



# GLIMPSES

**28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
(29<sup>th</sup> SAARC Charter Day)  
On  
6<sup>th</sup> December, 2013**

**Celebrated by  
SAARC Disaster Management Centre  
New Delhi**

Afghanistan

Bangladesh

Bhutan

India

Maldives

Nepal

Pakistan

Sri Lanka



**SAARC Disaster Management Centre**  
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**CELEBRATIONS OF SAARC CHARTER DAY 2013**

SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC), New Delhi, since its inception in 2007 has been celebrating the SAARC Charter Day every year with zeal and zest. Keeping up to the tradition, this year SDMC, celebrated 29<sup>th</sup> Charter Day, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2013 with full fervor. It was celebrated at the Conference Hall of SDMC, New Delhi.

To commemorate the occasion a panel discussion on “**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): from Risk to Resilience**”, - South Asia perspective, was organized. The entire programme was scheduled for 2 hrs but due to enthusiasm and active participation it continued for an extra hour. The panelists for the discussion were individuals of eminence from their respective fields.

The Celebrations had participation from Embassy of Nepal, Bangladesh High Commission, Deputy Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External affairs, Government of India, Mr. Mathew Hammill, Economic Affairs Officer, Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia, UNESCAP and Ms. Madhavi Ariyabhandhu, Regional Programme Officer, UNISDR, Bangkok. The forum had a judicious mix of representatives from UNICEF, UNDP as well as most of the South Asian regional Organizations like, The Energy Resource Institute, South Asian University, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Handicap International, World Vision, India Water Partnership, and Corporate sector was represented by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) and Global Rescue.

The Programme started with the welcome of the invited dignitaries and eminent experts in the forum, by Prof Santosh Kumar, Director, SDMC. Following which he read out the message of H.E. Secretary General of SAARC, on the occasion.





SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
SECRETARIAT

**Message from H. E. Mr. Ahmed Saleem, Secretary-General of SAARC,  
on the occasion of the Twenty-ninth SAARC Charter Day, 8 December 2013**

On the auspicious occasion of the Twenty-ninth Charter Day of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), I am pleased to issue this message and to extend my warm felicitations to the people and Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Launched in December 1985, SAARC is the manifestation of the collective will of our Member States to promote regional cooperation and integration in order to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.

While it is true that SAARC commenced with a few areas of regional cooperation in its initial stage, the ambit of engagement among its members continued to grow by every passing year. SAARC today caters to many diverse areas of regional cooperation pursued through a number of inter-governmental mechanisms and institutions. Indeed, SAARC has served as a common platform to address the common issues facing our region, thereby building mutual trust and confidence among one another. In addition, through its diverse activities over the past twenty-eight years, SAARC has been able to create a distinct South Asian identity.

While the Association has made notable achievements in many areas, there is a growing realization that more needs to be done to strengthen SAARC's institutions to make the SAARC process more efficient, effective and result-oriented to realize the objectives of the Association. To this end, with the mandate from the Member States for the first time, the SAARC Secretariat has undertaken a comprehensive Study to streamline, rationalize, restructure and strengthen all the mechanisms and processes of SAARC, including the Secretariat, Regional Centers and SAARC Specialized Bodies (SSBs). With the implementation of several recommendations contained in the Study, I remain confident that the SAARC process will be revitalized for the common benefit of its membership.

The Seventeenth SAARC Summit was held in Addu City of the Maldives in November 2011. The Summit was devoted to the theme, *Building Bridges*. Since then, a number of initiatives have been underway to promote intra-regional connectivity. However, the non-convening of the meetings of the Charter Bodies of SAARC, namely, Standing Committee, Council of Ministers and Summit, has created a backlog of important decisions to be taken by the Association. Nevertheless, I am pleased that all the Member States have now confirmed their participation at the Inter-Summit Session of the SAARC Council of Ministers to be held in the Maldives from 17 to 20 February 2014. With the convening of this Session and the Eighteenth SAARC Summit, I remain confident that the SAARC process will be active as before.

As we mark the Twenty-ninth SAARC Charter Day today, let us recommit ourselves to strengthen SAARC in order to deliver tangible benefits to our peoples in the region.

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Director, SDMC also presented the snap shot about the achievements and the pertaining issues which are being faced by the South Asian region and how SDMC proposes to handle these issues within the region. He began with inviting attention of all, to the aspects of the SAARC Charter which underlines our commitments to the region. And the constraints of demography which we have to collectively over come to achieve our vision and mission, with the support of strategies and the road maps devised by the Centre. He also reiterated the focus on regional co-operation and collaboration on various trans-boundary issues to mutually reach at tangle solutions for a resilient South Asia region. This can be collaboratively achieved with the support of Member countries and the International Partners.



