



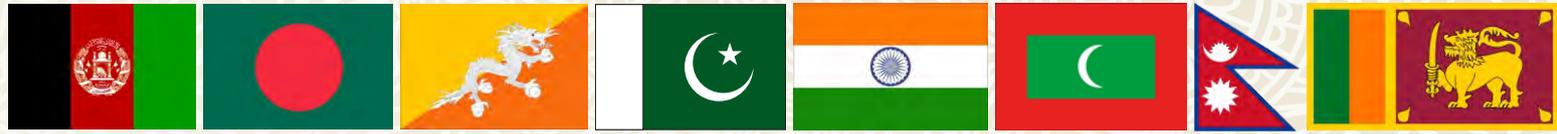
# 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers & Parliamentarians 2012

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## President Invites SAARC Parliamentarians to “People’s Agenda”

President Asif Ali Zardari in his Inaugural Speech at the 6th Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad rightly set the agendas for the Conference when he drew the attention of the delegates to some of the key challenges, faced by the region. His thought-provoking address was greatly admired by all. In his address, the President referred to SAARC Parliaments’ role in promoting peace, progress and prosperity in the region and stressed on increased contacts between Members of Parliaments as well as between the peoples of the SAARC countries. This message was widely appreciated by the media. Excerpts from the Editorial of one of the leading Newspaper “Daily Times” are reproduced:

“In his address to the conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliaments in Islamabad the other day, President Asif Ali Zardari urged the regional countries to unite to fight the menace of terrorism and extremism. He underlined Pakistan’s suffering at the hands of the fanatics, enumerating the loss of 40,000 lives and Rs 80 billion in economic losses.” The President said a collective approach was required to face the challenges confronting the region and to benefit from close cooperation in all fields. The Parliaments of the region should play a leading role in solving complex issues by protecting political liberties, human freedoms and the rule of law, the President went on. Zardari said Parliament in Pakistan had been empowered and a democratically elected government was nearing completion of its term (these may seem commonplace achievements in older and more established democracies, but given Pakistan’s chequered history, are counted amongst major achievements of the democratic order ushered in 2008). Pakistan is poised, the President underlined, to achieve the first peaceful democratic transition through the ballot box. All this promises Pakistan is well on its way to realising democracy’s dividends, the President added... The President’s address also dealt with the problems of drug trafficking and food security, the former providing a major source of finance for militancy, while the latter remained a serious challenge. SAARC enjoyed the advantage of cultural affinity amongst the people of the region, the President emphasised, but it must be said that these advantages have

## Address of the Prime Minister to the Delegates of 6th CASSP



“The conference affords an opportunity to the Parliamentarians of the SAARC region to engage in productive discussions on a variety of subjects and learn from each other’s experiences. The selection of this Conference’s core theme “Meaningful Participatory Democracy in South Asia--- Parliament’s Affirmative Actions” and “Targeting Food Security for the Region: Ensuring Parliament’s role in accomplishing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” is timely and relevant. Both these subjects are very much relevant to our common desire and special responsibility to promote prosperity and development in our region.

We are confident that your deliberations will lead to further deepening of cooperation among member states in related fields. Parliament represents the will and aspirations of the people. It is an institution where the representatives of the people protect the interests of the citizens, voice their aspirations and legislate to ensure that the policies and measures of the government ensure a better life for the people.

If being elected brings special privilege and honour, it also entails huge responsibilities. We should be cognizant of high hopes and expectations pinned on us by the people.

Parliament’s role is critical for any democracy to take deep roots and formulate policies for people’s welfare.

The broad-based and unhindered participation of people leads to greater ownership by the people and brightens the prospects of success. The Association of Speakers and Parliamentarians can easily serve as a viable mechanism for promotion of meaningful. The SAARC Charter of Democracy provides us the right direction for such endeavours.



We envision SAARC as a thriving organization, promoting not only regional development but advancing the global

agenda for peace and prosperity. One of the objectives of SAARC is to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life. Let’s join hands to extend support to strengthen democracy in our region.

There is no denying the fact that South Asia, despite being blessed with immense natural resources and talent, has not been able to realize its full economic potential. The region is still home to a large number of poor people. It is marked by rampancy of disease, conflicts, joblessness, violence and squalor. Climate change, environmental hazards and natural calamities have further eroded the prospects for sustainable growth, so critical for poverty alleviation.

The onset of globalization has thrown open new set of challenges and opportunities depending upon how the countries choose to respond to this process of evolution and change. Inertia and status quo will have to be abandoned in our pursuit of shared well-being of our people.

At a time when regional economic and political groupings are fast emerging on the map of the world SAARC can ill-afford to lag behind. The people of South Asia deserve better and it must be our endeavour to help them attain a respectable status in life. There is a need to develop comprehensive and holistic regional strategy which should include sharing of best practices in agricultural



In addition to increasing Wheat Support prices, the democratic government has taken a number of initiatives to boost crop production, such as water sector development, development of agricultural infrastructure and grain storage facilities, launch of Benazir Tractor Scheme, Special Programme for Food Security and Productivity Enhancement, Seed Sector Improvement, Crop Loan Insurance Scheme and Benazir Income Support Programme to help the poorest segments of the society.

We are developing a National Zero Hunger Programme as part of our quest for realization of FOOD FOR ALL dream. We seek to further strengthen our partnership with our regional and global partners in this regard. I believe that there is immense scope for cooperation among the SAARC member countries in this vital area. South Asia has yet to realize its full potential and this could be done only when we resolve our differences peacefully and develop the culture of solving our problems seriously and purposefully.

The parliamentarians have a unique advantage and they can play a significant role in promoting the ideals of peace and prosperity in their respective countries and the region. SAARC has immense potential to transform the region into a zone of peace, stability and prosperity. It is time for us to leverage our potential to overcome these challenges. Pakistan is firmly committed to the principles of SAARC and attaches great importance to its ideals and processes.

We strongly believe that regional cooperation is an important engine of prosperity for the people of the region. We are committed to go an extra mile to make SAARC an effective and productive organization that is beneficial to all South Asian citizens. Let us make people, partners in development. Let the people and their welfare be the focus of public policy. Let us focus on increasing regional trade.

I commend the efforts of Dr Fehmida Mirza, Speaker of the National Assembly, in hosting this prestigious Conference of speakers from the SAARC countries. I am sure that deliberations of the Conference will pave the way for more targeted efforts to strengthen SAARC and make it an effective regional bloc truly representative of aspirations of the people of South Asia.

I hope that you will take back pleasant memories of your stay in Pakistan. I wish you all success in your endeavour.”

sector, technology transfer and efficient irrigation system to effectively preempt any food crises in future.

I believe that the real challenge lies in making the process of development inclusive and equitable. This aspect should figure high on agenda of the governments. If fruits of development do not reach the real stakeholders, the teeming millions, we will not be able to realize the dream of a peaceful, prosperous and stable South Asia. South Asia is marked by the changing demographic pattern. There is a pronounced youth bulge. This huge reservoir of human resource can become an engine of growth if we engage with the youth and invest in their future.

It is in this context that the theme of Participatory democracy through affirmative action of Parliament needs to be debated.

South Asian region can rightly be termed as food basket. But despite this, the number of food insecure people has been on the increase. Reducing poverty, hunger and food insecurity are essential components of the Millennium Development Goals. Food security and economic growth mutually interact and

reinforce each other in the development process.

Food security, thus, becomes a fundamental component of national security paradigm. It is thus a major challenge. We need to make concerted efforts to face this challenge. Given the



importance and criticality of the challenge at hand, we in Pakistan have set up a full-fledged Ministry of Food Security and Research to cater to all aspects of Food Security.

## Chairman Senate Takes Keen Interest in Moot

The Hon'ble Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, Syed Nayar Hussain Bokhari graced the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians with his presence on numerous occasions.

The Chairman attended the Inaugural Ceremony of the conference, which was held at the Aiwan-e-Sadar on November 4, 2012. On this occasion, he met with the visiting Speakers and the delegations of the SAARC countries. Later in the evening, the Chairman also joined the Speaker's dinner, held in honour of the Conference delegates. The Chairman also held a bilateral meeting with the visiting Indian Speaker Smt. Meira Kumar.

In all these meetings with the SAARC Speakers, the Chairman congratulated them on the successful holding of the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference and sought its meaningful outcome.



## SAARC Speakers Term 6th CASSP “Historic Success”



“I take this opportunity to thank you Madam Chairperson and the people of Pakistan for the very warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and Members of my delegation. We are really touched by the warmth of your hospitality and the pains that you have taken to make our stay comfortable in your beautiful country. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the National Assembly of Pakistan, members of the Conference Secretariat and all those involved in the organization of this conference. They have done splendid work to make the conference a grand success.

We are also very grateful to the honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Asif Ali Zardari for having inaugurated the conference, for having given us the opportunity to interact with me in spite of his busy schedule.

As we come to the end of our deliberations, I feel happy to note that our interaction, both formal and informal have been very fruitful, which I believe will have a far reaching impact on the future of our Association.”



“It is my humble privilege on behalf of my delegation from Bhutan to thank the President of the Republic of Pakistan, Hon. Speaker a most dynamic Chairperson of the Conference, Dr. Fehmida Mirza and all the officials in the National Assembly of Pakistan for your kind hospitality and ensuring a successful Conference. We as a region for the benefit of people must work and cooperate and with through such cooperation, through such Conferences we can further our cooperation in our region. European Union, the Asian are doing very well and we have every reason that in South Asia we can do better because our people need more. We need cooperation, we need peace and prosperity and through such interaction of the Speakers and parliamentarians we can further our cause. With this I would like to once again thank the National Assembly of Pakistan, the most dynamic Speaker of National Assembly of Pakistan, our Chairperson and all the people involved in making this historic 6<sup>th</sup> Conference a successful. Thank you and we see you again and again thank you.”



“It is indeed my privilege to extend a vote of thanks on behalf of all the Delegates and on my own behalf to Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Speaker, National Assembly of Pakistan for hosting the Sixth Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians in such an incredible manner. Right from arriving here to the conclusion of the Conference today, we all had a wonderful experience – met each other, had meaningful discussions on topics of common concerns, with a view to strengthening our democracies and making them more transparent, accountable, participatory and meaningful.

Distinguished Delegates, during this Conference we had the opportunity to discuss two very relevant themes. The vibrant discussion on the theme 'Meaningful Participatory Democracy in South Asia – Parliament's Affirmative Action' was indeed very noteworthy. It gave us a chance to exchange our experiences and views on the current trends and devices being adopted towards making our democracies more mature and constructive for the common man.”



“As we now prepare to bid farewell to our distinguished host and to our friends and colleagues it gives me great pleasure on behalf of my distinguished farewell Speakers and Parliamentarians and on my own behalf to propose a vote of thanks, to extend our deepest and heartfelt appreciation to the many people who have ensured the productivity of our Conference and the joy of our stay in this beautiful city of Islamabad. You have surpassed our every expectation in the excellent arrangements made for our meeting. You and your team of officers have welcomed us with much warmth and friendship, served the needs of our Conference with efficiency and good organization, with professionalism and expertise. You and the people of Pakistan have touched the heart of each and every one of us and we take back with us to our respective countries and our peoples that love and affection so generously bestowed upon us by you and the people of Pakistan, shukarya, mehrbani, Madam Speaker aur Pakistani awam.”



“I feel over-whelmed as I have been honoured by this great Session to propose a vote of thanks on behalf of our country - Sri Lanka. I am conscious of the fact that I am proposing the Vote of Thanks in the absence of our Deputy Chairman Mr. Chandima Weerakkody, who has to fly back to Colombo in order to not only preside over Parliament because our Speaker honourable Chamal Rajapaksa will be there and also to vote for the Devi Nagamma enhancement living Bill that is being presented in Parliament today. And who of us are defaulters I hope the Chief Government will not take action against us because four members of Parliament who should be present there at this right moment are here. They are hiding under the shadow of the SAARC Conference.

Anyway, what we fail to vote in our own Parliament, we are voting for your Bill about the food security that you have presented. And I must also be happy to say, as I said in my intervention, that your proposals are already being implemented in our country.”

## Speakers of Provincial Assemblies Attend 6th CASSP



The Speakers of all four provincial assemblies attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, as Observers on the special invitation of the Hon'ble Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Fehmida Mirza. They were also joined by their respective delegations, comprising provincial legislators and high officials. Mr. Aslam Bhotani, Speaker of the Baluchistan Assembly, Mr. Karaamatullah Chagharmati, Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Rana Mohammad Iqbal, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly and Mr. Nisar Khoro, Speaker of the Sindh



Assembly were present at the Inaugural Ceremony of the Conference. They also attended the Speaker Dr. Mirza's dinner. The provincial delegations also participated in the working sessions of the Conference, where Mr. Aslam Bhotani, Speaker of Baluchistan Assembly also made an important presentation in one of the sessions.



## DELEGATION FROM PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES TO 6TH CASSP

The Assembly	Membership	Women Members	Minorities	Speaker	Deputy Speaker
 Provincial Assembly of Punjab	371	66	08	Rana Muhammad Iqbal Khan	Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan
 Provincial Assembly of Sindh	168	30	09	Nisar Ahmed Khuhro	Syeda Shehla Raza
 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly	124	22	03	Kiramata Ullah Khan	Khushdil Khan Advocate
 Provincial Assembly of Balochistan	53	12	03	Muhammad Aslam Bhootani	Syed Matiullah Agha

### PUNJAB

Sl.No.	Name	Designation
1.	Rana Muhammad Iqbal	Speaker Provincial Assembly of Punjab
2.	Col. (R) Shuja Khanzada	Member Provincial Assembly
3.	Lt. Col. (R) Muhammad Shabir Awan	Member Provincial Assembly
4.	Rai Mumtaz Hussain Babar	Special Secretary-II

### SINDH

Sl.No.	Name	Designation
1.	H. E. Mr. Nisar Ahmed Khuhro	Speaker, Sindh Assembly
2.	Nawab Muhammad Taimur Talpur	Member Provincial Assembly of Sindh
3.	Mrs. Shama Arif Mithani	Member of Provincial Assembly of Sindh
4.	Makhdoom Shafi Muhammad	Additional Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Sindh
5.	Mr. H.M Hassan Shah	Assistant Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Sindh

### KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Sl.No.	Name	Designation
1.	Mr. Kiramatullah Khan	Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly
2.	Attaullah Khan	Acting Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly
3.	Mian Nisar Gul	Minister Jail, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government
4.	Mr. Liaqat Ali Shabab	Minister Excise and Taxation, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government

### BALUCHISTAN

Sl.No.	Name	Designation
1.	H. E. Mr. Muhammad Aslam Bhootani	Speaker, Balochistan Assembly
2.	Mr. Zahoor Ahmed	Secretary, Balochistan Assembly

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yet to be translated into a realisation of potential. People to people contact, interaction amongst Parliamentarians and other such confidence building measures could certainly go a long way towards achieving the peace dividend in the region.

“What unites, actually or potentially, the region of South Asia are the common challenges of terrorism, poverty, underdevelopment and finding SAARC’s place in the sun in the world community. Taking a leaf from the book of successful regional blocs such as the EU and ASEAN, it is obvious that the gateway to ‘heaven’ lies in economic cooperation and trade. If SAARC can move towards this goal, and recent moves bettering India-Pakistan relations offer the best hope for a long time, it can improve the lives of all its peoples while becoming a formidable trading bloc with the rest of the world. When the advantages are so obvious, all that is needed is the political will to implement these ideas. I am pleased to learn that this conference will also discuss the role of parliaments in promoting participatory democracy in the region. Democracy is a prerequisite for economic development, political stability and overall peace and security. Strong Parliaments play a crucial role in ushering in reforms and ensuring efficiency and transparency of the governing structures. In Pakistan we have taken bold decisions to empower the Parliament. For the first time in our history an elected President has surrendered his powers to the Parliament. The South Asia of today has undergone a democratic transformation. Today the South Asian states are vibrant democracies. In Pakistan a democratically elected government is nearing the completion of its term. Soon we will achieve a peaceful democratic transition. We are well on our way to realizing democracy’s dividends. Ensuring food security for the people will be a challenge for our Parliaments.”

## SAARC Speakers Discuss Future Strategy



### Dr. Fehmida Mirza Shares her Vision as Chairperson of CASSP



“The acceptance of the idea by the Speakers' Council to institute a Women's Committee of the Association is a historic landmark. It has not only given shape to the long-cherished desire for a regional network of women legislators but has also set the course for the Association's possible future expansion in other areas of mutual cooperation. The general consensus on jointly addressing such challenges through closer inter-parliamentary cooperation at SAARC level is therefore an encouraging sign. It is equally heartening for me to note that the idea of a “South Asian Parliament” as proposed by me last year in New Delhi was repeatedly echoed as the possible future vision for our Association. The need now is to sustain this meaningful parliamentary dialogue. As the President of this Conference for 2012-3, I will be working on finding ways to increase the momentum of parliamentary exchanges amongst member Parliaments.

It is satisfying to note that democracy is the chosen path for all nations of South Asia and concerted efforts are being made by their respective parliaments to make it inclusive through progressive law making. The Conference has rightly identified terrorism as the biggest challenge to democracy in South Asia and stressed for Parliaments' pro-active role in comprehensively addressing this issue. In addition, the discussions have also revealed a strong agreement on strengthening the political parties structures at all levels, while calls were also made for greater parliamentary interventions in addressing issues of corruption, class-divide and trends of rising intolerance in South Asia. It is equally important to note that these deliberations have also pointed to the need of evolving a joint strategy on “Beyond 2015-Post MDGs” scenario. It was genuinely felt to take into account the realities of:

- Climate change and related risks
- Uncontrolled population growth and unplanned urbanization and
- Chronic poverty and growing inequalities
- the global financial crisis.

These are indeed serious threats to the progress and promotion of a vibrant democracy and owing to their inter-connected nature, they require a holistic approach on the regional level. This meeting's general consensus on jointly addressing such challenges through closer inter-parliamentary cooperation at SAARC level is, therefore an encouraging sign. It is equally heartening for me to note that the idea of a “South Asian Parliament”, as proposed by me last year in New Delhi, was repeatedly echoed as the possible future vision for our Association.

The need now is to sustain this meaningful parliamentary dialogue. As the President of this Conference for 2012-13, I will be working on finding ways to increase the momentum of parliamentary exchanges among member Parliaments. The women legislators have already taken the lead by calling for their meetings on biannual basis. This practise can be replicated by organising parliamentary seminars, workshops and discussions on mutually agreed issues on regular basis.

I also intend to visit all member parliaments to explore the possibilities of further expanding cooperation in our Association. I am confident that with the able support of the distinguished Speakers of SAARC, we will succeed in taking the Association.”