# PEOPLE'S SAARC

## People's SAARC 2014 – Declaration

**"PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS UNITING SOUTH ASIA FOR DEEPENING DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL JUSTICE & PEACE"**

22-24 November, Kathmandu, Nepal

We, the participants of People's SAARC Convergence met in Kathmandu on 22-24 November 2014 to reaffirm our solemn commitments to justice, peace, security, human rights, and democracy in the region for equality for all and to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

We have come together to challenge the systematic and structural marginalisation and exclusion of people through the dominant neo-liberal economic model that is at play currently; which has been violently restructuring the region's economic policies and cultural life of the people and undermining and devaluing both the values and institutions of democracy directly or indirectly.

We have come together to resist this threat to democracy from chauvinism, sectarianism, and communalism. Increased securitisation and militarisation of states and society in the name of combating terrorism and defending national security and increasing arbitrary detention, torture, custodial rape and extra-judicial killings have reduced space for democratic dissent and freedoms.

We have come together to respond to new challenges that have emerged in the form of climate change and environmental degradation which are of transnational dimensions; extraction of natural resources; food, water and energy crisis; and resource grab by governments and corporates.

We have come together to fight increasing violence against women and girls, dalits, tribals, indigenous peoples; all minorities including religious, sexual, linguistic, cultural and ethnic; persons with disabilities; migrants and refugees; and socially oppressed groups. These systematic and structural processes and practices further reinforce and reconstitute the traditional forms of exploitative and oppressive structures, like patriarchy and caste, in new forms, in the name of progress, modernisation and reform.

Resistance has to come from civil society and mass upsurge of people as contemporary experiences from around the world is showing that in fact it is the people's movements that can deepen the process of democracy; contend ideologically, politically and organizationally with all forms of regressive and chauvinistic regimes, viewpoints and ideologies; and build a secular framework for peaceful co-existence.

This coming together became visible in Kathmandu with the convergence of rallies across the city by a host of vibrant social movements, trade unions, peasants, indigenous peoples, women, feminists, conflict affected people, tribals and dalits, youths, elderly, academics, people with disabilities; sexual, religious and ethnic minorities and human rights activists from across South Asia and beyond with dialogues and deliberations by over 2500 activists in plenaries and more than 70 thematic sessions.

P-SAARC notes the renewed focus on SAARC by member countries and believes that 'Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity' is possible only when this cooperation goes beyond the interests of regional elites and corporates, allows socio-economic empowerment, and enables the people of South Asia to build their regional identity, just development, and sustainable livelihoods towards re-shaping the democratic institutions for peace, security, equality, and prosperity for life with dignity.

P-SAARC welcomes the Government of Nepal's initiative to form a Social Committee to give voice to the people of South Asia in the SAARC process. We hope this pathbreaking precedent becomes a regular mechanism of SAARC for meaningful engagement with civil society and people's movements of South Asia.

Reclaiming the region requires the assertion of people's movements with an alternative vision of a progressive regionalism based on peoples' needs and aspirations, universal human rights, different degrees of democratization and development, and allowing the diversity, including natural and environmental diversity, of the region to flourish. This can be made possible only if alternative people centred economic cooperation challenges the neoliberal model.

P-SAARC advocates the people's aspirations onto the SAARC agenda through people's movements and where there is shared interest with a South Asian State, possibly aligning with it.

We reaffirm ourselves to the alternative vision of political, social, economic and cultural systems to enable ecological, social and sustainable development of the region that eliminates all forms of discriminations based on class, gender, sexuality, disabilities, caste, ethnicity, religion, language and geography; which leads to a situation free from exploitation and oppression.

We commit to create a climate in which each individual will have the opportunity to realize all human rights for all, including collective rights, and full development of their human potentials; restore the balance and harmony with nature; eliminate the artificial and human barriers that divide lands, peoples and minds; and transcend all boundaries.

