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Y. K. Silwal.

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**Remarks**

**By**

**Y K Silwal**

**REMARKS BY H.E. MR. Y.K. SILWAL  
SAARC SECRETARY-GENERAL  
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE  
SEMINAR ON MEDIA AND PLURALISM  
IN SOUTH ASIA.**

**(Kathmandu, 22 March 1994)**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Hon. Minister,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,**

I am most thankful for the opportunity to say a few words at the opening session of the Seminar on Media and Pluralism in South Asia.

The Asian Mass Communications Research and Information Centre, Singapore and the Nepal Press Institute should be commended for jointly sponsoring this Seminar on a theme of great importance to the future of South Asia.

Both at the national and regional level, South Asian societies present great cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. There are however, many commonalities, shared history and heritage which underlie this diversity.

Against this background, pluralism is the only enduring basis for viable nation building. The challenge of statesmanship and political institutions is to accommodate and harmonize this diversity.

Promoting pluralism at a broader regional level is crucial to building closer South Asian Regional Cooperation.

The present trend in South Asia towards strengthening of democratic processes and institutions has involved the growth of political pluralism based on multi-party democracy.

I welcome very much your initiative in convening this Seminar for South Asian Media Representatives which focuses on the role of the media in promoting pluralism in the region and seeks to formulate an appropriate framework and action plan for this purpose.

It is obvious that the objective of strengthening people-to-people cooperation in South Asia could be promoted by and through mass-media both at national and regional levels. Strengthening contacts and cooperation among South Asian media representatives would in itself add to the non-governmental aspect of the regional process and contribute to the development of broad-based South Asian cooperation.

Promoting cooperation among the South Asian peoples and evolving suitable mechanisms for achieving this objective have figured prominently on the SAARC agenda.

The Male' Summit in 1990 called for measures to facilitate increased inter-action among federations and associations of journalists, news agencies and mass-media of the region. Your gathering here today gives substance to this mandate.

With the completion of the first cycle of Summits and the beginning of the second, we have entered a new phase in the evolution of the regional process. Since the inception of SAARC, its institutional structures and mechanisms have demonstrated considerable resilience even when confronted with grave unforeseen problems. During my consultations since assuming office as Secretary-General at the beginning of this year, I was heartened by the unequivocal re-affirmation of commitment at the highest political level to the development of regional cooperation.

The scope of regional cooperation has substantially broadened and now includes core areas of trade and economic cooperation. With the signing of SAPTA, we have a regional legal framework to pursue intra-regional trade liberalization. Increasingly our focus is on human and social content and development, particularly issues relating to the poor, children, women, disabled, health and population etc. There is expanding cooperation with international and other regional organizations.

Much has been done but obviously more remains to be done. There is a clear recognition of the crucial role of the media in promoting regional cooperation by sensitizing public opinion to regional issues and stimulating public debate and discussion. There is an urgent need for a sustained programme of public information to widely disseminate knowledge on the SAARC process, our complementarities, potential for further collaboration and shared heritage. This would create an enduring basis for pursuing regional cooperation on a broad front. Information process needs to go beyond the present event-orientation to process orientation. The formal institutions of SAARC, non-governmental organizations and the media need to work together to achieve this end.

I wish you all success.

Thank you.