



REPORT

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

**1ST JULY 2002
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

**Report of the Special Session of the
Governing Council of
South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
(SACEP)**

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**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF
SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (SACEP)
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INTRODUCTION

1. The Special Session of the Governing Council of SACEP was held on 1st July 2002 at Hilton Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka
2. Hon. Mr. Rukman Senanayake, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of Sri Lanka and Chairmen Governing Council SACEP chaired the meeting.
3. Mr Mahboob Elahi, Director General, SACEP assisted the Minister in the conduct of the meeting.

ATTENDANCE

4. Hon. P. L. Singh, Minister for Environment and Population, His Majesty's Government of Nepal and High-level delegates from all member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) attended the meeting.
5. Representatives from the UN Agencies and other International Organisations also attended the meeting. These included: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Maritime Organisation (IMO), International Oceans Institute (IOI), and US Environmental Hub for South Asia, Kathmandu.

A list of Participants is in Annex I.

THE MEETING

6. Mr. Mahboob Elahi, Director General, SACEP welcomed the participants to the meeting. He stated that this Special Session of the Governing Council of SACEP is a result of the commitment made by its present Chairman Hon. Mr. Rukman Senanayake to use SACEP forum to voice issues relating to environmental protection and sustainable development in the region. Taking the second Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting of South Asian Seas Programme, held from 28th June-01st July 2002, as an opportunity, the Minister has convened this Special Session. The objective of the meeting is to discuss and agree on a unified position of South Asia to be pursued at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26th August - 4th September 2002. In the past, South Asia position at various negotiating fora has been through broad regions, such as Asia/Asia Pacific, but due to magnitude of issues and special circumstances endemic to this region, our position should be presented separately at the WSSD.

South Asia Consultations for WSSD held from 27-29 September 2001 under the aegis of SACEP in Colombo, Sri Lanka came out with a South Asia overview and significant

development have taken place since then which need to be captured for articulating South Asian position for WSSD at this stage. For this purpose a paper 'Framework for the South Asian Regional Position on Sustainable Development' prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources together with SACEP has already circulated amongst all member countries (Annex II).

7. Hon. Mr. Rukman Senanayake, in his address stated that the present meeting was taking place at the right time as the WSSD preparatory process has been just concluded at Bali, Indonesia, had resulted in finalisation of most part of the text relating to implementation of Agenda 21 by the governments (Type 1 interventions). Some critical issues of Type 1, particularly relevant to the South Asian Region such as finance and trade is still bracketed, leaving room for further negotiations at Johannesburg. The preparatory report has recognised poverty eradication as one of the greatest global challenges and proposes to half the proportion of the world poor by 2015.

The Hon. Minister highlighted that the present meeting provided the region with probably the last opportunity to sit together prior to the World Summit to discuss the issues of sustainable development exceptional to our region. He, therefore, called upon the member countries to assist in developing a statement indicating our common position at the summit. The Address given by Hon. Mr. Rukman Senanayake is at Annex III.

8. Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd, Director/Coordinator, UNEP-GPA office, The Hague gave UNEP's perspective of WSSD negotiations and the opportunities that can be availed by the country delegations and region/sub-regions in pursuing their specific point of view. She stated that the WSSD preparatory process has been a lengthy and difficult one and that three outcomes were expected from this process. A Political Declaration that is not yet complete; the Type I negotiated outcomes, where issues such as trade and finance is yet to be finalised; and the Type II partnership outcomes which are to be negotiated at and after the summit. She further stated that at Bali, the governments came to an agreement on guidelines for the development of Type 2 project proposals and that these proposals can be submitted to the WSSD Secretariat until 25 August 2002 to be negotiated at the summit and/or thereafter.

Dr Vandeweerd further stated that the Secretary General of the UN in consonance with UN Millennium Development Goals approved by the 2000 Millennium Assembly has highlighted Poverty, Water, Biodiversity, Energy, and Health as the five major themes for WSSD. Earlier discussions on the coastal and ocean issues at WSSD were more or less confined to aspects, such as over exploitation of fishery resources and whaling. These are now being discussed in a more holistic and wider context to include all issues confronting oceans and need for integrated approaches for management of fresh water resources, watersheds and action for the protection of marine environment from land-based sources of pollution. To this end, several side events are being organised at the summit and invited the participants to visit 'Water Dome', which is being co-ordinated by her to address issues related to fresh waters and oceans on behalf of UNEP.

