



## DECLARATION TO FORGE REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN SOUTH ASIA

As South Asia has the largest number of labour-force in the world, its Labour Communities have several commonalities and it is in the interest of the people of South Asian Countries that they have common understanding and strategies to properly manage labour markets, increase labour productivity, ensure provision of decent working conditions in line with international labour standards and effectively improve the life and conditions of the labour-force.

Thus, We, the representatives of the **Governments, Employers and Workers**, from South-Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan [could not attend], India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) do hereby recognize the need to work jointly and in close coordination to accomplish the objectives; and, for the purpose, agree to formulate and develop a regional cooperation strategy inter alia:

- a. to expand coverage of labour laws to working communities as per International Labour Standards [ILS], gradually;
- b. to improve working conditions and subsequently, enhancing productivity and competitiveness of the working communities in South-Asia;
- c. to institute robust and comprehensive Labour Market Information [LMI] Systems for purposes of evidence-based policy making;
- d. to have a common platform collectively to endeavor and bargain for better working conditions for 'South-Asian Migrant Workers' with the labour-hosting countries and provide better working conditions to migrant workers within the South Asian Countries;
- e. to improve Occupational Safety & Health systems;
- f. to enhance relevance, quality and outreach of 'Social Protection Systems';
- g. to eliminate exploitative labour practices and to protect and support vulnerable workers including women, workers with disabilities, migrant workers, and informal economy workers; and
- h. to propose to constitute a South Asia Labour Forum to facilitate regional cooperation on Labour issues with the consent of South Asian Countries. The South Asian Countries agreed to meet regularly to follow-up on the joint statement.

**We** propose SAARC Secretariat to include labour and labour related issues in its mandate. We call upon the SAARC Secretariat & International Labour Organization (ILO) for technical support in the follow-up action for enhancing regional cooperation on the above mentioned areas and to develop a plan of action to implement the Joint Statement.

**We** jointly affirm to strengthen regional cooperation on these issues; to ensure knowledge and experience sharing and active tripartite participation; to develop common strategies and platform; to take all necessary measures for the welfare, protection, productivity, sustainability of enterprises and competitiveness of our working communities (be it within our countries or in foreign lands); and, to organize Annual South Asia Labour Conference in one of the South Asian Countries by mutual consent.

**Made** at Lahore, Pakistan on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at the occasion of 'South-Asia Labour Conference' (24-26 April 2014)