



**South Asia Initiative To End Violence Against Children [SAIEVAC]  
SAARC Apex Body  
“In Solidarity with the Children of SAARC”**

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**REPORT**

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION  
SDG ALLIANCE 8.7 – SOUTH ASIA LAUNCH**

**19-20 JULY 2016**



**Ministry of Labour and Human Resources  
The National Commission for Women and Children and the NACG Bhutan  
(SAIEVAC National Mechanisms)**

*Organized by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat*

*In collaboration with*  
**South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG),  
(Supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO))**



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## Regional Consultation SDG Alliance 8.7 – South Asia Launch

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### WAY FORWARD - DIRECT SCAN

The participants welcomed the collaboration with ILO in hosting the Regional Consultation in Bhutan and underlined the significance of the event, noting that it was the first among the regional launches of Alliance SDG 8.7.

The Consultation was unanimous in its opinion that SAIEVAC is well placed to move the 8.7 Alliance and the VaC agenda forward by coordinating the collective efforts of the Member States and the regional partners.

Many ideas, suggestions and recommendations emerged in the discussions, which are captured below:

#### A. Specific Follow Up Actions:

1. SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat in consultation with the SACG/ILO and other relevant development partners strategize to move the multi-stakeholder regional Alliance forward taking into consideration the ideas, suggestions and recommendations provided.
2. SACG/ILO to brief their country offices and constituents in the South Asian on the outcome of Bhutan meeting and consult with them on how they propose their involvement in the multi-stakeholder Alliance.
3. SACG/ILO to consult with their regional and country offices in regard to integrating action related to the Alliance and SDG 8.7 in their work programme and mobilizing technical and financial resources to support the initiatives with SAIEVAC and beyond.
4. SAIEVAC, SACG/ILO and other development partners to mobilize resources to strengthen SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat.
5. SAIEVAC National Mechanisms to propose, in consultation with SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and Ministries of Labour and Social Partners, how the broad-based multi-stakeholder Alliance within the country can be organized, and advocating with other key actors for technical and resource support, highlighting in particular the inter-linkages of SDG 8.7 with other SDG targets.
6. Organizing the next level of Consultations and Alliance formation in the countries, ensuring to involve all key stakeholders, including communities and children.
7. Identifying the coordination mechanism and establishing Action Plan, indicators and monitoring mechanism for implementation of SDG 8.7 in South Asia.
8. Organizing Consultations in preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child Labour (Argentina, 2017).

#### B. Group Work Outcomes:

##### a) The 8.7 Platform

- There is much room for demystifying the different elements of the SDG 8.7,

particularly in terms of their inter-relations and recommended that SAIEVAC, ILO, SACG and related partners hold further follow up consultations to address this;

- The 8.7 Alliance must use/expand the existing platforms while investing efforts to link with other key stakeholders and the engagement of Tripartite + critical in moving the agenda forward;
- While welcoming the participation of the Social Partners to the Regional Consultation, further reinforced the need to expand 8.7 Alliance by bringing other key stakeholders i.e the Parliamentarian Networks, Home/Interior Ministry, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Faith and Interfaith Actors etc.;
- Ensure focus on creating synergies between national, regional and international in forward taking norms and actions;
- Ensure enhanced efforts on advocacy and awareness raising

**b) Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)**

- Establish/strengthen focal point for reporting for SDG 8.7 and engagement of tripartite constituents in all initiative regarding SDG 8.7, especially the demand side. (e.g. private sectors).
- The SRS, ILO, SACG and other collaborating partners to further consult and streamline the issue of coherence in systems and the nature of reporting, particularly as the overall reporting frameworks evolve for the SDGs;
- The SAIEVAC Management Information System (SMIS) to be reviewed and harmonized with the data and information needs of 8.7 and other SDGs;
- SAIEVAC to ensure timely and effective monitoring of the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of all Forms of Child Labour;
- ILO, SACG and partners support SAIEVAC's capacity/role to monitor/collate progress for SDG 8.7 in the region.

**c) Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement**

- Create convergence of programmes and projects implemented by different organizations to eliminate/minimize duplication of efforts and resources;
- Follow through the proposed mapping and consultation on existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and make efforts to come up with a common SOP;
- Take stock of what has worked, share those successful or best practices and reinforce coordination to combat child labour and support SAIEVAC to play the coordinating role to achieve these.

d) **Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety – toward a South Asia Strategy**

- The work initiated by the Group Exercise is work in progress and SAIEVAC follow the process of wider consultation and finalization as done in the development of the previous regional actions plans;
- Work towards preparing the next draft of the regional strategy and table it for further deliberations in the proposed POCSO Seminar which is to be hosted by the Government of India, as per decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> SAIEVAC Ministerial Meeting;
- The draft be further worked on by inviting a core group of Experts from collaborating partners including ILO and interested SACG agencies;
- The initial draft of the regional strategy be made ready for the consideration of the 7<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting.

**C. South Asia Priorities for 4th Global Conferences on Child Labour**

- South Asia to ensure meaningful representation in the follow up of the Brasilia conference: the IV Global Conference on Child Labour in Autumn in Argentina;
- The SRS in partnership with ILO spearhead the creation of a convergent platform to showcase South Asia and the different initiatives happening in South Asia;
- South Asia to ensure focus on thematic areas such as school to work transition, child refugees, Recruitment of children in armed forces global supply chains, rural/informal economy, fragility while drawing attention on at new/emerging forms of child labour and how existing laws relate to these areas.
- ILO HQ and ILO South Asia to support SAIEVAC and partners to hold national/regional consultations in preparations for the Global Conference.



## Report: Regional Consultation SDG Alliance 8.7 - South Asia Launch

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### A. Introduction:

The development vision for the next 15 years is shaped by a set of 17 inter-related, mutually reinforcing and universally applicable goals, and its 169 Targets, that were adopted by world leaders in September 2015. These are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that South Asian Governments, along with governments and multiple stakeholders from across the world have committed to achieving through specified targets.

In March 2016, SAIEVAC convened its first South Asia High Level Round Table Meeting (HLM) on SDGs related to Violence against Children, with the overall aim to deepen understanding of the related SDGs as defined both within individual countries and across the region. In this context, child labour was discussed as a form of violence against children and linkages to other forms of violence and SDGs were highlighted.

The SDG Alliance 8.7 is a partnership initiative that focuses on ending child labour forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking through coordinated, multi-stakeholder and concerted action. SDG 8.7 is ambitious but critical to the achievement of many other goals and it can only be achieved effectively if all key actors of society act in partnership and in coordination with swift support to communities to protect children from child labour and all forms of violence in all settings.

The 2 days Regional Consultation on the SDG Alliance 8.7 – South Asia Launch was held in Thimphu, Bhutan from the 19-20<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The Consultation was hosted by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, the National Commission for Women and Children and the NACG Bhutan (SAIEVAC National Mechanisms); and *Organized by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat in collaboration with South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG) - Supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO).*

The Consultation was attended by SAIEVAC National Mechanisms National Action and Coordinating Groups on Action against Violence against Children (NACGs), Labour Ministries; Other ministries concerned directly with the issue (selected), representatives of Employers' and Workers' organizations (social partners), SAARC Secretariat, SAARC Migration, SAARC Law, SACG agencies - ILO (Senior representation; HQ, South Asia regional and national experts and Country Offices, ECPAT International, Plan – Asia Regional Office, Terre des Hommes (Tdh), UNICEF – ROSA, World Vision International (WVI), Global Alliance for Religion.

The Consultation also had the presence of the Hon'ble Minister of Works and Human Settlement who is also the Chair of the National Commission for Women and Children and the Hon'ble Minister of Labour and Human Resources of the Royal Government of Bhutan; the Hon'ble Minister of Gender and Family, Government of Maldives, the Deputy Minister of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled, Government of Afghanistan, the Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs,

Government of Bangladesh and the Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Government of Nepal.

## **B. Overall Goal of Consultation**

To join forces and form the South Asia platform for SDG Alliance 8.7, building momentum and spearheading action to end child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery.

## **C. Main Objectives of the Consultation**

1. Briefing on Alliance 8.7 and related concepts, terminology and issues, and other key SDGs, and their reflection in the SAIEVAC's strategic plan;
2. Launching of the implementation of the SAIEVAC Regional Plan of Action to End Child Labour as a broad collaborative framework for achieving SDG 8.7 in South Asia;
3. Identification of the current legal and policy frameworks and systems and their contribution to the achievement of SDG 8.7;
4. Identification of a common platform for stakeholders<sup>1</sup> from South Asia to contribute to achievement of SDG 8.7;
5. Prioritization of actions and issues from South Asia to be considered in the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child Labour (Argentina, 2017); and
6. Starting the process for drafting the SAIEVAC Regional Strategy on Sexual Exploitation and Online Exploitation as per the decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> SAIEVAC Ministerial Meeting

## **D. Inaugural Session: (Agenda at Annex – 1)**

The Inaugural Session of the Consultation was presided over by H.E Lyonpo Dorji Choden, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement and Chairperson, NCWC. The Session also had the participation of H.E. Arjun B Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC, the Hon'ble Minister for Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Ms Tomoko Nishimoto, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific and Ms Susan Bissell, Director of the Global Partnership on Ending Violence Against Children.

Speakers at the Inaugural session noted that partners in South Asia were the first among the regions to organize the Consultation and this was indicative of the existing groundwork in the region. The ambition and complexity of SDG 8.7 and the issues it involves were acknowledged, but there was also recognition of the experience, energy and existing partnerships, including the SAIEVAC, that could help to realize the goal in South Asia.

SAIEVAC's inclusiveness and diversity were highlighted. It brings together the stakeholders needed – the governments, civil society, the children, UN agencies, NGOs, other stakeholders. In regard to the SDG 8.7, its engagement with representatives of



employers' and workers' organizations was seen as critical.

The reality that child labour and other forms of violence and abuse against children exist was noted. The importance of all stakeholders was emphasized, particularly that of families, but also of systems that prevent abuse and protect children. The importance of clear understanding of what constitutes child labour was underscored, saying the ILO definition was clear on that as well on the fact that not all work was child labour. The challenge, it was noted, was in maintaining parity between definition and implementation, understanding and provisions in the law.

The urgency for realizing the goal was presented in terms of numbers: 17 million children in child labour, mainly in hazardous work, in South Asia and 168 million worldwide; 28 million South Asian children who are not reported as being in education or work – the invisible ones; 150,000 people in South Asia who become victims of trafficking; and 21 million people in forced labour worldwide – 11.7 million being in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Inaugural Session also witnessed the Launching of the following 2 documents:

- a) *The Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Child Labour in South Asia: 2016 – 2021*
- b) *Engagement of Faith and Interfaith Actors Against Violence Against Children – Desk Review*

Dr. Rinchen, Director General, SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat explained that the Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Child Labour was the outcome of a journey of three years of a consultative and participatory process that involved the SAIEVAC, representatives of Ministries of Labour, social partners and experts. He said the RAP is not intended to be prescriptive as countries need to take cognizance of their country specificities. It is a guiding benchmark. Similarly, the Faith and Interfaith Actors desk review had undergone a long and participatory process. The Director General said these were important products for action and acknowledged the commitment and support of the SACG, particularly of the ILO in regard to the RAP and of WVI in regard to the desk review.

