

Regional consultation

Deepening Economic Cooperation in South Asia Expectations from the 18th SAARC Summit

Kathmandu, 23-24 November 2014

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Programme Agenda

Day 1

08:30-09:00 Registration (Tea/Coffee)

09:00-10:45 Inaugural session

Welcome and Programme Highlights: Dr. Hiramani Ghimire,
Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and
Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu

Remarks: Mr. Pradeep Jung Pandey, President, Federation of Nepalese
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Kathmandu

Remarks: Major General (Retd.) Ashok Mehta, Independent Analyst,
India

Special remarks: Hon'ble Prof. Dr. Govind Raj Pokhrel, Vice
Chairperson, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

Chief Guest's remarks: Hon'ble Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey,
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal

Chair's remarks: Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, Kathmandu

10: 45-11:00

Tea/Coffee break

11:00-01:00

Technical session I: Improving trade and transport facilitation, and transit among South Asian countries

As different reports and studies have shown, the cost of doing trade in South Asia is extremely high due to poor trade and transport facilitation. Also, lack of adequate and efficient transit facilities have also hindered intra-regional trade of not only landlocked countries, but also coastal ones. Therefore, the focus of this session will be on the status of trade and transportation facilitation, and transit, in South Asia; possible reform areas to bring about necessary changes on these issues; and roles of different South Asian countries in bringing about the changes.

Chair: Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal, Professor Emeritus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu

Presenter: Dr. Prabir De, Senior Fellow and Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi

Discussants:

Dr. Mostafa Abid Khan, Director (Programme, Research and Policy Advocacy), Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI), Dhaka

Mr. Ismail Nashid, Assistant Commissioner of Customs, Commissioner General's Office, Maldives Customs service, Male

Dr. Pushpa Raj Rajkarnikar, Chairman, Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRAD), Kathmandu

Floor discussion

01:00-02:00

Lunch break

02:00-04:00

Technical session II: Promoting trade through reducing non-tariff barriers in South Asia

Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are considered one of the most important factors hindering trade among countries in South Asia. The Agreement

on SAFTA is also weak in terms of addressing issues related to NTBs. Therefore, this session will discuss issues related to existing NTMs, which of them are NTBs, what are the possibilities of reducing them and what would be the expected gains.

Launch of the report—NTMs in South Asia: Assessment and Analysis

Chair: Dr. Zaidi Sattar, Chairman, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI), Dhaka

Presenter: Dr. Selim Raihan, Professor, University of Dhaka

Discussants:

Dr. Nisha Taneja, Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi

Mr. Shankar Prasad Poudel, Under Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Government of Nepal

Ms. Dharshani Premaratne, Research Officer, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Colombo

Floor discussion

04:00-04:15

Tea/Coffee break

04:15-06:00

Technical session III: Trade, gender and technology transfer in the South Asian context

In South Asia, women own, manage and are engaged mostly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which not only provide employment to a large number of people in South Asia, but also contribute to intra-regional trade. But the relationship between trade and gender, and the importance of technology transfer to SMEs in enhancing their capacity has not been studied and discussed much in South Asia. This session will delve into these issues to provide recommendations to South Asian governments to strengthen trade, gender and technology transfer linkages through better regional cooperation.

Chair: Dr. Hiramani Ghimire, Executive Director, SAWTEE

Presenter: Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal, President, South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF), Kathmandu

Discussants:

Ms. Selima Ahmad, Founder President, Bangladesh Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka

Mr. Som Nath Mitra, Visiting Faculty, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) and Faculty of Management Studies, New Delhi

Floor discussion

06:30-09:30

Reception dinner

Day 2

08:45-10:45

Technical session IV: Normalizing India-Pakistan trade for enhanced regional cooperation in South Asia

The two largest economies of South Asia—India and Pakistan—continue to strive to normalize trade relations. Hence, despite having huge prospects for bilateral trade, which would spur intra-regional trade as well, existing bilateral trade between them continues to be low. Efforts have been made time and again to normalize the trade relationship between the two countries, but the challenge remains. Against this backdrop, this session will discuss the issues in India-Pakistan trade normalization, and suggest measures to overcome them so as to boost regional cooperation and trade in South Asia.

Moderator: Dr. Nisha Taneja, Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi

Panelists:

Dr. Zaidi Sattar, Chairman, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI), Dhaka

Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, Kathmandu

Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Mr. Zubair Ahmad, Former President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Karachi

Floor discussion

10:45-11:00

Tea/Coffee break

11:00-01:00

Technical session V: Promoting intra-regional investment and technology transfer in South Asia

Investment is another area where a huge potential exists for regional cooperation. In fact, most of the foreign direct investments (FDIs) in most smaller countries of South Asia have been from the larger countries in the region, mainly India. But South Asian countries lack a regional agreement like SAFTA on investment cooperation. The status of technology transfer that go together with FDIs has also been poor among South Asian countries. This session will discuss the prospects of greater intra-regional investment and technology transfer in South Asia, and the need for and contours of a regional investment agreement in South Asia.

Chair: Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE

Presenter: Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Discussants:

Mr. Kishore Kumer Basak, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka

Dr. Prabir De, Senior Fellow and Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi

Dr. Hemanta Kumar Dabadi, Director General, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Kathmandu

Floor discussion

01:00-02:00

Lunch break

02:00-04:00

Technical session VI: Ensuring energy security in South Asia through greater regional cooperation

South Asian countries together have huge energy potential, but almost all countries in the region are severely lacking in adequate energy supplies. This session will discuss the prospects and challenges of regional cooperation for energy security in South Asia.

Chair: Mr. Dipak Gyawali, Former Minister for Water Resources, Kathmandu

Presenter: Mr. Udai Singh Mehta, Director, CUTS International, Jaipur

Discussants:

Ms. Rubiya Binta Mustafiz, Assistant Director, Keystone Business Support Company Limited, Dhaka

Mr. Prakash Ghimire, Senior Advisor, SNV Bhutan, Thimphu

Dr. Anoop Singh, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur, Kanpur

Ms. Lydia Powell, Head, Centre for Resources Management, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Mr. Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, Former Vice President, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kathmandu

Mr. Muhammad Adil Khattak, Chief Executive Officer, Attock Refinery Limited, Rawalpindi

Floor discussion

04:00-04:15

Tea/Coffee break

04:15-05:00

Closing session

Summary and recommendations for the 18th SAARC Summit: Mr. Puspa Sharma, Research Director, SAWTEE, Kathmandu

Remarks: Hon'ble Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Member, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

Vote of thanks: Mr. Rabi Shankar Sainju, Under Secretary, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

Closing remarks by the Chair: Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Senior Vice President, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry