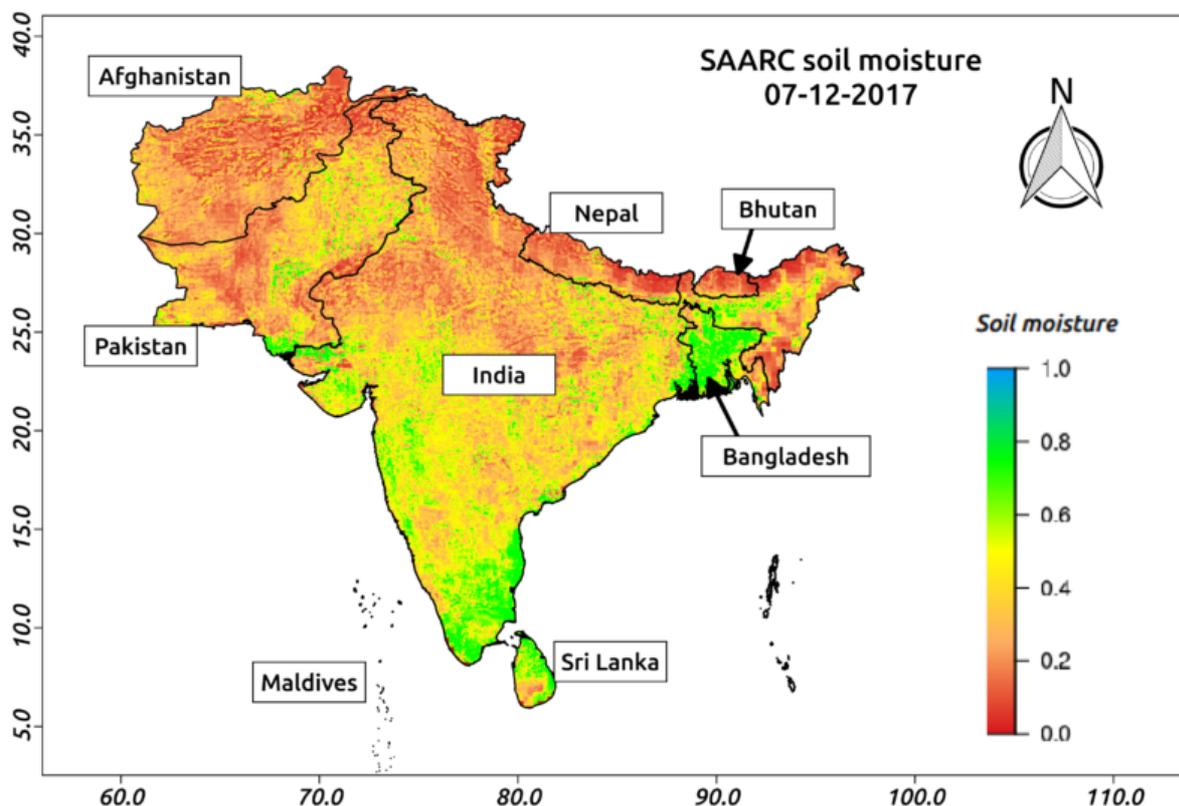


SAARC

Ardhendu.

The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was first raised in November 1980. After consultations, the foreign secretaries of the seven founding countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—met for the first time in Colombo in April 1981. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.

- Afghanistan became the newest member of SAARC at the 13th annual summit in 2005.
- The Headquarters and Secretariat of the Association are at Kathmandu, Nepal.



- SAARC comprises of eight member States:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

There are currently nine Observers to SAARC, namely: (i) Australia; (ii) China; (iii) the European Union; (iv) Iran; (v) Japan; (vi) the Republic of Korea; (vii) Mauritius; (viii) Myanmar; and (ix) the United States of America.

- Secretariat

- The SAARC Secretariat was established in Kathmandu on 16 January 1987. Its role is to coordinate and monitor the implementation of SAARC activities, service the meetings of the association and serve as a channel of communication between SAARC and other international organizations.

- The Secretariat comprises the secretary-general, seven directors, and the general services staff. The secretary-general is appointed by the Council of Ministers on the principle of rotation, for a non-renewable tenure of three years.

- Meeting of Heads of State or Government

- Meetings are held at the Summit level, usually on an annual basis.

- Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries

- The Committee provides overall monitoring and coordination, determines priorities, mobilizes resources, and approves projects and financing.

CHARTER of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

We, the Heads of State or Government of BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL, PAKISTAN and SRI LANKA;

1. Desirous of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the UNITED NATIONS CHARTER and NON-ALIGNMENT, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and noninterference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of all disputes
2. Conscious that in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved in the SOUTH ASIAN region by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful cooperation among the Member States which are bound by ties of history and culture;
3. Aware of the common problems, interests and aspirations of the peoples of SOUTH ASIA and the need for joint action and enhanced cooperation within their respective political and economic systems and cultural traditions
4. Convinced that regional cooperation among the countries of SOUTH ASIA is mutually beneficial, desirable and necessary for promoting the welfare and improving the quality of life of the peoples of the region

5. Convinced further that economic, social and technical cooperation among the countries of SOUTH ASIA would contribute significantly to national and collective self-reliance

6. Recognising that increased cooperation, contacts and exchanges among the countries of the region will contribute to the promotion of friendship and understanding among their peoples

7. Recalling the DECLARATION signed by their Foreign Ministers in NEW DELHI on August 2, 1983 and noting the progress achieved in regional cooperation

8. Reaffirming their determination to promote such cooperation within an institutional framework; DO HEREBY AGREE to establish an organisation to be known as SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION hereinafter referred to as the ASSOCIATION, with the following objectives, principles, institutional and financial arrangements: