

**Declaration of the Youth representing the Member Nations of the  
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)  
Adopted at the “South Asian Youth Summit for Colombo SAARC-2008”  
held at the Global Tower Hotel, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka on 25 th July, 2008  
organized by the “Sri Lanka-United Nations Friendship Organisation” (SUNFO)  
and Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)-Sri Lanka.**

**We the Members of organisations, networks and societies representing the Youth of the SAARC Member states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka;**

1. Aware of the common problems, interests and aspirations of the youth of South Asia;
2. Recognising the vast regional disparities in the levels of education throughout the South Asian region;
3. Convinced that better access to education is vital for youth empowerment and regional development;
4. Alarmed by the fact that Youth lack representation and are often left out of the decision making process on issues affecting them;
5. Desirous of promoting more opportunities for employment of youth of the Region;
6. Concerned at the extreme levels of gender discrimination and inequality within the South Asian region;
7. Alarmed by the rapid increase in HIV/AIDS in the South Asian region and the lack of political will and social awareness in addressing such an epidemic;
8. Bearing in mind that most nations within the region suffer conflict and other disasters resulting in a significant proportion of disabled youth, most whom lack any opportunities to progress;
9. Reaffirming our determination to promote the interests of youth in the South Asian region;

Propose,

1. The establishment of a Common Education Policy, to be adopted by all SAARC Members, and will set minimum education standards which must be met by all Members;

We, the Youth, propose the inclusion of HIV/AIDS awareness, narcotics, alcohol and sexual abuse education within the Common Education Policy;

We, the Youth, further propose the inclusion of Citizenship Education within the same policy in order to increase awareness on individual rights and entitlements.

2. The establishment of a SAARC Youth Parliament that works in collaboration with national parliaments and both the SAARC Ministerial and Heads of State Committees;

The Youth Parliament would discuss and propose policies for addressing and proposing solutions for issues affecting youth in the region and increase their representation.

3. The establishment of a Common Market for the South Asian region, where not only the free trade of goods take place, but also where services, capital and people are able to move freely within the Region, in order to exploit individual economic potential and contribute to overall regional development;

We, the Youth, propose the strengthening of existing institutional frameworks such as the South Asian Free Trade Agreement and encourage the establishment of Common Economic Partnership Area in the Region as an initial platform for the creation of a Common Market.

4. The recognition of a Common or Linked language in order to effectively communicate within the Region in order to maximise regional integration and mutual understanding.
5. The establishment of minimal female representation in individual national parliaments of the SAARC region;

Member parliaments must have at least 30 percent female representation;

We, the Youth, further propose the enactment by individual national parliaments of the South Asian region, three pieces of legislation fundamental for the establishment of gender equality;

We, the Youth, specifically propose the enactment of a Non Discrimination Act, Equal Opportunities Act and Equal Pay Act, in order to address the difficulties faced by women and other minorities.

6. The establishment of national legislation and policies providing increased opportunities and access to persons with disabilities in order to better integrate persons with disability to the social, educational, cultural, political and economic life of the South Asian region.

This summit was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on the 25 of July 2008 with the participation of Youth desirous of the creation of a more dynamic and thriving SAARC region.

We, the Youth, hold the national parliaments and their respective leaders, responsible and obligated to the effective implementation of these recommendations and policies in order to create an environment of peace and prosperity for the Youth and the Region as a whole.

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