Dr. Vandeweerd stated that the revitalisation of the African states had lead to more donor support to that region and at the recently held G8 Summit in Canada the developed nations had pledged more support for them. Therefore, she suggested that the Draft Framework for a Negotiating Position presented for consideration of the meeting by the Hon. Minister would need to be appropriately modified to portray the political will of the region to come

up with concrete actions to implement Agenda 21. She offered assistance for transcribe this document to UN format, reflecting priority issues and concerns of this region at WSSD.

9. Hon. Mr. Senanayake, then opened the floor for discussion. The gist of discussions and the decisions taken are summarised as follows:

- The Sri Lankan delegate Dr. B. M. S. Batagoda, gave background to the preparation of the draft Framework for South Asian Regional Position on Sustainable Development (Annex II). He said that it was an outcome of two documents; the Bali declaration and the document prepared at the South Asia WSSD Consultation Meeting held in September 2001 in Colombo. He further stated that as the country position papers are now being finalised, we could use this opportunity to come up with a good document highlighting the common position of the region.
- Representative from Pakistan indicated that the draft document contains suggestions that are already in existence in the region such as the South Asia Development Bank, Disaster Management Centres, etc. and requested that the final document should be finalised in co-ordination with the country governments through their missions in Colombo so as to avoid any duplication etc.
- Answering to a suggestion by Dr Batagoda in pursuing Type 1 negotiations by the region, Dr. Vandeweerd stated that priority should be given to develop Type 2 partnerships as there will be limited time-frame for discussing Type 1 issues at the summit. She pledged UNEP's support to the region in pursuing Type 2 partnership projects and suggested of organising a mall launch meeting of the document at Johannesburg with the participation of key funding agencies (ADB, World Bank, the Nordic countries etc.,). She further stated that the statement should be more practical and it should spell out the institutional mechanism to carry out the vision and the political will of the region. She observed that the concepts and contents of framework presented in the meeting seem to be adequate to develop a South Asia Position statement and also to develop Type 2 proposals.
- Mr. Elahi pointed out that although it is correct that some portions of the negotiated text for Type 1 interventions is bracketed, very little opportunity exist in effecting major changes in the text. Nevertheless, it should be our endeavour to pursue the agreed South Asia position at the remainder of the negotiation process. The second opportunity available to the country delegation is by including most of the elements of this position in their political statements to be delivered at the high level segment of WSSD. Concurrently, the agreed South Asian position may also be formally submitted to the Chair of Prepcom IV/CSD who have specifically invited proposals for elements to be covered in the Political Declaration to be issued at the end of WSSD. Third and most practical opportunity available to the countries is to prepare as many good Type 2 proposals. It has to be submitted before the given deadline on 25 August, 2002. He also requested UNEP's immediate support and assistance in developing at least 2 such proposals from South Asia. Dr. Veerle agreed to give it a favourable consideration.

- Hon. P. L. Singh, Minister of Population and Environment, Government of Nepal requested to keep the Framework short and more focused and suggested that it should have basic thrust areas, which can be expanded upon later. He said that regional co-operation could be ensured and sustained only by taking the region as a single integrated unit in the context of global economy. This will in turn lead to increased commitments and resources for the development of the region, as a whole. He further stated that based on our past experiences, it is high time that we recognise the need for better regional co-operation for sustainable development and that the efforts by the member countries in this context should be collated and synthesised for one regional position. SACEP can work more intensely in the coming years to enhance regional co-operation towards this end.
- Delegates observed that the views expressed by Hon. P. L. Singh contain useful ideas which can be used as a preamble to the regional position statement, based on the selected elements of the Draft Framework Position Paper for South Asia presented to the meeting.
- Mr. V. Ashok from the High Commission of India suggested that the position paper should be finalised after receiving views/comments from the governments. A meeting of the Consultative Committee of SACEP under the Chairmanship of the Minister may then be convened in Colombo to approve the South Asia position prior to its submission to the Prepcome-IV/CSD. The country governments are expected to proceed with the necessary follow up at their ends.