## **E. Technical Session: (Agenda at Annex – II)**

The Technical Sessions covered topics, including: introduction to the SDGs and SDG 8.7 - focus of the Consultation, country presentation - with a focus on innovative initiatives that could inform the work towards achieving SDG 8.7, and more in depth presentations on two specific technical areas - legal and policy frameworks and community-based child protection systems - as these are considered important in moving forward the action and collaboration on SDG 8.7. More specifically the sessions and presenters were:

- Key Note Address by H.E Zenysha Shaeed Zaki, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Gender and Family, Government of Maldives,
- The Sustainable Goals (SDGs) and the South Asian Response by Ms. Kendra Gregson/Ms. Dorothy Rozga, SACG Chairs;

- Alliance 8.7 - related concepts, terminology and issues by Ms. Beate Andrees - Branch Chief, ILO Geneva;
- Selected Country Case Studies on Alliances and Partnership to end child labour (Afghanistan Scenario: H.E Ahmad Shah Salehi, Hon'ble Deputy Minister of Labour, MoLSAMD; Bangladesh Case Study: Ms. Nasima Begum, Hon'ble Secretary, MOWCA and Team and Nepal Situation: Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi, Hon'ble Secretary, MoWCSW);
- Regional overview of the legal and policy frameworks and systems and their contribution to the achievement of SDG 8.7 by Prof S.Sivakumar/Mr.Vipin Bhatt, SAARCLAW;
- Community based child protection systems and meaningful child participation to prevent child labour by Mr. Rasa Sekulovic, Regional Adviser, Child Rights and Protection, Plan ARO/Ms. Gabriela Olguin, Child Protection Regional Adviser, South Asia and Pacific Regional Office, WVI

The Technical Session also included the following four Group Works (GW) that was expected to capture all the plenary presentations and discussions mentioned earlier: **(Group Reports at Annex III)**

- GW1 - South Asia platform for Alliance 8.7 – its nature, modality, etc
- GW2 - Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement
- GW3 - Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)
- GW4 - Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety – toward a South Asia Strategy;

The Consultation also considered a plenary discussion on South Asia Priorities for 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child Labour moderated by Ms. Beate Andrees, Fundamentals Branch Chief, Geneva.

*The Technical Session also provided the opportunity to disseminate the Report of the High Level Round Table Meeting on SDGs related to Violence Against Children, organized by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat in partnership with the SACG in March 2016.*

## **F. Key areas covered in the discussions:**

### ***F.1 Towards understanding SDG 8.7***

- SDG 8.7 deals with the child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and slavery, which are all legal concepts defined by international instruments and national legislation. What they have in common is the exploitation of one person by another for economic gain. At the basic level, the different concepts in SDG 8.7 have to do with the aspirations of people in life anywhere – dealing with education and protection for children, decent incomes and conditions of work for parents and adults, the freedom to choose employment and freedom to defend their rights at work, protection from violence and other harm;
- Key Conventions that relate to the four concepts in SDG 8.7 are: ILO Conventions (C138 and C182, C105 and C129), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and its Optional Protocols; the UN Convention against

Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and its Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

- The main three populations that are the target of SDG 8.7 are: children working below legal minimum working age, for which there is some flexibility for countries but which must be linked to compulsory schooling; youth who are of legal working age but are involved in hazardous work; and the adults and children in forced labour, and victims of human trafficking and slavery.
- Together the SDGs make up a comprehensive framework. There was wide recognition that SDG 8.7 is closely linked to other SDGs and a number of the 169 targets. Among these are SDG 4 and SDG16.2 in particular, but SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5 10 and 17. It was stated time and again that target 8.7 can only be achieved if the other relevant targets are achieved.

### ***F.2 The journey together – Alliance 8.7 South Asia***

- The SDG framework requires working across organizations, across national boundaries and across religious and other affiliations. There was clear agreement that the Alliance 8.7 agenda can be successful only if it is moved forward in an integrated and collective manner.
- Given the experience, expertise and partnerships (with particular reference to SAIEVAC) in South Asia, it was noted that Alliance 8.7 will be sustained only if it is built on what is already there and does not start from scratch.
- To move Alliance SDG 8.7 forward effectively, the critical and integral role of workers and trade unions and employers and their organizations was fully recognized and appreciated consistently. SAIEVAC committed to engaging with the social partners.
- Participants also called for other stakeholders to be included as well. Among these: parliamentarians, legal fraternity, the judiciary, the education sector, media and civil society. The increasingly important role of the private sector was highlighted and the need to engage it was emphasized.
- The role of communities, community leaders and community-based child protection systems was given particular attention because of their significance in working on SDG 8.7. It was noted that safe communities result in safe children but also cautioned that while communities are a source of safety, they can also be a source of abuse.
- The participants underscored the importance of the SDG 8.7 Consultation and Launch and the reinforced the critical need to expand and foster partnerships so as to move the VaC agenda in general and the SDG 8.7 agenda in particular. The lead role of ILO was reinforced and the role of Social partners (employers and workers and their organizations) was emphasized in creating a viable South Asia Alliance to serve as a platform for achieving the SDG 8.7 target.

### ***F.3 Legal and policy frameworks***

- Effective legal provisions are necessary and many countries already have laws and regulations in place. Implementation gaps are enormous. Impact of laws is in enforcement, prosecution and convictions, which are not happening. There was agreement that the focus needs to be on more effective implementation and enforcement and groups like SAARCLaw can be involved.

- The importance of coherence and linkages between legal and policy frameworks was emphasized as well as administrative measures to facilitate implementation.
- Pressing need to accelerate efforts towards formalization of informal economy where child labour are commonly found.

#### ***F.4 Community-based Child Protection Systems***

- Community-based child protection mechanisms are defined differently with one working definition as: groups of individuals at the community levels who work in a coordinated manner towards protection of children from all forms of violence in all settings.
- A variety of community-based child protection systems exist. Some are formalized bodies and entities, and others are in the process of formalizing and in yet. Still other places have groups of informal child protections systems and the groups are indigenous or externally initiated but linked in different ways to national child protection systems. All these groups play an important role and need to be linked to the Alliance.
- Children play an important role in community-based child protection systems and must be engaged appropriately in line with their own voluntary and well-informed participation.

#### **F.5 Innovative Initiatives**

It was noted that over the past three decades countries in South Asia had undertaken significant policy and programmatic action toward the elimination of child and bonded labour and implemented innovative programmes as part of their national development plans as well as with external support. This has resulted in extensive knowledge, experience and expertise in the region. It was also noted that the problems to be targeted through SDG 8.7, particularly child labour, pose great challenges and is by no means resolved. While action must be lead by countries, there is great need and scope for regional level action pertaining to sharing of innovative experiences, strategies and initiatives as well as lessons and knowledge, and leading on promotion of multi-sectoral and regional networking and collaborative partnerships. With this in view, a number of on-going promising initiatives were highlighted during the course of the technical sessions. Among these were the following:

***The Green Flag Campaign against Child Labor (Nepal)***: a local government social mobilization initiative that became a critical component of the ILO-supported District Mainstreaming Strategy working towards child labor free administrative zones (wards) and the transportation sector, in which Trade unions declared 200 public vehicles as child labor free in 2015.

***Child Friendly Local Government Programme – CFLG (Nepal)***: national programme on child protection and child labor issues. The Local Government Bodies in the districts of Kabhre, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur have mainstreamed (integrated) child labour elimination strategies in their municipal and district plans, programmes and budget and established child labour elimination desks for coordination, reporting and monitoring child labor cases.

**F.5** The Consultation also considered a plenary discussion on South Asia Priorities for 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child Labour moderated by Ms. Beate Andrees, Fundamentals Branch Chief, Geneva.

Beate Andrees, Chief of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch of the ILO Governance and Tripartism Department, briefed on the preparations that were initiated for the Fourth Global Conference on Child Labour, to be organized by the Government of Argentina in 2017. She encouraged participants encouraged to provide input on priorities for South Asia as programme planning was still under way.

Experiences and lessons from South Asia are many, among them SAIEVAC as a multi-stakeholder regional body for children, where governments, civil society, children and the UN and international organizations work together across agencies, sectors and countries.

There was interest that South Asia should ensure meaningful representation in the 4th Global Conference on Child Labour in Argentina, both to share its experiences and to learn from others. It was noted that more in-depth consultation with key stakeholders and the regional level would be necessary once the Conference organizers had more details. However, some of the emerging priorities based on the Alliance SDG 8.7 Consultation included:

The discussions covered the following areas of focus to be considered:

- South Asia to ensure meaningful representation in the follow up of the Brasilia conference: the IV Global Conference on Child Labour in Autumn in Argentina;
- The SRS in partnership with ILO spearhead the creation of a convergent platform to showcase South Asia and the different initiatives happening in South Asia;
- South Asia to ensure focus on thematic areas such as school to work transition, child refugees, Recruitment of children in armed forces global supply chains, rural/informal economy, fragility while drawing attention on at new/emerging forms of child labour and how existing laws relate to these areas.
- ILO HQ and ILO South Asia to support SAIEVAC and partners to hold national/regional consultations in preparations for the Global Conference.

***F.6 The Technical Session also provided the opportunity to disseminate the Report of the High Level Round Table Meeting on SDGs related to Violence Against Children, organized by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat in partnership with the SACG in March 2016.***

## **G. Process endorsed for finalization of the Report**

The SRS shared the draft Summary Report by the 27<sup>th</sup> of July and all the participants were encouraged to revert back with their comments/inputs by 8<sup>th</sup> of August. However, the response was limited to ILO and acknowledgement of the document by couple of others. Given this situation the SRS further extended the timeline twice till mid September followed up further by bilateral contacts.

## **H. Way Forward:**

The participants welcomed the collaboration with ILO in hosting the Regional Consultation in Bhutan and underlined the significance of the event, noting that it was the first among the regional launches of Alliance SDG 8.7.

The Consultation was unanimous in its opinion that SAIEVAC is well placed to move the 8.7 Alliance and the VaC agenda forward by coordinating the collective efforts of the Member States and the regional partners.

Many ideas, suggestions and recommendations emerged in the discussions, which are captured below:

### **a) Specific Follow Up Actions:**

1. SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat to propose to the SAIEVAC Governing Board and the SACG and other development partners how it intends to organize itself to move the multi-stakeholder regional Alliance forward in view of the ideas, suggestions and recommendations provided.
2. SACG/ILO to brief their country offices and constituents in the South Asian on the outcome of Bhutan meeting and consult with them on how they propose their involvement in the multi-stakeholder Alliance.
3. SACG/ILO to consult with their regional and country offices in regard to integrating action related to the Alliance and SDG 8.7 in their work programme and mobilizing technical and financial resources to support the initiatives with SAIEVAC and beyond.
4. SAIEVAC, SACG/ILO and other development partners to mobilize resources to strengthen SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat.
5. SAIEVAC National Mechanisms to propose, in consultation with SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and ministries of labour and social partners, how the broad-based multi-stakeholder Alliance within the country can be organized, and advocating with other key actors for technical and resource support, highlighting in particular the inter-linkages of SDG 8.7 with other SDG targets.
6. Organizing the next level of Consultations and Alliance formation in the countries, ensuring to involve all key stakeholders, including communities and children.
7. Identifying the coordination mechanism and establishing Action Plan, indicators and monitoring mechanism for implementation of SDG 8.7 in South Asia.
8. Organizing Consultations in preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child Labour (Argentina, 2017).

