



**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT**

SECRETARY GENERAL

MESSAGE

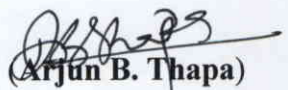
The eighth of December each year, since the inception of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, unfolds anniversary day of SAARC Charter and this day in December 2016, we celebrate the Thirty-second Charter Day. Thirty-two years, after its founding, the SAARC remains a beacon of hope in South Asia.

As defined in its Charter, the primary objectives of SAARC are to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region. 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. Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.

SAARC has made considerable progress since its emergence more than three decades ago. Some of the major achievements of SAARC include the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), South Asian University (SAU) and SAARC Development Fund (SDF), which is its umbrella funding mechanism. There are eleven sub-regional and regional projects that are underway in the social sector with the support of the SDF, while its Economic and Infrastructure Windows are being operationalized soon, opening up ample avenues for project-based collaboration in these important sectors. In the meanwhile, the SAARC Secretariat is also coordinating six projects in the areas of agriculture, rural development and food security with the support from ADB, FAO, OIE, IFAD, UNESCAP and the Government of Korea.

The Charter Day, in its Thirty-second year, is indeed an occasion for the peoples of South Asia to take pride in SAARC's achievements in the past and also to make a pledge together, with renewed vigour to collectively aspire for sustained prosperity of our peoples under the auspices of the Association. Further, I take personal pride in heading the organization during the past three years, and, together with colleagues from Member States at the Secretariat, it has been the most satisfying experience to work for the peoples of the region, focusing on goals enshrined in the SAARC Charter. The timeless values of the Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to "unite our strength" to serve "we the peoples". As we shine a light on this milestone anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to a better and brighter future for all.

I would like to express my deep appreciation and best wishes to our citizens for your vibrant role in building a peaceful and prosperous South Asian Community. Long Live SAARC!


(Arjun B. Thapa)

Kathmandu, 07 December 2016

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