SAARC and UN Women reaffirm their commitment to gender equality

Kathmandu, 15 April 2014: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and UN Women signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote gender equality, gender justice and the empowerment of women among the countries in the South Asian region. H. E. Mr. Arjun B. Thapa, Secretary-General of SAARC and Dr. Rebecca Tavares, Representative, UN Women’s Multi Country Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka signed a fresh MoU between SAARC and UN Women for continued partnership to promote gender equality. The signing ceremony was attended by senior representatives from the SAARC Secretariat and UN Women Representatives from Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan Media personnel were also present on the occasion.

UN Women and SAARC will together promote regional cooperation on trafficking, economic empowerment, political leadership and violence against women, and safe mobility. Through the newly signed MoU, SAARC and UN Women have agreed to develop and implement a SAARC Gender Equality and Empowerment Programme.

While expressing satisfaction over the signing of the MoU, H. E. Mr. Arjun B. Thapa, Secretary-General of SAARC stated, “Ever since the inception of SAARC, issues related to women have figured prominently on the SAARC agenda for regional cooperation. In addition to the many regional instruments, SAARC has initiated a number of regional projects for women empowerment and gender equality in the region.”

Delivering her remarks on the occasion, Dr. Rebecca Tavares, UN Women Representative said, “UN Women puts a very high value on its partnership with the SAARC Secretariat. We have a shared vision on gender issues, articulated in the MoU that UN Women and the Secretariat signed in 2001 to support Member Countries in meeting the goals of gender equality and in promoting mutual learning and cross fertilization. We are pleased to renew our MoU with SAARC for continued partnership for the next three years.”

The MoU signed today will remain valid for three years. UN Women’s partnership with SAARC on gender equality and women’s issues dates back to 1996. Inspired by shared goals and common concerns, SAARC and UN Women signed an MoU on 31 December 2001, which was later renewed in December 2007.