### **b) Group Work Outcomes:**

#### **i. The 8.7 Platform**

- There is much room for demystifying the different elements of the SDG 8.7, particularly in terms of their inter-relations and recommended that SAIEVAC, ILO, SACG and related partners hold further follow up consultations to address this;

- The 8.7 Alliance must use/expand the existing platforms while investing efforts to link with other key stakeholders and the engagement of Tripartite + critical in moving the agenda forward;
  - While welcoming the participation of the Social Partners to the Regional Consultation, further reinforced the need to expand 8.7 Alliance by bringing other key stakeholders i.e the Parliamentarian Networks, Home/Interior Ministry, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Faith and Interfaith Actors etc.;
  - Ensure focus on creating synergies between national, regional and international in forward taking norms and actions;
  - Ensure enhanced efforts on advocacy and awareness raising
- ii. Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)**
- Establish/strengthen focal point for reporting for SDG 8.7 and engagement of tri-partite constituents in all initiative regarding SDG 8.7, especially the demand side. (e.g. private sectors).
  - The SRS, ILO, SACG and other collaborating partners to further consult and streamline the issue of coherence in systems and the nature of reporting, particularly as the overall reporting frameworks evolve for the SDGs;
  - The SAIEVAC Management Information System (SMIS) to be reviewed and harmonized with the data and information needs of 8.7 and other SDGs;
  - SAIEVAC to ensure timely and effective monitoring of the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of all Forms of Child Labour;
  - ILO, SACG and partners support SAIEVAC's capacity/role to monitor/collate progress for SDG 8.7 in the region.
- iii. Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement**
- Create convergence of programmes and projects implemented by different organizations to eliminate/minimize duplication of efforts and resources;
  - Follow through the proposed mapping and consultation on existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and make efforts to come up with a common SOP;
  - Take stock of what has worked, share those successful or best practices and reinforce coordination to combat child labour and support SAIEVAC to play the coordinating role to achieve these.

iv. **Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety – toward a South Asia Strategy**

- The work initiated by the Group Exercise is work in progress and SAIEVAC follow the process of wider consultation and finalization as done in the development of the previous regional actions plans;
- Work towards preparing the next draft of the regional strategy and table it for further deliberations in the proposed POCSO Seminar which is to be hosted by the Government of India, as per decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> SAIEVAC Ministerial Meeting;
- The draft be further worked on by inviting a core group of Experts from collaborating partners including ILO and interested SACG agencies;
- The initial draft of the regional strategy be made ready for the consideration of the 7<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting.

**I. South Asia Priorities for 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conferences on Child Labour**

- South Asia to ensure meaningful representation in the follow up of the Brasilia conference: the IV Global Conference on Child Labour in Autumn in Argentina;
- The SRS in partnership with ILO spearhead the creation of a convergent platform to showcase South Asia and the different initiatives happening in South Asia;
- South Asia to ensure focus on thematic areas such as school to work transition, child refugees, Recruitment of children in armed forces global supply chains, rural/informal economy, fragility while drawing attention on at new/emerging forms of child labour and how existing laws relate to these areas.
- ILO HQ and ILO South Asia to support SAIEVAC and partners to hold national/regional consultations in preparations for the Global Conference.

**J. Closing Session:**

The Closing Session was presided over by the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources.

A Statement on behalf of the Social Partners present at the Consultation was presented to thank SAIEVAC for reaching out to engage them and committing to their productive involvement on the issue.

Ms.Panudda Boonpala, Director ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office in India, thanked the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting the Consultation and SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat for organizing it. She also congratulated SAIEVAC and the SAARC countries for adoption of the South Asia Regional Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Child Labour.



## Annex – I. Inaugural Agenda

### INAUGURAL AGENDA

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**Chief Guest :** H.E Lyonpo Dorji Choden, Hon'ble Minister  
Ministry of Works and Human Settlement  
& Chairperson, National Commission for Women and Children

**Moderator :** Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Director General, SAIEVAC

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- 0800–0900 :** Registration  
**0900 :** All Seated  
**0905 :** Arrival of the Hon'ble Chief Guest
- 0905-0915 :** Marchang Ceremony
- 0915-0920 :** Welcome Remarks  
- Ms. Kunzang Lhamo, Director, NCWC/Governing Board Member, Bhutan & Chairperson, SAIEVAC Governing Board
- 0920-0930 :** Opening Remarks  
- Ms. Susan Bissell, Director, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
- 0930-0940 :** Opening Remarks  
- Ms Tomoko Nishimoto, Assistant Director General & Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific
- 0940-0950 :** Opening Remarks  
- H.E Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC
- 0950-1000 :** Opening Remarks  
- H.E Lyonpo, Ngeema Sangay Tshempo, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR)
- 1000-1010 :** Launch of Reports:  
a) Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in South Asia: 2016-2021  
b) Desk Review: Engagement of Faith and Inter-faith Actors Against Violence Against Children in South Asia
- 1010-1020 :** Inaugural Address by the Hon'ble Chief Guest
- 1020-1025 :** Vote of Thanks  
- Mr. Sonam Wangdi, Director, Department of Labour, MoLHR
- 
- 1025- 1100 :** Group Photograph and Hi Tea

## Annex – II. Tentative Agenda

### Tentative Agenda

Day 1: Tuesday, July 19 2016

**0800 – 0900: Registration**

**0900 – 1025: INAUGURAL SESSION**

#### **TECHNICAL SESSION I**

*Chairperson – Ms. Rashmi Sahni, Governing Board Member, India*

1100 – 1110 : Key Note Address by H.E Zenysha Shaeed Zaki, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Gender and Family, Government of Maldives

1110 – 1120 : The Sustainable Goals ( SDGs) and the South Asian Response  
- *Ms. Kendra Gregson/Ms. Dorothy Rozga, SACG Chairs*

1120 – 1200 : Alliance 8.7 - related concepts, terminology and issues  
- *Ms Beate Andrees - Branch Chief, ILO Geneva*

: **Discussions**

#### **SESSION II**

*Chairperson - Ms. Kunzang Lhamo, Chairperson, SAIEVAC Governing Board*

1200 – 1300 : Selected Country Case Studies on Alliances and Partnership to end child labour

- Afghanistan Scenario: H.E Ahmad Shah Salehi, Hon'ble Deputy Minister of Labour, MoLSAMD
- Bangladesh Case Study: Ms. Nasima Begum, Hon'ble Secretary, MOWCA and Team
- Nepal Situation: Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi, Hon'ble Secretary, MoWCSW

: Discussions

**1300 – 1400: LUNCH**

1400 – 1500 : Selected Country Case Studies on Alliances and Partnership to end child labour - Contd

: Discussions

#### **SESSION III**

*Chairperson – Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi, Secretary, MoWCSW, GoN*

1500 – 1530 : Regional overview of the legal and policy frameworks and systems and their contribution to the achievement of SDG 8.7

- *Prof S.Sivakumar/Mr.Vipin Bhatt, SAARCLAW*

: Discussions

**1530 – 1600 : TEA BREAK**

1600 – 1630 : Community based child protection systems and meaningful child participation to prevent child labour

- *Mr. Rasa Sekulovic, Regional Adviser, Child Rights and Protection, Plan ARO/Ms. Gabriela Olguin, Child Protection Regional Adviser, South Asia and Pacific Regional Office, WVI*

1630 : End of Day – 1 : Administrative and Day 2 Announcements

1830 : WELCOME DINNER

### DAY – 2: Wednesday, July 20 2016

**0900 – 0910 : Re-cap of Day - 1**

#### SESSION IV

*Moderator - Ms. Sherin Khan, SS, DWT Delhi, ILO/DG, SAIEVAC*

**0910 – 0920 : Briefing on Group Work : Action Planning on way forward for Alliance 8.7 South Asia**

0920 – 1100 : Group Work (GW) - Groups to identify 3 key recommendations to form the Outcome of the Bhutan Consultation)

**GW I - South Asia platform for Alliance 8.7 – its nature, modality, etc**

**GW 2 - Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement**

**GW 3 - Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)**

**GW 4 - Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety – toward a South Asia Strategy;**

1100 – 1130 : TEA BREAK

#### SESSION V

*Moderator – Ms. Nasima Begum, Hon’ble Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Government of Bangladesh*

1130 – 1300 : Group Report Presentations and Discussions

1300 – 1400: LUNCH

1400 – 1445: Consultation on South Asia Priorities for 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Child

Labour

- *Ms. Beate Andress, Fundamentals Branch  
Chief, Geneva/Mr. A K Masud, CSO Governing Board*

: Discussions

**1445 -1600 : Finalization of the Recommendations/Way Forward**

**1600 : CLOSING SESSION**

CHIEF GUEST: Mr.Sherub Tenzin, Ofth Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, RGoB

Moderator : Dr. Rinchen Chopel, DG SAIEVAC

1600 : Report on the Outcome of the Regional Consultation

: Views of the Participants

- Kendra Gregson, Chairperson, SACG
- Ms. Panudda Boonpala, Director ILO DWT SA
- Representative Social Partners
  - Mr. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC
- Representative of Ministries of Labour
- Ms. Rashmi Saxena Sahni, SAIEVAC GB Member, India

: Closing Remarks by the Chief Guest

: Vote of Thanks – Master Tashi Phuntsho, Child GB Member

**: Closing Tea**

## Annex – III : List of Participants

### List of Participants

S. No.	Name of the Participant	Designation	Organization	Email
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## Annex – IV. Group Reports

### GROUP REPORTS

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#### Group I :

**Topic: Shaping the South Asia platform for Alliance 8.7 – its nature, modality, etc**

1. Dr. Razia Ismail (Chairperson)
2. Ms. Kendra Gregson
3. Mr. Vipin Bhatt
4. Dr. Fazal Elahi Ibrahim
5. Ms. Valerie Khan
6. Mr. R.P.A.Wimalaweera
7. Ms. Gabriela Olguin
8. Ms. Susan Bissell
9. Mr. Zahoor Awan
10. Mr. Syed Tareque Md. Ali
11. Ms. Sherin Khan
12. Ms. Kunzang Lhamo,
13. Ms. Najwa Fathimath,

#### Group 2 :

**Topic: Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement**

1. Mr. M A Kashem Masud
2. Ms. Beate Andrees
3. Mr. P. Joseph Victor Raj
4. Mr. Sonam Wangdi
5. Mr. Wahid Shah Amin
6. Mr. Kumar Bhattarai
7. Mr. Uday Kumar Gupta
8. Ms. Bipina Sharma
9. Mr. Nawjeet Karmacharya
10. Ms. Sulakshana Rana
11. Mr. Laxman Basnet
12. Ms. Champika Jayasinghe
13. Ms. Dorji Ohm

#### Group 3 :

**Topic: Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)**

1. Mr. Ahmad Shah Salehi, Deputy Minister AFG

2. Ms. Bharati Pflug, ILO
3. Dr. Md. Aminul Islam
4. Mr. Dharmendra Kumar Himanshu
5. Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee
6. Mr. Jayasignhe Batabandige Sarath Jayasinghe
7. Mr. Ashraaf Abdulla
8. Ms. Eri Mathers Suzuki
9. Prof. (Dr.) S. Sivakumar
10. Mr. Mukesh Galav
11. Dr. Kazi Mariful Islam
12. Mr. Fasihul Karim Siddiqi
13. Ms. Nasima Begum (Optional)

**Group 4 :**

**Topic: Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety toward a South Asia Strategy**

1. Mr. A.K.M. Masud Ali
2. Ms. Dorothy Rozga
3. Ms. Rashmi Saxena Sahni (Chairperson)
4. Dr. Chiranjeeb Kakoty
5. Ms. Mariyam Shifana
6. Mr. Ajit Hazra
7. Ms. Bina Kunwar Thapa
8. Mr. Rasa Sekulovic
9. Mr. Rajib Halder
10. Dr. Meeakshi Rai
11. Ms. Champa Gunsekera
12. H.E. Zenysha Zaki (Optional)
13. Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi

**Group Reports: (List of Group Members at Annex – III)**

**a) GROUP I : South Asia platform for Alliance 8.7 – its nature, modality, etc**

**i) 8.7 Covers:**

- Child labour
- Forced labour
- Trafficking
- Slavery

**ii) 3 levels: What is the responsibility of each level?**

- Global
  - Regional
  - Country
- To include the issue as pertains to both children and adults

- To help countries achieve the target
- To make 8.7 known – what is 8.7?
- Must be about adults and children
- SAIEVAC may be a trigger but is not the lead.
- Requirement to bring in many other actors – must have a national coordination body
- Alliance is to promote, advocate, communicate but a question remains as to whether it is to implement
- List the actors – regionally and nationally
- Define the messages – for the different ‘levels’ and ‘purposes’

### **iii) Conclusion:**

The Group Members will further coordinate to reflect on the points tabled and further share reflections on the topic by the stipulated timeframe.