DECISIONS

The meeting noted and agreed upon the following:

- Based on the Framework Paper on South Asian Regional Position (Annex II) presented in the meeting and other ideas discussed, UNEP-GPA will be requested to help in developing South Asia position for WSSD. The statement should emphasise the need for defining mechanism for enhancing regional co-operation for achieving goals of sustainable development.
- On receipt of the South Asia Position Paper for WSSD from UNEP, SACEP shall forward the same to all High Commissions/Embassies of the member countries in Colombo for views/comments within two weeks.
- The Consultative Committee of SACEP has been authorised to adopt the final document. The CC/SACEP shall meet under the chairmanship of the Minister for this purpose.
- Agreed South Asia position for WSSD may be suitably pursued by incorporating its salient features in country statements to be delivered by the leader of the country delegations at the high level segment of WSSD.
- SACEP will request UNEP's assistance in developing Type 2 proposals for this region for submission to WSSD by 25 August 2002.

- Hon. Minister Mr. Rukman Senanayake may present South Asia position at the WSSD as the Chairman of the Governing Council of SACEP.
- UNEP shall also assist SACEP in organising a launch meeting to present the South Asia position document at WSSD. UNEP will also be requested to assist in mobilising necessary financial resources for this purpose.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

COUNTRY DELEGATIONS

BANGLADESH	<p>H.E. Asharf-ud-Doula High Commissioner High Commission of Bangladesh 47 Sri Ernest de Silva Mawatha Colombo 7 Sri Lanka</p> <p>Tel: 941 - 681 310 Fax: 941 - 681 309 e- mail : bdootlanka@eureka.lk</p>	<p>Ashud Ahamed First Secretary High Commission of Bangladesh Sri Ernest de Silva Mawatha Colombo 7 Sri Lanka</p> <p>Tel: 941 - 681 310 Fax: 941 - 681 309 e- mail : bdootlanka@eureka.lk</p>
BHUTAN	<p>Ugen Tenzin Under Secretary National Environment Commission Thimphu Bhutan</p> <p>Tel: 975 - 2 - 323 384 Fax: 975 - 2 - 323 385 e- mail : utenzin@hotmail.com</p>	
INDIA	<p>Dr. B. R. Subramanian Advisor Department of Ocean Development Magasagar Bhawan, Block 12 C.G.O. Complex Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110003 India.</p> <p>Fax: 91 - 11 - 436 2278 Tel: 91 - 11 - 436 2964 e- mail :</p>	<p>V. Ashok Counsellor (Economic & Commercial) Indian High Commission 36 - 38 Galle Road Colombo 3 Sri Lanka</p> <p>Tel: (94 1) 430 560 / 422788 Fax: (94 1) 446 403 e-mail: slcomind@sri.lanka.net</p>
MALDIVES	<p>HE Mr. Abdul Azeez Yoosuf High Commissioner High Commission of Maldives 25 Kaviratne Place Colombo 6 Sri Lanka</p> <p>Tel: (94 1) 587 827 Fax: (94 1) 58 762 e-mail: a_azeez@diamond.lanka.net</p>	<p>Mohamed Thahseen Attaché High Commission of Maldives 25 Kaviratne Place Colombo 6 Sri Lanka</p> <p>Tel: (94 1) 587 827 Fax: (94 1) 58 762 e-mail: thahuseen@hotmail.com</p>

NEPAL

Hon P. L. Singh
 Minister of Population & Environment
 Ministry of Population & Environment
 Singh Durbar
 Kathmandu
 Nepal

Tel: 977 - 1 - 245 364 - 324 861 / 335 949
 Fax: 977 - 1 - 242 138

Mr. Sudhir Bhattarai
 1st Secretary
 Royal Nepalese Embassy
 153 Kynsey Road
 Colombo 7

Tel: 94 -1 - 689 656
 Fax: 94 -1 - 689 655

PAKISTAN

H.E. Ashraf Qureshi
 High Commissioner
 High Commission of Pakistan
 211 De Saram Place
 Colombo 10
 Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 696 301 - 2
 Fax: (94 1) 695 780

Dr. Jibgar Joshi
 Joint Secretary
 Ministry of Population & Environment
 Singh Durbar
 Kathmandu
 Nepal

Tel: 977 - 1 - 245 364 - 324 861 / 335 949
 Fax: 977 - 1 - 242 138
 e-mail : jibgar@yahoo.com

Tanveer Khaskheli
 Counsellor
 High Commission of Pakistan
 211 De Saram Place
 Colombo 10
 Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 696 301 - 2
 Fax: (94 1) 695 780

