

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

Recommendations for strengthening SAARC

By

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Introduction

With the highest concentration of the poor, reducing poverty is still a formidable challenge in South Asia. The region awaits concerted efforts of the member states to tackle the abject poverty. As the entire region has lagged behind in terms of socio-economic development, the region needs to create an environment of social and political stability which leads to economic take-off. South Asia is in need of a huge amount of investment in programmes and projects suitable designed for poverty alleviation and social development.

Poverty, unemployment, terrorism, extremism, underdevelopment, trafficking in women and children and lack of proper exploitation of the natural resources are regarded as major problems and challenges facing the South Asian Region. Although the third decade of SAARC is recognized as the decade of implementation, no effective strategy and action plan has been formulated so far to deal with the aforementioned problems. The regional organization is often blamed for just becoming a forum for South Asian leaders to meet each other. The charge is also not baseless when we look at the action plans of the regional body.

Here are the some valuable recommendations for the better role of SAARC:

- It says that the SAACR Charter formulated in a different environment in 1980s should be revised to address the present aspiration of the member states.

- Another recommendation says SAARC Development Fund needs to be used to develop infrastructures in the member states.

- South Asia should have more integration on trade and investment. It is necessary to remove domestic compulsions about trade and investment integration.

- Necessary efforts should be taken to build social and economic capital which will ensure the security of human being in the region and it called for formulating the South Asian Economic Union.

- Role of media is essential for furthering cooperation in South Asia. It says that media should be positive and should highlight commonalities and strong features of the country. media must be positive and supportive and it must learn when and where to stop. There should be maturity on the part of the media and their policymakers.

➤ **INTEGRATIVE FACTORS**

Regional communities such as the European Union and ASEAN have flourished due to a number of integrative factors. SAARC, on the other hand, has not experienced these integrative factors in any substantive way and will need to if the region is to develop any sense of community.

Political Will

The political will of the leaders of Europe and Southeast Asia to come together de
differences in size, level of development and security perception has been substantial.

➤ **Social Acceptability**

Regional economic integration has to be preceded by social acceptability of the regional personality both among elites and the people. South Asia had a common past, a common heritage and culture. The contemporary leaders of South Asia need to revive that commonality among its people as has been done in both Europe and Southeast Asia.

➤ **Mutual Benefits**

Strong regional cooperation will never be effective unless both people and their leaders can comprehend the mutual benefits of coming together.

- In order to create a better ground for mutual cooperation among the mainstream leaders, Track II diplomacy (i.e. nonofficial engagements) can prove fruitful.

CONCLUSION

In terms of size and strength, India has more important role to play in the region. Like India,

other member states also have to play their respective roles to help enhance regional cooperation. SAARC could emerge as a successful organization if the regional forum concentrates its activities on promoting cooperation among the people, and pays attention towards materializing the concepts of welfare state, and social justice and security. The regional organization should take up such measures at a time when economic liberalization and market oriented economy are gaining ground worldwide. With the solution of problems of this region, around one-fourth of the world's problems will be solved. Therefore, SAARC's success in achieving its objectives will be proved to be unique.