The Discussions also covered the following areas for consideration:

- The 8.7 Alliance must strengthen and use existing platforms
- Effort must be to create convergence of actors and actions
- Exploit the opportunity presented by SAIEVAC with its unique governance structure, as a SAARC Apex Body, ability to mobilise other related SAARC Mechanisms and to create convergence and ownership of the SAARC Member States

## **b) Group 2 : Forced Labour, Trafficking and Illicit Movement**

### **Key Actions:**

- Ratification of International conventions and protocols
- Capacity building and awareness raising on the legal provisions
- Engagement and dialogue with key stakeholders (Parliamentarians, judiciary, social partners, children, survivors, community, interpol police/community police and media)
- Advocate with parliamentarians, politicians, and decision makers on the need to sign and ratify the international convention on forced/child labour and human trafficking protocol.
- Advocate, lobby for implementation and make accountable politicians, government and other key stakeholders on existing agreements and establishing bilateral/trilateral/multilateral MoUs/agreements to address the cross border issues like forced labour, smuggling, trafficking etc. (especially in the area of mutual legal assistance, joint investigation, repatriation, rehabilitation etc.)
- SAIEVAC mechanisms (like SACG and NACG) to play a coordinating, facilitating and capacity building role to bring all the key stakeholders on board (including children and family), coordinate their efforts/resources/interventions and avoid duplication and maximize the outcome to reduce and eliminate child labour, trafficking and abuses.

- Institutionalization, formalization and systematization of all existing practices and frameworks/mechanisms.

**Conclusion:**

- The discussions covered the need to create convergence of programmes and projects implemented by different organizations to ensure the eliminate/minimize duplication of efforts and resources;
- To follow through the proposed mapping and consultation on existing SOPs and make efforts to come up with a common SOP;

**c) Group 3: Coherence in systems and reporting at different levels (national to international)**

**i) Discussion on current situation:**

- A number of different systems exist related to SDG 8.7 at country level, however there is no/limited coherence.
- No/low coordination
- Not all stakeholders are taking part (e.g. Statistics bureau, Trade unions, Judiciary, Law enforcement)
- Data collection mechanisms
- Missing data (e.g. child recruitment to armed groups, bonded labour).
- Use of data
- Legislation (e.g. different definition).

**ii) Recommendations**

**National Level:**

- Establishing/strengthening focal point for reporting for SDG 8.7
- Engagement of tri-partite constituents in all initiative regarding SDG 8.7, especially the demand side. (e.g. private sectors).
- Strengthening platform for all the stakeholders (labour, child protection, education, social protection, health, judiciary, police, statistics bureau etc)
- Influence politically (e.g. involvement of PM/President level)
- Conduct comprehensive analysis to identify gaps in legislation, data collection, reporting and implementation.

**Regional Level**

- Sharing good practices for reporting, data collection, and implementation at the regional level.
- Creating forum for the focal points from 8 countries to regularly meet to exchange information
- Ensure SAIEVAC to monitor the ‘Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of all Forms of Child Labour.
- Explore SAIEVAC’s role to monitor/collate progress for SDG 8.7 in the region.

**Conclusions:** The discussions underscored the need for greater clarity on the group topic besides covering the following areas:

- The SRS, ILO and other collaborating partners to further consult and streamline the issue of coherence in systems and the nature of reporting, particularly as the overall reporting frameworks evolve for the SDGs;
- The SMIS to be reviewed and harmonized with the data and information needs of 8.7 and other SDGs

**d) Group 4: Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, including online safety – toward a South Asia Strategy**

**1. Vision**

Every child in South Asia enjoy their safe childhood (inclusive of on-line safety) including their rights to protection and from all forms of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation at all settings

**2. Mission**

- To work with all concerned stakeholders through SAIEVAC Mechanism to end all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation against children in every South Asian country.
- To strengthen the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC) Regional Secretariat

**3. Scope and Definitions (for both girls, boys and transgender)**

- Exact Definitions need to be adopted from UN Conventions, SAARC Conventions, national laws (POCSO) and other global tools (Luxemburg Guidelines)

**4. Types of Abuse and Scope:**

- Circle of trust (family members, friends, care givers, community members, employers, professional, religious actors, educators and volunteers etc.), On-line sexual exploitation (grooming, sextortion, live streaming); Travel and tourism based sexual exploitation; Child Prostitution; Child Marriage in special conditionality; Mal use of Child Protection Institutions and volunteers; traditional and other practices harmful to children's development, dignity and protection (for example child marriage and child soldier being exploited etc.), exploitation of the economic vulnerability of the family.
- Trafficking for sexual reason; Home/ family, community, workplace, schools and institutions based sexual abuse of children;

## **5. Strategies:**

### **SAIEVAC work through its national mechanism in a child friendly (including disable children) and gender sensitive manner**

- a) Preventive (three tiers of prevention)- Awareness-Attitude-Resilience and skills (including children) advocacy, legal deterrence and responsible actions (business and institutions);
- b) Responsive: Access to justice and psychosocial services (inclusive of the children, parents / community and perpetrators etc. and compensation for the victims).
- c) Encourage ethical and responsive business practices
- d) Economic vulnerability reduction
- e) Coordination and cooperation
- f) Voices to victims and survivors
- g) Monitoring and Reporting (child friendliness)
- h) Sensitivity in handling (police, medical practitioners etc.)
- i) Child-Helpline services
- j) Knowledge management (Database, evidence creations)

## **6. Expected Result:**

Strengthened capacity/initiative of Member States of SAIEVAC, SRS and NACG to take the necessary steps to end sexual abuse and exploitation against children by adopting comprehensive legislation, ratifying all relevant international and regional instruments and enforcing a Code of Conduct for business inclusive of travel, tour and ICT outlets to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation (inclusive of Child Prostitution, Child pornography, Sex tourism, Rape, Sexual/Physical Harassment and on-line exploitation etc.).

## **7. Outputs/Indicators:**

- a) Legislations, policies and plans that prohibit all forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment including physical and non-physical forms in all settings against both boy;
- b) Comprehensive legal provisions at Member Countries to prohibit all forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment against girls, boys and transgender- are reformed, enforced and implemented;
- c) Mass awareness raising, skill and capacity building at every level (inclusive of children and service provider);
- d) States to consider the adoption of UNCRC Optional Protocol -3 (communication and complain mechanism) and strengthening SAARC Conventions and arrangements;
- e) Standards and code of conducts for all service providers and business inclusive of travel, tourism and IT sectors developed, adopted and applied;
- f) Child-friendly (including disability) reporting, prompt investigation and prosecution and recovery (psychosocial inclusive of child-helpline services) for survivors of violations;
- g) Data sharing (inclusive of investigations for cross-border crimes) and reporting established in country and regionally to adopt and enforce;

h) Networking at national, regional and global level strengthened.

For each of the outputs a detailed planning matrix (inclusive of activity, actors, timelines and MOVs need to be developed in line with the SDG)

## **8. Conclusion:**

The Discussions covered the following areas:

- The work initiated by the Group is work in progress and follow the same process of wider consultation and finalization as the previous regional actions plans developed by SAIEVAC;
- The SRS work towards preparing the next draft of the regional strategy and table it for further deliberations in the proposed POCSO Seminar which is to be hosted by the Government of India, as per decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> SAIEVAC Ministerial Meeting
- The draft be further worked on by inviting a core group of Experts from collaborating partners including ILO and interested SACG agencies
- The SRS to have the initial draft of the regional strategy ready for the consideration of the 7<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting.



## Annex – V: Statements by Dignitaries

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### **A. Inaugural Address by the Chief Guest H.E Lyonpo Dorji Choden, Hon`ble Minister, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement and Chairperson, National Commission for Women and Children, Royal Government of Bhutan**

Excellencies, Hon'ble members of Parliament, Distinguished participants, guests, ladies and gentlemen

*[Ms. Zenysha Zaki , Hon`ble Minister, Ministry of Law and Gender, Government of Maldives; Mr. Ahmad Shah Salehi, Deputy Minister Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Government of Afghanistan; Mr. Arjun B Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat; Ms. Tomoko Nishimoto, Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia Pacific, International Labour Organisation; Director General, Director General, SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat; Delegates from the SAARC nations and other International Agencies]*

Kuzuzangpo, a very good morning!

On behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan and on my own behalf, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to your Excellencies, to all our distinguished friends from SAARC nations and International Agencies, and to all the guests and participants, who are gathered here.

*[happy to inform that I was in Delhi in March 2016 to attend the 4th SAIEVAC Ministerial meeting in New Delhi. It was during that time, a conversation took place between the SAIEVAC Secretariat the NCWC] on this Regional Consultation meeting in Bhutan. I am so pleased that that in short span of time, the MoLHR in collaboration with the SAIEVAC Secretariat and the NCWC has been successful in organizing this meeting.]*

It gives me a great pleasure to be here today, at the inauguration of the 3-day Regional Consultation on the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Alliance 8.7, a partnership initiative, critical to ending child labour of the worst forms. South Asia forms a large part of the world population (nearly 60%). Despite a number of initiatives, legally binding agreements and international conventions being adopted and enforced, statistics show high number of child labourers still existing in the Asia-Pacific region.

I would like to commend the effort of the SAIEVAC Secretariat, in bringing together the relevant multi-stakeholders of the South Asian countries to join forces and to take forward this important global agenda ..... SDG Alliance 8.7 through SAIEVAC regional and national plan of action. The journey is starting from Bhutan. I am happy to note that during the 3-day consultation, drafting of SAIEVAC regional strategy on sexual exploitation will also be initiated. These initiatives are marks of true commitment for a child abuse free world.

I don't want to repeat the stories of the drudgery in the lives of children, working at premature age and a subject of many other sufferings.

As per a Resource Document on Child Labour,..... dating back to the 13th and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are many stories of how children were taken to work in the factories; child slaves were locked and shipped to destinations of work. They worked as domestic servants, as scavengers, in agriculture, mining and in many other sites that are dangerous and hazardous. History goes to show that the issue of child labour is as entrenched and as old as the human kind.

We are now in the 21st century. We have come a long way with several reforms, institutional mechanisms, legal instruments at the international and national level, varieties of policies and plans within governments, non-governments, civil society, academics, and private sector.

But we are still confronted by stories of worst forms of child labour. Stories of abuses are all too common. Statistics tell us all.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Many questions need to be asked. Why is child abuse still existing?

1. Is it because of poverty? Poverty emerges as the most compelling reason why children have to work. Poor households spend the bulk of their income on food and the income provided by working children is often critical to their survival. They prefer to keep children at work then sending to a school.
2. Or is it to do with ones own *Culture and tradition?* - labour is seen as the most productive use of a child's time. Children are often expected to follow in their parents' footsteps or help other members of the family, often at a young age, and especially the young girls. These deprive children of education.
3. Or is it the *Market demand?* - employers prefer to hire children because they are "cheaper" than their adult counterparts, ..... can be dispensed of easily if labour demands fluctuate and also easy to keep them under control.
4. Or is it the *Barriers to accessing education?* – basic education may not be free in all countries [*hence not affordable*] or maybe not easily accessible, especially in remote rural areas. In such situations, parents see choice or may be see no value in education. So children are sent to work, rather than to school.
5. Or are there other inadequacies of *poor enforcement of legislation and policies to protect children* - Child labour may persist if national laws and policies to protect children are lacking or are not effectively implemented.

We have come through many centuries. We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century .... in the globalized world of advanced information and technology ... and unprecedented socio-economic growth. Human injustice to a Child is simply unacceptable.

Over the next days of consultation, I am sure the participants will look at these questions and many more to come up with an effective coordination and partnership mechanism to immediately eliminate worst forms of child labour and progressively eliminate child labour under the SAIEVAC initiative.

In the context of Bhutan, our socio-economic growth has always been guided by people-centric, inclusive, culturally and environmentally sustainable development approach [*We call it the concept of GNH and His Majesty, the King says, it is pursuing development with values*]. This is the development path charted by the far sighted leadership of our Monarchs .... that material growth be balanced with non-material growth such as spiritual, mental and psychological well being; maintaining tradition, culture and environmental sustainability. The ultimate aim of development in any nation, is the wellbeing and happiness of its citizen.

