

Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

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We, the Heads of State or Government of BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL, PAKISTAN and SRI LANKA;

- 1.** Desirous of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the UNITED NATIONS CHARTER and NON-ALIGNMENT, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of all disputes;
- 2.** Conscious that in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved in the SOUTH ASIAN region by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful cooperation among the Member States which are bound by ties of history and culture;
- 3.** Aware of the common problems, interests and aspirations of the peoples of SOUTH ASIA and the need for joint action and enhanced cooperation within their respective political and economic systems and cultural traditions;
- 4.** Convinced that regional cooperation among the countries of SOUTH ASIA is mutually beneficial, desirable and necessary for promoting the welfare and improving the quality of life of the peoples of the region;
- 5.** Convinced further that economic, social and technical cooperation among the countries of SOUTH ASIA would contribute significantly to national and collective self-reliance;
- 6.** Recognising that increased cooperation, contacts and exchanges among the countries of the region will contribute to the promotion of friendship and understanding among their peoples;
- 7.** Recalling the DECLARATION signed by their Foreign Ministers in NEW DELHI on August 2, 1983 and noting the progress achieved in regional cooperation;
- 8.** Reaffirming their determination to promote such cooperation within an institutional framework;

DO HEREBY AGREE to establish an organisation to be known as SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION hereinafter referred to as the ASSOCIATION, with the following objectives, principles, institutional and financial arrangements:

**Article I
OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the ASSOCIATION shall be:

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- a)** to promote the welfare of the peoples of SOUTH ASIA and to improve their quality of life;
- b)** to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potentials;
- c)** to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of SOUTH ASIA;
- d)** to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems;
- e)** to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;
- f)** to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
- g)** to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and
- h)** to cooperate with international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes.

**Article II
PRINCIPLES**

- 1.** Cooperation within the framework of the ASSOCIATION shall be based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.
- 2.** Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.
- 3.** Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.

**Article III
MEETINGS OF THE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT**

The Heads of State or Government shall meet once a year or more often as and when considered necessary by the Member States.

**Article IV
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

- 1.** A Council of Ministers consisting of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States shall be established with the following functions:
 - a)** formulation of the policies of the ASSOCIATION;
 - b)** review of the progress of cooperation under the ASSOCIATION;
 - c)** decision on new areas of cooperation;
 - d)** establishment of additional mechanism under the ASSOCIATION as deemed necessary;
 - e)** decision on other matters of general interest to the ASSOCIATION.
- 2.** The Council of Ministers shall meet twice a year. Extraordinary session of the Council may be held by agreement among the Member States.

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**Article V
STANDING COMMITTEE**

1. The Standing Committee comprising the Foreign Secretaries shall have the following functions:
 - a) overall monitoring and coordination of programme of cooperation;
 - b) approval of projects and programmes, and the modalities of their financing;
 - c) determination of inter-sectoral priorities;
 - d) mobilisation of regional and external resources;
 - e) identification of new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies.
2. The Standing Committee shall meet as often as deemed necessary.
3. The Standing Committee shall submit periodic reports to the Council of Ministers and make reference to it as and when necessary for decisions on policy matters.

**Article VI
TECHNICAL COMMITTEES**

1. Technical Committees comprising representatives of Member States shall be responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the programmes in their respective areas of cooperation.
2. They shall have the following terms of reference:
 - a) determination of the potential and the scope of regional cooperation in agreed areas;
 - b) formulation of programmes and preparation of projects;
 - c) determination of financial implications of sectoral programmes;
 - d) formulation of recommendations regarding apportionment of costs;
 - e) implementation and coordination of sectoral programmes;
 - f) monitoring of progress in implementation.
3. The Technical Committees shall submit periodic reports to the Standing Committee.
4. The Chairmanship of the Technical Committees shall normally rotate among Member States in alphabetical order every two years.
5. The Technical Committees may, inter-alia, use the following mechanisms and modalities, if and when considered necessary:
 - a) meetings of heads of national technical agencies;
 - b) meetings of experts in specific fields;
 - c) contact amongst recognised centres of excellence in the region.

**Article VII
ACTION COMMITTEES**

The Standing Committee may set up Action Committees comprising Member States concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all Member States.

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**Article VIII
SECRETARIAT**

There shall be a Secretariat of the ASSOCIATION.

**Article IX
FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

1. The contribution of each Member State towards financing of the activities of the ASSOCIATION shall be voluntary.
2. Each Technical Committee shall make recommendations for the apportionment of costs of implementing the programmes proposed by it.
3. In case sufficient financial resources cannot be mobilised within the region for funding activities of the ASSOCIATION, external financing from appropriate sources may be mobilised with the approval of or by the Standing Committee.

**Article X
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. Decisions at all levels shall be taken on the basis of unanimity.
2. Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations.

IN FAITH WHEREOF We Have Set Our Hands And Seals Hereunto. DONE In DHAKA, BANGLADESH, On This The Eighth Day Of December Of The Year One Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Five.

Hussain Muhammad Ershad
PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Jigme Singye Wangchuk
KING OF BHUTAN

Rajiv Gandhi
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev
KING OF NEPAL

Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq
PRESIDENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

Junius Richard Jayewardene
PRESIDENT OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA