

# Kathmandu: Alternative People's regionalism, visa-free South Asia, food security and climate justice

Wednesday 26 November 2014, by [All Media Link](#), [Himalayan News Service](#), [News Today](#), [UNB](#) (Date first published: 22 November 2014).

## Contents

- [Call for unified voice of \(...\)](#)
- [The 'civil society' prescripti](#)
- [LDC should have the right \(...\)](#)
- [Saarc counties' unified \(...\)](#)

## Call for unified voice of SAARC countries on climate change

KATHMANDU: Speakers at a workshop on 'Alternative People's regionalism: Review SAARC declaration on climate change from people's perspective' organised in Lalitpur today, said the role of SAARC countries in the UN process on climate change is not unified.

They laid emphasis on a unified position of SAARC countries in the negotiation process in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as 'there are other groups like LDC/MVC (Least Developed Countries/Most Vulnerable Country) and G-77'. They also said the consecutive SAARC declarations on climate change from Dhaka and Thimphu were inadequate to serve the interest of the people of the region.

Nine civil society organisations from the South Asia regions organised the workshop as part of a three-day People's SAARC regional Convergence being held in Lalitpur, which started yesterday.

Addressing the workshop Badrul Alam, President of Bangladesh Krisok Federation, demanded justice for climate migrants as well as conservation of biodiversity. He also emphasised the use of grassroots knowledge while managing situations.

Balram Banskota said in his speech that we must consider struggle against capitalism and neo-liberalism.

Dr Abdul Matin, Secretary General of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon said that Dhaka and Thimphu declaration of SAARC on climate change should be reviewed. He added, "Connectivity should be used for the interest of the people of the region like visa-free trans-boundary movement, opening rail and road communications between all the SAARC countries and allowing climate migrants to freely move across all the countries for their livelihood."

In his keynote paper Mustafa Kamal Akanda of Equity BD, an alliance of NGOs in Bangladesh, underscored the need to facilitate climate migrants and their free movement throughout the SAARC

countries. He also demanded open employment access within SAARC countries as well as demilitarisation and demanded that investment be redirected towards people's well being.

Soumya Dutta from India said "We need alternative regional overarching goal of people's welfare and a visa-free regime with access to employment opportunity for people irrespective of religion and country." He also mentioned that most of the declaration commitments from Dhaka and Thimphu summit on climate change were hardly implemented.

He urged SAARC governments to form an Inter-Governmental Expert group on climate change as well as to establish SAARC climate change fund along with technology development in South Asia.

## **HIMALAYAN NEWS SERVICE**

\* Added At: 2014-11-23 10:06 PM Last Updated At: 2014-11-23 10:06 PM:

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?>

---

### **The 'civil society' prescription for Saarc**

Kathmandu, Nov 22 (UNB)- Leaders of civil societies of South Asian countries on Saturday demanded Visa-free South Asia to ensure democracy, peace and non-communalism in the region.

In this regard, they demanded strong solidarity within the region and also to strengthen existing food and seed bank mechanism under the framework of SAARC.

They raised the demands while addressing the inaugural session of People's SAARC Regional Convergence, a South Asian mega event of civil society, held at Staff College Ground in Lolitpur district, adjacent to the Nepalese capital Kathmandu.

The People's SAARC organized the convergence just four days before the 18<sup>th</sup> summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to be held in the same city.

The civil society leaders also stressed the need for people to people connectivity among the SAARC countries for development in the region. To remove all types of discrimination including caste and creed.

Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bamdev Gautam formally inaugurated the 3-day convergence participated by some 500 civil society activists from eight member states of the SAARC—India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Maldives, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Nepal. Coordinator of the People's SAARC Sharmila Karki presided.

The civil society members gathered in capital city to push the agendas from civil society perspective to the formal process of SAARC. The three day event bears slogan of 'People's Movement Uniting South Asia for Deepening Democracy, Social Justice and Peace'.

Prior to beginning, two rallies, with participation of several hundred individuals representing a hundred SAARC organisations marched from Pulchowk and Ekantakuna.

Inaugurating the function, the deputy Prime Minister Bamdev Gautam expressed his solidarity

toward People's SAARC agendas raised by various South Asian civil society organisations.

Gautam lamented that South Asia is still suffering from poverty, inequality and disparity even though it is the world's most populous region. Some agendas endorsed by previous declarations of the People's SAARC were addressed by the previous SAARC summits. The SAARC summits should be more focused on regional and multilateral issues rather than bilateral, he added.

He urged the People's SAARC to make itself more effective so that it can raise the people's agenda to the official SAARC.

Earlier while giving inaugural remarks, Sharmila Karki said that the function is being held to make the voice of South Asian people grow stronger.

She was of the view that SAARC countries are suffering various problems such as human trafficking, poverty, racial discrimination, violence against women, climate change and food crisis, among others. She stressed the need of common efforts to cope with those challenges.

President of Bangladesh Krishak Federation Badrul Alam demanded climate justice from the developed countries for South Asian Region during his address. He also stressed on agri-ecology as a solution to climate change.

Secretary General of Bangladesh Paribesh Andalan Dr Abdul Matin said People's aspirations and expectations during formulation of SAARC must be implemented, urgently. Connectivity must be used for the interests of the people, not for corporate interest.