Therefore, in over five decades of planned development in Bhutan, we have made unprecedented progress in the social sector such as in education and health. We have been able to meet the targets of several Millennium development goals.

Today, our school enrollment stands at close to 100% with almost 50% girls. It is our Constitutional provision to give free primary education to all our children. In practice, education is given free even at the tertiary level. There is almost gender parity even at the tertiary education level, except for technical fields. The same is for health services, where the government supports most tertiary treatments, going beyond the Constitutional provision of free service at the primary health care level.

In order to protect children against all forms of discrimination and exploitation including forced labour, adequate provisions are there in the Constitution, the Labour and Employment Act, and the Child Care and Protection Act. Bhutan is committed to implementing these provisions. Rules and Regulations; Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines for the Child Care and Protection Act of 2011 have been framed. We are putting in place the required institutions and the coordination mechanism to fully operationalize the provisions of the Act. We will also be having base line information once the study on Violence Against Children is completed. The Report is expected to be launched in August 2016. This will enable us to better target our interventions.

I am also happy to inform the gathering here, that the NCWC is also working on using the regional 1098 to establish a toll-free helpline for children. There would be gains from regional sharing and learning with member states who have established such helplines. [*the Government of India through the Ministry of Women and Child Development is doing a wonderful work on the Child helpline. It is fully operating – I took the chance while in Delhi to visit the center and the center is doing an excellent job ... reaching out to children in need. Hopefully NCWC will be able to collaborate with Helpline initiative of Delhi.*]

The MoLHR is also drafting an Action Plan on elimination of Child Labour in Bhutan. It is a collective effort of the Government, Civil society, development partners, private sector and communities.

However, the reality, despite all these initiatives and the legal instruments at national and international level, is child abuse still exists and it takes place commonly. It is most difficult to tackle when it takes place behind closed doors away from the public eye, such as in domestic work, especially when working far from their families and communities.

Child labour and any other forms of abuse, is a difficult issue and also an entrenched complex social issue. An issue of a child is not, and cannot be treated as a stand-alone single individual. He or she is (or should be) a member of the family; an integral part of the family .... a loved and a cared member in fact.

As a child, childhood is a critical time for safe and healthy growth in terms of physical, mental and other behavioural development. Family is a place for such growth and the first place of learning and of imbibing values.

The question, I want to pose is who are these parents whose children are abused or subjected to abuse, who are into child labour? Is it not being irresponsible on the part of the parents of not fulfilling their duty towards their children? Or is it their incapacity and inability? When we talk about a child, we cannot leave their parents and the family aside.

I know, many participants here are experts on child labour and abuses; campaigners to end violence against children, academicians and practitioners in the cause of child issue. I also know, so much has happened and so much is happening to end violence against children by the state and the international organizations as duty bearers. But are we focusing enough on the receiving ends .... the children themselves, the parents and the family ..... because the child is part of the parents and the family.

I therefore want to share my thoughts on two aspects [*not new issues*] ... if these could be a food for thought for your deliberation.

**First** is [as I mentioned], getting on board the children themselves and the parents and the family in addressing the issue of child abuse. To me child issue is a family issue. Addressing a family issue would be taking a more preventive approach .... it would be a longer term, more sustainable solution.

Our part of the world ... still has a strong family bonds and values of parental responsibilities for children and the children's duties toward parents. These are good values for any society [*I would think*]. These values can only come from responsible marriage, and responsible parents. It requires responsible parents to breed healthy children [*in most cases*]. The trend we are seeing today is irresponsible marriages and therefore broken families [*not only in the rural areas among the illiterates; but among the young educated couples*]. Broken families, single parenting, are becoming common. Then where will a child get proper care and home?

Therefore, a family is the most important social unit for the healthy upbringing and development of the child. What we learn from our families in childhood builds character and serves us throughout our lives. Families guide personal growth and education, while offering love and protection. When families are strong, our neighborhood is strong, our nation is strong and we can be more hopeful about the future. The journey begins from the family, the home. We need a healthy family that nurtures healthy children, less likely to be abused and avoid being pre-maturely in the labour force.

I know there are communication and awareness plans and programmes for families and communities, but they are not adequate. We need to do more on this. It is a long drawn process.. but we are not too late because our traditional society has rich family values which has just started transforming. We need to contain or revert the change.

**My second point** is on defining the “Child Labour” and in ensuring implementation in the right context of fulfilling this noble objective ... to protect our children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has given clear definition as “any work done by a child that may be harmful to their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development”. Children’s or adolescents’ participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive.

So not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is targeted for elimination. The definition is very clear at source. The danger we often face is not maintaining the clarity through .... during implementation and enforcement. What we often lack is in the understanding, in interpreting, and subsequently making legal intervention in the right context.

Therefore, creation of awareness and understanding of what constitute "child labour" is of utmost importance among all the stakeholders in the provision of the services, law enforcement, the target beneficiaries .... the children, parents and the community at large. Employers should be able to know what is permitted; and the child and the parents should .... also have the right understanding.

The understanding of the rights and of the responsibilities and duties are absolutely necessary to reap the benefit of a social development intervention. Otherwise, we will be creating other social problems of the young child and the adolescent youths. We already have increasing youth delinquents, impacting the society negatively.

I therefore would like to remind the meeting here that in implementing the regional and the national plan, education and awareness creation is critical and should assume high priority. The issue of child abuse is an entrenched way of life, and is a complex social issue.

Bhutan remains fully committed to the South Asia initiative on the SDG Alliance 8.7 and the platform of partnership for strengthening and carrying forward the agenda of eradicating worst forms of child labour and progressively eliminating child labour in the south Asia region.

I wish the consultation meeting all the success. I also wish all our friends from SAARC member countries, the international community, CSO and all other partners, who have come from far an enjoyable stay in Bhutan.

Thank you, and tashi delek!

**B. Opening Remarks :Lyonpo Ngeema Sangay Tshempo, Minister for Labour and Human Resources , Royal Government of Bhutan**

I am extremely privileged to welcome Ms. Zenysha Zaki, Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Law and Gender, Government of Maldives, Mr. Ahmad Shah Salehi, Deputy Minister Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Government of Afghanistan. Mr. Arjun B Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat, Ms. Tomoko Nishimoto,

Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia Pacific, International Labour Organisation, Director General, SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat, 57Delegates from the SAARC nations and other international agencies truly making an international environment and creating unity and diversity.

It is indeed a very motivating sight to see more female delegates as resource persons for this consultation, it only means that women are leading to make this world a better place. It is an honour for a little more than seven hundred thousand people of Bhutan to welcome the delegates to this important consultation on SDG 8.7 Alliance in Thimphu as a launching pad for the South Asia initiative to End Violence Against Children.

It is symbolic for Bhutan, the land of Gross National Happiness (GNH), being chosen as a takeoff point for this initiative for the entire Asia Pacific Region with the population of 4.4 billion people, which is home to 60% of the world's population of 7.4 billion. It makes sense to launch such an event from Bhutan in particular where traditionally women enjoyed complete property inheritance rights over men. Moreover, today Bhutan's population comprises of 52% women against 48% men (LFS 2015) and we are concerned more than ever before.

Bhutan is on the right track to solicit today's consultation by having in place so many laws and policies geared towards protecting the rights and freedom of the child. Firstly, the Constitution of Bhutan, which was gifted to us by our farsighted and selfless monarch, the great Fourth King of Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, strongly condemns any abuse or violence against children.

Moreover, Bhutan has signed and ratified the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) and has Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2011 in place. Bhutan has also ratified two other SAARC Conventions, one on prevention and combating the trafficking in women and children for prostitution; and the other on regional arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in South Asia.

The Royal Government of Bhutan is also committed to promote and protect the rights of children. As a result, Bhutan became the first country in the world to develop the Child Multidimensional Poverty Index (CMPI) which focuses exclusively on children and their experiences of overlapping deprivations.

I'm very happy to inform to this consultative meeting that the Ministry I represent also has enacted the Labour & Employment Act 2007 aligning with international standards related to child labour including the ILO convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

The minimum age of employment in Bhutan is 18 years. However, aged between 13-17 is considered acceptable form of child labour provided it is seasonal and doesnot affect physical and mental health of children.

My Ministry also monitors and ensures the protection of rights of the workers, their working conditions, occupational health and safety and the most importantly the non-discrimination at work places, and equal pay for equal work.

The Royal Government of Bhutan launched its Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2013-2018), which commits to strengthening both the child protection system and quality of education. The Government also funds and participates in several social programs that target improved livelihoods and access to education in impoverished, rural areas. The education and healthcare is provided free of cost to all the people in Bhutan which ensures the health and development of all the children in Bhutan.

The Government is constantly working closely with all stakeholders like law enforcement agencies and CSOs to uphold laws on the worst forms of child labour and budget for development of women and children is accorded a high priority. Even SDF fund has allocated USD 2600M for SAIVEC program benefitting almost all SAARC Countries.

In conclusion, I thank the Hon'ble Minister Dorji Choden, MoWHS, and also the chairman for gracing the occasion. I would like to wish all the delegates for a fruitful consultation and an enjoyable stay in our country.

### **C: Inaugural Address, Ms. Tomoko Nishimoto ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific**

Your excellences, senior Government Officials, representatives of the civil society, brothers and sisters, distinguished guests, children present here, participants and friends. *Kuzu Zangpo La!*<sup>2</sup>

It gives me great pleasure to be with you in this beautiful capital city, Thimpu. This is my first visit to Bhutan, but not the first time that the ILO has enjoyed the generosity and hospitality of the Government of Bhutan.

I often heard about this country's natural and historical charm as well as the warm-hearted people of the land of happiness. I am very pleased to have an opportunity to witness it all first hand.

#### **Ladies, gentlemen and children,**

Sustainable Development Goal 8, better known as SDG 8, places social justice and decent work for all at the heart of Agenda 2030 which sets an ambitious trajectory towards sustainable and inclusive growth and development.

SDG 8 has several targets. Target 8.7 is particularly challenging. It calls on us to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking; and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers. In addition, by 2025 we must end child labour in all its forms.

Achieving such an ambitious goal requires an unprecedented level of mobilization of partnership, which harnesses energy, resources and strategic and political acumen to a maximum degree. Ending child labour and modern slavery will require integrated thinking, coordinated actions, effective policy making and efficient use of resources in a manner we have never seen before. SDG Alliance 8.7 is intended to realize extraordinary and ground-breaking ways of bringing multiple actors together for concerted and focused actions to help countries to achieve the goal and targets set forth in SDG 8 and other related SDGs.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the basic greeting, or "Hello" regardless of time of day. "La" denotes respect and is extra polite.

**Ladies, gentlemen and children,**

In a way, together we are making a history today. This is the first regional Consultation to be organized before the SDG Alliance 8.7 gets its high-level global launch, in September this year, preceding to the United Nations General Assembly Session. Thank you for being the first. I thank most sincerely each one of you gathered here for the leadership and courage to take this bold step.

I am almost overwhelmed by the enthusiasm with which SAARC's Apex Body on Children, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children, or SAIEVAC, has embraced this partnership opportunity. SAIEVAC has worked hard to bring different stakeholders together for this Consultation and into this Alliance.

One of the factors that gives SAIEVAC's partnership its energy, is its diversity and inclusivity. It brings together governments, civil society, children, the UN agencies, NGO's and other stakeholders. This time, as a SAIEVAC-organized event, we are witnessing the first engagement of representatives from employers' and workers' organizations. I am particularly pleased with their presence because when it comes to issues of social justice and fundamental principles and rights at work, such as those covered under SDG 8.7, it is critical to have these social partners on board.

I congratulate the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat for taking this bold step and reaching out to them. I trust that their contribution will accelerate our progress.

**Ladies, gentlemen and children,**

Asia Pacific is the most dynamic, fastest-growing economic region in the world. Yet too many children, women and men in our region live in a world of violence, exploitation and abuse. Let me remind ourselves of a few statistics that show the scale of the challenge and why we need the broadest and the most dynamic of partnerships to respond.

