



Tenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES X)

Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia

Organizers

National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal; Ministry of Commerce, Government of Nepal;
and
South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu

14-16 November 2017

Kathmandu, Nepal

Background Note

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Launched in 2008, the South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) is a premier regional platform for discussing and analyzing economic and development issues and challenges facing South Asian countries, and advancing the cause of regional integration and cooperation. SAES aims to bring together stakeholders from the government, private sector, research/academic community, and civil society to generate innovative and actionable ideas for consideration by the region's policymakers and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The Summit is expected to foster the discourse on and interest in matters of regional cooperation by providing a regular forum for candid discussions among a cross-section of stakeholders, including policymakers and parliamentarians.

Five South Asian think tanks take turns to organize the annual event in one of the SAARC countries. The think tanks are: South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh; Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India; Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan; and Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.

So far, nine South Asian Economic Summits have been successfully organized. The first Summit was organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2008 with *Economic Integration in South Asia: SAFTA*

and Beyond as its central theme. The second Summit was organized in New Delhi, India in 2009, with the central theme *South Asia in the Context of Global Financial Meltdown*. The third Summit took place in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2010 with *Regional Economic Integration, Climate Change and Food Security Agenda for the Decade 2011-2020* as its core theme. The fourth Summit, organized in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2011, focused on *Global Recovery, New Risks and Sustainable Growth: Repositioning South Asia*. The fifth Summit was held in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2012 with the overarching theme of *Making Growth Inclusive and Sustainable in South Asia*. The sixth edition of the Summit was held in Colombo with the central theme of *Towards a Stronger, Dynamic, and Inclusive South Asia*. New Delhi hosted the seventh Summit with the agenda *Towards South Asian Economic Union*. The eighth Summit was held in Islamabad with *Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia* as its core theme. And the ninth Summit was held in Dhaka with *Reimagining South Asia in 2030* as its central theme.

Objective

National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal; Ministry of Commerce, Government of Nepal; and SAWTEE are organizing the Tenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES X) in Kathmandu with *Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia* as its central theme.

SAES X aims to (i) identify, analyze and prioritize opportunities and challenges in relation to deepening regional economic integration to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in South Asia, and (ii) generate actionable ideas towards that end. Participants will take stock of the efforts and outcomes in the realm of regional cooperation and economic integration in the last one decade, since the launch of the SAES, and chart out the way forward to strengthen SAARC as a regional whole. The existing and potential roles of public and private sectors, and development organizations/initiatives in the region in advancing economic integration in the region will also be discussed.

Focus of SAES X

The sub-themes to be covered in SAES X draw on the deliberations during the previous Summits, and emerging issues and recent developments at regional and global levels. The proposed sub-themes, to be spread over plenary and parallel sessions, include:

- Strengthening SAARC: Creating synergies between subregionalism and regionalism.
- Unleashing the potential of intraregional trade and investment.
- Assessing e-trade readiness.
- Sustainable Development Goals and inclusive growth.

- Enhancing regional cooperation on climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.
- Harnessing the potential of regional value chains for employment generation.
- Exploring the opportunities and challenges from international labour migration and remittances.
- Reimagining the governance of genetic resources and intellectual property in South Asia.
- Strengthening rural economies through innovation and SMEs.
- Engaging SAARC observers for advancing South Asian regional integration.
- Identifying avenues for energy cooperation.
- Strengthening trade facilitation, transit and connectivity.

A special plenary will be dedicated to the late Dr. Saman Kelegama, who was Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka and passed away in June 2017. A widely respected scholar and passionate advocate of regional cooperation and integration in South Asia, Dr Kelegama was a key figure behind the launch of SAES. The special plenary will discuss his legacy and the way forward for the regional cooperation agenda.

Participants

SAES X will bring together government representatives/policymakers, politicians and parliamentarians, development experts, academicians, civil society actors, and the business community from across South Asia to examine the issues of regional integration from different perspectives. International experts will be invited to share their experiences with the South Asian community. The number of participants is expected to be 250.