right to primary education should receive priority.

12. The Leaders also underscored the critical link between the success of national efforts aimed at poverty alleviation and the external factors affecting growth and development. They urged all major actors in the world economic scene, particularly the industrialized countries and multilateral and regional financial institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations to create an enabling international atmosphere that is supportive of poverty alleviation programmes in South Asia. This would require a new dialogue with donors.

13. The Heads of State or Government agreed to the following action indicated below:

— a national level of pro-poor plan to be drawn up by each Member State. This plan is to be harmonized with the open economy and structural adjustment strategies;

— to share during the next Summit information regarding the progress achieved.

TRADE, MANUFACTURES AND SERVICES

14. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the need to liberalize trade as early as possible through a step by step approach. They underscored that this should be done in such a manner that all countries in the region could share the benefits of trade expansion equitably.

15. In this context, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the finalisation of the framework Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). They expressed their deep satisfaction over the signing of the framework Agreement. The Leaders stressed that all necessary steps should be taken to begin the first round of trade negotiations to exchange trade preferences among Member States under the arrangement.

16. The Heads of State or Government further underlined the critical importance of urgently promoting intra-regional cooperation, particularly in the area of manufactures in order to enhance the productive capacity of the member countries, and to promote sustained growth and development to prevent the marginalization of South Asia's trade interest in the larger global context.

ENVIRONMENT

17. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep concern at the unabated degradation of the environment and recurrence of devastating natural disasters. They also underscored the risks and dangers involved in overlooking the challenge posed by these problems. They expressed their commitment to implementing at all levels — national, bilat-

eral, regional and global — programmes for the protection and preservation of the environment and prevention of its degradation. The Heads of State or Government recognized that the completion of the Regional Study on the 'Greenhouse Effect' and its impact on the Region was a significant step forward in promoting regional cooperation in this vital area. They also stressed the importance of continuing the ongoing SAARC activities in the field of environment.

18. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and underscored the imperative need to ensure the flow of resources to successfully implement the wide-range of suggested initiatives and actions contained in Agenda 21. The Heads of State or Government noted that all international actions in the area of environment should be based on common but differential responsibilities, collective endeavours and a balanced perspective. Such actions, they stressed, must consider the protection of environment, economic growth and eradication of poverty as mutually reinforcing. All environmental initiatives, they underscored, must preclude the imposition of arbitrary and one-sided pre-conditions and ensure a harmonious blending of environmental and development concerns. They further noted with satisfaction the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. They urged that the Commission approach environmental problems of developed and developing countries in an equitable manner.

19. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction over the adoption of a common position by Member States prior to the United Nations conference on Environment and Development. They expressed their determination to continue in future the practice of intra-SAARC consultations on matters of common concern.

POPULATION

20. Recognizing the sovereign right of all countries to promote, adopt and implement their population policies and mindful of their cultures, values and traditions, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to integrate demographic objectives and population strategies in the formulation of the development strategies of Member Countries. In this context, they also noted the importance of adequate investment in the health and education sectors for the success of their population programmes. They agreed that cooperation among member states should be strengthened, both through sharing experiences and in other practical ways, to enhance their capacity to deal with the population problem. The Leaders urged Governments of developed countries, as well as all concerned international and regional organizations, to strengthen their financial and technical support in the area of health and education as part of their strategy of assistance to developing countries in their development efforts.

21. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the offer of Nepal to host a SAARC Ministerial Conference on Women and Family Health in Kathmandu in October/November 1993.

SHELTER

22. The Heads of State or Government reiterated that housing was a basic right for all people and that Governments should act as facilitator and supporter of shelter programmes initiated by the people. They urged Member States to continue to work towards the global objective of 'Shelter for All by the Year 2000'.

CHILDREN

23. Reaffirming their commitment to accord the highest priority to child survival, protection and development, the Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction that all Member States had completed their National Plans of Action on Children. They reiterated their call at the Colombo Summit to continue to ensure coordinated follow-up action by Member States on their respective plans.

24. The Heads of State or Government endorsed the 'Colombo Resolution on Children' adopted by the Second SAARC Ministerial Conference on Children held at Colombo in September 1992 and urged Member States to implement programmes as appropriate in their respective national context, to achieve the illustrative goals embodied in the Resolution, and the goals of the SAARC Plan of Action on Children.