Asia Pacific still has the most child labourers in the world. Almost one-in-10, or 78 million children are child labourers; 48 million of these children are in hazardous work.

In the South Asian countries it is conservatively estimated that some 17 million children are in child labour, mainly in hazardous forms. Of these, more than 10 million are aged between 5 and 14.

We should also be concerned about the 28 million South Asian children, mostly girls, who are reported as inactive. This means they are not in school or working. Rather they are likely to be trapped in child domestic labour, child marriage, or even trafficking.

More than 150,000 people in South Asia become victims of human trafficking every year. This region also has the highest number of child trafficking victims.

Twenty-one million people are in forced labour worldwide, including more than 11 million women and girls. The largest number of forced labourers in the world – 11.7 million (56 per cent) – are in the Asia-Pacific region.

Forced labour takes many forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. We find forced labour in domestic work, agriculture,



construction, manufacturing and entertainment, among other sectors. Migrant workers and indigenous people are particularly vulnerable.

I can go on and on. It is worthy to note that women and girls are particularly vulnerable. These figures are shocking, but as you all know, the problems are not new.

What is new is the very strong call for us to work together, with a clear vision and a coordinated strategy. Although we may be able to make progress on some problems and challenges by ourselves, we will surely do it more effectively, and more quickly, when we work together.

For the ILO, this means working in close cooperation with partners like SAIEVAC and the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children, or SACG. We need to strengthen national systems and policies for social protection, decent jobs, opportunities for skills training, social dialogue and the eradication of child labour, forced labour and discrimination.

Let me express my gratitude and commendation towards SAIEVAC for pulling together a timely, comprehensive, Regional Action Plan on the Eradication and Prevention of Child Labour. I look forward to supporting its implementation in ways that will help transform the lives of children in South Asia.

May I conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation for the generous support given to this event by Bhutan - the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, the National Commission for Women and Children, and the National Coordinating Groups on Violence against Children, or NACG. Thank you. We are truly grateful.

On behalf of the ILO I wish you a successful meeting. Thank you and *Kadinchey*

**D. Keynote address by H.E. Zenysha Shaheed Zaki, Minister of Gender and Family,  
Government of Maldives,**

The Director General of SAIEVAC, Dr Rinchen Chopel,  
Chairperson and Governing Board Member of India Ms Rashmi Sahni,  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Assalaamalaikum and a very good morning to you all.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat for inviting me to attend this regional consultation, and for the opportunity to address this forum. I am both honoured and pleased to be here.

As we gather here today, millions of children across the world, including within the South Asian region, continue to suffer and witness violence, abuse, exploitation and maltreatment, regardless of their culture, class, or ethnic background.

As you would be aware, South Asia is home to over half-a-billion children, the largest child population of any region in the world. Regrettably, it also has the largest number of children engaged in child labour and other forms of child exploitation.

While a number of initiatives exist, awareness has improved and attitudes have begun to change, SAIEVAC estimates that 17 million children in this region continue to be victims of child labour. Such acts of violence against children harms their physical and mental development, and deprives them of their childhood, their potential and dignity. We cannot afford to remain ignorant, naive and unresponsive on this serious issue.

While development and progress continue to take shape in today's globalized world, we must not render insignificant, our shared responsibility to ensure that the welfare and security of children are accounted for, and to reinvigorate existing frameworks in which mutual collaboration and collective wisdom prevail.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Government of Maldives, under the leadership of His Excellency President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom remains committed to playing an active role in promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

In this regard, the Government has undertaken a number of legislative and regulatory measures, as well as policy initiatives to address the gaps identified in our child protection system. We are also in the process of updating our existing child rights legislation to ensure its readiness to tackle modern challenges and to align it with the Maldives' international human rights obligations.

In addition to several measures at the national level, the Maldives has also made commitments at both regional and international levels, to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children. In this regard, the Maldives relied heavily on the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, and has put into operation many of its recommendations, including the child helpline, which was established in 2009.

Furthermore, the Maldives has ratified, and became party to important international and regional conventions and treaties including the Convention of the Rights of Child and its optional protocols, the ILO Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour which entered into force in 2013, and other international human rights related treaties and initiatives.

I am also pleased to note that under the mandate of the recently established Ministry of Gender and Family, I assumed office with a renewed impetus towards greater collaboration with our partners, to jointly address the existing challenges and emerging issues faced by children at a regional and global scale.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my firm belief that preventing violence against children and eliminating all forms of child labour is a shared responsibility. It requires a comprehensive, coordinated and systematic approach and it should also include stronger inter-agency collaboration

amongst stakeholders at all levels, as well as greater investments regionally and internationally.

The Regional Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of All forms of Child Labour launched today, is an important milestone in our collective efforts. However, it is important to note that a continuous regional dialogue and commitment is vital to successfully implement the strategies and plans to address the issue of child labour.

On behalf of the Government of Maldives, and on my own behalf, I would therefore like to congratulate SAIEVAC and all stakeholders, for this achievement and their hard work and dedication to help the most vulnerable groups in our societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that this important platform provided today, will help forge stronger partnerships and alliances that can reinforce national, regional and global responses to address violence against children and prevent and eliminate all forms of child labour.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the SAIEVAC regional secretariat and the Royal Government of Bhutan for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and to my delegation during this visit.

Let me also thank SAIEVAC for their continued assistance and support to the Maldives. On the same note, I would like to personally thank Dr Rinchen, and express my sincere hope that we will continue to work closely to make greater advances in child protection and build on the progress that has already been accomplished in the region.

I thank you all. Wassalaamalaikum.

#### **E. Opening Remarks By His Excellency Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC**

- Her Excellency Lyonpo Dorji Choden, Honourable Minister of Works and Human Settlement of the Royal Government of Bhutan,
- His Excellency Lyonpo, Ngeema Sangay Tshempo, Honourable Minister of Labour and Human Resources of the Royal Government of Bhutan,
- Honourable Ministers from South Asia,
- Excellencies Ambassadors, Honourable Members of Parliament,
- Ms. Kunzang Lhamo, Chairperson of SAIEVAC Governing Board,
- Ms Tomoko Nishimoto, Assistant Director General & Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific,
- Ms. Susan Bissell, Director, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children,
- Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Director General, SAIEVAC,
- Distinguished participants from the ILO and other organisations,

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I wish to thank SAIEVAC, its partners and the Royal Government of Bhutan for convening this regional consultation on this very important topic and bringing various stakeholders together to link regional efforts to the global Sustainable Development Goals. Let me also extend my sincere gratitude to the hosts for the warm welcome and generous hospitality offered to me and my delegation, in this beautiful and mesmerizing city of Thimpu. I have had the opportunity to visit Bhutan on a number of occasions. As someone coming from Nepal, most of the time I get confused whether I am in Bhutan or Nepal given the fact that the landscape and topography of both countries are similar.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today I am reminded of Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa who once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." From the moment they become a human life in their mothers' wombs, till they are old enough to take rational decisions for themselves for their own well-being, it is our responsibility to ensure that their physical needs for adequate food and shelter and their emotional needs for love and care are met. It is also our responsibility as adults, to ensure that children live a life free from violence, exploitation and abuse. These are necessary ingredients for their healthy growth to become individuals who are capable of positively contributing to their society.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At present, we are a long way away from realizing this powerful vision of a world where its children are free from all forms of violence and exploitation. Around the world, millions of children are subjected to different forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Looking at the labour sector alone, as per ILO estimates, 168 million children worldwide are in child labour, accounting for almost 11 per cent of the child population (5-17 years old). Half of these children are involved in hazardous work, which endangers their health, safety and moral development. Moreover, 21 million adults and children are estimated to be in forced labour, with some 5 million below the age of 18.

Looking at the South Asian Region, excluding Afghanistan, the seven Member States of SAARC account for 16.7 million children in child labour and of these 10.3 million are in the 5-14 year age range. Even more alarming is the fact that the young, 5-11 year-old children, make up about one-fifth of all child labourers in this region.

For these very obvious facts and figures, it is time that South Asia strengthens its response to eliminate all forms of violence, particularly that of child and forced labour from the region.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Through its Social Charter, Declarations of the Heads of States' Summits, Ministerial Statements, Conventions and various related forums, SAARC has continued to give high prominence to its agenda on children. Except the first one, all SAARC Summit Declarations mention children in one way or the other. Four SAARC Ministerial Conferences on Children have been held so far. SAARC marked 2001 – 2010 as the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child and its implementation was reviewed at the Ministerial level. SAARC has ratified two major Conventions related to children: they are the SAARC Convention on Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangement for the Promotion of Child Welfare. The latter, envisages facilitating full potential of South Asian children. A Regional Task Force has also been formed to monitor and assess the implementation of the provisions of these Conventions. In addition, the SAARC Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children has the mandate to discuss all matters related to children at the regional technical level.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SAARC provides a critical intergovernmental platform for governments and other stakeholders in the region to accelerate the implementation of global and regional commitments related to children. It is heartening to see that the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) is effectively using this platform, to tackle important issues of regional concern related to children such as child labour. The successful realisation of the vision and mission of SAIEVAC as an Apex Body of SAARC is also relevant and important to achieving the larger vision of SAARC, enshrined in its Charter – *“to promote the welfare of the peoples of SOUTH ASIA and to improve their quality of life.”*

I have every reason to believe that the launching of the implementation of the SAIEVAC Regional Plan of Action to End Child Labour as a broad collaborative framework for achieving SDG 8.7 in South Asia, is a very important step in the right direction. Therefore, I call on the Governments of South Asia, the mechanisms of SAARC and all our collaborators to work together to eliminate all forms of child labour from this region.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before I conclude, let me once again thank the Organisers for this very important event. I wish the Consultation every success and look forward to its successful outcome, which

will be a keep pathway for our joint efforts to make South Asia a safer place for its children.

**Thank you all.**

**F. H.E. Ahmad Shah Salehi, Deputy Minister of Labour, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled**

It's wonderful to be in the historic city of Thimphu. The city is just gorgeous and breathtaking. I look forward to the opportunity to get to see more of this great city.

Today is an especially gratifying day for me as we gather here to reaffirm our resolve against the menace of violence against our children; to renew our commitment to a world free from child labour in all forms; to a world free from forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking.

With the launch of SDG Alliance 8.7 in South Asia, we come together today to embark on a new chapter of partnership, of cooperation, and of solidarity with each other to give our children the promise of a just future, a future of opportunity, a future in which our children will have an opportunity to realize their full potential.

SDG Alliance 8.7, is indeed, a significant step towards jointly protecting our children, particularly the disadvantaged. I congratulate the ILO and the SAIEVAC Secretariat and all the organizing partners for this important initiative forward and for bringing it to this stage.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite significant progress in the global fight against child labour, particularly against its worst forms, the situation for our children remains grim. The nations we represent are home to some of the most despicable forms of child labour. Rampant poverty, pockets of fragility and conflict, economic underdevelopment, struggling systems of governance, inadequate national capacities, the prevalence of criminal networks, and a wide range of other factors specific to South Asia are the main drivers of the child labour phenomenon. Protecting our children, therefore, demands multi-front, multi-stakeholder, multi-purpose approaches and interventions which I believe the Alliance 8.7 rightly captures and advocates for. As the high level roundtable meeting on SDGs noted and as evident from the ongoing policy debate on SDGs, lack of progress on addressing violence against our children seriously affects our ability to realize the goals of the 2030 Agenda. How can we possibly claim success in our 2030 vision for planet, people, and prosperity when millions of inheritors of that vision, of that agenda, of that prosperous planet that we envision continue to face the worst deprivations and be denied their fundamental rights of inclusion, growth, and improved livelihoods.

Dear colleagues, the endorsement of the 2030 agenda offers us a unique opportunity to benefit from the unprecedented global consensus, and most importantly the global will and momentum to effectively combat all development challenges, including violence against our children. Today marks a significant event in our shared endeavor to change the conditions of our children. There is no greater cause and no greater agenda than to work to ensure a decent future for our children, and to empower them by ensuring their rights.

Dear colleagues, let me use this opportunity to give you a brief update on the status of children in Afghanistan.

During the past decade, my country Afghanistan has made considerable progress in all spheres of national importance. With the generous support and assistance provided by our international partners and with the resilience and determination of the Afghan people, we have transitioned from a period of complete despair, tyranny, and fear to a stage where we now have stories of success and advancement to celebrate, be proud of, and build on. We are a challenged, but rising democracy today promising to achieve inclusive and sustained growth and development for all our people. With over 10 million children in schools, a significant 45% of them girls, with infant and maternal mortality rates falling unprecedentedly, with per capita incomes rising as well as increased space for social and political dialogue and major democratic freedoms, Afghanistan is well on its way toward a new era of hope and progress. I am pleased to say that Afghan children have been one of main beneficiaries of the progress we have made in the past decade. The Afghan Government sees the protection and welfare of the Afghan children as an integral component of Afghanistan's national development agenda.

With a view to ensure the safety and security of our children, the Afghan Government has enacted effective legislation and is a proud party to international conventions that prohibit child labour and other forms of child right violations. The legal instruments enacted envisage effective protection measures and safeguards for at risk children. We remain committed to effectively implementing the provisions of Conventions 138 and 182 of the ILO as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our Constitution, the Labour Law, and all major Government programs and planning documents reflect the spirit of the International Conventions which we have ratified and strongly guarantee the principles of fairness, opportunity and inclusion. Our Labour Law, for instance, is significant in a sense that it doesn't have a single mention of the word child labour; we use the word Employment in the Labour Law for which the minimum age is 18 years, except for employment in light industry work for which the minimum age requirement is 15 years, thus making child labour in all forms completely prohibited. We have begun the revision of the Labour Law through a tripartite consultative mechanism to ensure greater conformity with the international labour standards as well as with the prevailing socioeconomic and development context of the country.

But I think we all know that we cannot ensure the rights of our children just by making laws; we need to enforce those too and supplement them through effective programs.

The Afghan Government together with our partners is pursuing efforts already made against the worst forms of child labour and will continue to combat child trafficking. We are actively promoting programmes and activities in collaboration with private sector employers, workers' organisations, civil society organisations, and all the relevant stakeholders for the progressive and effective elimination of child labour, and particularly for combating its worst forms. We have implemented programs with encouraging results in major child protection areas, including direct child protection programs, social support provision, daily child labour support services in all the 34 provinces of the country. The daily support program, for example, helped put over 19,000 children into schools following accelerated learning programs just in 2014-15.

In 2014, Afghanistan made an advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. We announced the adoption of a list of 29 occupations and working conditions prohibited for children. The Government also took steps to combat child trafficking by acceding to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and issuing a directive to improve enforcement of the current law on human trafficking. In addition, the Government passed a law criminalizing the recruitment of children under age 18 into state security institutions and the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict approved a new roadmap to support efforts to end underage recruitment.

Additionally, the President and the First Lady are personally leading and overseeing initiatives to combat child labour and violence against children. Very recently a National Trust Fund for the Protection of Vulnerable Children was established; the Fund will be used to implement long-term, child rehabilitation and protection programs. We have now officially dedicated in our national calendar the final two weeks of the holy month of Ramadan to the protection of children at risk. This initiative will play a key role in mobilizing financial as well as other types of support necessary for effective, accelerated investments every year in securing the future of vulnerable Afghan children.

Dear colleagues, while we have stories of success in preventing child labour in Afghanistan, we recognize we have not done enough. Our work to protect our children is long-term and will continue.

In Afghanistan children and youth have been the hardest-hit victims of the calamities and years of conflict of whom a large majority were deprived of proper education and training opportunities, thus becoming prone to vulnerabilities of all forms.

Children in Afghanistan are engaged in child labour, including in agriculture, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in the forced production of bricks. Children also continued to be recruited and used for military purposes by non-state groups, and were in limited instances used by some members of state groups to carry out specific tasks.

The Afghan Government recognizes that the progress made in the area of fighting for our children is significant, but a lot remains to be done, more effectively and more urgently. With an alarming 2.7 to 3 million children currently in the labour market, the Afghan Government sees the need for long-term, integrated programs implemented in partnership with our international partners to fundamentally address the issue of child labour in a way that targets the underlying reasons as to why children are driven into labour. We believe that eliminating child labour is not an enforcement matter only. In a country with a crippling poverty rate of 39%, many households respond to economic shocks via taking their children out of school and requiring them to generate income. Many children remain vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse, and due to the socio-economic conditions prevalent throughout the country many children are forced to work on the streets to aid in supplementing their families' income. Our programs thus need to focus on providing alternative sources of income to vulnerable families.

An important area we need to address is the demand side of the child labour. As long as there is demand, it's just natural that there will be supply. In Afghanistan, I must report with deep sadness that along the border regions children are used to smuggle items across the border, including illicit drugs and explosives. This is the depth some humans have fallen to, unfortunately.



Ladies and gentlemen, building on the progress and responding to the challenges which I briefly presented to you require not just national level commitment, policy interventions and programs, but also multilateral cooperative mechanisms and transnational coalitions to enable us to fight child labour in all forms. Our challenges do not recognize borders and region, and neither should our responses. In Afghanistan, we see our welfare, development, peace and stability as inextricably linked to developments in our immediate and extended neighbor. And child protection is not an exception to this view. Therefore, the Afghan Government welcomes any cooperative initiative that promote peaceful and collaborative ways of working to confront common challenges. The South Asia launch of the SDG Alliance 8.7 is a welcome step and our Government stands ready to support it, contribute to it, participate actively in its work, and benefit from it for our children.

I believe the first key task of the Alliance should be to work with the Governments in South Asia to advocate for and support the ratification and effective implementation of all child labour related international conventions, recommendations and initiatives. This I think can be a significant and more concrete addition to other activities the Alliance will be engaged on and will be pursuing. In this regard, I think the Regional Action Plan to End Child Labour which was presented today, and the South Asia Strategy against Child Labour are key initiatives in which the Alliance can be an important actor, albeit with support from multilateral agencies, particularly the ILO, UNICEF, and the SAIEVAC Secretariat. This Alliance of the Willing I hope will prove to be a catalyst in enabling the members to share their resources and experiences, particularly in the area of statistical and institutional capacity building which is a key obstacle to the ability of some of our member nations to achieve progress not just on Target 8.7, but on all internationally agreed development goals.

At the end, I thank the ILO and all partner agencies and groups for working to propose and advocate for the establishment of this Alliance.

I also would like to thank the Government of Bhutan, the SAIVAC Regional Secretariat, and the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children for bringing together this wonderful group of people for a cause we all care deeply about, and for a mission to the attainment of which the future of our world, Our Children, is closely linked.

**Thank you for your attention.**

**G. Ms. Nasima Begum ndc, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs  
Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh**

Distinguished Chair,  
Hon'ble Chief Guest,  
Royalties, Ministries, Dignitaries and esteemed delegates and participants

It's indeed a great pleasure for me to address to such a wonderful gathering for combating child labour in the region. I am happy to convey greetings from Bangladesh to you all. I

would also like to congratulate the Government of Bhutan for hosting this important event. My sincere appreciation to SAIEVAC and ILO for organizing it.

We all are aware that in South Asia Children are involved in the various forms of labour and exploitative situation. This includes child domestic labour, children working in hazardous industries, child trafficking, child bonded labour, etc. These children are either engaged by their family member, close relatives, traffickers, or through third party. These children exposed to various forms of exploitation and abuse, mental trauma and physical health hazard, etc.

As a member of SAIEVAC Bangladesh is supporting the regional strategy of SAIEVAC to end all forms of child labour in South Asia which was one of the 4<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Recommendations in August, 2014. This generic proposal is also responsive to the framework of cooperation between SAIEVAC and ILO for Children of South Asia. I believe this has set the pathway which has led us to this grand event.

The overall goal of the proposal is to implement the regional strategy to prevent and eliminate all forms of child labour with a priority on the worst form of child labour having special focus on the situation of the girls and excluded or vulnerable populations.

To address the issues of the worst forms of child labour, the Government of Bangladesh had issued the Strategy Regulatory Order and published a list of hazardous work prohibited for the children ages 14-18. The list highlights 38 occupation including ship breaking, leather manufacturing, construction, and automobile repair, etc. To strengthen its legal provisions against child labour in general the government has adopted the Children's Act of 2013 which harmonizes national law with international standards on child protection, including extending the legal definition of childhood upto 18 years. The 2010 National Education Policy raise the age of compulsory education from grade 5 to grade 8. All these are the reflections of the Government's commitment in preventing and protecting the children from the harms of child labour.

The government of Bangladesh has taken various initiatives to prevent protect and eliminate all forms of child labour. The Government has also recognized that child labour is the multi-sectoral problem and must be addressed through multi-pronged strategy and approaches. Accordingly, it has taken up a number of interventions. Many of the problems are routed in the economic structures of poverty and inequality and hence need to be addressed through protective measures.

A study of BBS, BIDS and UNICEF conducted in 2013 shows that in the last 10 years, the number of working children has declined from 7.9 million to 3.5 million and the number of child labour has declined from 3.84 million to 1.7 million.

Although we have been able to reduce child labour over the years, but many thousands of Bangladeshi children still works in hazardous job identified by the ILO. There are also a

huge number of working children employed particularly in hidden jobs as domestic labour- who are facing great risk of abuse and exploitation. The working children, who live separately from their families, face situations of violence, abuse and economic exploitation. This insecure, uncertain situation puts them at a risk of trafficking as they seek a better life for themselves. To address all these, the multi-sectoral and multi-strategic intervention is required to be further strengthened.

I take an opportunity to share with you recently the Government of Bangladesh enacted Children's Act 2013 has evolved legal provisions on violence against children in the country in line with the provisions of UNCR. The Human Trafficking Act of the Country has kept special provision in combating trafficking in children. The country has passed acts on domestic violence, sexual harassment and pornography- which are creating legal provisions for prevention, protection and access to justice. The labour law has been revised to devise better protection to child labour and showing zero tolerance to the worst forms of child labour. The work plan for the implementation of the National Child Labour Elimination Policy is now on the process of being revised. Government is presently working with the support of UNICEF to develop a comprehensive child protection system. I would like to mention here that during the last National Children's Day, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina directed to the respective Ministry that no children should live on the street. She has strong personal commitment to ensure the protection of all children.

Both Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Social Welfare in collaboration with the UNICEF is implementing Child Sensitive Social Protection Project and Enabling Environment for Child Rights (EECR) Project to end child labour along with prevention of school dropout and child marriage.

Ministry of Labour and Employment through GO-NGO collaboration, has form the National Child Labour Welfare Council which works as a think tank and monitoring body to review progress in implementation of NPA on Child Labour.

Being committed to SDG, Bangladesh finds a great relevance in the initiative of ILO and SAIEVAC to highlight the target 7 of SDG- Goal 8 which calls on us to take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst form of child labour, eradicate forced labour, and to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. Like MDG Bangladesh will remain at the forefront in achieving the goals and targets of SDG. SAIEVAC can be appropriate platform to work together for eliminating all forms of child labour in South Asia. In this regard I sincerely appreciate this timely initiative of formulating a regional strategy by the SIAEVAC with the support of ILO. I wish all the best to this process and express the full support of Bangladesh to the cause.

My sincere thanks to SAIEVAC and ILO for extending me the opportunity to be the part of this excellent event.

Now in this session, I would like to move forward to the scheduled presentation on ‘Bangladesh Case Study’ which will be presented by Mr. A.K.M. Masud Ali, Executive Director of INCIDN Bangladesh. So, I request him to deliver his presentation.