SRI LANKA

Hon Rukman Senanayake
 Minister of Environment & Natural Resources
 Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources
 Sampathpaya
 Battaramulla
 Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 - 86618
 Fax: 94 - 1 - 877 281
 e-mail :

Anura Jayatilake
 Deputy Director
 Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources
 Sampathpaya
 Battaramulla
 Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 - 877453
 Fax: 94 - 1 - 861 352
 e-mail : envpolmg@sltnet.lk

Dr. B. M. S. Batagoda
 Director - Global Conventions
 Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources
 Sampathpaya
 Battaramulla
 Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 - 877294
 Fax: 94 - 1 - 877292
 e-mail : envecon@sltnet.lk

Dr. W. L. Sumathipala
 Coordinator - Montreal Protocol Unit
 Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources
 Sampathpaya
 Battaramulla
 Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 - 871 764
 Fax: 94 - 1 - 887455
 e-mail : sumathi@sri.lanka.net

Dr. N. S. K. N. de Silva
Chairman
Marine Pollution Prevention Authority
11C Tower Building
25 Station Road, Colombo 4
Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 - 553 197
Fax: 94 - 1 - 553 197

Priyani Wijemanne
General Manager
Marine Pollution Prevention Authority
11C Tower Building
25 Station Road, Colombo 4
Sri Lanka.

Tel: 94 - 1 -
Fax: 94 - 1 -

UN & INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

UNEP

Veerle Vandeweerd
Coordinator
Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action
for the Protection of the Marine Environment
from Land-Based Activities (GPA)
P. O. Box 16227, 2500 BE
The Hague
The Netherlands

Tel: 31 70 311 4460
Fax: 31 70 345 6648
Email: v.vandeweerd@unep.nl

Ellik Adler
Senior Programme Officer
Regional Seas Programme Coordinator
Division of Environmental Conventions
UNEP
P.O. Box 30552 Room T-232
Nairobi,
Kenya

Tel: (254) 2 624033, 624 544
Fax: (254) 2 624 618
e-mail: ellik.adler@unep.org

IMO

John Ostergaard
Senior Adviser on Marine Pollution
Marine Environment Division
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SR
United Kingdom

Tel: (44 - 20) 7735 7611 Ext 3223
Fax 44 - 20 - 587 3210
e-mail: jostergaard@imo.org

IOI

Prof. R. Rajagopalan
Director, IOI India
International Ocean Institute
ICSR Building, Chennai 600 036
India

Tel: (91-44) 257 0338
Fax (91-44) 257 0559
e-mail: ioi@vsl.com

US Env. Hub

Jay Pal Shrestha
Regional Environmental Affairs Specialist for South Asia
Regional Environmental Hub for South Asia
Embassy of the United States of America
Kathmandu
Nepal

Tel: (977-1) 411 179 - 4673
Fax: (977-1) 419 485
e-mail: shresthaip@state.gov

SACEP

Mahboob Elahi
Director General
SACEP
10 Anderson Road, Colombo 5
Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 589 376, 589 787
Fax: (94 1) 589 369
e-mail: melahi@eureka.lk

Pradyumna Kumar Kotta
Project Coordinator, SENRIC
SACEP
10 Anderson Road
Colombo 5
Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 596 443, 589 787
Fax: (94 1) 589 369
e-mail: pk_sacep@eureka.lk

Prasantha Dias Abeyegunawardene
Deputy Director Programmes
SACEP
10 Anderson Road, Colombo 5
Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 596 442, 589 787
Fax: (94 1) 589 369
e-mail: pd_sacep@eureka.lk

Nishanthi Perera
Programme Officer - SAS
SACEP
10 Anderson Road
Colombo 5
Sri Lanka

Tel: (94 1) 552 761
Fax: (94 1) 589 369
e-mail: np-sas@eureka.lk

FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL POSITION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the member countries of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) met at Colombo on the 1st of July 2002 at the Special Session for the South Asian regional meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg South Africa to develop the regional position of member countries of the SACEP on Sustainable Development.

We renew our commitment to the Rio Declaration on Environment Development & the provisions of Agenda 21, the programme for further implementation of Agenda 21 adopted by the General Assembly at its 19th Special Session in June 1997; and re-affirmed at the millennium summit in 2000

We regret on the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and inadequate commitment of countries to achieve global sustainable development and believe progressive, positive and co-operative steps will be taken to rectify the constraints and barriers in achieving global sustainable development.

