

## **South Asia – as a Family**

The South Asian Community is lagging behind most parts of the world in building its community of relationship and partnership. South Asia has been a victim of its history of mutual mistrust.

But now South Asia can and will emerge as a union of South Asia without borders and controls. This is inevitable.

India, as the largest country in South Asia, has to be a role model as a “giver” without expecting equivalent returns. India’s example is essential and inevitable to build a South Asian Community and for building trust.

Building mutual trust is a long process. And, it can be derailed easily. But, the movement to build trust has to be built step by step, action by action without this mutual trust being established, it will be impossible to build a South Asian Community.

The most important issue is connectivity both physical in terms of infrastructure and, in addition, telecom and IT connectivity. These will bring people together for business cooperation or, indeed, any cooperation to flow.

The women of South Asia are amazing, resourceful and capable and their empowerment will see a dramatic change in the plans and

prospects for a South Asian Community. Women are more evolved and can play a major role.

South Asia is a region of youth. India's 400 mn under 25, 700 mn under 40 is an example of a young nation full of energy. These young people are not influenced by the past. They are focused on a new future. We must involve them in building the South Asian Community.

South Asia has to become a free trade area, without barriers, taxes and duties. India has to take the first step to allow exports to India by South Asian Countries, free of duty, free of barriers.

Governance –and the sharing of best practices – the learning from all – to address development and terrorism has become a major issue. Within that law and order, corruption, judicial systems, etc have to be addressed together.

The building of human resources capacity through education, training, and retraining would change the face of South Asia and its future. This is a huge challenge. Today, through skills training school dropouts are getting world-class training in skills and employability.

With 700 mn people in the villages of South Asia their lives have to be enriched and we are now seeing a cluster and hub approach to rural development as well as self-help groups making a difference.

Energy development – not just big projects – but local energy – using local resources will help enormously.

For too long we have left it to Government/Leadership needs to be grasped by civil society. Cutting across protocol. Red tape. Bureaucracy. To build friendship, partnership and a new community of peace and prosperity.

I See three factors now on the radar screen.

1. A strong Commitment to change.

This is the sentiment of people. To go beyond the status quo. To take on vested interests. To strive. To struggle. To move ahead. To change the future

2. A Culture of new confidence coming out of pain an setback. A will to make it happen. A sense of Strength.
3. The capacity for courage to go for a better future for South Asia. To be unafraid to go forward. Make mistakes. Learn. Move ahead.

WE need, we seek, a body of people to dream a new dream for South Asia. And, to translate that dream to reality. To build a United States of South Asia free of barriers and full of trust. I see that happening. All of us together can make this come true.