



**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
SECRETARIAT**

**MESSAGE  
WORLD AIDS DAY, 1 DECEMBER 2015**

World AIDS Day is observed globally every year on 1 December to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS. **“Getting to Zero”** is the theme of this year’s World AIDS Day, which aims for **“Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.”**

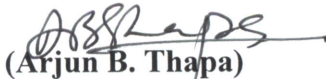
Achieving the target set by UNAIDS for ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 is possible by closing the gap between people who have access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services and people who are left behind. Closing the gap means empowering and enabling all the people, everywhere, to access the services they need. By closing the HIV testing gap, people who are unaware of their HIV-positive status can begin to get support; by closing the treatment gap, people living with HIV will have more access to life-saving medicine; by closing the gap in access to medicines for children, all the children living with HIV will be able to access treatment; and by closing the access gap, all the people can be included as a part of the solution.

In line with its Charter objectives, SAARC remains committed to “promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.” Accordingly, at their successive SAARC Summits, our Leaders have recognized HIV/AIDS as a major threat to the region’s economic transformation. At the Twelfth SAARC Summit held in Islamabad in January 2004, our Leaders committed themselves to reduce the spread of the epidemic in the region and to enable access to affordable prevention and treatment services to combat HIV/AIDS, TB and other infectious diseases by strengthening the SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre in Nepal.

South Asia has a low HIV prevalence of less than one percent. The HIV virus has shown a declining trend in some of the countries of the region and there has been notable progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On a more positive note, all the SAARC Member States have developed their strategic plans to combat HIV/TB. In addition, the Member States have also increased access to and coverage of life-saving treatment, reduced HIV infection, and accelerated efforts to eliminate the risk for vulnerable populations.

As we observe the World AIDS Day today, I call for intensified global and regional actions to halt, control and prevent the HIV/AIDS epidemic across the SAARC region by 2030.

Kathmandu, Nepal.

  
(Arjun B. Thapa)  
Secretary-General of SAARC