We affirm the critical role of the South Asia in promoting regional and global sustainable development. It is the largest population in the world, the largest population of the world poor, the largest cultural diversity inherited from long history of civilisation and endowed with significant human resource base and biodiversity including migratory species.

We note that the South Asia is a unique region in the world, which require unique policies, institutions to achieve sustainable development of the region.

We further note that sustainable development of South Asia Region can significantly influence on the global sustainability. We believe that achieving sustainable development in the region is necessary to achieve global sustainable development.

We further note wide spread poverty prevailing in the region, inadequate financial resources, lack of peace and political stability and security, inadequate institutional and technical capacity, unavailability of environmentally sound technologies have been significant constraints to achieving sustainable development

We recognise that peace, security and political and macro economic stability are prerequisites for sustainable development in all countries in the region.

We recognize the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" in international co-operation to achieve global sustainable development

We recognize good governance at the domestic and international level and respect for human rights and cultural diversity is essential for sustainable development.

We believe that access to safe drinking water and sanitation, access to transportation and energy should be basic needs for sustainable development.

We believe poverty eradication is the greatest challenge for global sustainable development so that the world solidarity fund should be established with a time bound action programme to improve basic sanitation, safe drinking water, energy and access to economic activities for the poor.

We note that availability and access to technologies to all is a prerequisite for global sustainable development. Restrictions to the access to latest technologies will increase the gap between poor and rich, which impede sustainable development. Therefore, global community should work towards making all technologies available for those who need such technologies on a phase out basis.

We recognize equitable globalisation has harsh impacts on the region in the process of achieving sustainable development. Therefore developed countries should work towards reducing such impacts on developing countries through adopting good governance, sustainable trade, and improving access to financial market information.

We note education and capacity building of civil society including women empowerment is important for sustainable development. Therefore, providing access to basic education to all the global citizen should be responsibility of entire world.

We consider that the sub-region has tremendous potential to earn additional revenue through effective utilisation of its biological resources. As such we strongly recognise the need for regional agreement to safeguard ourselves from bio-piracy.

We believe that the adequately addressing the economic social and environmental issues is essential to sustainable development in the region. South Asian thematic priority issues as identified through the South Asian forum held in Colombo during September 2001 include:

- Eliminating poverty and creating human security
- Managing population growth and its impacts
- Conserving the natural resource endowments
- Securing the economic base

We recognise the necessity towards developing a capacity building framework to ensure raise public awareness; address technical capacities; improve on technology transfer; improve sub-regional co-operation through partnerships at all levels

We recognise the value of the cleaner environment and strongly advocate to support the research and monitoring of the deteriorating natural resources; encourage energy efficient practices and promote use of renewable energy sources

We believe following actions should be undertaken through strong sub regional co-operation to achieve sustainable development in the South Asia region.

- Joint action for poverty eradication and human security including creation of a South Asian food bank and disaster preparedness and management system
- Arresting the population growth through direct incentives and indirect measures like income security and illiteracy
- Assessing, mapping and documenting the biodiversity wealth of the sub region and reviewing indigenous knowledge and practices that promote conservation and local value addition.
- Building a systematic mechanism for technology development and sharing within the sub region including creation of a South Asian Technology Bank
- Liberalising the preferential trading regime within the sub region through a variety of measures including MFN status among member countries and moving towards a single currency
- Building the bargaining power of the sub region in global trade and other negotiations through optimised valuation and packaging of its unique products and services.
- Allocating reasonable percentage of national GDP from the developed countries towards environment protection activities, which should be valued as a decent scheme towards environmental protection activities

- Consider the setting up of a South Asian Development Bank, on the lines of the ADB, with contribution from member countries multilateral, bilateral and other private agencies.
- Pursuing measures for sub regional sharing and management of natural resources including energy and water where by production and trading cost of goods and services from the region can be optimised.

Exploring opportunities to formulate South Asian happiness index based on the unique experience of Bhutan and other initiatives in the sub region.

**OPENING ADDRESS BY
HON. RUKMAN SENANAYAKE
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SRI LANKA**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

As the Chairman of the Governing Council of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Program (SACEP) I am honoured to welcome you all to Sri Lanka, my country and to the special session of the Governing Council of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Program. I wish you a pleasant stay in Sri Lanka.