**H. Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi, Hon’ble Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Government of Nepal**

- Distinguished Delegates from the SAARC Countries,
- SAIEVAC Governing Board Members and Coordinators,
- Chair of SACG
- NACG Chairs,
- Representatives from the UN Agencies, INGO's, Civil Society and the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

**Good Afternoon and Namaskar!**

\*Summary of two presentations and concerns shown by the floor.

\*\*Both the presentations were very interesting and illuminating covering in-depth subject matters. The issues floated during the presentations and the floor discussions were very constructive and invaluable in a bid to search solutions to the problem of child labor in SAARC Region.

\*\*\*Having said this, I would like to share some of my thoughts on the issue.

It is my pleasure to be here in this august gathering.

1. At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to SAIEVAC, Ministry of labor and Human Resources, the Royal Government of Bhutan, and National Commission for Women and Children and the NACG Bhutan for organizing SDG Alliance 8.7-South Asia Launch.
2. I am honored for having this opportunity of chairing this important session related to legal and policy framework and also community based child protection system in order to address child labor problem.
3. I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the organizers for the warmest hospitality provided to me and members of my delegation.

**Distinguished delegates,**

4. We all are aware of the fact that across the South Asian region, millions of children are facing various problems, such as abuse, exploitation and other common forms of violence. Such violence do exist at homes, in schools and communities and workplaces or institutions.
5. Among different kinds of violence, child labor is one of the most pressing issues in the region. It is the most sensitive issues which must be addressed collectively to safeguard the interests and rights of the children. This program is the reflection of our sincere efforts at the regional and national level towards ending all forms of child labor in all settings.

6. The main objective of the event, to my belief, is to bring all the actors together and form a South Asian platform for SDG Alliance 8.7, for spearheading affirmative actions to end child labor. Moreover, this esteemed gathering marks the commencement of the implementation of the SAIEVAC Regional Plan of Action to End Child Labor as a broad collaboration framework for achieving SDG 8.7 in South Asia.
7. This event, I believe, is an attempt to build solidarity for the implementation of the Regional Action Plan to End Child Labor and ultimately by achieving dialogue for such collaboration and cooperation. From that perspective, the meeting is timely and relevant.
8. Needless to say, child labor is a gross human rights violation as it compromises the fundamental rights of children. It has been recognized as a global problem. Hence, there have been a number of initiatives and commitments against child labor globally.
9. Although agriculture absorbs the highest percentage of children in employment in every South Asian country, no other sector of our daily life remains untainted with the dark spot of child labor. Be it industry or urban transport or even the entertainment sector, prevalence of child labor has remained rampant. Similarly, both urban and rural children continue to be at a greater disadvantage and are more likely to work throughout the region.
10. The consequences and impacts of child labor are long lasting and detrimental. They impair children's physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being, as well as the economic and social development of the countries in the region and peace within the communities. Children are also victims of trafficking, uninformed rural-to-urban migration, conflict and they suffer immensely from natural disasters, to which South Asian countries are prone to.
11. South Asia has expressed its solidarity in ending child labor and this has been exemplified in different regional and international forums through their participation and their pledge for action. One of the regional responses against child labor includes adoption and enactment of the Regional Action Plan against Child Labor prepared by SAIEVAC.
12. Child labor is widely prevalent in all around the globe and Nepal too is not an exception. The Government of Nepal has identified seven worst forms of child labor and has called for an immediate action to bring an effective end. They are: bonded labor, domestic child labor, rag picking, mining, carpet weaving, pottering, and child trafficking. In recent years, new sectors have gained increasing importance, such as children working in the entertainment industry (especially involving girls), urban transportation, cross-border smuggling, and embroidery work. While child labor in the formal sector has decreased, there is a rapid increase in the informal sector which is not covered by Nepalese labor law. As an example, many children, particularly girls are informally employed as domestic servants where they are at increased risk of sexual exploitation and outside the protection of their families.
13. The reason for having child labor can be cited as poverty and ignorance. Moreover, inadequacy of health and educational faculties, unequal distribution of the income in

the society, income inequality and also backwardness of the certain tribes and communities are other reasons in this regard.

14. While poverty is usually the main reason why children are working, it is not always the only factor. Boys and girls who are placed with relatives following the loss of their parents ( due to health, migration or second marriage) are often sent to work outside their family or community when those relatives cannot or are not willing to take care of them. Some child laborers may have run away either from a violent home or because of ill- treatment at school. Children separated from families face heightened risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
15. The Nepal Labor Force Survey (NLFS) (2008) estimates the child population in Nepal between 5 and 17 of age to be 7.77 million, which is about 33 per cent of the total population in the country (CBS & ILO, 2011). The survey estimates that about 3.14 million children, i.e. about 40.4 per cent of the child population in the 5 to 17 year age group, may be classified as children in employment (commonly called working children). Out of these 3.14 million children, around 1.60 million children, or almost 51 per cent of all working children, fall into the category of child labor. Within the child labor category, 0.62 million children have been identified as being engaged in what is called hazardous work (ibid).
16. Nepal does have law on child labor that stipulates age-specific working conditions such as the maximum number of hours permitted and the types of work. However, these are only enforced in the formal sector where few children work. Most worryingly, child labor is still socially accepted. Parents and communities are often not aware of its detrimental effects on children or of the existing laws.
17. As an important actor in a global fight against child labor the Government of Nepal ratified the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and the ILO Conventions on the Minimum Age for Employment (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182) in 1997 and 2002 respectively. The ratification of these major Conventions on child labor provided here the Government of Nepal a firm understanding that without concerted moves that place child labor at the forefront of national development agendas, the issue of child labor will not be resolved. The ratification of the international Conventions was followed by the enactment of Children's Act, 1992; Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000 with the hazardous Child Labor List as part of its schedule; Kamaiya Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2002; and the National Master Plan (NMP) on child labor (2004-14) among others. And, more recently the National Child Policy, 2012 that strongly recommends discouraging child labor and to penalized employers found guilty of child labor, including in domestic work.
18. In addition, recently promulgated constitution of Nepal, the Children Act, 1992,; National Plan of Action (2004/05-2014/15) on Children, Thirteenth Periodic Plan (2013-2016) and Child Policy, 2012; NPA on Holistic Development of Adolescent (2013-2018) all have emphasized on the protection of the rights of the children by refraining them from all kinds of abuse, exploitation and violence including child labor.

19. Child Friendly Local Government Programme (CFLG) in support of the development partners has a national coverage today on child protection and child labor issues. Local Bodies of the Government in Kabhre, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts have mainstreamed child labor in their municipal and district plans, programmes and budget and have child labor elimination desks established for coordination, reporting and monitoring child labor cases.
20. The Green Flag Campaign against Child Labor, which is a local government initiatives supported by the ILO, is emerging as a strong social mobilization tool against domestic child labor, and as of today more than six wards are declared as child labor free with 10,000 household of aforesaid three district hosting the green Flags as a symbol of child labor free homes. The campaign is also translated into making child labor free transportation sectors. Trade unions have already declared 200 public vehicles as child labor free in 2015.
21. In order to minimize child labor in Nepal, the Government of Nepal has made interventions in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution. It is worth noting that all programs being carried out by different Ministries at the central and the district levels have incorporated awareness raising and capacity development programs against child labour.
22. Alongside, the Department of Labor under the Ministry of Labor and Employment is finalizing the Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Guidelines, Child Labor Monitoring Guidelines and Legal Procedures for the Labor Officers to undertake Child Labor Cases. The legal reform has also opened a opportunities for the government to bring about policy coherence on Child Labor related laws and review them in light with the International Labor Standards.
23. In line with the targets 8.7 of the SDGs to eliminate all forms of Child Labor by 2025 including forced Labor and Modern day slavery, the Government of Nepal together with the development partners and civil society organizations has already started revamping its mechanisms and is accelerating its actions to address child labor issues.
24. With the initiation of Ministry of Labor and Employment, a number of legislations are being amended which includes long overdue amendments of the child labor( Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000, review of the hazardous child labor list. Moreover, the draft of a New Child Children's Act is being prepared by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, which is believed to replace the existing Children's Act, 1992. It is believed that the draft bill would incorporate more stringent provisions to prohibit child labor in all settings.
25. The Ministry of Labor and Employment is in the process of finalizing the draft National Master Plan (NMP) to Eliminate Child Labor(2016-2026) incorporating the twin goals of eliminating the worst forms of Child Labor with immediate and urgent measures and all its forms by 2025.
26. There is a sharp drop in the proportion of Children aged 5-14 years engaged in some sectors, such as carpet making, stone quarries, beedi making, and pottering, bonded labor and children associated with armed forces or armed groups. With the education policy and the School Sector Reform Programme (2009-2016) targeting the hard to

reach children, the school enrollment rate of children at the primary level has increased to 94.5 percent.

27. Following the legal and policy decision, a number of efforts are underway to strengthen the capacities and comprehensive preventing and curative approaches in that combating child labor with its worst form in priority.
28. Recently the Government of Nepal has approved an enacted National Strategy against Child Marriage, which has set a goal of making Nepal free from Child Marriage by 2030. I would also like to inform this August gathering that the Government has just started rescuing street children for their sustainable management. Since street children also serve as child labor for their living their sustainable management directly or indirectly helps contribute to resolve the issue of child labour.

**Distinguished guests,**

29. As envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Government of Nepal has emphasized on strengthening of inter-sectorial mechanism within and beyond Government systems aiming at ending child labour.
30. I would like to reiterate the fact that the Government of Nepal is really determined to fulfill commitments that were made to end child labour;
31. At the end, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, I would like to express my commitment once again to strive to make Nepal free of Child labor by fulfilling every educational and health needs of adolescent, boys and girls.
32. I hope this consultation will offer an opportunity for exchanging lessons learnt, gains made, gaps identified and challenges faced and further for strategizing role of key stakeholders in putting an end to child labour.
33. I wish for the successful completion of this event with productive and meaningful outcome.

**Thank you once again.**

**I. Statement at the Closing Session by the Social Partners (Employers' and Workers' Organizations)**

Chair of the closing session  
Distinguished delegates from SAARC Countries  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all I would like to thank the organizer for providing the social partners (i.e. employers' and workers' organizations) an opportunity to participate in this important program.
2. Thanks go also to my colleagues working in trade unions and employers for entrusting me to speak on their behalf.



3. It is really a commendable job done by SAIEVAC by inviting important partners like us while we talk about the child labour issue.
4. Everybody who is present here in this gathering agrees that the event remains meaningful and successful, which has stressed on materializing target 8.7 of SDGs. We will present the outcomes of the meeting to our respective organizations. I will be presenting this meeting's proceedings to Executive Board Member members comprising of 7 countries and 21 unions of approximately 5 crores members in the South Asian Region.
5. On behalf of all my friends over here, would like to suggest to make a national apex body comprising of all stakeholders including civil society, Ministries, development partners and social partners, in which each group has a meaningful place & role.
6. Child labour problem is very prominent in the region. We would like to reiterate to have formalization of informal economy and social protection and National ID Card, which is in offing in the South Asian Region.
7. We look forward to working with partners to implement the Regional Action Plan on Child Labour that was launched
8. At the end, I believe that this initiative will make a mark on resolving child labour problem in general and target 8.7 of SDG in particular.
9. Thank you once again for giving me this opportunity.
10. Thank you to the Government of Bhutan for the hospitality and to SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat for all the arrangements leading to the consultation and while in Bhutan. We also thank the SACG, particularly the ILO for their collaboration in the consultation.

On behalf of

- **Mr. Laxman Basnet**, South Asia Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC)
- **Mr. Syed Tareque Md. Ali**, Member of the Committee, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF)
- **Mr. Mukesh Galav**, Secretary, Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)
- **Mr. Fasihul Karim Siddiqi**, Secretary General, Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP)
- **Mr. Zahoor Awan**, General Secretary, Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF)
- **Mrs Champika Jayasinghe**, Senior industrial Relations Advisor, Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC)
- Delivered by: Mr. Laxman Basnet

