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### OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Note verbale dated 23 June 1997 from the Permanent Mission  
of Maldives to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General

The Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and in his capacity as the Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has the honour to forward herewith a copy of the 1997 New Delhi Declaration of Environment Ministers on a common position before the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Agenda 21, with the request that the Declaration be circulated as a document of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

ANNEX

1997 New Delhi Declaration of Environment Ministers on a common position of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation before the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of Agenda 21

We, the Environment Ministers of the member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), having met at New Delhi on 2 and 3 April 1997,

Recalling the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992,

Recalling the Declaration of the Heads of State or Government during the seventh and eighth SAARC summit meetings held at Dhaka in 1993 and Delhi in 1995,

Noting the outcomes of major world conferences on social development, population, women, habitat, food security and sustainable development of small island developing States,

Rededicating ourselves to the task of economic development, social progress and environmental protection,

Concerned that poverty is the main contributing factor to environmental degradation in the SAARC region, which has low levels of industrialization, widespread illiteracy, malnutrition and inadequate health care and housing,

Considering that more people live in poverty today than was the case at the time of Rio summit, and reiterating that the overriding priority of developing countries is the eradication of poverty so that sustainable development can be achieved within the context of sustained economic growth,

Mindful that the daily needs of the majority of the people of these countries are met mainly through direct dependence on the natural resources of the region, and that despite economic hardships, the countries of the region accord high priority to the conservation of the natural environment, inter alia, through the simple lifestyles that characterize them,

Noting with satisfaction the initiatives taken by the countries of the region for preservation and preservation of the environment while meeting the developmental needs of people through broad-based economic growth,

Reiterating the importance of intensifying regional cooperation in all spheres of environment and development to fulfil basic human needs,

Concerned that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities for global environmental degradation having been accepted by all, there is little evidence to indicate a major shift in attitudes and behaviour on the part of industrialized countries,

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Also considering that in spite of the commitments made at Rio by the industrialized countries to facilitate transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries and to provide new and additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable, the progress has been very disappointing,

Acknowledging that although the primary responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 21 rests with national Governments, the absence of adequate support and assistance from the international community for the efforts of developing countries has hampered their effective action in this field,

Noting that much of the environmental degradation results from unsustainable lifestyles in the industrialized world or poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries, which itself is the result of inequitable growth patterns, unfavourable terms of trade and investment flows, and a global macroeconomic environment that is not supportive of the development of developing countries,

Noting with concern that developing countries are finding it difficult to address their legitimate environmental and development goals in a situation characterized by rising protectionist tendencies against competitive imports from developing countries,

Noting with satisfaction the successful conclusion of the four international conventions relating to biodiversity, climate change, desertification and straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, emanating from the Rio Conference,

Concerned that several developed countries are yet to ratify these conventions which are of primordial interest to the developing countries in this region,

Recognizing that low-lying countries of SAARC are likely to be the worst affected if the present trends in climate change are to continue,

Concerned that a large number of people in the SAARC countries are affected by the fragility of the Himalayan Mountain ecosystem,

Noting the importance of effective information-sharing and networking in the SAARC region in environmental areas, strategies and technologies to promote effective cooperation among member States for sustainable development,

Welcoming the progressive development of environmental law in the South Asian countries,

#### Agenda 21

1. Reaffirm that environment is a matter of common concern, and commit ourselves to support international cooperation in this field;

2. Commit ourselves to intensifying greater regional cooperation in all spheres of environment and development;

3. Stress that the special session of the General Assembly should focus on the fulfilment of the international commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

4. Reaffirm our strong opposition to conditionalities on international trade and financial flows in the form of "environmental clauses", and stress that environmental protection cannot be isolated from the general issues of development;

5. Stress that trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or disguised restrictions on international trade;

6. Emphasize that trade and environment policies should be mutually supportive in a manner that contributes to sustained economic growth and that positive measures such as financial flows, technical and technological assistance are preferable to trade measures for tackling environmental measures;

7. Stress that protection of the environment requires sustained efforts to change consumption patterns, especially in industrialized countries;

8. Emphasize the importance of the peaceful application of nuclear technology in overcoming the concerns of developing countries relating to energy, self-sustained growth and environment;

9. Urge developed countries to transfer environmentally sound technologies and technical know-how on concessional and preferential terms and also to contribute to endogenous capacity-building measures in the developing countries;

10. Strongly urge the developed countries to provide predictable, adequate, new and additional financial resources and to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance immediately;

11. Urge the developed countries and all relevant international and regional funding agencies and financial institutions to provide adequate funds on concessional terms and/or as grants for micro-credit programmes in the SAARC region to strengthen the role of women and their empowerment for eradication of poverty and for sustainable development;

12. Commit ourselves to securing the participation of all actors of civil society, in particular women, youth and children, and voluntary organizations, in the national efforts towards implementation of Agenda 21, and decide to promote regional camps for schoolchildren and encourage their active participation in environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources;

13. Urge developed countries to assist the low-lying SAARC countries most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change in meeting the costs of adaptation and in capacity-building;

14. Agree to cooperate in mitigating the adverse impact of climate change and sea level rise in the member countries of SAARC and in identifying appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures;

15. Stress that special attention should be paid to the protection and preservation of the Himalayan region to minimize the vulnerability of people dependent on the mountain ecosystem;

16. Agree to establish effective information networking mechanisms to assist member countries to protect and manage the environment in order to attain sustainable development.