25. The Heads of State or Government noted in particular the need to take effective measures to protect children against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation and agreed to promote cooperation among Member States in devising such measures.

YOUTH

26. Stressing that the youth of South Asia constituted a vital resource for national development and that mobilization of their latent power was imperative, the Heads of State or Government focussed special attention on the needs of the youth in South Asia and their development.

27. The Leaders noted that the youth of South Asia faced a number of serious problems requiring urgent attention and remedial measures. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host a Ministerial Conference on Youth in South Asia in 1994 to address the problems of the Youth and focus on the broad theme of youth and development. They also agreed to designate 1994 as the 'SAARC Year of the Youth'.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DISABLED PERSONS

28. The Heads of States or Government while recalling their decision at the Male' Summit to observe 1993 as the 'SAARC year of Disabled Persons', adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the Disabled Persons. They urged Member States to take concrete steps to implement the plan.

29. They welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host a Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons in September 1993.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

30. While reviewing the situation of women in the region, it was noted with satisfaction that over a period of time, the content of regional cooperation which address the issue of development, gender and equality for women has steadily grown in SAARC. The Heads of State or Government hoped that the cooperation thus developed will enable Member States to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing women into the mainstream of development with independence and equality.

31. The Heads of State or Government recalled that in pursuance of their collective will expressed in the Male' Summit to observe the 1990s as the 'SAARC Decade of the Girl Child', Member States had undertaken to formulate National Plans of Action for the improvement of the condition of the Girl Child giving priority to her survival, protection and development. They expressed satisfaction that some Member States had already completed this task and others were expected to do so soon.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

32. The Heads of States or Government emphasized that cooperation in the field of Science and Technology was of utmost importance in order to accelerate the process of development in South Asia.

33. They called for further intensification of efforts by Member States in this important area, particularly to facilitate research and exchange of information through networking arrangements in the fields of bio-technology, genetic engineering, energy modelling techniques and other identified areas of cooperation.

TERRORISM

34. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal. They strongly deplored the adverse consequences of terrorism.

35. They noted with grave concern that the efforts to combat the growing threat of terrorism had resulted in the diversion of valuable scarce resources from urgent development programmes.

36. The Leaders reiterated the need to give high priority to the enactment of enabling legislation at the national level to give effect to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, while urging the Member States which had not yet done so, to make every effort to finalize

this matter before the Eight SAARC Summit.

37. While recognizing that some progress had been achieved in the fields of consultation and exchange of information, they stressed the need for further enhancing cooperation in these fields as well as for coordinated action. They called for the expeditious implementation of the recommendations formulated for advancing cooperation in this regard in pursuance of their decision at the Colombo Summit.

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND DRUG ABUSE

38. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their grave concern at the growing menace of drug trafficking in the region and the aggravation of the problem of drug abuse among the South Asian population, particularly the youth.

39. They recognized the devastating impact of drug abuse on the very fabric of society and the serious threat to security and stability posed by drug trafficking through its growing linkages with organised crime, illicit arms trade and terrorism.

40. The Heads of State or Government were gratified to note the expanding cooperation among Member States to combat and eliminate the scourge of drug trafficking and drug abuse.

41. They reiterated the need for further strengthening cooperation in this field and called for the expeditious implementation of the recommendations formulated for this purpose in pursuance of their decision at the Colombo Summit.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

42. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to pay special attention to the monitoring of the security of small states and underscored the need to consider special measures of support to preserve their sovereign independence, territorial integrity and the well-being of their people. They further noted that real protection of small and weaker states should be firmly rooted in the Rule of Law and strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms relating to the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States — big or small. This, they stressed, should be ensured by all countries either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate actions.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

43. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need to further promote people-to-people contact in order to ensure increased involvement of peoples of South Asia in the process of regional cooperation. In this context, they noted that the formulation of guidelines and procedures for extending recognition to regional apex bodies would facilitate participation of these bodies in promoting regional cooperation at the people-to-people level.

44. The Leaders expressed the hope that the recent recognition of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry would contribute positively to enhancing cooperation in the crucial areas of trade and economic relations.