P-SAARC 2014 **demands** earnest attention and action from the states and governments of the South Asian countries gathered here in Kathmandu for participating in the 18th SAARC Summit to "walk the talk" and act urgently with clear time bound response to the following:

1. Devise and implement effective strategies with time bound, result oriented plans to eradicate poverty, hunger, all forms of discrimination, including untouchability; address denial of human rights and all other forms of socio-economic anomalies;
2. Establish high standards for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of women, children, migrant and informal sector workers, youths, elderly people, families, dalits, minorities, agricultural workers and fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, tribal peoples, people affected by slavery and slavery-like practices, LGBTIQ, people living with HIV/AIDS, trafficking survivors, refugees, stateless, IDPs, peasants, persons with disabilities, conflict and disaster affected people and all others who are discriminated, excluded, marginalized and oppressed in different forms and manifestations;
3. Ensure democratic and inclusive participation through, periodic, transparent, free, fair and credible elections, to uphold peoples' right to political participation and ensure access of all sections of society to all tiers of governance;
4. Uphold all human rights for all based on the principle of universality, interdependence and indivisibility with equal respect and promotion of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including the right to development, right to food and nutrition, right to work and livelihoods, right to social security, right to information, right to assembly and freedom of expression, right to shelter and housing, right to education, right to sexual and reproductive health, right to water, food, nutrition and sanitation,

and right to freedom of association and collective bargaining as deliberated in different thematic sessions;

5. Uphold environmental conservation and climate justice, stop plundering of natural resources such as lands, forests, water, mines, minerals and fisheries, among others;
6. Protect and promote indigenous as well as traditional knowledge systems ensuring community control over natural resources especially for women, including socially excluded communities;
7. Immediately stop neo-liberal development models designed by corporations and operated through markets that favour unjust profiteering over people's sustainable development, that deny peoples' collective rights to commons;
8. Recognize, promote and implement people-centred South-South cooperation at all levels to resolve issues and problems of the South;
9. Stop losses and damages caused by unsustainable development models dependent on fossil fuels and imposed technologies; and, frame and implement policies and functional mechanisms to provide just reparation measures for the losses and damages with due consideration for the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) and respective capabilities in global climate negotiations;
10. Explore and adopt durable solutions for asylum seekers, refugees, stateless, IDPs, labour and forced migrants through appropriate legal, institutional and policy measures in conformity with international frameworks;
11. Adopt standard contract and a reference wage to ensure rights of migrant workers; and create support mechanisms for stranded migrants and migrants in need;
12. Establish victim centred and rights-based transitional justice mechanism to effectively address past violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and end the culture of impunity in conformity with international standards and practices;
13. Find comprehensive pro-people solutions through engagement with people and communities on multiple use of water, forest and land;
14. Formulate and enforce human rights friendly legal mechanisms to end all forms of violence, including child marriage, child labour, sexual abuse, corporal punishment, trafficking, dowry system, caste- and ethnicity-based discrimination and other traditional harmful practices;
15. Ban the production, use and transfer of landmines, cluster munitions and IEDs; destroy all stockpiles; and clear the affected land of explosive remnants of war; and support and rehabilitate the survivors and families;
16. Establish SAARC forums on indigenous peoples; tribals; women; elderly people; persons with disabilities; and dalits;
17. Develop a human rights charter and an effective and participatory human rights mechanism as an apex body to promote, protect and fulfill all rights for all people of the region in conformity with international human rights law;
18. Take immediate steps to amend the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution to broaden its mandate and scope;
19. Ensure Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health (SRHR) for all people of the region in accordance with the Program of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the outcome documents of their review conferences reaffirming the commitment made towards the CEDAW;

20. Stop continuous militarisation and take adequate steps to restore peace and prosperity in the region by acknowledging decision making role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict rebuilding;
21. Put in place comprehensive legal policy, budgetary and programmatic measures in each country in order to safeguard the social, economic and cultural and civil and political rights of millions of dalits to fully enjoy their citizenship rights at par with other citizens with special recognition of the rights and entitlement of dalit women;
22. Eliminate all forms of manual scavenging and ensure dignity and equality for sanitation workers; and ensure disposal management of human waste in strict conformity to the principles of human rights, health and environmental sustainability;
23. Ensure constitutional and legal recognition of indigenous peoples as a distinct group with effective implementation of UNDRIP as agreed in the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples' outcome document; and adopted by the General Assembly on 15 September 2014;
24. Immediately include Labour in the SAARC Areas of Cooperation;

P-SAARC finally **demands** implementation of all charters, declarations and conventions adopted by SAARC in the previous summits; and as members of the global civilization, all SAARC member states should immediately ratify and enforce all core international human rights instruments.

On behalf of People's SAARC 2014,

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*Kathmandu*