



SAARC

SECRETARY GENERAL

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
SECRETARIAT



**Message**  
**World AIDS Day, 01 December 2017**

World AIDS Day is observed every year on 01 December to raise awareness of the HIV epidemic, mitigate stigma and discrimination associated with the disease, encourage prevention, treatment and care of the people living with HIV/AIDS, and demonstrate solidarity and support to the people affected by the disease. The theme of the World AIDS Day this year is "My health, my right."

The right to health is the right of every human being irrespective of cast, religion, race and social status. This right implies the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; prevention and treatment of ill health; making decisions about one's own health; and to be treated with respect and dignity without any discrimination.

SAARC is committed to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, as an important component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Almost all the SDGs are linked in one way or the other to health. So, achieving the SDGs, which also include the objective of ending the AIDS epidemic, will depend heavily on ensuring the right to health.

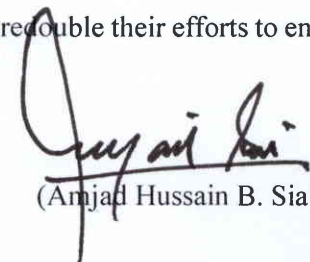
SAARC countries face common health challenges. Most bear a burden of infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, Non Communicable Diseases and malnutrition. Demographic transitions, HIV and AIDS, migration, unplanned urbanization, and a host of social determinants of health accentuate these problems.

On the whole, the SAARC region has a low level of HIV infection, but the number of people living with HIV is quite high, estimated to be at 2.28 million, with the largest burden shared by three countries namely, India, Pakistan and Nepal.

The SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) plays a key role in addressing the health challenges in South Asia. The STAC is working to support the efforts of the National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes through evidence-based policy guidance, coordination and technical support.

While drawing complacency from the success we have achieved so far, we must make concerted efforts to ensure that all children start their lives free from HIV; young people and adults grow up and stay free from HIV; and the treatment becomes accessible to every person in every corner; and there is no discrimination towards patients.

On this World AIDS Day, I wish to call upon the Member States of SAARC to redouble their efforts to end the HIV epidemic by 2030.

  
(Anjad Hussain B. Sial)