45. The Heads of State or Government expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of India for hosting the First South Asian Festival of SAARC Countries in 1992. The Festival provided the people of the region the opportunity to share in the rich cultural heritage of South Asia. The Heads of State or Government hoped that the South Asian Festival would become a regular feature.

ASSOCIATION OF SAARC SPEAKERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

46. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the initiative of the Speakers of Parliaments of SAARC Countries in forming an 'Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians'. They were of the view that the establishment of this Association would add another important dimension to the process of regional cooperation.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

47. The Heads of State or Government endorsed the recommendation of the Council of Ministers for the establishment of an Inter-Government Group (IGG) on South Asian Development Fund (SADF) on an ad hoc basis. They directed that the IGG define in clear terms the size, structure, resources and operational modalities of the proposed fund. They also directed the IGG to examine their complementarities between the SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) and SADF, and their relationship, including the possibility of their merger. They welcomed the offer of Maldives to host the meeting of IGG.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

48. The Heads of State or Government had wide-ranging discussions on the current global political trends and future prospects, particularly those issues that affect South Asia. In this context, they reiterated their deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen the United Nations as the central instrument for peace, security, disarmament, development and cooperation among the nations of the world. To this end, the Leaders supported all constructive initiatives aimed at strengthening the United Nations. They, however, underscored that any move to adapt or reform the United Nations must be undertaken with the sole objective of rendering the United Nations more democratic, efficient and effective and not to limit the focus of its attention to a narrow and isolated range of objectives.

49. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-aligned Movement and underlined the continued validity and relevance of these principles and objectives in the contemporary global political and economic context. They recalled the important role the Movement had been playing in strengthening international peace, promoting development and establishing more equitable and just economic relations and enhancing international cooperation in all areas. They expressed their deep conviction that the Movement's innate strength uniquely equipped it to continue to play a most constructive role in laying the foundations and defining the characteristics of a new world order which should be based on the principles of justice, equity and democracy in international relations. In this context the Heads of State or Government welcomed the success of the Jakarta Summit of the Non-aligned countries and called for the expeditious implementation of its decisions.

50. The Heads of State or Government noted that the end of the coldwar presented new opportunities and challenges. They observed that despite many positive developments and recent successes in resolving some regional conflicts, the international political scene was still marred by strife and tension. They expressed their serious concern over the unfortunate and tragic consequences of ethnic conflict and violence afflicting people and communities in many parts of the world. They stressed that efforts must be intensified to find peaceful and viable solutions to conflicts of long standing nature and new problems through greater respect for international law and universally accepted humanitarian norms and standards.

51. The Heads of State or Government noted a number of recent positive developments in the area of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament including the agreements on bilateral arms reductions between the United States and the Russian Federation. They expressed their hope that the implementation of the far-reaching arms reduction agreed in the Washington Agreement of June 1992 and START II signed in Moscow in January 1993 would be successfully carried out. The Leaders urged all nuclear weapon states to collectively endeavour to attain the ultimate goal of complete elimination of nuclear arsenals in the shortest possible time.

52. They also underscored the imperative to further broaden and deepen the dimensions of disarmament and to complement bilateral approaches of disarmament with effective multilateral approaches. While welcoming the recent progress in arms reduction at the global level, the Leaders were convinced that this objective could be best achieved through the promotion of mutual trust and confidence among Member States.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

53. The Heads of State or Government noted that while it

was important to build peace and create conditions of stability in the world, it was equally important to promote economic and social development. They underscored that international cooperation for development and eradication of poverty were inextricably linked with the preservation of international peace and security and hence needed to be treated on an equal footing and pursued with equal vigour. The Heads of State or Government expressed their grave concern over the continuing deterioration in economic situation in the majority of developing countries. The economies of developing countries, they observed, continued to suffer as a result of limited market access for their exports, dwindling resource flows, absence of adequate foreign investment, mounting external indebtedness, inadequate transfer of technology and the inequities in the global monetary, financial and trading systems. The Heads of State or Government noted that although the developing countries themselves had the primary responsibility for their economic development, the role of developed countries remained central to the revival of the growth of the world economy — in particular the economies of the developing countries.

54. The Heads of State or Government reiterated the vital importance of economic interdependence among nations and of the need for reviving North South dialogue. They fully endorsed the view that there should be more equitable economic opportunities for all nations. These should include such important features as the strengthening of a free, open and nondiscriminatory multilateral trading system, effective macro-economic coordination and fiscal discipline to ensure stable conditions conducive to development in the global economy. They also reiterated their firm support for the broadening of the coordination of international macro-economic policies to take into account concerns of all countries, specially the developing countries. Referring to the competing demands for capital and investment resources, the Heads of State or Government underscored the need to ensure the adequate flow of investment resources to the developing countries through increasing global savings and a more equitable utilization of the peace dividends. In this context the Heads of State or Government also underscored the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for the developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. They emphasized on the need for exceptional finance to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC Countries.

55. The Heads of State or Government also strongly underlined the need to continue efforts to seek a comprehensive, durable and growth-oriented solution to the external indebtedness of the developing countries. This, they stressed, was essential to accelerate the process of growth in these countries. A lasting solution to the debt crisis, the Heads of State or Government noted, must take into account the need to significantly reduce the stock and service of all types of debts of indebted developing countries to augment the concessional aid flows to SAARC Countries and work out anticipatory measures to prevent the recurrence and proliferation of the debt problem.

56. The Heads of State or Government also underlined the importance of a strengthened and liberalized international trading system. In this context they noted that the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations was a matter of great importance to the developing countries. Failure of the Round, the Leaders noted, would only further impair economic growth and encourage protectionist policy seriously weakening the multilateral trading system. The Heads of State or Government strongly urged the major partners in the Negotiations to demonstrate their political will and take positive steps to ensure without further delay a satisfactory conclusion of the Uruguay Round. They further stressed that although the main thrust of these negotiations in the recent past had been in respect of new issues, there was an imperative need to ensure that the Uruguay Round fully take into account the concerns and interests of developing countries. This, the Heads of State or Government stressed, was particularly important. The Leaders underscored the need to speedily conclude the current round of negotiations in a transparent, balanced and expeditious manner. They also stressed that before the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, an evaluation of results be held from the point of view of developing countries.

57. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern over the increasing stock of anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations against the exports of developing countries and the new threats to a liberal trading order in the form of measures taken in pursuit of the goals relating to workers' rights and the environment.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

58. The Heads of State or Government were of the view that greater consultations among the delegations of SAARC Countries in all international fora on the major issues of common concern to them would be in the interest of all their countries. They felt that the development of collective positions on such issues in the international fora would enhance the international profile of South Asia and would enable the countries in the region to articulate their position on them more effectively. They reiterated their common resolve to concert their position in all international fora and negotiations with a view to deriving maximum benefits from them in accordance with their needs and common priorities.

59. The Heads of State or Government underscored the vital importance attached by their countries to the forth coming Second World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the World Population Conference in 1994 and the 1995 World Conference on Women. They also supported the convening of a World Summit for Social Development. The Heads of State or Government stressed the need to develop a common South-Asian perspective on the issues to be discussed by these important international conferences. They also underscored the imperative to coordinate the position of SAARC countries in order to ensure a balanced equitable and action oriented outcome of these Conferences.

OBSERVER STATUS

60. The Heads of State or Government decided that an Expert Group of the Member States will examine the various requests for observer status at SAARC/SAARC meetings in all its aspects on the basis of a working paper to be prepared by the Secretariat and make appropriate recommendations to the Nineteenth Session of the Standing Committee. In this respect they welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host the Expert Group meeting.

CONCLUSION

61. The Heads of State or Government expressed their deep satisfaction over the positive outcome of the Seventh SAARC Summit and expressed their conviction that this Summit would greatly contribute towards strengthening the policies and cooperative actions of the Member States in response to the challenges of the 1990s and beyond in areas where SAARC has a distinct contribution to make. They also reiterated once again their determination to strengthen and enrich SAARC as an instrument — endowing it with a clear set of forward looking goals and objectives as well as all the requisite institutional capacities — so that it can continue to work to enrich not only the lives of its own members but also promote peace, progress and stability in South Asia in a larger context.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE SAARC HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

62. The Heads of State or Government gratefully accepted the offer of India to host the Eighth SAARC Summit in 1994.

63. The Heads of State or Government of Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their sincere appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had conducted the Meeting and guided its proceedings in her capacity as Chairperson. They expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and People of Bangladesh and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.