

Sixth South Asian Peoples Summit

Declaration

New Delhi, India March 31 – April 2, 2007

"People's Summits", held annually since 2000 parallel to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit aims to promote people to people dialogues, exchanges and linkages in South Asia to address regional issues. This joint civil society initiative provides a platform to act on a "people's agenda" and helps civil society to engage with national governments and regional institutions. The participation of Afghanistan in the 6th People's summit was welcomed in which more than 200 people from 8 countries participated.

We the people and networks of South Asia - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have assembled in New Delhi, India from March 31-April 2, 2007 strongly condemn the increased defense spending despite repeated demands from the people for a 10% annual reduction and utilization of these amounts for people's development.

The summit strongly demands for the establishment of a Regional Security Council for amending nuclear policies to curb proliferation of nuclear weapons and make South Asia a violence and nuclear free zone.

The people's summit express concern over the problems faced by the people traveling within the region and demand that SAARC States must declare visa free South Asia to facilitate the free movement of people. A transparent and non-bureaucratic institutional mechanism needs to be established to ensure the rights of the migrant workers.

South Asian State Parties should guarantee basic economic and social rights of the people by setting minimum regional standards and by instituting concrete social security measures to provide a minimum income, unemployment benefits, health care and education for all citizens. It should ensure just and fair trade and reduce disparities existing in the region.

The summit demands the State Parties for the immediate ratification and implementation of SAARC convention on human trafficking. It urges for adoption and ratification of the regional Victim/Witness Protection Protocol to combat trafficking, commercial exploitation and sexual abuse of women and children in the region.

The summit recommends the creation of South Asian Parliament for building trust and regional cooperation.

The summit denounces the privatization of basic services including water, health, education and power and demands an end to imperialist and the neo-liberal economic policies.

The summit demands comprehensive policies and strategies for achieving the SAARC Development Goals with adequate financial allocations. Additionally SAARC development goals should include agendas for promoting social inclusion, peace, human rights and disaster management.

The summit demands the setting up a South Asia Human Rights Council and Defenders Court to ensure effective implementation of human rights and the rule of law.

The summit condemns the suspension of fundamental rights and civil liberties in South Asia and calls for the restoration of basic human rights and democracy in countries forthwith particularly in Bangladesh. It reiterates its demand that the states must not be allowed to suspend fundamental rights and civil liberties under any pretext.

The summit reiterates the urgent need for land reforms and land rights for indigenous people with special efforts for the inclusion of the people affected by the recent disasters, people of the coastal and resource poor areas including conflict zones.

The summit also demands the right to information in South Asia.

The summit urges SAARC State Parties to set up a Disaster Mitigation and Management Fund to ensure proactive support mechanisms in disaster affected areas. The poor and marginalized including dalits, women and ethnic minorities should be at the center of disaster mitigation and management policies and practices.

Many of the already vulnerable people of South Asia, including dalits, women, children, ethnic minorities, will be further dramatically impacted by global warming and climate change. We demand the parties of North to compensate for the ecological damage. The States of SAARC should come out with clear policies to address the challenges.

The summit demands a Hunger Free South Asia and urges the SAARC State Parties to develop a collective strategy for South Asian rural investments and agricultural development to increase agricultural productivity.

The summit observes inadequate regional and national policies for water distribution and management leading to conflict amongst the countries in the region. We urge immediate unconditional settlement between SAARC States on existing and potential conflict issues such as territorial disputes, water distribution and management, and hydrocarbon resources.

The summit demands suspension of all mega hydro electric projects that adversely affect the lives and livelihoods of millions of people.

The summit advocates for a comprehensive mechanism to deal with voluntary repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons.

South Asian people would work towards common South Asian identity.

The South Asian people will work towards the setting up of a Task Group on ecological issues.

Realizing the impact of conflict in the region, the people commit to establish a People's Peace Commission to monitor peace processes and arms trade.

The summit pledges itself to work for reducing the impact of climate change, such as saving glaciers and linking the people of the Himalayan watershed on both sides.

Women and children are major victims of armed conflict. The summit commits for setting up of a South Asian Women's Forum against conflict, war and militarization.