#### Biodiversity

Noting that all the member countries of the SAARC region are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and that the three main objectives of the Convention, namely, the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable utilization of the components of biological diversity and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of biological resources, read with other provisions of the Convention, offer an opportunity to SAARC countries rich in biodiversity to realize the economic value of their biological resources while conserving them in the interest of inter-generational equity,

Noting also that the Convention on Biological Diversity is founded upon the principle of equity, which is sought to be secured by recognizing the rights of the countries of origin of biological resources to the benefits arising out of the utilization of their resources and the rights of the local people and indigenous communities to shares in the benefits arising out of the utilization of their system of knowledge, innovation, practices and technologies,

Noting that the developed country parties to the Convention have an obligation to provide additional financial resources to developing country parties to enable the developing countries to meet their obligations for implementing the Convention, and noting also that developed countries have a responsibility to create a facilitating environment for transfer of technologies, including biotechnologies, to the developing countries,

Acknowledging that biological resources could also be region-specific or shared by more than one member country, and acknowledging also the difficulties in securing fully effective enforcement of regulations of transfer, particularly because very small quantities of genetic material are sufficient for research and development purposes and that there is the possibility that these can cross borders undetected,

Recognizing the difficulties that may be encountered by national Governments in enforcing national legislation and regulations for facilitating access to their biological resources on mutually agreed upon terms based on prior informed consent for the above-noted reasons,

Noting the need to have a common approach on access to genetic resources and other related issues for cooperation in research and development, training and capacity-building,

1. Express concern at the dwindling of official development assistance and that the developed country parties to the Convention should provide new and additional financial resources to enable developing country parties to fulfil their obligations under the Convention;

2. Urge developed countries to enhance their support and cooperation to the developing countries and create a facilitating environment for transfer of technology, including bio-technology, to the developing countries and for equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of biological resources with the countries of origin;

3. Agree that SAARC member countries will make efforts to formulate a common approach for access to genetic resources that are common to more than one member country in the region;

4. Also agree to expand cooperation in the region for the protection and conservation of biodiversity;

5. Further agree to cooperate closely in developing a common stand on IPR-related issues and other issues during negotiations at the multilateral forums under the Convention on Biological Diversity;

6. Agree to cooperate in taking action for capacity-building of member countries in taxonomy, bioinformatics, and research and development, making use of the existing institutional strengths of member countries.

#### Hazardous wastes management

Recognizing the risk of damage to human health and the environment caused by handling of hazardous chemicals and wastes,

Considering that countries of the region import hazardous chemicals and raw materials for recycling, which are hazardous waste products generated by developed countries,

Noting that most of the member countries are parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal,

Taking into account that there is a need to accelerate the industrial development process in the member countries of the SAARC region in an environmentally sound manner,

Aware that the environment of the member countries of the SAARC region are being seriously threatened owing to accelerated trade in hazardous waste and eventual dumping, by some parties and non-parties to the Basel Convention,

Recognizing the need to protect human health and the environment by imposing strict control on transboundary movement of hazardous chemicals and wastes,

1. Stress the need for collection and dissemination of information on commonly used chemicals and sharing knowledge on risk assessment;
2. Underscore the importance of regulation of transboundary movement of chemicals and wastes in accordance with internationally adopted agreements and guidelines and the obligations of developed country parties in this regard;
3. Agree to take all feasible steps for sound management of hazardous chemicals and waste as well as promote cooperation in bringing out appropriate national legislation, sharing of information and training;
4. Stress the need to develop an understanding among member countries in the SAARC region regarding transfer of wastes for recycling and reuse, taking into account existing national regulations in this regard;
5. Emphasize the need for an effective mechanism and procedure to prevent movement of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals in disguise or in the name of useful products;
6. Decide to work towards evolving principles based on sound management of hazardous wastes so as to develop national policies to phase out toxic agricultural and industrial chemicals and trade in hazardous waste;
7. Pledge to strive to contract regional and bilateral agreements for the adoption of cleaner technology and transfer of appropriate technologies.

#### South Asian Seas

Reaffirming the importance of all positive actions taken to protect the ocean, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources,

Welcoming the South Seas Regional Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme, which aims to protect and manage the marine environment and related coastal ecosystems of the region, and promote sustainable development and sound management of regional marine and coastal resources, taking into account the social and economic aspects thereof,

Recalling the adoption of the action plan for this Programme at the meeting of the plenipotentiaries held in March 1995 at New Delhi with reference to the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities considered during the Intergovernmental Conference on the subject held in Washington in 1995,

1. Request all SAARC countries to take the necessary action to make the South Asian Seas programme operational;
2. Urge United Nations environmental agencies and institutions like the Global Environmental Facility, the United Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank to extend all assistance to efforts taken to protect and preserve the marine environment in our region;

3. Stress that no discriminatory environmental instrument or agreement should be enforced regarding elimination of persistent organic pollutants in the absence of viable inputs vital for sustained increase in food production in all developing countries, including the SAARC countries, and that all efforts should be made to provide alternative chemicals and technology for production of these alternatives on non-commercial terms to enable developing countries to phase out the elimination of such persistent organic pollutants;

4. Urge all SAARC countries to preserve rare, fragile, ecologically sensitive coastal and marine ecosystems, such as mangroves, coral reefs, sea-grass beds, etc., for conservation and sustainable use of the resources under national jurisdiction.

In the light of the above common SAARC position highlighted in the present Declaration, to be known as the 1997 New Delhi Declaration of the SAARC Environment Ministers, pledge to maintain regular interaction during the process of preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of Agenda 21 and to coordinate positions of the SAARC countries at the special session to project and secure effectively the interests of our countries.

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