Prof Santosh Kumar, also underlined that the Centres efforts are to work in the direction of remedying, ailing Development Gains in the scenario of increasing disaster challenges towards a disaster resilient society. He further elaborated that today's panel discussion will provide input to conceptualize and develop conclusion paper on HFA 2, which would be endorsed by all Member countries in Asia Ministerial Conference in June 2014. It is also the mandate of SDMC to bring all the Member countries on a common understanding and acceptance for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), for the region. And this highlights the importance of today's discussion and more importantly expert comments following the discussion. SDMC looks forward to such brainstorming sessions which can set the tone for DRR, Climate Change, HFA and SDG. Such inputs will form the part of Conclusion paper which SDMC would be developing and once it is endorsed by all SAARC Member States, it will be an input to the South Asia

Conclave to be held in Jan 2015. And this will be in turn be the input as position paper of the region to the World Conference. The major emerging issue in times to come is Climate Change, its impact and Adaptation which needs to be handled with special focus on South Asia region. Hence SDMC has already initiated the process of development of a position paper on Climate Change which would lead to HFA 2, in collaboration with UNISDR. With these words marking the commitment of the Centre for the region the house was set open for panel discussion.

Mr. Mathew Hammill, Economic Affairs Officer, Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia, UNESCAP, presently working in the area of MDG and SDG laid stress on issues like eradication of hunger, women empowerment, adequate sanitation facilities, devising minimum standard guidelines for disasters, food security and energy security. The disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction strategies should be in terms of priorities for better positioning in South Asia Region. He further opined that as Millennium Development Goals did not address issues in totality, hence Sustainable Development Goals have to address the gap and also reduce economic and social risks. He concluded by outlining the recommendations for the South Asia region which SDMC should address. These were to strengthen the co-operation and lead the process so that a combined approach to prioritize the focus areas for the region can be arrived at. SAARC should lead the process on issues like energy security, natural resource management, DRR and SDG with bottom up approach.



This was followed by presentation of a case study on the Brahmaputra River Basin on social, economic and political aspects. The study has been carried out by the Climate Change

Division of The Energy Resource Institute (TERI). The study highlighted the importance of taking into account the social, economic and political equation existing, while addressing the DRR and Climate Change impact, to have a holistic approach. An innovative practical project demonstration was shared by World Vision India, wherein protection of livelihood by setting up an example that how an uncultivable stone filled land can be made cultivable with a little extra effort. This highlighted the importance of action combined with innovation on the field to achieve the goals set through HFA and SDG.

Ms. Madhavi Ariyabhandhu, Regional Programme Officer, UNISDR, Bangkok, speaking on the occasion underlined the importance and urgency of addressing DRR and Climate Change issues through DRR framework – HFA 2. In her opinion the most effective way of addressing these would be mingling these objectives into SDG's and HFA core areas of work. She apprised that currently, UNISDR is leading the process of development of HFA 2 framework but the responsibility of implementation of actions should not only involve the Governments of the countries but also all the stakeholders in the area. And this also forms the basis of present consultation process. During this process the seven core areas that have been identified as most important and fundamental in post HFA 1, beyond 2015 and needs to be addressed are: Community Resilience, Integration between SDG, DRR and Climate Change, action at the local level, Women leadership and gender equity in DRR, Underline Risk factor i.e. aiming for sustainable development gains to be protected from disaster losses, risk governance and accountability and Private sector engagement in Risk Reduction.

The aim of UNISDR is to come up with very specific recommendations on these areas, which should be outlined in post 2015 framework. She was pleased to inform the house that SDMC is leading the Consultative process for identification of issues and priorities of the region for HFA -2. The inputs will be compiled and this will form the position paper to be endorsed at the Asia Ministerial Conference in 2014. This will be the contribution of the region to the Global framework and the same would then be endorsed at the World Conference. She stressed that the need of hour is to take the driving seat and in order to do so, this is the time to reflect upon the recommendations and directions where we want to go post 2015.



Mr. MJH Javed, from the Bangladesh High Commission highlighted the importance of regional co-operation, and SAARC is the forum which can provide the platform for regional dialogue so that mutually we can arrive at a consensus for trans – boundary issues. This forum should also look into regional resource mobilization on need basis.



He complimented the SAARC Disaster Management Centre for the efforts put together to commensurate the SAARC Charter Day and also appreciated the august gathering which participated in the discussions. He congratulated the Director, SDMC for achievements of the Centre and once again reaffirmed the pledge on behalf of Bangladesh, to support the Centre in all its regional efforts.

Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle, from the Nepal Embassy, congratulated the Centre for all the efforts put together to celebrate the occasion. He appreciated the



concerns raised by experts that are being faced by the region and was of the opinion that the solution to these issues can be arrived at only through mutual collaborations and SAARC is the right forum to address it as most of the disasters affect two or more neighboring countries at the same time. Hence most of the issues are trans-boundary and the solution has to be achieved mutually. He further expressed his views that smaller working groups on various issues should be constituted comprising of expert of the field from all SAARC member countries who can mutually agree upon solutions to trans- boundary issues.



Ms. Margareta Tileva, UNICEF, brought the focus of the august gathering towards the increasing severity of natural disasters e.g. in last one and half months India has already faced two

cyclones and the third cyclone is presently building up. The same increase in intensity is reflected across the region as Philippines also faced cyclone, of the magnitude not known earlier to mankind. This only reiterates the fact that the need of the hour is to focus on our collaborative efforts towards handling climate change and its related impact. While such issues are being addressed, the most vulnerable and affected are the children. And hence issues pertaining to children in disasters should be given priority. She was of the opinion that from the South Asian perspective, the two major challenges that need to be addressed are governance and power play. And the possible solutions to these issues lie in innovation, but the idea or concept of innovation should come from the community, i.e., a bottom-up approach should be adopted. She was of the opinion that SAARC can provide the forum for data exchange among the member countries.

Ms. Veena Khanduri, from India Water Partnership, highlighted that one of the major issues in the region is water, and as rightly pointed out by the other panelists, water security and energy security are important issues that need to be tackled by neighboring countries for amicable and mutually agreeable solutions. As these are mostly trans-boundary issues, hence SDMC is the right forum to address these issues for solution. She was of the opinion that one of the important aspects is to share data among the countries and SDMC can lead this process. She apprised that SDMC



along with IWP is planning a regional workshop on trans-boundary water issues.



Mr. Arun Sahdeo, of UNDP, underlined the importance of development of a baseline and indicator for DRR which are mutually agreed among the member countries so that preparedness and resilience of communities to disaster can be assessed quantitatively. He informed the forum that currently UNDP is working on these issues. This only underlines

the importance of development of tools for measuring resilience. SDMC should also adopt similar approach and take up formulation of guidelines on these issues for the region and this would go along way in assisting disaster preparedness in a big way. This strategy can act as game changer for the region.

The Corporate Sector represented by Global Rescue and Federation of Indian Commerce and affirmed their support



for the cause to the region. FICCI representatives shared that now in India with the recent law amendment all corporate sector companies have to invest about 2% of their income for corporate social responsibility and thus big, small and medium business would now be pitching their roles in a development of better resilient communities. The students of

different countries in the region who are studying at South Asia University also shared their understanding on the importance of spreading awareness as in their opinion the dialogues, policies and strategies can be practically executed only when there is awareness among the common man on issues revolving around them.

Ms. Madhu Sethi, Deputy Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External affairs, Government of India on behalf of the ministry extended warm felicitation to all on the occasion of SAARC Charter day. She expressed her appreciation on the knowledge that had been shared and

innovative, useful ideas for enhancing the activities of the Centre that have been shared today. She reiterated the important aspects of mutual co-operation as substantiated in the SAARC Charter. India's commitment to SAARC is to stimulate and sustain the cooperative projects of SAARC that are instrumental in realization of SAARC people dreams and aspirations. The SAARC Disaster Management Centre redeems our confidence and faith to deliver our commitments. As SAARC represents 1/5 of the population of world, it is mandated to improve the quality of lives of people by its efforts and SDMC is a very vibrant part of this association. SAARC to provide India as a member is committed which enhances the effectiveness of SAARC. She congratulated the Centre for the remarkable celebration on the occasion of Charter Day.



The celebrations ended on a note of commitment for the cause to make the communities more resilient. Prof Santosh also highlighted that SAARC is the most disaster prone region of the World but it is also the biggest laboratory for solutions to disasters, due to the intellect, resources and the will to work for the cause. And this will be the game changer for the region Prof Santosh concluded the days celebrations by reiterating the quote from H.E. Secretary General's message on the occasion "as we mark the 29<sup>TH</sup> SAARC Charter Day today, let us recommit ourselves to strengthen SAARC in order to deliver tangible benefits to our peoples in the region".



*"Small is beautiful"*

*The SAARC Disaster Management Centre, Team.*