

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**Statement by  
His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,  
President of the Republic of Maldives,  
at the Closing Session of the Fourteenth SAARC Summit**

New Delhi, India  
Wednesday, 4 April 2007

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I feel privileged to express, on behalf of all heads of delegation taking part in this Summit, our warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, for the excellent manner in which you have guided the proceedings of the 14th SAARC Summit. This has indeed been a ground-breaking Summit. We have opened new horizons for our joint efforts, and identified further avenues to strengthen and expand.

This for me has been another memorable visit to New Delhi, as I am sure it has been for all distinguished delegations taking part in this important

meeting. The arrangements made for our gathering, and the warm welcome and the generous hospitality extended to us by the government and the people of India have all been exemplary. Everywhere we went smiling faces greeted us. And every smile spoke volumes about their faith in SAARC. And every face strengthened our resolve to go beyond sound bytes to tangible results.

We are delighted that Afghanistan, has joined our fold. Afghanistan's membership of SAARC increases not only our numerical strength but, revitalizes our regional identity.

We are also happy that observer delegations from key development partners of the region – China, EU, Korea, Japan and the US – have attended the Summit. Their presence is an impetus to look outward beyond the region.

*Mr. Chairman:*

Your offer to allow zero tariff duty access to LDCs of South Asia, and to liberalize India's visa regulation for students, teachers, professors, journalists and patients from member countries is evidence of your firm commitment to promote greater regional co-operation.

Prime Minister Khandu Wangchuk highlighted a critical issue not only for Bhutan but for all member countries of SAARC, when he spoke of resource management and environmental security. We share his concerns.

The concern that Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed raised that global warming and sea level rise posed a major threat to the lives and livelihoods of our peoples is shared by the Maldives and other member countries.

The call by President Mahinda Rajapaksa for SAARC member countries to join hands in bringing an end to terrorism in South Asia draws our attention to a clear and present danger.

President Hamid Karzai touched on another tough challenge facing South Asia, when he emphasized the need to rid our region of the menace of narcotic drugs.

The five-point roadmap proposed by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to promote an environment for genuine peace and security in South Asia has the potential to take regional co-operation to new and exciting heights.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala displayed his passion and commitment for the SAARC ideal when he ignored doctors' advise to attend this Summit. He reminded us that poverty alleviation should remain a primary focus of SAARC.

*Mr. Chairman:*

We have been able to make important decisions that will affect the lives of our peoples. The Declaration that we have just adopted is a historic milestone in our quest for closer integration.

We agreed at the Retreat today to initiate result-oriented co-operation to attain energy, food, water and environmental security in South Asia.

Deeper economic integration is crucial for speeding up economic and social development and improving the quality of life of the peoples of South Asia. I am confident that this Summit has generated the political will for SAFTA to be implemented fully. I am also happy that we have agreed to speed up other measures to intensify economic co-operation.

We have given due attention to the important task of connectivity in all its aspects. In addition to laying out logistics, the frameworks that we have agreed to foster closer people-to-people contact are crucial. The South Asian University will be one of the cradles of the future mindset of this region.

The Agreement to establish the South Asian Food Bank is another major milestone of this Summit, as is the decision to operationalise the South Asian Development Fund.

2007 marks the 60th anniversary of the end of colonialism in South Asia. This year, both India and Pakistan mark 60 years of independence. This is clearly an auspicious occasion. It is with immense satisfaction that I note the heightened desire during the Summit to open a new and exciting chapter of friendship and co-operation in our region.

I want to conclude by thanking the Heads of State and Government for accepting the offer of the Maldives to host the 15th SAARC Summit in Male' next year.

Given your proven record, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the 15th Summit with the full confidence that under your able stewardship, SAARC would have broken through to new horizons by the time the baton is passed on to the Maldives.

It is time to make SAARC truly a peoples' association. Let us make SAARC work.

I thank you all, and look forward to welcoming you in Male' in 2008.

*Thank you!*