Among others, Rij Mohammad Dalili from Afghanistan, NB Giri from Bhutan, Rakhi Sehgal from India, Ibrahim Ismail from the Maldives, Sunita Danuwar from Nepal, Azra Sayeed from Pakistan and B.Skantha Kumar from Sri Lanka spoke about common issues pertaining to the South Asian countries.

As part of the three-day function, various interactions and seminars among representatives of South Asian Civil Society started on Saturday itself. People's Convergence will issue a joint declaration on Monday, which will be later on submitted to Minister for Foreign Affairs Mahendra Pandey.

**Reported by: UNB**, November 22, 2014 11:44:28 pm in Bangladesh

\* <http://www.unb.com.bd/psaarc-free-visa>

---

## **LDC should have the right to ensure Food Security for their Poor**

Speakers at a seminar in Katmandu, Nepal on Monday proposed that the least development countries (LDC) along with the developing countries should have been able to exercise their right to ensure food security for their poor people. Though WTO (World Trade Organization) thinks that this food security agenda will distort the global trade.

The WTO's decision of 1995 about giving 10% subsidy for the people should not be enforced at present considering inflation and price hike in essentials. They said the decision should be rationalized in keeping with the present scenario.

The seminar titled “The world Trade Organization, Agriculture and the right to food,” held at the hall room of Administrative Staff College in Lalitpur district adjacent to Katmandu in Nepal is organized by Seven civil service organizations including Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (EquityBD), South Solidarity Initiative-Action Aid, India, Third World Network (TWN) of India and LDC Watch of Nepal as a part of the 3-day People’s SAARC regional Convergence.

The People’s SAARC Regional Convergence, a south Asian mega event of civil society, took place in Nepal from 22 to 24<sup>th</sup> November as the parallel event of the official SAARC Summit on behalf of the people of South Asia.

Benny Kuruvilla of South Solidarity Initiative-Action Aid of India moderated the seminar while among others Badrul Alam of Bangladesh Krishak Federation, Mostafa Kamal Akanda of Equity and Justice Working Group, Ranja Sengupta of Third World Network and Prerna Bomzan of LDC Watch Nepal spoke.

Addressing the seminar, Badrul Alam said WTO is worse than World Bank and IMF. It has own teeth to bite meaning it has the legal rights to punish its member states if fail to comply with the decision. He added, it is an undemocratic and illegitimate institution and is promoting the neo-liberal economic agenda in favour of the multinational companies.

Mustafa Kamal Akanda of EquityBD said, there was popular demand to allocate more in agriculture in the current national budget of Bangladesh but the government was forced by IMF and World Bank not to increase it. And this is how Bangladesh government was bound to switch the allocation for agricultural subsidy to social safety net.

Ranja Sengupta of India said WTO is ignoring genuine food security and the present livelihood concern and pushing aggressive trade liberalization, which is destroying the livelihood of farmers as well as the environment in the South Asia.

Prerna Bomzan said in her speech since development was at the centre of Doha Round, the LDC issues must be prioritized. The Bali LDC package must be implemented immediately because it is still non-binding in nature.

### **All Media Link**

\* <http://allmedialink.com/ldc-right-ensure-food-security-poor/>

---

## **Saarc counties’ unified role sought in UN over climate issue**

KATMANDU, Nov 23: Experts at a workshop here on Sunday stressed the need for a unified role by Saarc countries in the United Nations in negotiating various climate change issues, reports UNB. A unified position of the Saarc countries is needed in the negotiation process in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting, they said. The experts were speaking at a workshop, titled ‘Alternative People’s regionalism: Review Saarc declaration on climate change from the people’s perspective’, held at Zanaki Hall of Women Development Training Centre in Lulitpur district, adjacent to the Nepalese capital Katmandu. The speakers said the Saarc Declarations on climate change in Dhaka and Thimphu are inadequate to serve the interests of the people of the region.

Ten civil society groups, including Equitybd Justice Working Group and Bangladesh Paribesh Andalan (BAPA) organised the workshop as part of a three-day People's Saarc regional Convergence, which is being held in Lulitpur from Saturday. Moderated by BAPA secretary General Dr Abdul Matin, the workshop was addressed, among others, by president of Bangladesh Krishak Federation Badrul Alam, Prof Dr Keshab Khadka and Balram Banskota of Nepal, Ujaoni Halima and Soumya Dutta of India. Mustafa Kamal Akanda of Equitybd presented the keynote paper in the workshop. Dr Abdul Matin said the Dhaka and Thimphu Declarations of Saarc on climate change should be reviewed. Connectivity should be increased for the interest of people of the region like visa free trans-boundary movement, opening rail and road communications among all Saarc countries and allowing the climate migrants to all countries for their livelihood, he added.

In his keynote paper, Mustafa Kamal Akanda stressed the free movement of climate-induced migrants in Saarc countries. Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bamdev Gautam formally inaugurated the 3-day convergence on Saturday participated by some 500 civil society activists from eight member states of the SAARC—India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Maldives, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Nepal. The civil society members gathered in Katmandu to push the agendas from civil society perspective to the formal process of Saarc which will begin November 26.

## **News Today**

\* [http://www.newstoday.com.bd/index.php?option=details&news\\_id=2395558&date=2014-11-24](http://www.newstoday.com.bd/index.php?option=details&news_id=2395558&date=2014-11-24)

---