I am glad that we were able to gather here today to discuss our position on the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. This is the last opportunity for us to discuss on this issue before the WSSD meeting to be held in Johannesburg, August 2002.

This meeting is taking place at the right time. The preparatory process for the WSSD was just concluded at the 4th Prepcom held in Bali, leaving a wide range of issues open for discussion at the Johannesburg. There is a large number of issues to be resolved before a meaningful plan of implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development is adopted. Among the major issues that are being considered include the reaffirmation of commitment to the Rio principle and other UN international agreements. The "common but differentiated" principle, which has been set out in the 7th Rio principle, has still been subjected to debate. This means that the global community has to go back beyond the 1992 earth summit. Even the respect for human rights has not been fully endorsed. We have also failed to produce consensus on major issues such as trade, finance, globalisation and energy. Nevertheless, the progress achieved in the negotiation process thus far is commendable, though some critical issues pertaining to sustainable development remain unresolved.

Though the PrepCom IV has failed to accomplish its task as planned it has come up with a *draft Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development* with large number of issues left open for the Summit in Johannesburg to solve. The framework for political declaration is also ready.

The preparatory report has recognised the poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge facing the world today. Poverty alleviation is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development in developing countries. The report proposes halving the proportion of the world poor whose income is less than \$1 a day and the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, the proportion of people lacking access to improved sanitation by 2015. This is an important recommendation.

The report also addresses promotion of women's equal access to and full participation, food security, combat desertification, implement efficient household sanitation system, promote safe hygiene practices, education, innovative financing and partnership, capacity building and technology transfer, improve transportation and access to markets have been subjected to debate. Proposals have been made on establishing a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication and provision of assistance to increase income generating employment opportunities respecting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards. In addressing poverty, important issues such as establishment of the World Solidarity Fund have not been agreed upon.

With respect to protecting and managing the natural resource base, the following issues that were agreed upon at the Prepcom IV are commendable.

- Technical and financial assistance to halve the proportion of people, who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water by 2015

- Agreements to eliminate subsidies contributing to ill legal, unreported and unregulated fishing, alien invasive species in ballast water, transport of radioactive waste
- Ensure the Kyoto protocol entry into force and encourage to adopt "Common but differentiated principle"
- Role of women in rural development agriculture and food security
- Propose the ratification of International treaty on Plant genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- Role of women in rural development agriculture and food security
- promote non consumptive eco-tourism
- Achieving significant reduction of biodiversity loss by 2010

I need not to remind you that the globalisation process has positive aspects and drawbacks. However, challenge remains to ensure that the sharing of benefits shall be among all the countries. The world community has agreed to enhance capacity in developing countries to benefit from liberalised trade, but it won't be adequate without having a proper program of action to implement it effectively.

Distinguished Delegates,

When we are talking about sustainable development, the issue of unsustainable consumption and production practices is also important. In my view, in addressing the issue of unsustainable consumption and production practices little has been achieved except agreements on polluter pays principle, cleaner production and eco-efficiency and capacity development for waste management in developing nations.

Despite the decisions we have taken so far at the Prepcom meetings, some critical issues particularly relevant to the South Asian region still remain for discussion. Therefore, I would like to draw your attention on the following issues during today's discussion.

- A time bound action programme to eradicate poverty while establishing a world solidarity fund
- Adopt "Common but differentiated responsibility" in international co-operation to achieve sustainable development
- Develop respect for human rights and good governance as a prerequisite to achieve sustainable development
- Time bound action programme to improve living standard of the people in the region with improved sanitation, safe drinking water
- Sustainable supply of energy to cater growing demand for energy in the region
- Possible technology transfer in all sectors relevant to sustainable development
- Regional peace, economic and political stability, and building institutional capacity in the region
- Strengthen the regional co-operation to maximise nation wide and region wide benefits

Therefore the SAARC countries should develop a common position on the WSSD and make a unified voice at the Summit in Johannesburg. We have prepared a framework SAARC position paper for your consideration. If we can agree on this framework position paper with necessary improvements, we can submit this to the WSSD.

I hope this will be a very fruitful session, and wish you a pleasant stay in Sri Lanka.

Thank you.